Final Independent Evaluation: Helping least developed countries (LDCs) pursue structural economic progress toward and beyond graduation (SB-009659/1819F)
(May 2018 to July 31, 2022)

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FinalReport

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Commissioned by:
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Intervention Countries:

- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Myanmar
- Vanuatu

Acknowledgements

Disclaimer

Table of Contents

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CDP	United Nations Committee for Development Policy
CDPMO	Capacity Development Programme Management Office
EAPD	Economic Analysis and Policy Division
EOG	Evaluation Oversight Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
iGRAD	Sustainable Graduation Support Facility
ITC	International Trade Centre
LDC	Least developed country
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NSDEP	National Socio-economic Development Plan (5years)
PDR	People's Democratic Republic
PPP	Public Private Partnership
STS	Smooth transition strategy
ToC	Theory of Change
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNOHRLLS	United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States
UNRCO	UN Resident Coordinator's Office
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Executive Summary

Overview

The project under evaluation was approved under the 11th Tranche of the United Nations Development Account in 2017 for implementation over the duration, May 2018 to December 2021, and in 2021 extended to July 31, 2022. The project aimed to help five least developed countries (LDCs): Bangladesh; Bhutan; Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR); Myanmar; and Vanuatu enhance their ability to achieve structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status.

Purpose

The primary objective of the evaluation is to undertake an independent assessment of the expected accomplishments of the project and to determine the extent to which the project was relevant, efficient, effective, achieved its expected impact, and whether the results of the project are likely to be sustained now that the project has ended.

The primary users of the evaluation will be the two project partners (UNDESA and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development - UNCTAD), and the national stakeholders - government officials, private sector, civil society, development and trading partners from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao PDR, and Vanuatu in the four beneficiary countries. More broadly the evaluation will be of value to the UNDESA/Capacity Development Programme Management Office (CDPMO), and other key UN agencies that have played an important role in the implementation of the programme (including United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), relevant UN Resident Coordination Offices, and United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLLS).

Approach

As set out in the Evaluation Plan, the evaluator conducted a mixed-methods approach (done remotely), using key informant interviews (KIIs), supported by a review of extensive project documentation, and the distribution of an e-Survey. In total, 16 informants were interviewed, 36 informants participated in on-line group discussions (one was held with colleagues from Bangladesh, two were held with colleagues from Bhutan, and one was held with colleagues from Lao PDR). 19 respondents from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Lao PDR completed the e-Survey.

Key Findings

Relevance: Project objectives align with the needs of the beneficiary countries, and they appreciate the quality and usefulness of the project deliverables. However, it is not just the support provided in terms of analytical assessments (such as the Vulnerability Profiles and the Impact Assessments) and the preparation of the smooth transition strategies that have been of value but also the additional support provided (such as supporting the PPP initiative in Vanuatu, organising South-South collaboration events, and producing a range of bi-products tailored to specific needs in each of the beneficiary countries).

Effectiveness: Choice of activities has been appropriate in light of objectives. The project has been delivered in a highly consultative manner, enhanced further through follow-up consultations to ensure beneficiary countries could use and implement project outputs. The project is seen to have enhanced capacity by encouraging 'learning by doing' (e.g. collaborating with countries to prepare the Vulnerability Profiles and the ex-ante assessments) and through targeted workshops and training (such as on the ePing platform which has been of considerable help to project recipients and LDCs in general understand and respond to new export-related requirements issued by trading partners). Peer-to-peer exchanges were seen to be highly effective in helping participants discuss common challenges of graduation and identify pathways to address them

collaboratively. Activities have promoted inclusiveness by engaging with stakeholders at both the national and at local/ provincial level.

Efficiency: The project delivered as expected, although the time frame had to be extended by 6 months to accommodate the challenges posed by COVID-19. Activities that were seen to be the most efficient from the beneficiary country point of view, included in-person technical assistance, analytical work which took familiar issues but went much deeper so that beneficiary countries understood the underlying structural issues; practical guidelines, and the peer-to-peer exchanges. The project adapted, and was responsive, to the challenges posed by COVID-19. COVID-19 also allowed the project an opportunity to innovate and explore new approaches to implement project activities. For instance, the project adapted and improved its online approach to ePing training, and also developed an ePing smartphone application in response to requests and feedback received from beneficiary countries and other key stakeholders. This response by the project is a good illustration of how the project met its obligations with respect to the objective specified in the original project design document that 'based on inputs received from users in participating countries, the web-based ePing toolkit will be improved'. The co-implementation between UNDESA and UNCTAD enabled greater efficiency by the latter stages of the project with change in project personnel. Several factors paved the way for stronger coordination including the use of the Resident Coordinators Office in each beneficiary country, and through regular project meetings and developing a clearer understanding of roles within the project.

Sustainability: Project partners have managed to build on earlier successes to maintain continuity with respect to graduation from LDC status, and have thereby taken visible actions to enhance sustainability. For instance, the sustainability of the capacity developed has been enhanced through the utilisation of impact assessments (IAs) and vulnerability profiles (VPs) to inform a country's preparation for graduation by reflecting findings from the analytical work in graduation dialogues, national smooth transition strategies, national development strategies, policies and planning, and budgeting and financing measures. The successful pilot of iGRAD is also critical to this process, but as is the work the project has done to build relevant capacity and raise awareness amongst policy makers as to the next critical steps to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

Gender and Human Rights: As part of wider UN efforts mainstreaming has become more of a focus as the project progressed. Issues pertaining to gender and human rights were not specifically required by Development Account Guidelines, thus not incorporated into the original design of the project. Nevertheless, the project has ensured that gender and human rights issues permeate the project, although they are not always explicitly mentioned. Gender aspects do appear in several of the studies undertaken, especially IAs and VPs. In the case of human rights, economic and social human rights such as decent living, education, health and their related rights lie at the very core of the work of the project, within all analytical outputs and to the technical assistance given. Moreover, the STS guidelines, for instance, prepared by the project acknowledge the importance of gender and human rights, and outline how these concerns need to be considered during STS preparation and subsequent implementation.

Impact: The project has contributed to the incorporation of policies and smooth transition measures aimed at mitigating vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents and the formulation of smooth transition strategies in each of the beneficiary countries. The project has been working with each beneficiary country and other graduating countries to help mitigate vulnerability and build resilience in the formulation of the respective smooth transition strategies. Moreover, counterparts in each government having demonstrated ownership of mainstreaming resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policymaking - not only through formulating policy to support STSs, but through, for instance, establishing working groups and other collaborative mechanisms to drive the STS implementation process.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion is that the project not only achieved what it set out to achieve but delivered more than was initially planned. Factors for the project's success include use of highly competent partners and cooperative operational activities. The project has contributed to the development of smooth transition strategies and has supported efforts for the respective strategies to be adopted into national development plans and implementation into budgetary frameworks. By doing this, and through other efforts, the project has enhanced the sustainability of its work.

Lack of coordination between UNCTAD and UNDESA in terms of how they implemented activities had initially been a challenge for the project, but this has been addressed to ensure a far more integrated approach to delivery. The project was effective in adapting and responding to COVID-19, but the pandemic did curtail many of the face-to-face activities. Whilst the project continued to share knowledge during the pandemic, there remains a preference for in-person events.

The project has undoubtedly been of tremendous value, but there is also a recognition that additional time and investment is required to realise what is still needed to ensure a smooth transition toward and beyond graduation from LDC status. There remains a high demand for this type of support, and as indicated by beneficiary countries will need ongoing in-person support with implementing their respective smooth transition strategies. It will be important to ensure that all key stakeholders are made fully aware of what UNDESA, UNCTAD, and other UN entities will be doing in the future to build on the success of this project.

Recommendations

Given the key findings and conclusions of this evaluation that the project delivered and achieved more than was initially planned through the highly competent partners and cooperative operational activities, only 3 recommendations are made, namely:

For CDPMO:

1) Ensure that DA Project guidelines provide greater clarity on how priority cross-cutting issues (such as gender, human rights, and climate change) can be integrated into project outcome and output indicators and applied in implementation plans and subsequent monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

2) Ensure that DA Project guidelines provide greater clarity with regards to coordination and collaboration between different UN agencies to create synergy and ensure effective division of labour from the outset.

For Project Implementing Agencies (UNDESA/ UNCTAD):

3) Ensure that all key stakeholders are made fully aware of what UNDESA, UNCTAD, and other UN entities will be doing in the future to build on the success of this project, and how they can access this type of support in the future. Further support is still required in line with the types of support already provided, including:

- relevant advisory services to policy makers, including responding to the findings of Impact Assessments and Vulnerability Profiles;
- Graduation support via iGRAD;
- enacting and monitoring implementation of smooth transition strategies; and
- staying abreast of changing international trade requirements through ePING.

