11th Tranche Development Account project on “Measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP regions”

Final Terminal Evaluation Report

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# ACRONYMS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Acronym** | **Definition** |
| AAEIR | Assessing Arab Economic Integration Report |
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| AEISI | Arab Economic Integration System of Indexes |
| AfCFTA | African Continental Free Trade Area  |
| AfDB | African Development Bank |
| AIED | African Institute for Economic Development |
| APRII | Asia-Pacific Regional Integration Index |
| ARII | Africa Regional Integration Index |
| AUC | African Union Commission |
| DA | Development Account |
| DESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs |
| DigiSRII | Digital and Sustainable Regional Integration Index |
| DRII | Digital Regional Integration Index |
| EAC | East African Community |
| EC | European Commission |
| ECA | United Nations Economic Commission for Africa |
| EGM | Expert Group Meeting |
| ESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| ESCLAC | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| ESCWA | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia |
| GAFTA | Greater Arab Free Trade Area in Western Asia |
| JRC | Joint Research Centre |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| RC | Regional Commission |
| RCEP | Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership  |
| RDTII | Regional Digital Trade Integration Index |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SPRII | Sustainable Regional Integration Index |
| TOC | Theory of Change |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |

# Executive Summary

**Introduction and Background**

The 11th Tranche Development Account (DA) project on “Measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP regions” was designed to strengthen the capacity of selected Member States to measure, monitor and improve their performance in regional integration within the African, Western Asia, and the Asia-Pacific regions. This objective was to be realized by 1) developing robust regional integration indices that would be freely and easily accessible to stakeholders in the three regions; and 2) building capacity and providing technical assistance to selected countries on the use of the information generated by these indices for analysis and better policy making which would eventually lead to improving their performance in regional integration with a particular emphasis on trade integration.

The Terminal Evaluation of this project was conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group guidelines and Development Account Evaluation Guidelines. The evaluation was conducted to serve three main purposes:

1. *Learning*: to identify lessons learned from the effective implementation and results of the project that will contribute to existing knowledge;
2. *Accountability*: to provide evidence of the extent to which the project was adequately managed for results and that it supported the goal of the project; and
3. *Decision-making*: to provide credible evidence for decision-making by project partners (ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, member States and other stakeholders for improving development outcomes.

**Evaluation Methodology**

The evaluation examined the performance of the project in terms of its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability as well as the extent to which the project incorporated or mainstreamed gender, human rights, disability inclusion and other cross-cutting issues into the project. The evaluation covered the period of the project’s implementation from January 2018 to its completion in December 2021 and was conducted over a six-month period from January 2022 to June 2022.

The evaluation was framed by a theory-based approach, assessing how the theory of change (TOC) was operationalized in project documents and across the portfolio of project interventions. This allowed for the evaluation to develop and present systematic evidence about the effectiveness of programming efforts in relation to planned objectives, and link questions of coherence, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability – as well as contributions to impact – to the results framework. The diverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – was noted in this regard. The evaluation assessed the project against a set of standard evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria and associated questions were applied through a flexible framework that accounts for the interactions amongst them, to ensure data collection and analysis met ECA’s evaluation objectives in a comprehensive manner.

Data collection and analysis were based on a mixed-methods approach. Secondary data was reviewed and mapped against the evaluation matrix to assist in answering the evaluation questions. Over 40 documents were reviewed and included project documents, annual project reports, policy documents, websites, country level documents and reports, financial data, user guides and web platforms, regional integration indices and its data. A multi-stakeholder approach was adopted to gather the views and perspectives from key informants using a semi-structured interview format. A purposeful sample of 53 stakeholders were contacted from which 25 were interviewed for a 47% response rate. An online survey from a purposive sample of project implementors, consultants, member States representatives, international organizations and attendees at various workshops conducted for the project received 31 responses for a 21% response rate. The multiple lines of evidence used in the evaluation were triangulated to provide a user-focussed, evidence-based narrative that connects analysis to findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

**Evaluation Findings**

Relevance and Coherence

The DA project to measure, monitor, and improve performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA, and ESCAP regions was aligned with regional development plans and met current and emerging national and sub-regional strategic needs and priorities. The project objectives, outcomes and outputs were also consistent with and supportive of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The project was well designed in that activities and outputs led logically to the overall goal and outcome of the projects. However, there was less evidence of the relevance for including gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into regional trade and digital integration policies and practices supported by the project. At both the regional and national levels, the development of regional integration indices and the support to member States to build their capacities in regional integration was congruent with the work of other organizations in the same or similar areas. The project was able to adapt to changing circumstances whether it was a lack of buy-in from the initial targeted countries for capacity building or the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the later, the project was able to pivot appropriately in order to address the growing importance of digital trade in the world and its emerging role in the post pandemic regional integration dynamic.

Effectiveness

The DA project was effective in achieving its objectives “to enhance capacities of member States to measure and monitor their progress in regional integration” and “to strengthen capacities for selected member States to improve their performance in regional integration”. Targets for both outcomes were met and exceeded and with additional support provided additional countries in the three regions were able to benefit from project activities. The major risk to the success of the project was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which restricted travel and in-person meetings, workshops, and training. The project was effective in mitigating this risk by switching to on-line and virtual formats for training and workshops, including webinars that enabled the project to extend its reach and support a greater number of member States than planned. While the project proposal stated that the project would pay particular attention to gender and youth issues by examining their role in regional integration, there was no evidence that this was done. Gender and youth indicators were not included in the indices nor were they considered in the recommendations of the completed national action plans. Effort was made, however, to ensure that at least 30% of participants attending trainings and validation workshops were women.

Efficiency

Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, project resources were well-used, activities were delivered according to plan and the project was completed within its projected timeframe. The scope of the project was expanded due to the savings realized from switching to hybrid and virtual formats. As well, the project was able to mobilize additional support to scale-up the project and its activities. The project was successful in improving its operational efficiency in various ways whether it was by moving forward with motivated collaborators, linking key experts with researchers in the field at the appropriate times, developing an implementation and monitoring plan that was appropriate, realistic, and provided guidance along the way or by taking a collaborative approach that assured buy-in and collective action to achieve the project’s objectives. From the outset, the three RCs took a collaborative approach to the development of the indices ensuring the best possible harmonization of the methodologies used to create the indices. Collaborations with the Joint Research Centre of the EC, OECD, and other organizations within each of the regions allowed for an exchange of knowledge and ideas and created win-win situations with these organizations and others working in the field of regional integration

Sustainability

The project was delivered as part of a continuum of efforts by all 3 RCs to support member States in improving their regional integration performance over time. All 3 RCs were working on regional integration issues before the implementation of the project and will continue to do so going forward. Capacity building of member States and local institutions through the project created the foundation for further work to be done in this area. The regional integration indices developed during the course of the project will continue to be used thanks in particular to the dedicated web platforms which were developed although the indices will need to be updated from time to time.

Cross-cutting Issues

There was little evidence of the incorporation of gender, human rights, and disability inclusion issues into the design, planning and implementation of the project aside from ensuring participation of a certain percentage of women in events organized by the RCs. Going forward, the RCs will need to determine how they wish to respond to the rights, needs, and interests of different stakeholders so they too can benefit from the improved performance in regional integration.

**Evaluation Conclusions**

The evaluation formed five conclusions based on the findings of the evaluation.

Conclusion 1: The DA project met a current and growing need in the 3 regions for improving the performance of member States in regional integration.

Conclusion 2:The DA project was well-designed and implemented. It was able to adapt to changing circumstances while effectively meeting the goals and objectives of the project.

Conclusion 3: The RCs used the resources provided by the DA project efficiently and combined these resources with savings generated from Covid-19 restrictions plus additional funds raised from other sources to expand the project, extend its reach to member States, and meet unexpected expenditures.

Conclusion 4: The DA project built the foundation from which project benefits will continue into the future. However, ownership of the regional integration indices is still within the purview of the RCs, demand for capacity building of member States is high and emerging issues and priorities will need to be addressed.

Conclusion 5: The DA project did not address equity, diversity, and inclusivity issues within the parameters of the indices as well as through the national studies, action plans and roadmaps for implementation. These are important issues to address so as to “leave no one behind” as performance in regional integration is improved.

**Recommendations**

The evaluation made 3 recommendations based upon the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

Recommendation 1: Focus on key next steps that will need to be taken to insure that results achieved to date continue on into the future.

Recommendation 2: Support the completion of activities stemming from the DA project and follow up with member States on strategies they need to move forward.

Recommendation 3: Integrate gender and other cross-cutting issues into the regional integration indices.

**Lessons Learned**

A number of lessons have emerged from the implementation of the DA project over the period 2018 – 2021 that can inform future work to support member States in measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration.

* *Taking the time to choose the right partners produces results*
* *Working as a team builds synergies*
* *Being timely and opportunistic brings success*
* *Collaborative approaches that seek win-win situations add value*
* *Changes in government and personnel can delay progress*

# Introduction and Objectives of the Evaluation

The Terminal Evaluation of the 11th Tranche Development Account (DA) project on “Measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP[[1]](#footnote-1) regions” was conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group guidelines and Development Account Evaluation Guidelines. The evaluation serves three main purposes of learning, accountability and providing credible evidence for decision making. The primary users of the evaluation are ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA, DESA, member States specifically the beneficiary countries and other key partners. The evaluation was conducted over a six-month period from January 2022 to June 2022.

## Evaluation Purpose and Scope

The evaluation was conducted to serve three main purposes:

1. *Learning*: to identify lessons learned from the effective implementation and results of the project that will contribute to existing knowledge;
2. *Accountability*: to provide evidence of the extent to which the project was adequately managed for results and that it supported the goal of the project; and
3. *Decision-making*: to provide credible evidence for decision-making by project partners (ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, member States and other stakeholders for improving development outcomes.