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of Project

The project (SB-009659-1819F) under evaluation was approved under the 11th Tranche of the United Nations Development Account in 2017 for implementation over the duration, May 2018 to December 2021, and in 2021 extended to July 31, 2022. The project, conducted in partnership between UNDESA and the UNCTAD, built on earlier Development Account capacity-building projects to deliver continued support for structural transformation during and after LDC graduation.

The project aimed to help five least developed countries (LDCs): Bangladesh; Bhutan; Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR); Myanmar; and Vanuatu[1] enhance their ability to achieve structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status. The initial total budget was $800,000 but reduced to $745,729 in 2021, to allow for reallocation of funds towards new COVID-response projects, required by the Development Account. The project was operationally completed on June 30, 2022.

1.2. Background of the evaluation

With the project having ended in June 2022, this independent assessment of the project will determine the extent to which the expected accomplishments of the project have been achieved, and determine the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation was undertaken from 30 August until 30 October 2022.

1.3. Purpose and primary users of the evaluation

The evaluation has both summative and formative purposes. The summative element of the review will need to determine and explain how the program has operated since May 2018, identifying the extent and quality of the program's contribution to structural changes introduced by beneficiary countries toward and beyond graduation from LDC status. The formative element of the evaluation will need to set out the lessons learnt to date that the project offers for optimising its contribution going forward, and in so doing the evaluation will make feasible and practicable recommendations related to improving the nature of this type of project in the future, and ultimately contributing to improved structural progress for LDC's in the future.

The primary users of the evaluation will be the two project partners (UNDESA and UNCTAD), and members of the EOG[2] from the four beneficiary countries. More broadly the evaluation will be of value to the UNDESA/Capacity Development Programme Management Office (CDPMO), and other key UN agencies that have played an important role in the implementation of the program (including ESCAP, relevant UN Resident Coordination Offices, and UNOHRLLS).

1.4. Scope, Criteria and Area of Focus

The scope of the independent evaluation includes:

- Meetings (online) with the Evaluation Oversight Group (EOG) comprising of a key government stakeholder from each of the five project countries (excluding Myanmar) to promote recipient countries' direct and strategic engagement and shared ownership of the project results.
- A desk review of project documents.

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[1] Vanuatu graduated in December 2020. Bhutan is scheduled to graduate in 2023, Bangladesh and Lao PDR are scheduled to graduate in 2026. Since the coup d'état in Myanmar, February 2021, the project has not worked there due to UN sanctions.

[2] The role of the EOG has been to provide an important holistic country perspective (including facilitating access to key stakeholders within each of the beneficiary countries). Sharing the evaluation findings with the EOG demonstrates the project's commitment to transparency and accountability.

- Interviews with key individuals from the UN implementing organizations, from the beneficiary countries (excluding Myanmar) and other project stakeholders.

The evaluation assessed the extent to which the project's aim to help the five LDCs from the Asia-Pacific region increase their chances of achieving structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status was achieved. In doing so, the following criteria were applied:

Criteria	Area of focus
Relevance	• Assess the relevance and coherence of the project's design regarding country needs and how the project is perceived and valued by the target country and groups. • Ascertain the significance of the contributions made by the project to beneficiary countries, governments, institutions, individual and other key stakeholders. This component should include an assessment of the quantity, quality and usefulness of the activities and outcomes
Effectiveness	• The extent to which the project accomplishments have been fulfilled by the end of the project implementation period, measured by the indicators of achievement provided in the project document. • Analyse if concrete results were delivered, countries capacities enhanced, and countries continue to use the tools and further develop capacities for evidence-based and data driven policy and decision-making. • Analyse how the project activities contributed to the outcomes and in turn resulted in the two main project accomplishments and subsequent impact on the intended beneficiaries. • Analyze the implementation strategies of the project with regard to their potential effectiveness in achieving the project outcomes and impacts, gender balance, and unexpected results and factors affecting project implementation (positively and negatively).
Efficiency	• Assess the overall value of the project activities and outcomes in relation to the resources expended, including, if possible, the added value by additional resources or substantive contributions, i.e., those beyond the project's original work plan and budget. • How efficient was the project in using the financial and human resources provided to implement planned activities and achieve the target outcomes within the set workplan/timelines and below budget or achieve more with the same resources? • How efficiently did the project overcome operational challenges such as COVID-19 or use it as an opportunity to innovate and explore new approaches to project implementation? • To what extent have the project's governance and management structures and processes enabled, or hindered, the delivery of its activities? (this is particularly important in the context of the project to look into what worked and what did not in co-implementing the project between UNDESA and UNCTAD as in the areas of collaboration, coordination, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and advocacy, etc.)?
Sustainability	• Assess the extent to which the benefits/results/activities will continue after the project has come to an end, from the perspective of beneficiary countries, individuals, institutions and other key stakeholders. • How well did the project partners/implementers maximize synergies with earlier work to maintain continuity as well as linkages to emerging and changing needs of the countries?
Gender and human rights perspectives	• To what extent have gender & human rights concerns been integrated into this project's design and implementation? • To what extent have UNDESA and UNCTAD promoted and encouraged gender sensitive approaches and gender inclusive participation in the project activities?

In addition, the evaluation identified lessons learned, good practices and made recommendations for key stakeholders to draw on to improve programming in the future.

2. Description of the Intervention

2.1. Background

The project, was conducted in partnership between UNDESA and UNCTAD, built on earlier Development Account capacity-building projects to deliver continued support for structural transformation during and after LDC graduation. It aimed to help five least developed countries (LDCs): Bangladesh; Bhutan; Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR); Myanmar; and Vanuatu enhance their ability to achieve structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status.

The project aimed to support the beneficiary countries through targeted interventions, dependent on where the country was in terms of the graduation process. Thus the support included:

- country-specific analytical material on the implications of LDC graduation; vulnerability and resilience-building; and smooth transition strategies;
- relevant advisory services to policy makers; and
- actions to help project recipients and LDCs in general understand and use the export-related new requirements issued by trading partners.

2.2. Project objectives and expected accomplishments

By the end of the project, two main accomplishments were expected: (i) a strengthened capacity of government officials to mainstream resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policy-making; and (ii) improved capacity in LDCs, to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports.

Accordingly, the project should result in targeted beneficiaries - key stakeholders including selected government officials within the ministries associated with LDC graduation and its implications such as Foreign Affairs, Planning, Finance, Trade and Commerce having enhanced capacities specifically: (i) better understanding of the implications of graduation from LDC status; (ii) incorporating policies aimed at mitigating vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents; (iii) formulating and enacting smooth transition strategies; and (iv) staying abreast with changing international trade requirements.

2.3. Project strategies and key activities

The project aimed to achieve these accomplishments through the provision of the types of activities listed in the table below

Table 1: Key activities implemented by the project, per expected achievement

Expected Achievement	Activity Cluster	Activities
EA1. Strengthened capacity, among government officials in recipient countries, to mainstream resilience-building, and smooth transition strategies into national policy-making.	A1. Preparation of Country-Specific Studies	A1.1. Preparation of three vulnerability profiles and three ex-ante impact assessments for the benefit of Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar
		Additional Activities due to CDP decision to pilot graduation assessments in two countries -
		A1.2 Preparation of two smooth transition strategies (STS) for the benefit of Bhutan and Vanuatu
	A2. National and Regional Workshops	A2.1 National Workshops
		A2.2. Regional Workshops

Expected Achievement	Activity Cluster	Activities
EA2. Improved capacity in LDCs, to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports	A3. Product Information	A3.1 Training and Promotional Materials
		A3.2 National Workshops
		A3.3. Regional Workshops

Project implementation mid-way through the project duration, required modifications due to the onset of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its socio-economic impact on both developed and developing countries, UNDESA and UNCTAD explored innovative ways to help the five project target countries address the severe disruption to societies and economies, through the project activities and within the broad framework of the project outcomes. Fortunately, all country-specific analytical material on the implications of LDC graduation such as the impact assessments and vulnerability profiles for Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar, and smooth transition strategies for Vanuatu and Bhutan had been delivered and relevant advisory services to policy makers provided. What remained were in-country national and regional workshops and country level training in understanding and using the export-related new requirements issued by trading partners for Bangladesh and Vanuatu. Project activities remained relevant but for effectiveness and efficiency purposes, delivery modalities were adjusted by UNDESA and UNCTAD to reflect governments' redirection of government funds and human resources, government functionality and mobility due to border closures and lockdowns, country responses to COVID-19 and to simultaneously maintain graduation momentum.

A framework for a new generation of vulnerability profiles was prepared by UNCTAD in 2020 to broaden the scope of previous vulnerability profiles and used to enhance the vulnerability profiles for Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar that also reflected the implications of COVID-19. An updated and revised white paper was prepared by UNCTAD, to serve as the basis for the preparation of a smooth transition strategy (STS) by Bhutan. UNDESA produced an STS Guidance Note made available online (LDC Portal) to help graduating countries including non-project target countries such as Angola and Sao Tome Principe prepare their STS.

UNDESA support to Vanuatu was scaled up to include implementation of their STS taking into consideration COVID-19 implications. As part of the upscaling, a leadershift dialogue was designed and co-facilitated by UNDESA and two experts from the Pacific to introduce new leadership concepts and shifts in resilient policymaking as a graduated country in the face of multiple adversities, global economic uncertainties in a post-COVID environment. Training material on ePing by UNDESA under a tripartite cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Trade Centre (ITC), was modified and delivered virtually rather than in-person for Bangladesh, Bhutan and Vanuatu. Similarly, given the impossibility of organizing in-country validation workshops, UNCTAD organized virtual workshops with national stakeholders in Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Gender dimensions in a COVID environment were also considered in the research / analytical work and in delivering virtual training.

2.4. Logic Model/ Theory of Change

Whilst a logic model or Theory of Change (ToC) does not exist for the project, for the purposes of this evaluation a Theory of Change has been inferred from project documents (see **Annex 2** for details). The inferred ToC serves multiple purposes in this evaluation:

- It maps the logical chain of how the interventions implemented by the project lead to the specific change the project is expected to contribute to;
- It helps to identify the subset of issues on which the evaluation can usefully focus; and
- It also is the basis for articulating key assumptions (specified below) which can be tested in the evaluation.

The ToC is underpinned by a set of critical assumptions. These assumptions articulate the necessary and sufficient conditions which need to be met to achieve the impact that the project is expected to achieve.

Table 2: Key Assumptions

Level in the ToC	Key Assumptions
Inputs to Activities	There will be continued support and commitment by the LDCs to support interventions provided by the project
	Available funding is sufficient to implement all elements of the project
	Key Ministries within each of the LDCs have the resources and motivation to engage with the project
	Relevant stakeholders have or will develop adequate capacity to implement all elements that the project has introduced
Activities to Outputs	Key ministries in the LDCs are keen to exchange information and expertise together on relevant policy issues related to structural transformation.
	Key ministries are keen to engage in capacity building initiatives led by the project
	There is sufficient technical assistance to support and facilitate interventions planned by the project.
	Key ministries have the capacity to incorporate policies and formulate relevant strategies supported by the project
Outputs to Outcomes	There is the political will to mainstream relevant strategies into national policy-making
	There is the political will to access and share applicable information to promote exports
	There is the political will to use lessons learnt and adopt good practice highlighted by the project
Outcomes to Impact	Awareness and capacity to implement relevant policies related to graduation

2.5. Beneficiaries and target countries

The project aimed to help five least developed countries (LDCs): Bangladesh; Bhutan; Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR); Myanmar; and Vanuatu enhance their ability to achieve structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status. The targeted beneficiaries in each country included government officials, private sector, civil society, and development and trading partners.

2.6. Key partners and other stakeholders

Synergies across UNDESA and UNCTAD specific activities and with other UNDESA and ESCAP projects was a key feature of the project, combining or leveraging other institutional, human, technical and financial resources and reducing the burden on government officials. The project also drew on considerable support from ESCAP, relevant UN Resident Coordination Offices, and UNOHRLLS.

2.7. Resources

Project Total Budget was reduced from $800,000 (initial approval) to $745,729 due to organizational decision to reallocate funds to response for COVID-19. UNDESA share increased by 3% from $499,600 to $515,600 due to an increased budget for project terminal evaluation. UNCTAD share of the total budget decreased by 23% from $300,400 to $230,129.

Project duration was extended from December 31, 2021 to July 31, 2022 to allow UNDESA and UNCTAD to utilize unspent funds due to cancelled national and regional workshops. At the time of the evaluation 79% of

the total budget had been spent, UNDESA had expended 82% of its allocation and UNCTAD 70%, as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1:Budget and expenditure by agency
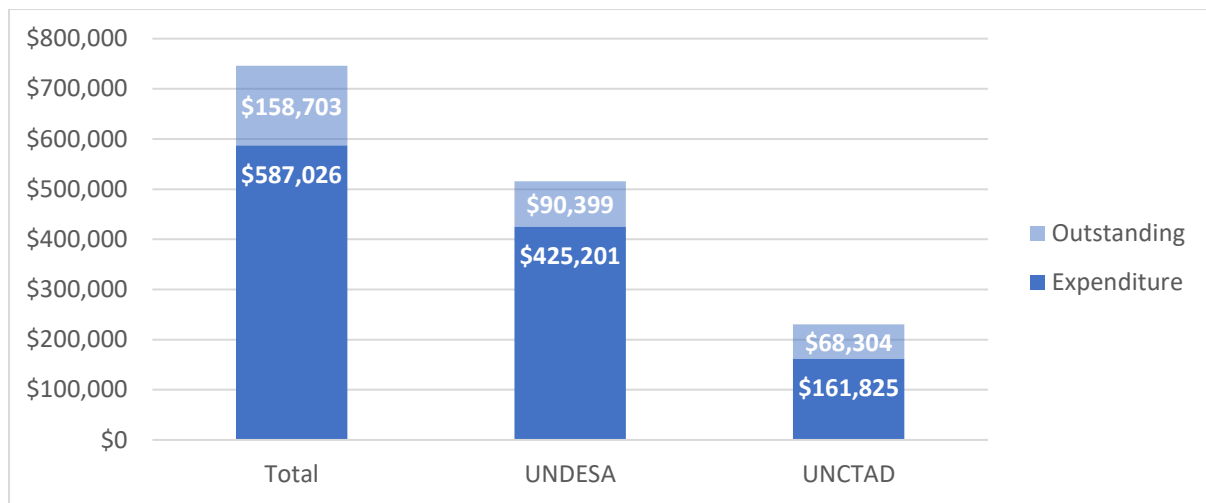
3. Evaluation Objectives, Scope and Questions

3.1. Objective and purpose

The primary objective of the evaluation is to undertake an independent assessment of the expected accomplishments of the project and to determine the extent to which the project was relevant, efficient, effective, achieved its expected impact, and whether the results of the project are likely to be sustained now that the project has ended.

The main purpose of the evaluation is two-fold:

- accountability for results – to prove whether the project has achieved what it set out to achieve for selected stakeholders and target countries;
- learning – to determine what worked, what did not work, what could be improved in future project design and to draw on lessons learned that could improve the overall quality and strategic focus of future programming and interventions

3.2. Scope, evaluation criteria and questions

The scope of the evaluation covers all activities conducted by the project between the start of implementation in May 2018 until the project completed its operations on 31 July 2022. The evaluation questions, including sub-questions are listed in the table below, which also highlights how the evaluation matrix corresponds to specific UN evaluation criteria.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-questions
Relevance	EQ 1. To what extent is the project addressing the needs of the beneficiary countries and is perceived to be of value?	1.1. Are the objectives of project still relevant to needs of the beneficiary countries?
		1.2. Is the project seen to be of value to the beneficiary countries?
Effectiveness	EQ 2: To what extent is the project doing the right activities?	2.1. Has the choice of activities by the project been appropriate in the light of the overall objectives?
		2.2. Were project activities inclusive, and were they implemented in an inclusive way?
		2.3. Are there activities the project should have implemented but did not?
Efficiency	EQ 3: To what extent is the project doing things right?	3.1. Which activities have worked best and what are the lessons to be drawn from positive experiences?
		3.2. To what extent did the project deliver value for money?
		3.3. How has the program adapted to the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?
		3.4. Has the project's governance structure been appropriate to facilitating project strategic intervention, implementation and progress towards results and objectives?

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Sub-questions
Sustainability	EQ 4: To what extent will the benefits of the project be sustained?	4.1. To what extent did the project partners/implementers maximize synergies with earlier work to maintain continuity as well as linkages to emerging and changing needs of the countries?
		4.2. Is it reasonable to expect that the project's activities may have an effect, or a further effect, on graduation from LDC status by the beneficiary countries in the longer term?
Gender and Human Rights	EQ 5: To what extent have gender & human rights concerns been integrated into this project's design and implementation?	5.1. To what extent have UNDESA and UNCTAD promoted and encouraged gender sensitive approaches and gender inclusive participation in the project activities?
		5.2. Is the proportion of the portfolio of activities that addresses gender and human rights issues consistent with expectation at this stage of implementation?
Impact	EQ 6: To what extent did the project contribute to beneficiary countries transitioning from LDC status?	6.1. To what extent did the project strengthen government to mainstream resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policy-making?
		6.2. To what extent did the project improve capacity to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports?