The objectives of the evaluation were twofold: a) to assess the performance of the project considering its goals and objectives and b) to provide lessons learned, good practices, and recommendations for improvement in the design and delivery of future programs and projects.

To do so, the evaluation examined the performance of the project in terms of its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability as well as the extent to which the project incorporated or mainstreamed gender, human rights, disability inclusion and other cross-cutting issues into the project. The evaluation covered the period of the project’s implementation from January 2018 to its completion in December 2021.

# 2.0 Profile of the Project

## 2.1. Project Context

Divisions between countries created by geography, poor infrastructure and inefficient policies are an impediment to economic growth and development. Regional integration helps countries overcome the divisions that impede the flow of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas. In a rapidly evolving trade landscape, deepening regional integration is seen as a priority for many developing countries especially from the African and Arab regions. Regional integration allows countries to overcome divisions by integrating goods, services, and markets, thus facilitating the flow of trade, capital, energy, people, and ideas.

The first stage of integration is focused on the liberalization of goods and services within a region to create a larger market and is expected to generate benefits for most but include costs for some. Regional trade agreements have been established in each of the three regions involved in this project, however progress in regional integration has been uneven. For regional integration to be successful, individual countries will need to reach a certain level of performance in the various dimensions of integration (i.e., going beyond just trade and investment integration to other avenues for integration such as enabling the free movement of people within the region, the development of adequate regional infrastructure, and productive, financial, macroeconomic, institutional, and social integration which would include a focus on gender and youth).

Whereas regional trade agreements in the ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP regions have been established among various member states and larger regional trade agreements are being implemented in each region such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) in Western Asia, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in Asia and the Pacific, some of the negotiated agreements are being implemented at very uneven paces. The project therefore hypothesized that benefits accruing from the implementation from regional trade agreements would be enhanced by assisting Member States and regional organizations in the 3 regions to better assess and monitor their performance on the different aspects of integration and to build the capacity of selected Member States to improve their performance in regional integration. The Project thus aims to strengthen the capacity of selected developing countries to measure, monitor, and improve their performance in regional integration within the three identified regions by 1) the development and provision of a robust regional integration index in each of the three regions of focus, and (2) building the capacity of selected developing countries (6, 2 in each region) to use the information generated through the index for better policy making and analysis that would improve their performance in regional integration, with a strong focus on trade integration.

## 2.2 Key Project Objectives and Implementation

The key aim of the project was to strengthen the capacity of selected Member States to measure, monitor and improve their performance in regional integration within the African, Western Asia, and the Asia-Pacific regions. This objective was to be realized by 1) developing robust regional integration indices that would be freely and easily accessible to stakeholders in the three regions; and 2) building capacity and providing technical assistance to selected countries on the use of the information generated by these indices for analysis and better policy making which would eventually lead to improving their performance in regional integration with a particular emphasis on trade integration.

The evaluation drafted a Theory of Change presented in Figure 1 to help explain the project’s logic. Two outcome results were identified to achieve the project objective of strengthening the capacity of selected developing countries to measure, monitor and improve their performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP regions:

* Enhanced capacities of selected Member States to measure and monitor their progress in regional integration; and
* Strengthened capacities of selected Member States to improve their performance in regional integration.

Figure 1: Draft Theory of Change



To achieve the first outcome, the project undertook to build robust regional integration indexes in the three regions, train Member States on the use of the index for policy and analysis, and then to develop national overviews on the status of regional integration for the selected six Member countries (2 for each region). The second outcome was built on the first outcome and was geared towards enabling selected countries to improve their performance in regional integration through the development of national action plans to overcome constraints and bottlenecks for successful trade integration, the establishment of roadmaps to guide implementation and the organizing of national review meetings to assess the progress of each country’s implementation of their action plan to improve their performance.

Both ECA and ESCWA had started working on the development of regional integration indexes as part of their effort to assist Member States to rank countries and regional economic communities according to their integration performances. ECA had completed and officially launched the first edition of the African Regional Integration Index (ARII) in 2016 and started working on a second edition that would include improvements to the methodology. A first version of the Arab Economic Integration System of Indexes (AEISI) had also been constructed by ESCWA and results published in the 2016 first edition of Assessing Arab Economic Integration Report (AAEIR). ESCAP, as part of this project, anticipated building on the Asia-Pacific Regional Integration Index (APRII) which was developed by the Asia Development Bank (ADB).

The implementation of the project was influenced by the changing economic and trade context over the last four years and in particular by the COVID pandemic crisis which restricted travel but also provided opportunities to extend the scope of project activities and to make them more relevant to the COVID period. ECA led the overall coordination of the project with ESCWA and ESCAP being implementing partners within their own regions. In its 2021 Annual Report on the project, ECA reported that it had completed all the activities envisaged under the project except for the organizing of two national review meetings to assess the implementation progress of the action plans for improving selected countries’ integration performance against their roadmaps. This activity was no longer relevant due to the timeline of the project and delays experienced in the development of the action plans due to COVID-19. Instead, the project undertook a training and research initiative on digital trade regulatory integration in Africa that will be used as a basis to add a digital trade component into future editions of the ARII. In general, the activities completed by the project were:

* The organization of an inter-regional Expert Group Meeting (EGM) to critically review the methodologies of the regional integration indices.
* Based on this review each regional commission (RC) revised and harmonized the methodologies to develop their regional integration index. ECA published the second edition of the ARII in 2019. ESCWA revised the methodologies for AEISI and developed three scorecards to provide additional information on the context and outcomes of Arab countries efforts towards enhanced integration. ESCAP completed the development of the methodology for the APRII and developed a sustainable regional integration index (SRII) and a digital regional integration index (DRII) as additional dimensions of the extended version of the APRII.
* User Guides and Web Platforms for the indices in each region were developed and are freely and easily available online.
* Trainings to sensitize member States, regional and sub-regional organizations on the index and its use for policymaking and analysis were organized by ECA (2 trainings) ESCWA (2 trainings) and ESCAP (1 training). In addition, ECA organized jointly with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC) a webinar series on the use of ARII 2019 and its dedicated platform for policy analysis/development.
* National overviews on regional integration status containing policy recommendations were developed. 31 participants trained on the use of the ARII produced country profiles using ARII 2019; ESCWA finalized the Strategic National plans for Morocco and Jordan’s economic integration as well as a study assessing the impact of COVID-19 on Arab countries’ economic integration performance; and ESCAP supported the development of national studies on digital regional integration and health services for Pakistan and the Philippines.
* Action plans with a roadmap for implementation on how to overcome constraints and bottlenecks to successful trade integration were developed for Burkina Faso and all six member States of the East African Community (EAC) (Tanzania, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and South Sudan) supported by ECA. ESCWA supported Morocco and Jordan in the development of National Actions Plans and implementation strategies. ESCAP provided technical assistance to Pakistan and the Philippines to develop national action plans based on inputs from the national studies.
* Validation workshops to peer review the above-mentioned action plans and roadmaps to guide implementation, although delayed, were organized by the respective RCs.

## 2.3 COVID-19 IMPACT

Due to COVID-19 travel and in-person meetings restrictions, all three UN Regional Commissions involved in the Project changed the format of several of the planned events from physical to online or virtual. The financial resources saved from such changes enabled the project to take on additional and complementary activities to expand the scope and strengthen the impact of the Project.

In brief, ECA took this opportunity to build on ESCAP’s experience gained through the Project to launch an initiative on digital trade regulatory integration in Africa to complement its work on the Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII), with the view to add a digital trade component to future editions of the index. ECA, also, through the blending of additional resources increased the number of pilot countries to be supported to develop actions plans aimed at improving their regional integration performance in Africa from 2 countries (Burkina Faso and Tanzania) to the 5 other members of the East African Community (EAC).

ESCAP used the financial resources saved from changing the format of planned events from physical to online to improve further the methodology and depth of its regional integration index called Digital and Sustainable Regional Integration Index (DigiSRII), including an update of the underlying datasets to the latest possible data point. Also, ESCAP increased the depth of the DigiSRII database by collecting data to support digital trade integration of selected Asia-Pacific economies, from the perspectives of digital regulatory harmonization with regional trade partners. An outcome of the ESCAP’s extended scope of work is the Regional Digital-trade Integration Index (RDTII) framework that has been used to feed information into the national action plans made for Asia-Pacific pilot countries. The RDTII framework has been shared with ECA and ESCWA to consider its use in their respective regions when applicable.

ESCWA worked on improving the methodology of its system of indexes for monitoring and evaluation. Underlying indicators have been updated and the latest available data fed into the databases for the indexes and scoreboards. Improvements include the preparation of integration indexes using non-oil data. Estimations of bilateral services flows have been carried out and economic integration indexes will be recalculated using this additional indicator along with the others individual indicators used so far. Additionally, estimations of the underlying indicators used to compute the indexes have been made and data is available for 2020, which will allow an early assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on economic integration. It will also facilitate the undertaking of ex-ante and prospective analyses that will be used to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on integration performance and alternative integration policies to boost the global and regional integration of Arab countries.

## 2.3 Financial Information

Financial information for the project is presented in Table 1 below. The changes between budget/allotment and expenditures are due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as described above and in Finding 8 below.