4. Methodology

4.1. Methodological approach and rationale

As set out in the Evaluation Plan, the evaluator conducted a mixed-methods approach (done remotely), using key informant interviews (KIIs), supported by a review of extensive project documentation, and the distribution of an e-Survey. In total, 16 informants were interviewed, 36 informants participated in on-line group discussions (one was held with colleagues from Bangladesh, two were held with colleagues from Bhutan, and one was held with colleagues from Lao PDR) (See Annex 5 for details). 19 respondents from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Laos PDR completed the e-Survey.

The main methods of data collection are outlined in the table below. The choice of data collection methods and some of the detailed approaches have been guided by the strategic nature of the evaluation, the priority areas highlighted in the inception phase, the extent to which data is readily available and the limitations imposed by the timeframe for the evaluation.

Table 4.1 Overview of different methods and instruments

Instrument	Purpose	Description
Document review and synthesis	The evaluation will use existing documents and data as a starting point, so that other methods, including interviews and the survey can focus on adding to what is already known. The synthesis of evaluations and other relevant documentation is a key element of this approach and has been started during the inception phase so as to inform all the main aspects of this evaluation design.	See Annex 2 for a list of documents already received
Interviews	Key informant interviews (KII) are an important way of deepening the understanding derived from documentary sources, triangulating findings, and understanding organizational dynamics. Interviews were held with key individuals from the UN implementing organizations, from the beneficiary countries (excluding Myanmar) and other project stakeholders. Wherever possible interviews will be done in relevant and appropriate groups	Annex 5 provides the list of people interviewed
e-Survey	An online survey was distributed to relevant government officials from the beneficiary countries, most directly engaged with project. The survey ensures further triangulation of findings from the document review and interviews.	See Annex 6 for data from the survey

The list of key informants, and documents reviewed can be found in the Annex 5.

4.2. Sampling strategy for qualitative and quantitative data collection methods

The nature of this evaluation did not require a sampling strategy, for the simple reason that all of four beneficiary countries were invited to participate in the evaluation. It was therefore not necessary to make any choice about who should participate and why they were selected to participate. The approach used to identify participants followed two distinct, but nevertheless similar methods:

- At UN entity level – UNDESA kindly identified all the key entities it had worked with, and all were approached for interviews.
- At beneficiary country level – the EOG representatives played a critical and important role in the identification of key informants.

For the eSurvey – each EOG representative provided a list of survey respondents (key government officials who had participated in project activities, from across multiple government Ministries). Each person on the lists provided by the EOG representatives was then sent a survey link and invited to complete the survey. For the online consultation – again each EOG representative provided a list of key informants who had played a key role in project activities. Each person named on the online meeting list was invited to take part in the online consultation.

4.3. Integration of gender and human rights perspectives into data collection and analysis

The evaluator's approach to integrating both gender and human rights perspectives can be seen in the approach taken in conducting this evaluation and the issues that were examined in the evaluation. The review methodology mainstreamed both gender and human rights into the processes and approach for planning the evaluation (as spelt out in the Inception Report and listed in the Evaluation Matrix). In addition, the evaluation explicitly examined the extent to which the project integrated both a gender and a human rights perspective into its activities. A gender-equality responsive, and one that integrates human rights, means that the evaluation was conducted in a participatory and inclusive manner, showing respect to all stakeholders. The evaluation also ensured, within the tight timelines for the evaluation, that a wide range of stakeholders were consulted throughout the duration of the assignment.

As the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines on integrating gender equality and human rights in an evaluation highlight, understanding barriers to participation that may impede certain groups is a critical step towards understanding constraints and challenges that may arise in the process and seeking alternative ways to ensure inclusion (**Error! Reference source not found.**, p. 46). Such barriers may include time, place, accessibility, as well as means of communications and the ability to participate remotely in the review process. These aspects were carefully considered when preparing for the interviews on a case-by-case basis and suitable ways were sought to ensure inclusive participation as much as possible (including by ensuring that participants also had an opportunity to complete the e-Survey if they could not attend the group discussions). The evaluator also worked with EOG members from each country to understand barriers to participation and to ensure that those who wanted to participate in the evaluation were given an opportunity to share their views.

4.4. Limitations

Limitations faced during the evaluation were primarily related to the tight schedule and the remote nature of the evaluation. Timing of the fieldwork created challenges due to several key informants being unavailable due to other commitments. The evaluator mitigated these limitations using multiple approaches to gathering evidence (typically respondents had the opportunity to participate in an interview, complete a survey, and take part in a focus group). Whilst there were instances when respondents were not available for interviews, this did not happen often, and most interviews were conducted as scheduled. Of the four beneficiary countries, Vanuatu, despite agreeing to be a member of the EOG and to participate in the evaluation was the only country that did not participate actively in the evaluation. Nevertheless, the project was able to supply many different reports and other documentation which provided sufficient evidence to corroborate findings related to the support provided by the project to Vanuatu.

5. Findings

The evaluation findings and the evidence to substantiate them are presented below. They are structured as a response to each key evaluation question in turn. In addition, the evaluator has assessed each of the evaluation criteria using the following scoring matrix.

	Satisfactory rating (4, 5 and 6)		*Less than satisfactory rating (1, 2 and 3)*
6	**Very good**; performance was of a very high quality, project delivered what was expected under this criterion	**3**	**Less than adequate quality**; on balance the quality was unsatisfactory, and/or the project failed to deliver in at least one major area under this criterion
5	**Good**; performance was of a high quality, project delivered almost all of what was expected under this criterion	**2**	**Poor quality**; the quality does not meet what was expected in several areas of what was delivered under this criterion
4	**Adequat**e; on balance the quality was appropriate, there were no major failures in delivering what was expected under this criterion	**1**	**Very poor quality**; the project needs a major overhaul under this criterion

5.1. EQ 1. To what extent is the project addressing the needs of the beneficiary countries and is perceived to be of value?

Project objectives align with the needs of the beneficiary countries. The two expected achievements of the project (i.e. strengthening capacity to mainstream resilience – building and STS into national policy making, and to improve capacity to access and share export market information) speak to the essence of graduation from LDC status. To determine the needs of what is required to ensure each beneficiary country moves toward and beyond graduation the project conducted extensive consultations at the outset with relevant national authorities in each of the beneficiary countries (e.g. working closely with the core ministerial group established by the Economic Relations Department of the Ministry of Finance in Bangladesh).

Beneficiary countries appreciate the quality and usefulness of the project deliverables. Graduation from LDC category is a clearly demarcated process, within which there is a prescribed set of sequential steps a beneficiary country follows. Key steps within this process include UNCTAD preparing a vulnerability profile of the beneficiary country, UNDESA providing and ex ante assessment (and since 2019 these are being consolidated into a single graduation assessment report), and work to prepare and then finalise a smooth transition strategy. As noted below (Table 2) the project has provided considerable support for all these steps, which have been highly appreciated by the beneficiary countries (Figure 2). Beneficiary countries also noted that the project has provided 'reassurance and guidance through a complex process', many of whom did not fully comprehend both the process and the implications until the project raised their awareness. Beneficiary countries also noted in this regard that the project 'helped them to understand challenges they had yet to consider'. However, there is also a sense amongst beneficiary countries that more is needed to identify viable solutions to the challenges that have been identified.

Contributions made by the project are valued by beneficiary countries (Figure 2). Beneficiary countries were highly appreciative of the step-by-step process that the project has provided for enhancing graduation. Of particular importance, has been the project's ability 'to raise awareness to ensure we have a far better understanding of the graduation process', the project 'went beyond the short term, it broadened the horizon of policy makers to draw attention to deeper lying structural issues to ensure our planning takes these issues into consideration'. However, it is not just the support provided by the project in terms of the prescribed

steps necessary for graduation from LDC status, but also the support provided relevant to the distinct context of each of the beneficiary countries. This support has included, for instance, supporting the Public Private Policy (PPP) initiative in Vanuatu, investment related issues in Bhutan, and supporting the emergence of South - South cooperation between LDCs to enhance peer-to-peer engagement and learning. A range of additional bi-products were also prepared by the project, for instance UNCTAD produced the following additional studies in response to specific requests for advice:

- Regional integration as a strategic avenue for sustainable LDC Graduation in Bangladesh
- National productive capacities gap assessment of Bangladesh
- Environmental priorities in the graduation process: Material balances and environmental footprints
- Environmental priorities in the graduation process: Making the monetary and financial system fit-for-purpose

Figure 2: Rating of different components of the project, by stakeholders from beneficiary countries (Source: own survey)
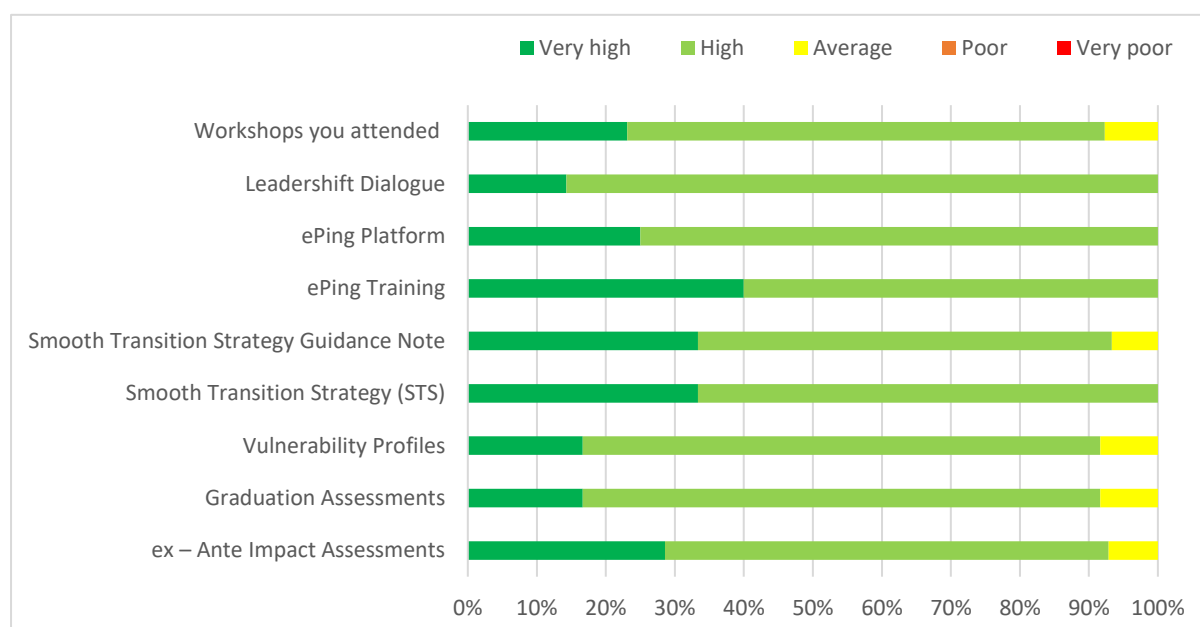

Figure 2 illustrates the extent to which survey respondents rated different components of the project. Support around the STS, the Graduation Assessments were rated particularly highly. Very few respondents were dissatisfied with any of the support they received. Of those who had taken part in ePing training, the training was well regarded. In the group discussions key informants noted that support provided through the ePing component of the project was another example of the project responding to the needs of beneficiary countries. Informants reported that, for example, where they had concerns about losing preferential free market access the ePing platform provided some reassurance on this matter. Key informants reported that as a result of the training they were now able to access timely information about new product requirements and could then share information that was of a better quality with relevant stakeholders. The fact that the data on the platform is both current and provides comprehensive information on export issues was also seen of enormous value as it allowed officials to formulate, adjust and respond to new requirements as soon as they became known.

Scoring

Criterion	Score	Justification
Relevance	6	Performance was of a very high quality, project delivered outputs that met the needs of beneficiary countries

5.2. EQ 2: To what extent is the project doing the right activities?

Choice of activities by the project has been appropriate in light of its objectives. Key features of these activities are not only the quality of the outputs, but the consultative manner utilised in the preparation of the outputs. As one informant noted – 'the project has operationalised in very practical ways the strategic intent behind global declarations such as the Doha Plan of Action'. Furthermore, whilst many of the outputs were prescribed (such as the Vulnerability Profiles) they were adapted by, and responded to, the local context.

The table below provides a strong sense of the wide range of support provided to each of the beneficiary countries, and the extent to which the project delivered the expected outputs. All of these activities (as we discuss further in the relevant sections below), also signal the extent that the project was able to deliver the expected results of the project (as per those identified in the inferred ToC). There is clear evidence that the project delivered in terms of ensuring greater awareness and a better understanding of the implications of graduation from LDC status, that countries have taken steps to incorporate policies to mitigate vulnerability and build resilience into key planning documents, that smooth transition strategies are being formulated, and that tools such as ePing are being used for their intended purpose.

Table 2: Examples of project activities in each of the beneficiary countries (Source: Project Progress Reports)

| Beneficiary Country	Examples of project activities
Bangladesh	• Fact finding/ data collection missions • Vulnerability profile, and a national workshop on VP in December 2020 – which discussed the present vulnerabilities of the Bangladeshi economy which will need to be addressed during the graduation process, including during its smooth transition phase • Ex – ante assessment • Graduation impact assessment report – supported by a *Virtual Meeting on Graduation of Bangladesh,* June 2021 • National Dialogue on LDC Graduation and support for the preparation of the STS
Bhutan	• National study for a smooth transition to post-LDC status • Updated and revised white paper to serve as the basis for the preparation of an STS in Bhutan (included advisory services/ capacity building to targeted ministries in preparation of their submission to CDP on country preparation for the rollout of the national STS) • White paper served as the basis for domestic discussion on the STS, which started in April 2021 • Virtual training workshop on ePing for Bhutan • Virtual workshop to discuss modalities and content of the STS
Lao PDR	• Fact finding/ data collection missions

Beneficiary Country	Examples of project activities
	• Vulnerability profile and related policy dialogue with government officials in November 2020 • Consultative workshops on the potential impacts of graduation • Ex-ante assessment • ePing toolkit and training - Public and private stakeholders were trained by UNDESA on how to use ePing • ePing train the trainer • Provided inputs to Lao PDR in preparing its STS including using the STS Guidance Note to guide the development of a roadmap for their STS and establishing a consultative mechanism for preparing its STS. • UNDESA also held a session on LDC graduation process and preparing an STS, and supported the RC with in-country presentations on LDC Graduation and smooth transition
Myanmar	• Fact finding/ data collection missions • National workshops on LDC graduation • Vulnerability profile and related policy dialogue with government officials in November 2020 • Ex – ante assessment • ePing toolkit and training Public and private stakeholders were trained by UNDESA on how to use ePing • ePing train-the-trainer
Vanuatu	• Smooth transition strategy (and associated workshops) for progress toward and beyond graduation • LDC graduation support for Vanuatu STS implementation • Further policy and technical support on preparation for graduation including implementing specific measures under the STS as part of piloting iGRAD (Sustainable Graduation Support Facility), provided virtually • Support provided to Vanuatu's Technical Working Group on PPP to develop a PPP policy, and legal and regulatory framework

Project enhanced capacity not only by encouraging 'learning by doing' (e.g. by collaborating with countries to prepare the Vulnerability Profiles and the *ex-ante* assessments), but also through targeted capacity building initiatives (such as through the STS workshops and the different types of support mentioned above). In addition, the project also provided a range of other types of capacity building support including:

- ePing training (developing training manuals, developing training manuals, identifying a set of Frequently Answered Questions, and the ePing administrative chat tool).
- STS Guidance note - informed by lessons learned from project support, and developed by the Secretariat of the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP)
- Piloting of combining vulnerability profiles prepared by UNCTAD with the ex-ante assessments prepared by UNDESA into single Graduation Assessments in Lao PDR and Myanmar

Survey responses confirm the view that the support has enhanced capacity, and that they are utilising the products of project activities (Figure 3). On average, 80% of respondents believe that because of the project, they are now able to implement an STS, and address recommendations made in the Vulnerability Profiles and Impact Assessments. A similar number reported they are using the tools and other products produced by the project, with less than 5% disagreeing with this statement.