Table 1: Project Budget vs Actual (USD)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Budget Class and Code** | **ECA** | **ESCWA** | **ESCAP** | **TOTAL**  | **ACTUAL** | **DIFFERENCE** |
| Other Staff Costs | 015 | $ 40,000 |  |  | $40,000 | $0 | $40,000 |
| Consultants and Experts | 105 | $ 116,500 | $62,500 | $62,500 | $241,500 | $405,940 | ($164,440) |
| Travel of Staff | 115 | $ 22,500 | $18,000 | $18,000 | $58,500 | $33,736 | $24,764 |
| Contractual Services | 120 | $ 4,200 | $ 4,200 | $ 4,200 | $12,600 | $151,493 | ($138,893) |
| General Operating Expenses | 125 | $ 31,000 | $20,700 | $20,700 | $72,400 | $56,662 | $15,738 |
| Workshops/Study Tours(Grants and Contributions) | 145 | $ 140,000 | $122,500 | $122,500 | $385,000 | $162,169 | $222,831 |
| **TOTAL** |  | **$354,200** | **$227,900** | **$227,900** | **$810,000** | **$810,000** | **-0-** |

# Evaluation Approach and Methodology

## Overall Approach

The evaluation was guided by professional standards and principles[[2]](#footnote-2) and took particular care to ensure transparent, inclusive, participatory, utilization-focused, and gender-responsive evaluation processes and outcomes. All efforts were made to facilitate the participation of relevant stakeholders at different levels and in the various stages of the evaluation. Since the scope covered project interventions in a range of countries and regions, it was not possible for all stakeholders to voice their thoughts through direct exchanges with the evaluator; for this reason, the methodology used an online survey to reach as many of these stakeholders as possible.

Open communication was established from the outset in the inception period with ECA’s Evaluation Unit and ECA’s coordinator of the project. This continued throughout the evaluation, allowing for the free and fluid circulation of messages, documents, and data, while maintaining appropriate professional standards of integrity and independence.

### 3.1.1 Theory-Based Approach

The evaluation was framed by a theory-based approach, assessing how the theory of change (TOC) presented above was operationalized in project documents and across the portfolio of project interventions. This allowed for the evaluation to develop and present systematic evidence about the effectiveness of programming efforts in relation to planned objectives, and link questions of coherence, relevance, efficiency, and sustainability – as well as contributions to impact – to the results framework. The diverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – was noted in this regard.

The comparison of evidence of outcomes to what was planned considered the risks and assumptions. In addition, the evaluation explored how important contextual factors, opportunities, and constraints have affected the pathways from output to outcome and how this may have been addressed or leveraged in different instances.

## 3.2 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation assessed the project against a set of standard evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria and associated questions were applied through a flexible framework that accounts for the interactions amongst them, to ensure data collection and analysis met ECA’s evaluation objectives in a comprehensive manner.

### 3.2.1 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The key evaluation questions that guided the assessment process, identified in relation to the criteria, are shown in the Table 2.

Table 2: Evaluation Criteria and What Was Assessed

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Key Criteria** | **What was assessed: The extent to which….** |
| **Relevance and Coherence**(Is the intervention doing the right things?)(How well does the intervention fit?) | * 1. The main objective, outcomes, and outputs of the project were relevant to identified national/sub-regional/regional strategic needs and priorities, and to the Sustainable Development Goals and regional development agendas.
	2. The activities and outputs addressed stakeholders’ needs.
	3. The activities and outputs of the project were consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of outcomes, including the inclusion of gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into trade integration policy and practice.
	4. The activities and outputs of the projects were coherent with and supportive of other interventions aimed at regional integration in targeted regions and countries.
	5. The project was able to adapt to changing circumstances (i.e., COVID-19, buy-in from Member States, etc.).
 |
| **Effectiveness**(Is the intervention achieving its objectives?) | * 1. The objectives of the project are being achieved.
	2. COVID-19 had an impact on the project’s activities.
	3. The project managed identified risks to achieve its intended results.
	4. Project results were inclusive for different beneficiary groups and based on the principles of equity, non-discrimination, and accountability.
 |
| **Efficiency**(How well are resources being used?) | 1. The project was implemented according to plan.
2. The project was successful in improving its operational efficiency, (i.e., increased usage of integrated planning, monitoring, and reporting tools, efficiency of program management systems and tools)
3. Synergies or complementary efforts within ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA and with partners and other relevant entities create efficiencies in the implementation of the project.
4. ECA, ESCAP and ESCWA were best positioned to implement the project (value for money).
 |
| **Sustainability**(Will benefits last?) | * 1. Project beneficiaries and/or member States and/or stakeholders have ownership, capacity, and resources to maintain the activity results after external funding ceases.
	2. The project contributed to capacity building of local institutions and/or member states to continue to deliver quality services.
	3. Sustainability mechanisms (including environmental sustainability) were built into the project design.
 |
| **Cross-Cutting Issues** | 1. Gender was incorporated into the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation practices of the project, as well as the results achieved.
2. Human rights issues and disability inclusion were incorporated into the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation practices of the project, as well as the results achieve.
3. The project responded to and affected the rights, needs and interests of different stakeholders, including women, men, youth, people with disabilities and other marginalized group.
4. Innovative aspects of the project were incorporated into activities and were proved successful.
 |

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### 3.2.2 Evaluation Matrix

The **evaluation matrix** presented in Annex 1 expands upon the key questions identified in Table 2. It was the central tool for the evaluation in that it linked the evaluation criteria and questions to relevant indicators of evidence that the evaluation looked for, the data collection methods used to collect evidence, and the data sources. It guided the capture of the quantitative and qualitative data needed to develop the evidence-based findings, conclusions, and recommendations, and formed the basis for the questions with which the evaluation assessed documentary data, and was used in interviews and the online survey.

## Evaluation Data Collection Methods

Data collection and analysis were based on a mixed-methods approach. Secondary data was reviewed and mapped against the evaluation matrix to assist in answering the evaluation questions. Over 40 documents (please see Annex 2) were reviewed and included project documents, annual project reports, policy documents, websites, country level documents and reports, financial data, user guides and web platforms, regional integration indices and its data. The evaluation also perused strategic and policy documents from other organizations such as OECD, regional banks, and national governments to understand better the positioning of the project vis a vis other regional integration initiatives.

A multi-stakeholder approach was adopted to gather the views and perspectives from key informants using a semi-structured interview format. A purposeful sample of 53 stakeholders were contacted from which 25 (identified in Annex 3) were interviewed for a 47% response rate. To probe different hypotheses, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from key project stakeholders (from a purposive sample of project implementors, consultants, member States representatives, international organizations and attendees at various workshops conducted for the project) through an online survey. Of the 149 individuals who received the survey, 31 completed the survey for a response rate 21%. Of those who completed the survey, 21% were from UN agencies, 21% from local government, 18% from member States, 15% each from the private sector, 15% from universities, academia or think tanks, and 9% from International Organizations.

## Data Analysis and Triangulation

The multiple lines of evidence used in the evaluation were triangulated to provide a user-focussed, evidence-based narrative that connects analysis to findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Experiences and opinions from the different categories of stakeholders were assessed for commonality as well as divergences to test the assumptions, enablers, and blockages identified in the theory of change and to answer the evaluation questions. Interviews with project staff at the end of the data collection period were used for validation of emerging trends and findings from the analysis of the evidence gathered.

## Challenges and Limitations

A number of challenges and limitations identified during the course of the evaluation are identified below.

* ***Conducting evaluations during a global pandemic -*** The COVID-19 context presented many challenges, including the exclusion of in-person consultation and field visits, which had the potential to limit the evaluator’s ability to cross-check information and supplement data gathering with direct observation. The evaluator was comfortable using virtual platforms for primary data collection in both French and English.
* ***Difficulties in arranging key informant interviews –*** Key informant interviews were conducted during the months of April and May and took longer than expected. Multiple reminders were sent out with a number of responses returned querying what the project was all about. In the end, 47% of key informants contacted were interviewed and represented a good cross-section of respondents from each of the RCs and selected countries as well as individuals involved in each of the project activities (development of the indices, user guides and web platforms, and capacity building of member states in the measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration). There is a risk however, that important voices and views may not have been represented, creating gaps in the assessment. The evaluation addressed this limitation by conducting a survey of key stakeholders that covered some of the gaps that may have occurred. For example, none of the key informants from Burkina Faso and Tanzania (key countries of focus for ECA) responded to interview requests but ended up completing the survey.
* ***Lag time between attendance at workshops or involvement in the project and the conduct of the evaluation –*** Many of the in-person workshops and capacity building trainings were conducted early in the project before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the world (2018-2019). The evaluator found some key informants had difficulty in recalling these events or associating attendance at an event with the project in question. This was particularly true for the ESCAP region. Despite this shortcoming, the evaluator was able to gather sufficient information from the document review, key informant interviews and survey response to conduct the evaluation.

# 4.0 Evaluation Findings

## 4.1 Relevance and Coherence

The DA project to measure, monitor, and improve performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA, and ESCAP regions was aligned with regional development plans and met current and emerging national and sub-regional strategic needs and priorities. The project objectives, outcomes and outputs were also consistent with and supportive of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. The project was well designed in that activities and outputs led logically to the overall goal and outcome of the projects. However, there was less evidence of the relevance for including gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into regional trade and digital integration policies and practices supported by the project. At both the regional and national levels, the development of regional integration indices and the support to member States to build their capacities in regional integration was congruent with the work of other organizations in the same or similar areas. The project was able to adapt to changing circumstances whether it was a lack of buy-in from the initial targeted countries for capacity building or the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the later, the project was able to pivot appropriately in order to address the growing importance of digital trade in the world and its emerging role in the post pandemic regional integration dynamic.