Figure 3: Extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with statements relating to the project building capacity and the utility of project outputs (Source: own survey)
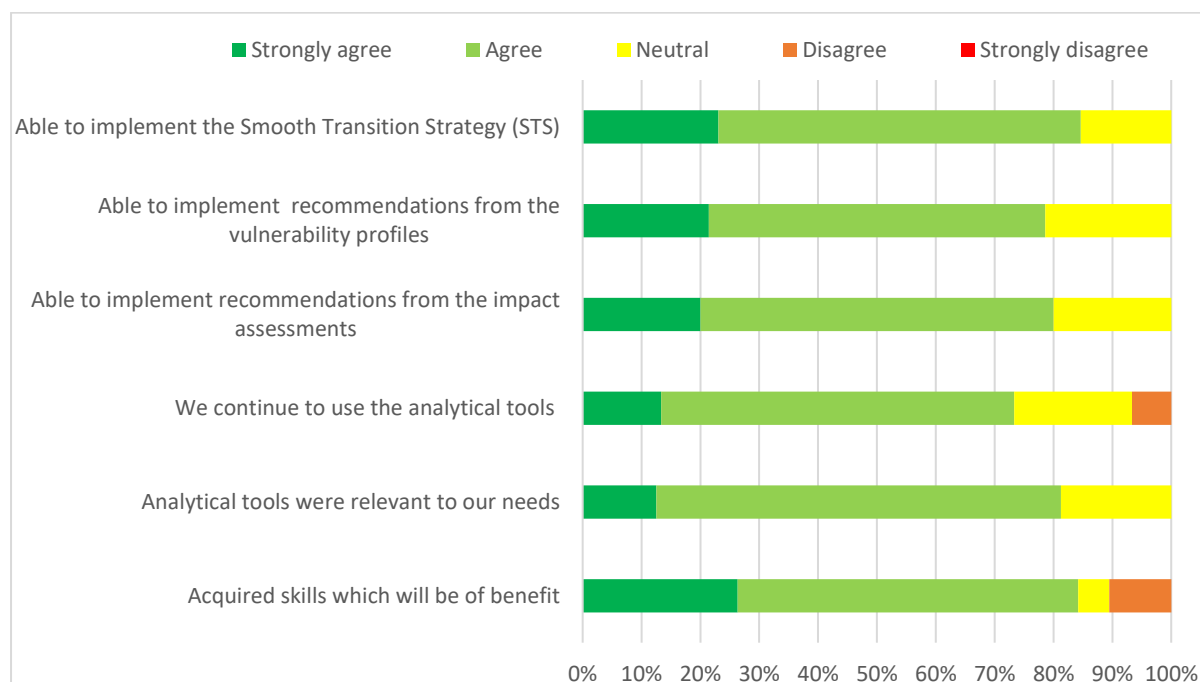
A further feature of the approach used successfully by the project to build capacity has been through peer-to-peer exchanges. In July 2022 the project organised the *South – South Technical Peer Learning on Developing and Operationalizing Public Private Partnerships*, which provided Vanuatu with an opportunity to hear, draw on and benefit from the experience in developing and operationalizing PPP policies and legal frameworks of five peer countries – Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan.

Key informants spoke of the value of these types of events, especially in that they allowed participants to deliberate on common challenges of graduation and identify pathways to address them collaboratively in devising their respective STS, share lesson learning with those countries who had recently successfully graduated, and discuss effective means to advocate for greater international support for financing the implementation of their respective STSs.

Activities have promoted inclusiveness by engaging with stakeholders at both the national and at local/ provincial level. A key feature of project activities has been the focus on inclusion at different levels. Typically, the project focussed on supporting a national working group/committee that worked closely with the respective UN entities to ensure collaboration through multiple rounds of engagement and dialogue. However, major workshops drew on participants from a wide range of sectors (including government, private, Civil Society, and the media) in addition to ensuring both national and provincial/local were afforded the opportunity to participate. Examples include

- *Virtual Meeting on Graduation of Bangladesh from the least developed country category and smooth transition towards sustainable development basis of national stakeholder and development partner workshop on preparing for graduation* co-organised by UNDESA and the Government of Bangladesh was attended by a total of 97 participants comprising of senior officials from the government of Bangladesh, the CDP, OHRLLS, UNDESA and UN entities, development and trading partners, civil society, think tanks and academia.

- PPP support in Vanuatu included widespread consultation in three key provinces with significant economic potential.
- Representatives of the media attended public meetings in Bangladesh, where there has been considerable debate within the media, and society more broadly, on relevant graduation issues.
- STS guidance notes have been translated into 5 languages to allow a wider segment of society in these countries to be informed and engaged in the preparation for graduation and smooth transition process.

Progress reporting largely focuses on the activity level, and there seems to be very little systematic monitoring of deliverables. Whilst the annual progress reports provide a helpful sense of what the project is delivering, the reports do not provide a clear picture of the results achieved by the project. There does not seem to be a deliberate plan for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within the project, although there is some evidence that the project has periodically reflected on its achievements and made important adjustments to its approach (such as ensuring greater integration between the lead entities, adjusting delivery in response to COVID-19, revising and adapting the ePing training approach and so on). A well-developed M&E plan, with clearly defined indicators against which progress could be tracked, would have enhanced the project's ability to demonstrate its success and ensured a more systematic approach to lesson learning.

Scoring

Criterion	Score	Justification
Effectiveness	5	Performance was of a high quality, project enhanced capacity and enhanced inclusivity, but the project's reporting on its efficacy is largely at activity level

### 5.3. EQ 3: To what extent is the project doing things right?

The project delivered as expected, although the time frame had to be extended by 6 months to accommodate the challenges posed by COVID-19. As already noted, the project delivered what was expected, and the vast majority of key informants acknowledged that these deliverables were of a high quality and of immense value. In terms of which activities were seen to be the most efficient from the beneficiary country point of view, there was a strong sense that:

- Technical expertise was best shared when it was done in person, especially as this allowed 'hands on' demonstrations, which allowed participations to ask questions as the initiative was implemented. This was particularly true when the technical support was provided in-country, as it not only built local capacity but also helped ensure momentum of the graduation process was maintained

- Analytical work was highly valued as the project 'took issues which we were familiar with and prodded deeper so that we understood the underlying structural issues'.

- Practical guidelines provided by the project were also highly appreciated 'as they operationalised the steps in a practical way, which meant we could implement what was expected'.

- Reports were presented in a logical and understandable way 'which sensitised policy makers to the core/ fundamental issues'

- Peer-to-peer sharing of experiences (such as the South-South *Technical Peer Learning on PPPs*) were also seen to be of valuable as 'it showed us how others were implementing graduation', 'provided us with practical solutions' and 'energised policy makers to keep the process moving'.

The project adapted and was responsive to the challenges posed by COVID-19. As a result of the pandemic the 3 countries recommended for graduation (Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Lao PDR) were given 5 years to graduate instead of the usual three-year standard preparatory period. Key features of the response by the project to the extended time frame, within the context of the pandemic, included either shifting meetings, training, and workshops online (which led to savings for the project), and/or postponing planned activities to allow for further reflection on how best to deliver them during the pandemic. By and large countries were very responsive and willing to continue with events that were conducted online. COVID-19 provided the project with an opportunity to reflect and rethink how it delivered its activities, and it also allowed the project team to become familiar with various new tools. For instance, UNDESA's Capacity Development Programme Management Office (CDPMO) organized several sessions on the use of new and emerging virtual platforms and tools from the public and private sector for UNDESA staff, to enhance their capabilities in delivering remote policy and technical advisory support to developing countries.

In some instances, the pandemic led to greater efficacy, such as working with the Government of Vanuatu to co-design capacity building support to implement Vanuatu STS implementation as part of piloting iGRAD (Sustainable Graduation Support Facility), some of which is being delivered virtually and some through alternative means. In other instances, virtual workshops become the norm with Government officials of Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Moreover, three of the five ePing workshops were delivered virtually as it was not possible to travel given the pandemic. Often, such as in the case of ePing, the virtual engagement was further enhanced by the project providing supporting materials (e.g. ePing developed training guides and training videos). The fact that the project had built close relationships with key interlocuters in each of the beneficiary countries enhanced the process, as high levels of trust and confidence were already in place which was necessary for online consultations to work efficiently (over 90% of survey respondents consider UNCTAD and UNDESA to be a trusted partner, Annex 6).