*This section discusses the relevance and coherence of the Project and examines the extent to which the project was meeting identified national/sub-regional/regional strategic needs and priorities. It also assesses the project’s alignment with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) as well its coherence with regional development agendas. It undertakes an examination of how well the activities and outputs addressed stakeholder needs and to what extent the activities and outputs were consistent with the overall goal and attainment of outcomes, including the inclusion of gender, human rights, and environmental dimensions into regional trade and digital integration policy and practice. Finally, an assessment of how the project was consistent with similar efforts at the regional, sub-regional and national levels and how well the project was able to adapt to changing circumstances was undertaken.*

**Finding 1: The project was well aligned with regional development agendas in all three regions (Africa, West Asia, and Asia-Pacific) and met current and emerging national and sub-regional strategic needs and priorities. Moreover, project objectives, outcomes and outputs were consistent with and supportive of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the 2030 Agenda.**

Divisions between countries impede the flow of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas. Regional integration is seen by governments as a way to stimulate greater efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness by lowering barriers and reducing costs. For each of the UN regional commissions involved in the project, (ECA, ECSWA, and ESCAP), the development of regional indices and support to member States to build capacities on regional integration have been long standing priorities. ECA supported the development and launched the Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII) in 2016; ESCWA did likewise for the Arab Economic Integration System of Indexes (AEISI) published in the first edition of Assessing Arab Economic Integration Report (AAEIR) also in 2016; and ESCAP has long identified regional integration as a priority in its work to deepen and broaden economic integration in Asia and the Pacific.

Increasingly over the last few decades, countries have formed alliances to integrate their economies in order to achieve rapid economic development, decrease conflict and build mutual trust. In Africa, regional groups and customs unions have been long established. More recently the continent of Africa is now poised to establish the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which when implemented has the potential to lift 30 million people out extreme poverty[[3]](#footnote-3). In Western Asia, the development of an Arab Customs Union remains a priority since it was first announced at the Arab League’s 2009 Economic and Social Development Summit in Kuwait. For Asia and the Pacific, regional integration has been a priority but has seen uneven benefits across the region. In 2017, ADB published the Asia-Pacific Regional Integration Index (APRII) that can assist policy makers in the region assess the degree of integration across economies and subregions, compare strengths and weaknesses, and track progress. Being able to measure, monitor and improve performance in regional integration from verified data remains relevant for all three regions.

The objectives, outcomes and outputs of this project are closely tied to and aligned with the achievement of SDGs by enabling member States to measure and monitor their progress towards regional integration that will enhance economic and social prospects for their citizens. It will assist them to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (SDG8), build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation (SDG9), end poverty in all its forms and everywhere (SDG1) and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG17).

Key informant interviews were unanimous in stating how important this project was for each of the regions and within the selected focus countries for the project. African respondents cited how the project was aligned to the ongoing AfCTA process and will assist countries with their negotiations. In Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP’s focus on digital trade and health came at a critical time for respondents from Pakistan and the Philippines as COVID hit and governments increased its focus on digital trade. For ESCWA, respondents from Jordan and Morocco cited the continuing importance of regional integration despite ongoing conflicts and political upheaval. Survey respondents were also nearly unanimous in their assertions on the relevance and alignment of this project with national and sub national strategic needs and priorities, with the sustainable development goals, and with regional development agendas with over 95% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

**Finding 2: The project was well designed from the standpoint that the activities and outputs led logically to the overall goal and outcomes of the project. However, there was less evidence of the relevance for including gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into regional trade and digital integration policies and practices supported by the project.**

As illustrated in the Theory of Change in Figure 1 above, the intervention logic shows that the activities and outputs lead logically to the objective of strengthening the capacity of selected member States to measure, monitor and improve their performance in regional integration in the 3 identified regions. First off, an Expert Group Meeting would be organized to revise and harmonize to the extent possible the methodology for developing the regional integration indices after which users guides and web platforms would be created. Representatives of member States, regional and sub-regional organizations would then be trained on the index and its use for policy making and analysis. Those trained would then be supported in developing national overviews on the regional integration status for their countries which would contain policy recommendations for each of the six selected member States. The project would then support these countries to develop national action plans on how to overcome constraints and bottlenecks for successful trade integration. Validation workshops would then be held to peer review each of the national action plan’s and to develop a roadmap to guide implementation. After a period of implementation, the project would organize two national review meetings to assess the progress of implementation of the country’s action plan to improve its integration performance against the roadmap. The vast majority of key informant’s interviewed affirmed that the project’s activities and outputs were relevant to achieving the goal of the project.

Less evident was the relevance for including gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into the trade integration policy and practices of the project. While the project considered it important to pay attention to gender and youth issues in the development of the indices, most key informants did not find these issues relevant for inclusion aside for assuring the adequate representation of women in trainings and workshops organized by the project. Further discussion on these dimensions is included in Findings 7 and 14.

**Finding 3: At both the regional and national (country) levels, the development of regional integration indices and the support to member States to build their capacities to measure, monitor and improve their performance in regional integration were congruent with the work of other organizations in the same or similar areas. Moreover, the project sought collaboration from key partners in the development and maintenance of the indices.**

The second edition of the Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII) was a joint and collaborative effort of the ECA with the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Development Bank (AfDB). ECA also engaged with the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission (EC) and with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the development of composite indicators. According to key informants for this evaluation, this type of collaboration is a win-win situation for each of these institutions as it provides additionality in the work for each organization on regional integration. ESCAP’s development of the Sustainable regional integration Index (SRII) and Digital Regional Integration Index (DRII) improved the set of tools originally developed by the Asian Development Bank (ABD) and added to the extended version of Asia Pacific Regional Integration Index (APRII). For ESCWA, key informants remarked that the project supported and was consistent with the efforts of the League of Arab States, the Arab Maghreb Union, and Member States. 90% of respondents to the survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the project was coherent with and supportive of other initiatives of a similar nature in the country of region where they worked.

**Finding 4: The project was able to adapt to changing circumstances such as a lack of buy in from initially targeted countries and the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic which obligated the project to move from in-person trainings and workshops to on-line and virtual formats. The project was able to pivot its resources to address the growing importance of digital trade in the world and its growing role in the post-pandemic regional integration dynamic.**

Early on the project had to adapt to a lack of buy in to the project capacity building activities due to changes taking place in some of the countries originally targeted for support. It also was able to maximize the opportunities made available from the on-set of the COVID-19 pandemic. Once the project was approved, ECA realized that Benin, although continuing to be interested in being selected as a target country for support in developing their capacity in regional integration, was undergoing changes in their ministries and thus not ready to engage with ECA at the time. Following a request, Burkina Faso replaced Benin for the project’s focussed support. At the same time, consultations with the East African Community indicated that a regional action plan for the 6 member countries[[4]](#footnote-4) which included Tanzania (one of the initial pilot countries) would provide a higher value and be more meaningful for member states. Similarly, ESCWA which originally targeted Kuwait and Tunisia as pilot countries changed its focus to Jordan and Morocco who indicated more urgent needs to address growing economic concerns and who would be able to benefit from more focussed support. As COVID-19 became a reality, ESCAP identified that digital trade would play a greater role in regional integration and therefore identified Pakistan and the Philippines as the pilot countries it would support. Pakistan was chosen because it had the greatest need for support in developing its digital trade policies and the Philippines because it had the highest potential to improve its regional digital trade integration and would thus be in a position to identify best practices and lessons for the rest of the region to learn from.

With travel restrictions in place, in person workshops, trainings and meeting were replaced with virtual ones resulting in substantial savings. These savings were then used and combined with other funds to expand the scope of the project within its parameters and consistent with its goals and objectives. ECA used the additional funds to take advantage of the growing importance of digital trade and regional digital trade integration by engaging experts to collect data and produce country profiles on digital trade and regional integration in 28 African countries. ESCWA with the additional funds focused on new trends in regional trade integration within the Arab region such as FDI and remittances as it relates to individual economies and trade and covered 18 member States in the model. ESCAP having focused on regional digital trade integration in its index, trained experts from 22 additional countries on how to collect and compile digital trade statistics, build specific data sets, and develop country profiles with key findings and recommendations based on the collected data.

Interviews from key informants affirmed overwhelmingly the adaptability of the project to changing circumstances. 81% of respondents to the survey strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the project adjusted its activities appropriately in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 4.2 Effectiveness

The DA project was effective in achieving its objectives “to enhance capacities of member States to measure and monitor their progress in regional integration” and “to strengthen capacities for selected member States to improve their performance in regional integration”. Targets for both outcomes were met and exceeded and with additional support provided additional countries in the three regions were able to benefit from project activities. The major risk to the success of the project was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which restricted travel and in-person meetings, workshops, and training. The project was effective in mitigating this risk by switching to on-line and virtual formats for training and workshops, including webinars that enabled the project to extend its reach and support a greater number of member States than planned. While the project proposal stated that the project would pay particular attention to gender and youth issues by examining their role in regional integration, there was no evidence that this was done. Gender and youth indicators were not included in the indices nor were they considered in the recommendations of the completed national action plans. Effort was made, however, to ensure that at least 30% of participants attending trainings and validation workshops were women.

*This section discusses whether the project has achieved its objectives. It examines whether targets have been met as planned and the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of results. It also considers the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on project activities and what adjustments were made and how these adjustments contributed to the achievement of results or addressed any new priorities of member States that may have emerged. Finally, it analyses to what extent project results were inclusive for different beneficiary and marginalized groups.*

**Finding 5: The project has been effective in achieving its objectives to “enhance capacities of selected member States to measure and monitor their progress in regional integration” and “to strengthen capacities of selected member States to improve their performance in regional integration”. Targets for both outcomes were met and exceeded and with additional support provided additional countries in the three regions were able to benefit from project activities.**

In order to meet the first objective, the project set out to update and develop indices on regional integration in the three regions, develop users’ guides and web platforms and train member States in their use. This would enable the six targeted countries to be better able to assess the status of regional integration in their countries. In the first instance, the project effectively revised and developed the regional integration indexes for the three regions, developed and published their respective users’ guides and web platforms and then held training workshops on the use of these regional integration indexes for policy analysis and policy making. The target for this outcome was that 4 out of the 6 selected member States would develop country profiles assessing the degree of regional integration within their countries. In the end, all six targeted countries were able to assess the status of regional integration in their countries and develop country profiles. Moreover, the project was able to extend its training to other member States. ECA trained experts from 28 additional African countries on digital trade data collection and compilation and contracted them to develop data sets on digital services trade integration and regional digital trade integration and to produce country profiles summarizing key findings and key recommendations from the collected data. ESCWA trained experts from 4 additional member States (other than the 2 pilot countries) on how to assess their status of regional integration in their countries using the System of Indices for Monitoring and Evaluation of Economic Integration (SIMAEI). ESCAP provided training to an additional 22 countries to develop national datasets and for analysing their national regulatory challenges for digital trade integration with other Asia-Pacific economies.

For the second objective of improving the performance of member States in regional integration, the project supported its six target countries to develop action plans with a roadmap to guide implementation to address trade integration gaps. Targets for this outcome were that at least four out of the six countries would produce an officially approved action plan with a roadmap for implementation and by the end of the project at least one of the action plans would be on track (for completion 2 years after the project was completed). For the first target, all six target countries completed their action plans with roadmaps for implementation. ECA supported Burkina Faso and Tanzania (through the East African Community) in the development of national or regional AfCTA implementation strategies. Both strategies were finalized and validated by the relevant member States. ESCWA provided similar support to both Jordan and Morocco which finalized their national action plans. ESCAP worked with national think tanks in Pakistan and the Philippines to conduct and publish national studies that identify the challenges and opportunities of the respective pilot countries in digital and sustainable integration with other Asia-Pacific economies. The action plans that were developed were disseminated and verified through workshops held in both countries.

Key informant interviews echoed this finding that the project was extremely effective in achieving its target results. Key factors that contributed to this success included the simplicity of the indices in that they were limited to key dimensions, the ease with which anyone can access and read the information provided, the training provided to member States on the use of the indices, and the collaborative approach taken which allowed for member State ownership of the project outcomes. Respondents to the survey agreed overwhelmingly that the project was effective in enhancing member States capacity to measure and monitor their progress in regional integration and that the project has been effective in strengthening their capacity to improve their performance (89% either agreed or strongly agreed with both statements). Key limiting factors to the effectiveness of the project identified by key informants were data limitations although this reinforces the need for countries to improve their data collection strategies and the mobility of government officials which happened in a number of instances during project implementation putting the success of the project at risk due to having to engage with new personnel that may or may not be supportive of the project outcomes.

**Finding 6: The major risk to the success of the project was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic which restricted travel and in-person meetings, workshops, and trainings. The project was effective in mitigating this risk by switching to on-line formats for training and workshops including webinars that effectively enabled the project to extend its reach and support more member States in the use of the indices for measuring, monitoring, and improving their performance in regional integration.**

The Covid-19 pandemic while posing a risk for completing scheduled activities, also provided an opportunity to explore emerging issues such as digital trade integration that was rapidly gaining importance as countries dealt with travel and group meeting restrictions. The three 3 RCs delayed planned physical events, but were able to move some to on-line and virtual formats. ECA also took the opportunity to develop training webinars with the AfDB and the AUC on the use of ARII 2019 for policy analysis and development and targeted various events during 2020 and 2021. In addition, EAC developed an on-line course on the use of ARII 2019 which has been administered through EAC’s training arm, the African Institute for Economic Development (AIED). ESCWA was able to expand its scope during COVID-19 by integrating new trends in trade, studying the effects of remittances and FDI in a COVID-19 and post-COVID world through a framework for trade policy analysis. 18 additional economies were brought into the model. ESCAP also shifted to virtual formats for its trainings and meetings, the savings from which were used to expand its reach to 22 other countries.

The vast majority of interviewees applauded the way the RCs pivoted its work to virtual formats with one person commenting that with the research work being home based and national in scope, the project made great gains amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Others lamented the lack of in-person meetings and suggested that, as restrictions began being lifted towards the latter part of 2021, the project could have been extended to allow for more face-to-face meetings. Overall, 81% of the respondents to the survey agreed or strongly agree with the statement that the project adjusted its activities appropriately in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Finding 7: While the project proposal stated that the project would pay particular attention to gender and youth issues by examining their role in regional integration, there was little evidence that this was done. Indicators on gender or even youth were not included in the indices nor were they considered in the recommendations of the national action plans that were produced. Effort was made, however, to ensure that at least 30% of participants attending trainings and validation workshops were women.**

In reviewing the indices from the 3 regions, indicators focused on women and youth were non-existent, the ESCAP DigiSRII being the only exception with 2 indicators listed under the Sustainable Indicators for Digital economy integration.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, these indicators were only used in the comprehensive index for economies with data availability and does not appear to be identified for use as Conventional Indicators. With the lack of disaggregated data for women and youth on their participation in regional integration, it is not surprising that there was no mention of gender or youth dimensions in regional integration in any of the reports, national studies or action plans reviewed. Neither were there recommendations made to improve participation of women and youth or other marginalized groups in regional integration. Interviewees suggested the lack of attention to gender and youth was due to how the indexes were structured to look at the gaps in policy for the various dimensions of integration (i.e., Trade Integration, Productive, Macroeconomic, Infrastructure and Free Movement of People) and the type of indicators attached to these dimensions. Others stated that the research on indicators for the indices were structured in such a way that disaggregated data on gender, youth or other marginalized groups was not available or meaningful for the purpose of the indices. Nevertheless, *SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* identifies a number of targets for member States to aim for by 2030, namely; “undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws”; “enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women”; and “adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels”.[[6]](#footnote-6) To improve the project’s consideration of gender and youth dimensions going forward, researchers will need to look at how women and youth participate in regional integration activities and to address any gaps going forward. Participation of women in the workshops and training organized by the RCs was satisfactory with a more than 30% participation rate overall.

## 4.2 Efficiency

Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, project resources were well-used, activities were delivered according to plan and the project was completed within its projected timeframe. The scope of the project was expanded due to the savings realized from switching to hybrid and virtual formats. As well, the project was able to mobilize additional support to scale-up the project and its activities. The project was successful in improving its operational efficiency in various ways whether it was by moving forward with motivated collaborators, linking key experts with researchers in the field at the appropriate times, developing an implementation and monitoring plan that was appropriate, realistic, and provided guidance along the way or by taking a collaborative approach that assured buy-in and collective action to achieve the project’s objectives. From the outset, the three RCs took a collaborative approach to the development of the indices ensuring the best possible harmonization of the methodologies used to create the indices. Collaborations with the Joint Research Centre of the EC, OECD, and other organizations within each of the regions allowed for an exchange of knowledge and ideas and created win-win situations with these organizations and others working in the field of regional integration.

*This section discusses how well the project used its resources. It examines whether the project was implemented as planned, whether additional support was provided to overcome implementation challenges and to what extent and in what ways was the project successful in improving its operational efficiency. This section also analyses the extent to which synergies or complementary efforts within EAC, ESCWA and ESCAP or with other partners and relevant entities created efficiencies in the implementation of the project.*

**Finding 8: Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, project resources were well used, activities delivered according to plan, and the project was completed within its projected timeframe. The scope of the project was expanded due to the savings realized from switching to hybrid and virtual formats. As well, the project was able to mobilize additional support to scale-up the project and its activities.**

The project progressed steadily from year 1 (2018) to year 4 (2021) successfully completing all activities except for the last activity of organizing two national review meetings to assess the progress of implementing action plans to improve selected country’s integration performance against their roadmap. As the timeline for this activity had elapsed, this activity will be completed post project through other budgetary resources. Implementation from year 1 began slowly with 55.3% of the planned activities completed by year-end. This was largely due to unforeseen work in ensuring that the methodologies to be used in each of the indices were developed and/or improved properly so as to ensure the effective implementation of the project. Years 2 (2019) and 3 (2020) saw the implementation rate increase to 70% and 78% respectively and with a no-cost six-month extension in Year 4 the project was completed. Delays were experienced in finalizing the 2 pilot countries in each of the 3 regions which would be provided technical assistance and support to develop their national studies, plans and roadmaps for improving performance in regional integration. ECA, in consultation with its sub-regional office for Eastern Africa decided to develop a regional action plan for the six countries of the EAC that would also take into consideration national specificities. ECA also during Year 1 changed Benin for Burkina Faso due to slow uptake in Benin and a more urgent request from Burkina Faso. Similarly, ESCWA changed its target countries to Jordan and Morocco. ESCAP took longer to find the right collaborators for its target countries finally settling on Pakistan and the Philippines for the reasons mentioned previously.

As COVID-19 interrupted the world in the first quarter of 2020, the project needed to adjust its capacity-building efforts to virtual and on-line formats. This resulted in savings in the budget lines of Workshops/Study Tours (please see Table 1 above) of approximately US$222,000 and Staff Travel of US$25,000. These savings were then used to expand the project in the manner described in Findings 4 and 6 above through the hiring of consultants and experts and for contractual services. For ECA, these funds were used to add the digital trade integration component. ESCWA funded the consultancies for monitoring the COVID-19 impact on economic integration and work on a stimulus programmer of selected Arab countries and ESCAP was able to cover consultancy costs to develop capacity building tools and to improve and update DigiSRII techniques and databases. During the implementation of the project, it was recognized that the budget allocation for the development of the web platforms was limited and adjustments needed to be made to cover the actual costs. 40 thousand USD was transferred from Other Staff Costs to cover this deficit.

Throughout the implementation of the project, extra-budgetary resources were mobilized and used to supplement the project budget and provide support for key activities that expanded the project’s scope. Table 3 identifies the additional resources mobilized. The additional leveraging of US$323,500 represents a 40% increase of resources mobilized for this project and illustrates the synergies created between this project and other initiatives as well as the growing interest in the use of regional indices to improve the performance of regional integration.