Figure 4: Extent to which survey respondents were satisfied with the changes the project introduced in response to COVID-19 (Source: own survey)
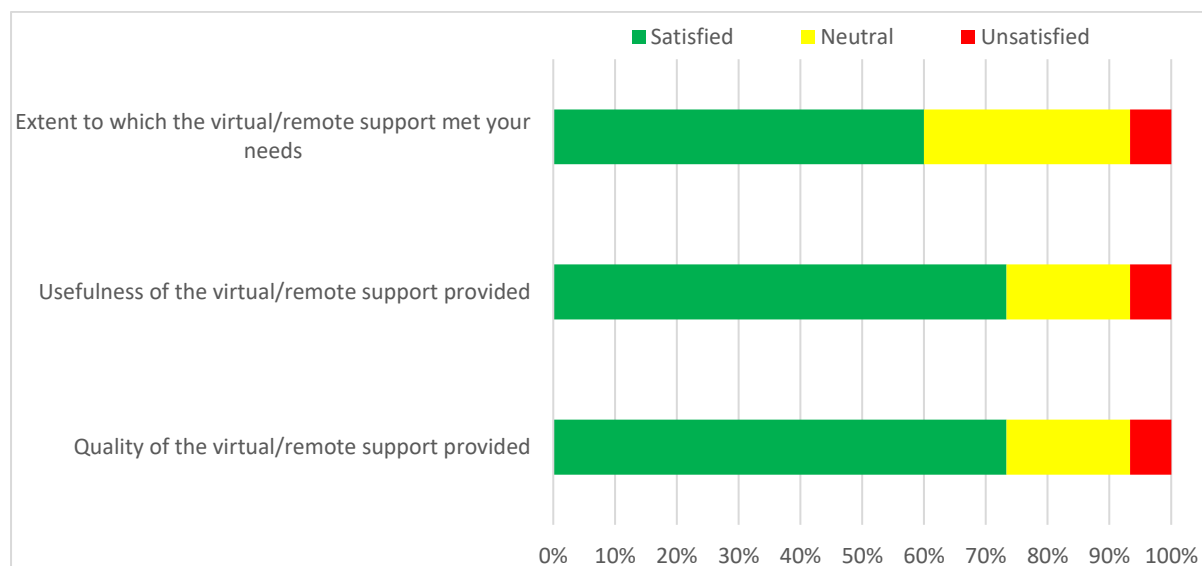
Naturally, COVID-19 did have some impact on the project. As shown in Figure 4, whilst the majority were satisfied by the changes introduced (on average two thirds of the respondents), approximately a third either had no view, or (admittedly a small minority) were unsatisfied. As already mentioned above, beneficiary countries prefer in-person training and workshops, especially as they value the building of relations between themselves and the relevant UN agencies, but these were not possible during lockdowns. Whilst the project continued to share knowledge during the pandemic (and bearing in mind that the bulk of the impact

assessments had already been completed before travel restrictions were implemented), there remains a preference for in-person events. Moreover, in some of the beneficiary countries (such as Lao PDR) the pandemic highlighted the digital divide in society. In practice this meant that whilst engagement and consultations continued with national government, it was particularly challenging engaging with local government where connectivity was not as effective. A further challenge with the online engagement was that it made follow-up challenging for the project, especially in terms of determining whether participants had utilised what had been shared with them during workshops and other training events.

Project used external shocks such as COVID-19 as opportunities to innovate and explore new approaches to implementation of project activities. A good example of the project's innovation (informed not only by moving the training online, but also because of it reflecting on its own efficacy), has been the adaptation of training materials for ePing. In this instance the project revised and adapted its approach when it realised its manuals were too long and not as effective as desired, its PowerPoint slides could be improved, and that the pace of delivery needed to be reduced and delivered over a series of sessions (a single 2-hour virtual session is inadequate to build sufficient capacity). By preparing shorter training videos, in addition to translating material, the project ensured greater training efficacy. Furthermore, as the initially planned ePing regional workshop were possible to organize due to the continuing challenges of Covid-19 and based on specific request/feedback received by countries and stakeholders, funds were used to develop an ePing smartphone application. The innovation introduced by the project with regards to ePing demonstrates how the project met its obligations with respect to the objective specified in the original project design document that 'based on inputs received from users in participating countries, the web-based ePing toolkit will be improved.'

An unintended consequence of the extended project timeframe meant that it provided greater opportunity for additional support and advice to be provided to the beneficiary country (and extended the project's ability to deliver on the bi-products mentioned above). In addition, the success of the successful graduation of Vanuatu, has provided the project with innovative ways to share its graduation journey. By engaging with key stakeholders in Vanuatu, the project produced three videos (which included producing the video scripts, voiceovers and working with a local video production company to canvas various voices and their perspectives on graduation). The videos provide a diverse set of views, including from the Prime Minister (political leadership), society (communal and self-leadership) and private sector (economic and business leadership).

By its own admission the project recognises that **initially coordination was not as effective as it could have been and that there was some confusion about the respective roles in the project**. Nevertheless, by the end of the project there is a strong sense that coordination has improved. As part of this process, and of enormous benefit to the project, has been the role of the Resident Coordinators Office (RCO), who ensure at country level better coordination of UN entities within country, ensuring a more efficient approach that reduces duplication of effort, and also provides a direct link for the project to national government in the beneficiary countries. Due to their location, RCOs are often also able to provide informed, context-specific information to guide project interventions within the beneficiary countries. It is important to note, that the project has also been of benefit to RCOs, as it provided a catalyst for RCOs to liaise with RCOs in neighbouring countries. For instance, the RCOs from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao PDR and Nepal are in regular contact (at a minimum on a monthly basis) to discuss the graduation process in their respective countries, and talk through challenges and potential solutions. In the run up to the 2021 Graduation Review by CDP all 4 RCOs realised that they were advising on graduation, but there were common challenges (such as gaps in data). The 'peer support group' of RCOs have been working together ever since to learn from each other. As one informant noted – 'I think this has shown how effective RCOs can be, as they are independent of the project they are able to maintain relationships and identify where an intervention is needed'.

Within the project, whilst there was a clear division of labour (e.g. UNDESA did the ex-ante assessment, and UNCTAD did the Vulnerability Profiles), and whilst there was no substantial overlap in the analytical work, it did usually mean for the beneficiary country the same officials were often spoken to multiple times by different entities, which they found confusing and time-consuming. With greater coordination, beneficiary countries now have one focal point to work through which has been highly appreciated. The project contributing to the piloting of the graduation assessments (a synthesis of both the ex-ante assessments and the Vulnerability Profiles) has also been shown to be successful. The graduation assessments provide policy makers in the beneficiary country with a single, high level summarised assessment of the key issues, which enhances the practicability of the analytical work done by both UNDESA and UNCTAD. Whereas Governments had questioned why different agencies were doing similar types of activities, the graduation assessment – combining the two reports into a short more accessible report on graduation - has helped set the tone to more integrated way of working. Moreover, establishing monthly meetings between UNCTAD and UNDESA, and where applicable (and COVID-19 restrictions allowing) joint missions, has further enhanced integration, and paved the way for stronger collaboration. Both agencies now acknowledge the benefits that can be seen from the division of labour, and the value of learning from each other.

Integration has enhanced the project's success in leveraging additional resources. For instance, by increasing synergies with other UNDESA projects, such as the UNDESA PDF LDC Project with common target countries, the project leveraged resources (USD$30,000) for a regional workshop in Vanuatu. Similarly, the project has enhanced its collaboration with ESCAP, which has demonstrated where work can be combined, and where substantive work can be linked or integrated. As already noted above by ensuring greater coordination with other UN entities, particularly with the UN Resident Coordinator, RCO and UN Country Teams, has ensured support is better coordinated, integrated, and streamlined thus reducing duplication. This in turn has reduced the burden of a plethora of workshops for the target countries. In addition, as already noted above, where projects with different target countries combine workshops, this allows for greater South - South Cooperation, and a better exchange of experiences and learning. This in turn helps to deepen and expand the project impact.

Scoring

Criterion	Score	Justification
Efficiency	4	Project achieved greater efficiencies towards the end, but recognises that collaboration and coordination was initially fragmented at the start. Greater integration did lead to the project leveraging other initiatives to enhance efficiency

5.4. EQ 4: To what extent will the benefits of the project be sustained?

Project partners have managed to build on earlier successes to maintain continuity with respect to graduation from LDC status, and have thereby taken visible actions to enhance sustainability. Beneficiary countries are implementing components of their STS, and integrating these components into national policies Most survey respondents (79%) believe that the capacity of their Ministry had been strengthened to help develop national policies to promote a smooth transition from LDC status, with only 21% believing this had not been the case (Figure 5).