Table 3: Financial Leveraging (USD)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Donor** | **Amount Raised** | **Purpose** |
| Global Affairs Canada | 50,000 | Development of Regional AfCTA implementation strategy for EAC member States |
| Global Affairs Canada | 250,000 | Support for training and research initiative on digital trade regulatory integration in Africa |
| European Union | 10,000 | Development of the national AfCTA strategy for Burkina Faso |
| FEALAC | 13,500 | Improvement to the methodology and data quality of the regional integration indexes for the Asia-Pacific region, particularly for those related to regional value chain integration |
| Total | 323,500 |  |

**Finding 9: The project was successful in improving its operational efficiency in various ways whether it was by moving forward with motivated collaborators, linking key experts with researchers in the field at the appropriate times, developing an implementation and monitoring plan that was appropriate, realistic, and provided guidance along the way or by taking a collaborative approach that assured buy-in and collective action to achieve the project’s objectives.**

The vast majority of respondents to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that the project made efficient use of it resources (81%) and that the project used appropriate management systems and tools to use its resources efficiently (81%). Stakeholder interviews revealed that key to using its resources efficiently was that the project took the time to develop sound methodologies and to identify the right collaborators with connections to key policy makers in the target countries. Collaborative approaches to achieving goals can be a slow process as relationship buildings takes time and requires trust. Once the key partners were in place with a sound methodology and with proper training and capacity building, the project was able to complete its activities in an efficient manner. Another key to the efficient use of resources which was expressed in interviews with stakeholders from each of the regions was the ability of the project to link experts with local researchers to develop the indices, national studies, plans and roadmaps for implementation. Linked to this idea, others expressed that working as a team rather individual researchers helped to build synergies and to exchange ideas that fostered learning as well as a sense of ownership. The implementation system and plan employed by each of the RCs was described by interviewees as appropriate, collaborative, and realistic and provided the necessary guidance to complete the work in the time allotted. The majority of interviewees also commented on the collaborative approach taken by the RCs to implement this project which fostered local ownership of the data collected, the analysis undertaken, and the national plans and roadmaps developed. According to one respondent, “the amount and quality of the information that was gained through the research work as a result of the project was good value for the organization’s resources. The monitoring and guiding of the work by UN officials made it possible for the project to achieve what it was set to achieve”.

Notwithstanding the above, a few interviewees identified areas which were less than efficient. Contracting of consultant experts in Africa for training on digital trade data collection and compiling and producing datasets and producing country profiles was a long and slow process. One of the consultant experts mentioned that once the contract was over, there was little follow up done to ensure the use of the national studies with the appropriate government officials. Given the few interviews conducted on this particular element for the evaluation, it is difficult to know how prevalent this issue was among the 28 country studies completed. Given the capacity issues of the core ECA team at headquarters, in order to move forward towards embedding a regional digital trade index for Africa in the ARII, ECA will need to develop a strategy and harness additional resources to ensure the implementation and use of the national studies already completed.

**Finding 10: From the outset, the 3 RCs took a collaborative approach to the development of the indices ensuring the best harmonization of the methodologies used to develop the indices. Collaborations with the Joint Research Centre of the EC, OECD, and other organizations within each of the regions allowed for an exchange of knowledge and ideas and created win-win situations with these organizations and others working in the field of regional integration.**

From the outset, the project took a collaborative approach to development the indices for the 3 regions. While complete harmonization of the indices could not be achieved because of different dynamics of integration within each region, some degree of complementarity and convergence on key components was realized. The collaborative approach untaken also enabled regions to learn from each other and adopt approaches from one region to be developed in another region. For instance, ESCAP’s choice to develop a digital integration index prompted ECA to use additional resources generated from the lack of travel during COVID-19 to develop a similar index for Africa. The engagement with the JRC-Ispra of the EC on the construction of composite indicators and with the OECD on digital trade indexes further helped the RCs develop their methodologies and develop robust checks on their appropriateness. The collaborations also brought added benefits as JRC-Ispra is auditing the work of the indices at little or no cost and will provide technical feedback on the indices and their methodology in order to improve the indices going forward. Interviews with representatives of the OECD and JRC-Ispra spoke to the win-win nature of the collaboration with the RCs. Simply put, the European organizations gained access to data sets on regional trade and digital integration from the 3 regions, while the RCs gained from the knowledge and experience of these organizations who are specialized in the production and assessment of composite indicators and scorecards.

## 4.4 Sustainability

The project was delivered as part of a continuum of efforts by all 3 RCs to support member States in improving their regional integration performance over time. All 3 RCs were working on regional integration issues before the implementation of the project and will continue to do so going forward. Capacity building of member States and local institutions through the project created the foundation for further work to be done in this area. The regional integration indices developed during the course of the project will continue to be used thanks in particular to the dedicated web platforms which were developed although the indices will need to be updated from time to time.

*This section discusses whether benefits will last. It analyses the extent to which member States and other stakeholders have ownership, capacity, and resources to maintain activities and results after the project is completed. It examines whether the project contributed to capacity building of local institutions and/or member States to continue the delivery of activities that would improve regional integration performance. Finally, it identifies the major factors that influenced the sustainability or non-sustainability of the project.*

**Finding 11: The project was delivered as part of a continuum of efforts by all 3 RCs to support member States in improving their regional integration performance over time. All 3 RCs were working on regional integration issues before the implementation of the project and will continue to do so going forward.**

79% of survey respondents stated that projects results were likely or very likely to continue after the project ends. The remaining 21% of respondents were neutral. Part of the reason for the continuance of project results is that regional integration issues are key components of the work of each RC. The DA project was a natural flow from the work each of the RCs was involved in prior to the project starting. Likewise, the 3 RCs are continuing their work on regional integration issues after project activities have ended. The completion of the DA project has generated more demand and interest not only from member States but also with donors and other RCs as well[[7]](#footnote-7). In particular the digital trade integration index has created a big opportunity for continued support from donors and member States in the future. Global Affairs Canada is supporting ECA in Africa in this regard and other projects are coming on stream to support the work of each the regions.

**Finding 12: Capacity building of member States and local institutions through the project created the foundation for further work to be done in this area. The regional integration indices developed during the course of the project will continue to be used thanks in particular to the dedicated web platforms which were developed although the indices will need to be updated from time to time.**

 63% of survey respondents felt that it was likely or very likely that local institutions and member States have the capacity to continue measuring, monitoring, and improving regional integration performance. The project, itself, has created the foundation for further work in this area. With a database and an index, it then becomes possible to monitor the evolution of policies and integration over time, which can then lead to policy proposals to enhance regional integration. The web platforms created as part of this project will make the continued use of the indices for policy analysis and improvement possible as long as it is updated. The current capacity building of member States and local institutions in the few piloted countries will drive the process for more ownership by member States who will provide new data on regional integration. Nevertheless, it will be incumbent on the RCs to develop new avenues of support to sustain the progress made to date. ECA has begun the process by developing webinars and on-line training in the use of the ARII and its components. However, a clear plan and strategy for continuing the capacity building of member States will need to be actioned to sustain the results of this project.

## 4.5 Cross-cutting Issues

There was little evidence of the incorporation of gender, human rights, and disability inclusion issues into the design, planning and implementation of the project aside from ensuring participation of a certain percentage of women in events organized by the RCs. Going forward, the RCs will need to determine how they wish to respond to the rights, needs, and interests of different stakeholders so they too can benefit from the improved performance in regional integration.

*This section discusses the extent to which gender, human rights, and disability inclusion was incorporated into the design, planning, and implementation of the project.*

**Finding 13: As mentioned in Finding 7, there was little evidence of the incorporation of gender issues into the design, planning and implementation of the project aside from ensuring participation of a certain percentage of women in the workshops, meetings and trainings organized by the RCs. Likewise, issues of human rights and disability inclusion were not included in the design and implementation of the project. Going forward, the RCs will need to determine how they wish to respond to the rights, needs, and interests of different stakeholders, including women, men, youth, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups so they too can benefit from the improved performance in regional integration.**

Gender, human rights, and disability inclusion dimensions were difficult to include into the dimensions and indicators for the regional integration indexes in the three regions partly because the structure of the research did not entirely allow for how policies to improve regional integration would impact on human rights, gender, and disability inclusion issues. Interviewees were at a loss to suggest how the project could improve the inclusion of these cross-cutting themes into the indices. One starting point is to look at participation and access of marginalized groups as it relates to the various dimensions of the indices and the impact on these groups from improvements made in regional integration. This would mean that the RCs will need to develop specific indicators to assess how women and other marginalized groups contribute to the regional integration process and in the process identify gaps which would need to be addressed to improve the participation of these groups in regional integration moving forward.

# 5.0 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1: The DA project met a current and growing need in the 3 regions for improving the performance of member States in regional integration.** Regional integration is seen by governments as a way to stimulate greater efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness by lowering barriers and reducing costs. For each of the UN regional commissions involved in the project, (ECA, ECSWA, and ESCAP), the development of regional indices and support to member States to build capacities on regional integration have been long standing priorities. The evaluation found that the project was consistent with the needs of member States, coherent with other initiatives taking place, and capable of addressing emerging needs of member States. (Findings 1, 2, and 3)

**Conclusion 2: The DA project was well-designed and implemented. It was able to adapt to changing circumstances while effectively meeting the goals and objectives of the project.** The evaluation found that the project was successful in delivering on its expected results. Outcome targets were met and surpassed and the RCs were able to adapt and adjust to changing circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic presented the greatest risk to the achievement of results, yet the project was able to pivot effectively to on-line and virtual formats and with the savings generated address emerging issues and priorities of member States such as Regional Digital Trade Integration and expand its capacity building reach to other member States. With expanded reach comes expectations, and the RCs will need to develop strategies as a next step to support member States in implementing policies that will improve their regional integration performance. (Findings 4,5,6 and 9)

**Conclusion 3: The RCs used the resources provided by the DA project efficiently and combined these resources with savings generated from Covid-19 restrictions plus additional funds raised from other sources to expand the project, extend its reach to member States, and meet unexpected expenditures.** The evaluation found that project resources were well-used, activities delivered according to plan and results delivered within the project’s timeframe. Operational efficiency was improved by the methods employed by the RCs to implement the project (i.e., collaborative approach, deployment of experts at appropriate times, identifying motivated partners). Synergies between RCs and between RCs and other regional organizations were an important factor in creating the operational efficiencies in implementing the project. (Findings 8,9, and 10)

**Conclusion 4: The DA project built the foundation from which project benefits will continue into the future. However, ownership of the regional integration indices is still within the purview of the RCs, demand for capacity building of member States is high and emerging issues and priorities will need to be addressed.** The evaluation found that project has created important instruments for sustaining the benefits of the projects over time (i.e.; web platforms and user guides to enable use of the indices, on-line training courses and webinars to assist member States, and published studies from targeted countries that can be used as examples for others). Another important factor that can sustain the benefits achieved by the project is the continued focus of the RCs on regional integration as an important part of their ongoing work. Nevertheless, strategies will need to be developed to identify how data will be updated periodically, who will take ownership of the indices, how will emerging issues be incorporated as they arise, and who will address the capacity building needs of member States to assist them in improving their performance in regional integration. (Findings 11 and 12).

**Conclusion 5: The DA project did not address equity, diversity, and inclusivity issues within the parameters of the indices as well as through the national studies, action plans and roadmaps for implementation. These are important issues to address so as to “leave no one behind” as performance in regional integration is improved.** The evaluation found that the DA project did not focus on incorporating gender, human rights or disability inclusion indicators into the indices which, if done, would enable member States to assess how different groups such as women and youths would contribute to regional integration. Member States could then identify gaps which would need to be addressed to improve the participation of and benefits accruing to marginalized groups going forward. (Findings 2,7, and 13).

# 6.0 Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** **Focus on key next steps that will need to be taken to ensure that results achieved to date continue on into the future.** There are a number of important instruments that were developed during the course of the project: web platforms and user guides for the indices in all three regions, webinars, and on-line tutorials on the use of the indices for identifying gaps, free and easy access to the indices themselves plus reports, workshops, and national studies that will provide valuable information on the value and use of the indices. Nevertheless, the three regions and any other region joining this work will need to develop a plan for updating the indices now and into the future, continuing the capacity development work of member States who were not part of the pilot project, and the transfer of ownership to member States or regional organizations to carry on the work in the future.

**Recommendation 2: Support the completion of activities stemming from the DA project and follow up with member States on strategies they need to move forward.** The project ended with unfinished work that if completed would add to the knowledge base around regional integration. Two national review meetings were to be organized to assess the progress of implementation of the action plan to improve selected country’s integration performance against the roadmap. These review meetings should be undertaken in order to understand the effect of policy changes made so as to inform future use of the indices. Additionally, it would be important to follow up with member States who were not part of the 6 pilot countries but who were supported by workshops and consultancies to develop datasets and national profiles in order to determine next steps in the process for improving regional integration performance in those countries.

**Recommendation 3: Integrate gender and other cross-cutting issues into the regional integration indices.** A process should be established to understand how women, youth and other marginalized groups can participate in and benefit from a country’s improvement in regional integration. Once understood, indicators, perhaps within a social dimension, can be established and included in new versions of the regional indices so that member States can identify any gaps or barriers which would need to be addressed to improve performance for these groups.

# 7.0 Lessons Learned

A number of lessons have emerged from the implementation of the DA project over the period 2018 – 2021 that can inform future work to support member States in measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration.

* *Taking the time to choose the right partners produces results*: the identification of the pilot countries in some cases took time to choose the right partners with the right connections and motivations. In the end, this combination was able to produce results.
* *Working as a team builds synergies*: A number of interviewers identified the pairing of international experts with local researchers a key factor for the success of project, as it built synergies, allowed for knowledge to be exchanged, and created learnings.
* *Being timely and opportunistic brings success*: Success comes from being at the right place at the right time with the right product. During the project period, the AfCFTA was being negotiated which created a demand for the ARII and the training/capacity building to use it. With COVID-19, digital trade increased in importance at which point the ECA capitalized and developed a training and research initiative on digital trade regulatory integration in Africa.
* *Collaborative approaches that seek win-win situations add value:* From the outset, the 3 RCs took a collaborative approach that ended up paying dividends. Through this collaboration, they were able to share methodologies, exchange knowledge and present a common front when launching the indices. Collaborations were also built with OECD and JRC-Ispra from which the RCs greatly benefited from their expertise in exchange for access to data sets generated by the project.
* *Changes in government and personnel can delay progress:* Frequent changes in government can set back a project by the need to get new personnel up to speed or dealing with less interested decision-makers. When working with member States, it’s important to build relationships and contingency plans that can overcome this scenario.

# Annex 1 Evaluation Matrix

| Key Questions and Sub-questions | Indicators | Data Collection Methods | Data Sources |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Relevance and Coherence** |
| Is the intervention doing the right things? How well does the intervention fit? |
| * 1. To what extent were the main objective, outcomes, and outputs of the project relevant to identified national/sub-regional/regional strategic needs and priorities, and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and regional development agendas?
 | * Evidence of alignment between project objective, outcomes, and outputs with identified national/sub-regional strategic needs and priorities, to SDGs and regional development agendas
* Perspectives of project proponents, partners and stakeholders on alignment of project goals with strategic needs and priorities
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online surveys
 | * Documents such as national plans and strategies of member states, regional development strategies, key UN SDG documents and development strategies; background studies and situational analysis documentation, project documents
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from participants and stakeholders
 |
| 1.2 How well did the activities and outputs address stakeholders’ needs? If the results were different than the ones planned, have they still contributed to addressing stakeholders’ needs?  | * Evidence of alignment between project activities and outputs with stakeholder needs.
* Perspectives of project participants as to the relevance of project activities and outputs meeting their needs.
* Perspectives of project stakeholders as to the relevance of project activities and outputs meeting their needs.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
* FGDs
 | * Documents such as project plans, progress reports, reports and documents used for seminars, workshops, and trainings, feedback data from activities and trainings, etc.
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from participants and stakeholders
 |
| 1.3 To what extent were the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of outcomes, including the inclusion of gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into trade integration policy and practice?  | * Evidence that project activities and outputs have logically led to the overall goal and outcome of the project.
* Assessed quality of the incorporation of gender, human rights and environmental dimensions into trade integration policy and practice
* Perceptions of project stakeholders (organizers, partners, participants) that project activities and outputs were the right means for achieving expected outcomes
* Perceptions of project stakeholders (organizers, partners, participants) that project activities and outputs incorporated gender, human rights and environmental dimensions.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
* FGDs
 | * Documents such as project plans, progress reports, reports and documents used for seminars, workshops, and trainings, feedback data from activities and trainings, etc.
* Review of Regional Trade Indexes, User’s Guides and Web programs for gender, HR and environmental dimensions
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from participants and stakeholders
 |
| 1.4 To what extent were the activities and outputs of the projects coherent with and supportive of other interventions aimed at regional integration in targeted regions and countries? | * Evidence of congruence between project activities and outputs with other initiatives at the national and regional levels
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the level of congruence between project activities and outputs with other initiatives at the national and regional levels
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as those relating to other development partners working in the same or similar fields, national and regional level plans, and strategies
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| 1.5 How well was the project able to adapt to changing circumstances (i.e., COVID-19, buy-in from Member States, etc.) | * Evidence of ability of the project to adapt to changing circumstances.
* Perceptions of project stakeholders and participants on the ability of the project to adapt to changing circumstances.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project plans, progress reports, justifications for any changes being made
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| **Effectiveness** |
| Is the intervention achieving its objectives? |
| 2.1 To what extent are the objectives of the project being achieved? Were targets met as planned? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of objectives? | * Reported performance against targets for relevant project indicators
* Evidence of any changes taking place in the capacity of targeted countries to measure, monitor and improve performance in regional integration.
* Perceptions of project stakeholders and partners with the ability of the project to achieve expected results including gender, human rights, and environmental dimensions
* Identification of project stakeholders and partners as to the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of results
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, feedback from participants, monitoring reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| 2.2 What was the impact of COVID-19 on project’s activities? What adjustments were made and to what extent did these adjustments contribute to the achievement of expected results and any new priorities of Member States that may have emerged in relation to COVID-19?  | * Examples of programming adaptions and initiatives aimed at addressing the effect of COVID-19 on project outcomes
* Perceptions of project stakeholders on how these adaptions contributed to the achievement of expected results and any new priorities of Member States.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, feedback from participants, monitoring reports, research reports and literature on the effects of COVID-19
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| 2.3 How well did the project manage the identified risks to achieving its intended results? Were there unidentified risks that affected project outcomes? If so, to what extent did they affect project outcomes? | * Evidence of project personnel identifying monitoring and mitigating risks to achieving intended outcomes.
* Perceptions of project staff and stakeholders on the management of identified risks and the emergence of any unidentified risks and their effect on project outcomes.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, monitoring reports, risk registers and reports
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| 2.4 To what extent were project results inclusive for different beneficiary groups and based on the principles of equity, non-discrimination, and accountability? | * Degree to which gender and other disaggregated indicators are contained in project documents, reports, and indexes
* Degree of importance attached to inclusion practices in project documentation and reports
* Perceptions of project personnel, stakeholders, and project participants as to extent project results were inclusive for different beneficiary groups
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
* FGDs
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, feedback from participants, monitoring reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders and participants
 |
| **Efficiency** |
| How well are resources being used? |
| 3.1 Was the project implemented according to plan? If not, was timely corrective action taken where necessary? Was there additional support identified or provided to overcome implementation challenges? Did the implementation of the project make effective use of time and resources to achieve results? Were there other implementation approaches that were likely to have been more economical?  | * Evidence that project resources were well used, according to plan, and delivered in a timely manner.
* Identification of problems in implementation and corrective action, if any, undertaken
* Identification of other implementation approaches, if any, that would have achieved similar results in a more economical manner
* Perceptions of project partners, participants, and other stakeholders as to the efficient use of resources.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, feedback from participants, monitoring reports, statistics
* Budget related documents and expense reports
* Related project documentation and strategies from other interventions
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
* Member State representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders and participants
 |
| 3.2 To what extent and in what ways was the project successful in improving its operational efficiency, i.e., increased usage of integrated planning, monitoring and reporting tools, efficiency of program management systems and tools, etc.? | * Evidence of use of integrated planning, monitoring, and reporting tools.
* Perceptions of project partners and implementers on the efficiency of program management systems and tools
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, monitoring reports, statistics
* Budget related documents and expense reports
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners
 |
| 3.3 To what extent did synergies or complementary efforts within ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA and with partners and other relevant entities create efficiencies in the implementation of the project? To what extent was the work of the project duplicative or supportive of the work of other entities?  | * Evidence of synergies and complementary efforts among the 3 Regional commissions and other partners that created efficiencies in project’s implantation.
* Examples of duplicative or supportive work to that of other entities
* Perceptions of project partners as to the complementary and/or synergistic efforts in implementing the project
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project progress reports, monitoring reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| **Sustainability** |
| Will benefits last? |
| 4.1 Do project beneficiaries and/or member States and/or stakeholders have ownership, capacity, and resources to maintain the activity results after external funding ceases?  | * Evidence of sustainability plans and implementation of these plans
* Examples of resources provided to continue project benefits
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the continuation of project activities.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project sustainability plans, project progress reports
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| 4.2 Did the project contribute to capacity building of local institutions and/or member states to continue to deliver quality services? What are other major factors that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the project? | * Evidence that capacity building of local institutions and member states is sufficient to continue to enable member states to measure, monitor and improve performances in regional integration.
* Identification of factors influencing achievement and/or non-achievement the sustainability of project outcomes
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the capacity of member states to continue project activities.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project sustainability plans, project progress reports
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |
| 4.3 Were there sustainability mechanisms (including environmental sustainability) built into the project design? Were there additional actions that should have been taken to address sustainability? Were any areas of the intervention clearly un-sustainable, and what lessons could be learned from these? Are the beneficiary member States now able to take the results into the next level? Has the project led to identification of such next aims/endeavors? | * Evidence of sustainability mechanisms built into the project design
* Identification of other actions to address the sustainability of results
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders on the sustainability or non-sustainability of interventions, lessons learned, and identification of next steps.
 | * Document review
* KIIs
 | * Documents such as project sustainability plans, project progress reports
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
 |
| **Cross-cutting Issues** |
| Did the intervention address gender, human rights, disability inclusion and innovation in its activities and results? |
| 5.1 To what extent was gender incorporated into the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation practices of the project, as well as the results achieved?  | * Evidence of gender incorporated in the project from its design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the extent of gender considerations in the project
 | * Document review
* KIIs
 | * Documents such as project plans, project progress reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
 |
| 5.2 To what extent were issues of human rights and disability inclusion incorporated into the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation practices of the project, as well as the results achieved? | * Evidence of human rights and disability inclusion incorporated in the project from its design, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the extent of human rights and disability inclusion considerations in the project
 | * Document review
* KIIs
 | * Documents such as project plans, project progress reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
 |
| * 1. To what extent did the project respond to and affected the rights, needs and interests of different stakeholders, including women, men, youth, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups?
 | * Evidence that the project responded to and affected the rights, needs and interests of different stakeholders, including women, men, youth, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups.
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the extent to which the project responded and affected the rights, needs, interests of these stakeholders
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project plans, project progress reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders and project participants
 |
| * 1. What innovative aspects of the project (addressing new topics or using new means of delivery or a combination thereof) proved successful?
 | * Identification of the innovations used in the project
* Evidence of innovations used in the project and the extent of their success
* Perceptions of project partners and stakeholders as to the extent to which innovations used in the project were successful
 | * Document review
* KIIs
* Online survey
 | * Documents such as project plans, project progress reports, statistics
* ECA, ESCWA, ESCAP personnel
* Representatives of UN partners and other stakeholders
* Member State Representatives
* Survey Responses from stakeholders
 |

# Annex 2 : Documents Reviewed

UN Development Account Evaluation Framework, October 2019, [https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2256\_1571321768\_UN%20DA%20Evaluation%20Framework%20(Final).pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/da/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/da-project-management-documents/2256_1571321768_UN%20DA%20Evaluation%20Framework%20%28Final%29.pdf)

Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully, OECD, March 2021, <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/applying-evaluation-criteria-thoughtfully_543e84ed-en>

2018 progress report FOR DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT project #1819X

2019 progress report FOR DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT project #1819X

2020 progress report FOR DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT project #1819X

2021 progress report FOR DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT project #1819X

Annex 2 - EXTENSION REQUESTS FOR DA PROJECTS

PROJECT DOCUMENT 11TH TRANCHE OF THE DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT, 1819\_\_Measuring, monitoring and improving performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP regions

Regional Integration for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific: ESCAP Digital and Sustainable Regional Integration Index and Indicator Framework, DigiSRII 1.0

Regional Integration Analyzer, ESCAP

Africa Regional Integration Index Platform, ECA, 2019

ARII 2019 User Guide

Africa Regional Integration Index Report 2019

Arab Trade Gateway, ESCWA, 2022

Morocco: Towards a successful regional and international integration, ESCWA, 2022

User Guide Arab Economic Integration System of Indices, Updated 19 January 2021

Terms of Reference for Terminal evaluation Measuring, monitoring, and improving performance in regional integration within ECA, ESCWA and ESCAP regions (DA 11th Tranche Project)

Regional integration at the World Bank <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration>

Asia Regional Integration Center, Tracking Asian Integration, <https://aric.adb.org/>

Lesotho Digital Economy Diagnostic, February 2020, World Bank

Regional Integration and the Digital Economy: Workshop on Asia-Pacific Regional Integration: Measuring, Monitoring and Improving Performance for Sustainable Development, 22-23 April, Bangkok

National Action Plan: Promoting Pakistan’s Digital Trade Integration in the Asia-Pacific Region, ESCAP, 2021

National Study on Digital Trade Integration of Pakistan, ESCAP, 2021

Regional Integration and Cooperation of Pakistan in Health-related Sector, ESCAP, 2021

Digital Trade Integration of the Philippines with Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP, 2021

National Action Plan Promoting the Philippines’s Digital Trade Integration in the Asia-Pacific Region, ESCAP, 2021

Regional Integration and Cooperation of Philippines in Health-related Sectors, ESCAP, 2021

Paving the Road to the Philippine’s Digital integration with the Asia-Pacific, Public Webinar, ESCAP, 2021

INTEGRATION DES REGLEMENTATIONS RELATIVES AU COMMERCE NUMERIQUE PROFIL PAYS, REPUBLIQUE DE MADAGASCAR

# Annex 3: Interviews Conducted

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Organization** |
|  Simon Mevel | UNECA |
| Inam Ullah | UNECA |
| Witada Anukoonwattaka | UNESCAP |
| Yann Duval | UNESCAP |
| Mr. Mohamed Chemingui  | UNESCWA |
|  Layale Bassil  | Independent Consultant, Beirut |
| Cissy Namuddu Settumba Kiyaga  | Buganda Land Board, UGANDA  |
| Ms. Mahlet Girma  | ATPC, RITD, ECA, BURKINA FASO |
| Mr. Kato Kimbugwe | Regional Consultant Rwanda |
| Mr. Geoffroy Guepie  | ATPC, RITD, ECA France |
| Mr. Janos Ferencz  | OECD France |
| Ms. Martina Francesca Ferracane  | European University Institute (**EUI**) & Independent consultant  |
| Mr. TALENT NESONGANO  | Independent Consultant Lesotho |
| Mr. Ibrahim Saif | Independent Consultant, Jordan |
| Mr. Nabil Jedlane | Independent Consultant, Morocco |
| Mr. Nasser Saidi | Independent Consultant, Lebanon |
| Mr. Mouawia Atiat  | Head of Trade Policy Division, Jordan |
| Mr. Pervez Iftikhar | Member Prime Minister's Taskforce on IT and Telcom, Pakistan |
| Mr. Ahmed Qadir | Director General, Competition Commission of Pakistan |
| Mr. Faheem Sardar | Head of Policy (NSD), Prime Minister Office, Pakistan |
| Aadil Nakhoda | Pakistan |
| Maaz Javed | SPDI, Pakistan |
| Vaqar Ahmed | SDPI, Pakistan |
| Francis Mark Quimba | Philippines |
| Anthony A. Abad | CEO-TradeAdvisors, Philippines |

1. ECA is the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, ESCAP is the United Nations Social and Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and ESCWA is the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These include [*OECD-DAC Evaluation Standards*](https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf)and[*UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation*](https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The African Continental Free Trade Area – Economic and Distributional Effects; World Bank Group, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The two indicators are “Average intraregional share of female population with financial institution or mobile money account” and “Average intraregional share of female population that use Internet for online purchase” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Targets 5a, 5b and 5c respectively SDG5; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ESCLAC has expressed strong interest in supporting a regional integration index for Latin America and the Caribbean [↑](#footnote-ref-7)