*Figure 5: Extent to which participants believe that their Ministry's capacity had been strengthened to **help develop national policies** which will promote a smooth transition from LDC status (Source: own survey)*
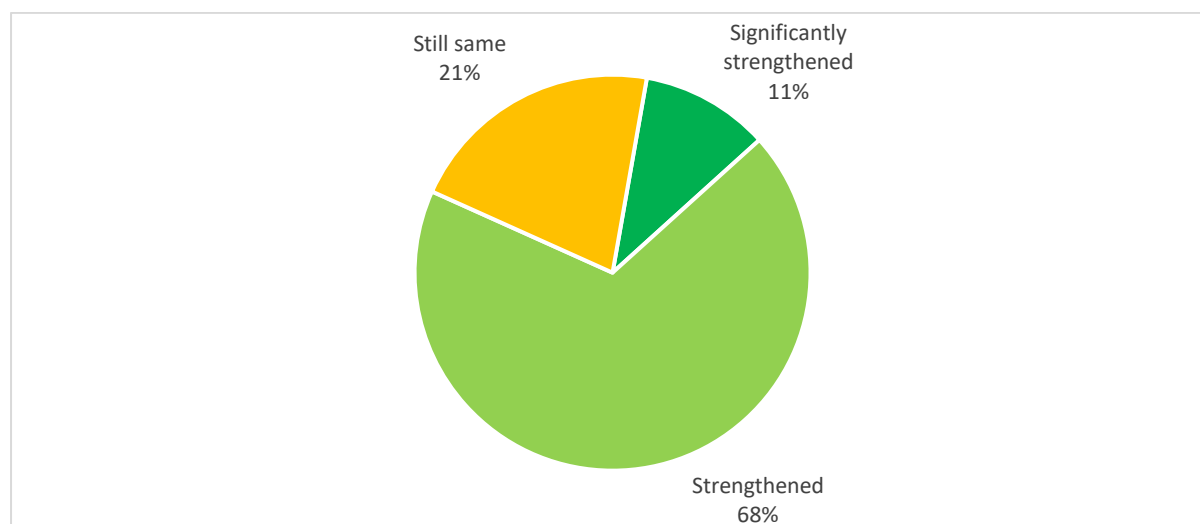
Examples of the manner in which beneficiary countries are enhancing sustainability of the project's benefits include Lao PDR integrating its STS in its 9th National Strategic Economic and Development Plan; and Bhutan using the updated and revised white paper as the basis for the preparation of its STS and for incorporating it into the country's 13th Five-Year Plan. In addition, the project has also been supporting sustainable efforts that include:

- Updating and revising Vulnerability Profiles for Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar to reflect the impact of Covid-19 and lingering vulnerabilities;
- Supporting Bangladesh in its negotiations with the EU, WTO and EIF on possible extension of access to the LDC-specific international support measures that the country currently enjoys;
- Working with Bhutan on developing an innovative financing strategy to address financing gaps that could hinder its smooth transition strategy; and
- Working with Vanuatu to develop and validate the country's PPP Policy.

It is reasonable to expect that the project's activities may have an effect, or a further effect, on graduation from LDC status by the beneficiary countries in the longer term. An important success of the project, and which will help enhance sustainability, has been the effective piloting of the iGRAD (Sustainable Graduation Support Facility) in Vanuatu (and which has been scaled-up to an additional 7 countries in 2022). iGRAD, previously known as the Sustainable Graduation Support Facility (SGSF) was designed by UNDESA in collaboration with OHRLLS and ESCAP and is being operationalized under the umbrella of the IATF chaired by OHRLLS. A key feature of iGRAD is that it is a country-led global platform that responds to the increasing demand from graduating and recent graduated LDCs for dedicated capacity development in the form of policy and technical advisory services in preparing and managing graduation and a smooth transition towards

sustainable development. iGRAD is also seen as an important mechanism in strengthening coordination and coherence of UN agencies working in the beneficiary countries. The development of this facility addresses a number of issues that beneficiary countries raised during the evaluation – namely the extent to which beneficiary countries of the project can continue to access support (especially as graduation is still several years hence):

- In the formulation and ultimately implementation of their respective STS;
- To access innovative financing for the transition and beyond;
- Facilitating South-South Cooperation, dialogue and sharing country as well as region-specific knowledge and experience;
- Ensuring that momentum is maintained, and that beneficiary countries build on the successes achieved to date;
- Identifying further tools, mechanisms, and modalities to ensure beneficiary countries received tailored support, and
- Ensuring effective in-country monitoring of the graduation process and beyond.

Scoring

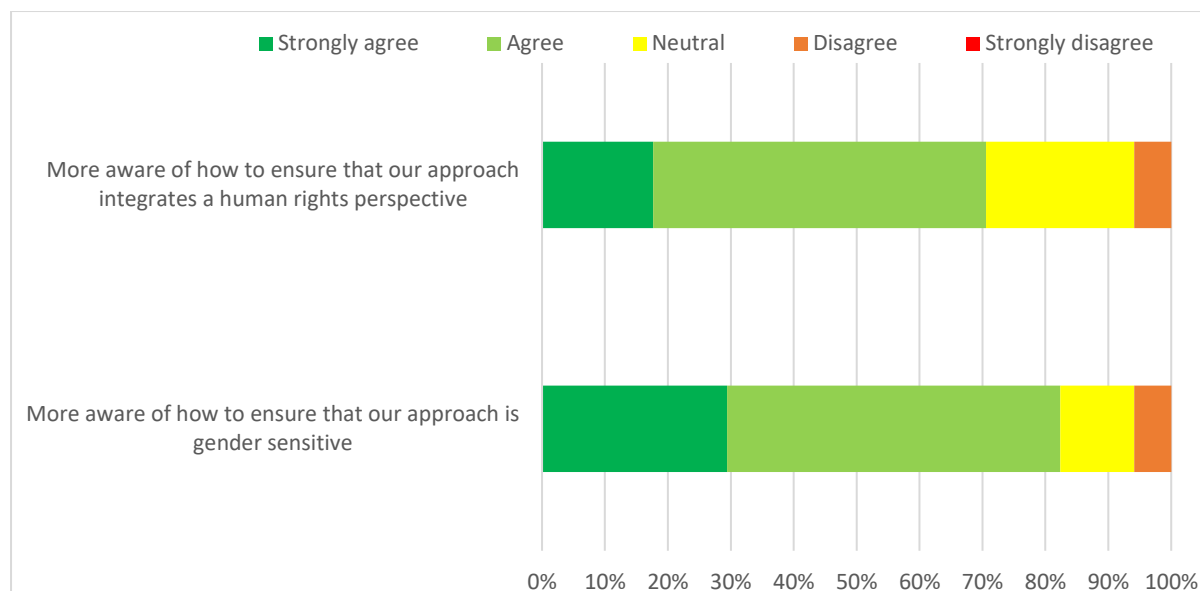| Criterion	Score	Justification
Sustainability	5	It is reasonable to expect the project's benefits to be sustained, but it is too early to tell what extent momentum will be sustained through iGRAD

5.5. EQ 5: To what extent have gender & human rights concerns been integrated into this project's design and implementation?

As part of wider UN efforts – mainstreaming has been more of a focus as the project progressed, but the project recognises more could have been done from the outset. The most recent progress report noted that whilst an 'improvement in inclusive participation in country consultations on LDC graduation, is observed….. female participation relative to males is still low (25%) for most project countries. More needs to be done to ensure this is considered in project design and implementation'. The project also recognises that integration is dependent to an extent on whether the context in each beneficiary country was responsive to integrating gender and human rights into their graduation activities. For instance, in Bhutan the gender equality officer was heavily involved in developing the STS White Paper. In Bangladesh, the importance of the garment industry (an industry heavily skewed towards female employment) within the Bangladesh economy led the project to conducting additional work to understand the implications of graduation on this sector, which in turn brought to the fore several important issues related to gender and human rights within the garment industry.

Since 2021 the project has explicitly embraced gender as a key principle for programming. For instance, it is tracking participation in workshops, and lobbying stakeholders to bring greater numbers of women to these events. The recent *Leadershift dialogue* got countries to rethink how they do policy making by getting them to think through the implications of gender equity and human rights on social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status. In Vanuatu, for instance, this has led to women who participated in the dialogue to actively conceptualise the role of women and girls in the development trajectory of Vanuatu as a graduated country. Furthermore, the STS guidelines prepared by the project acknowledge the importance of gender and human rights. The guidelines outline how these concerns need to be considered during the STS preparation

and subsequent implementation. In the figure below (Figure 6), the majority of the survey respondents were of the view that the project has made stakeholders more aware of the need to integrate a human rights perspective into the graduation process (70% of respondents agreed with this statement), and also that such an approach needs to be gender sensitive (82% of respondents agreed with this statement).

Figure 6: Extent to which respondents believe the project is integrating a human rights and gender perspective into its activities (Source: own survey)

As part of wider UN efforts mainstreaming has become more of a focus as the project progressed. Issues pertaining to gender and human rights were not specifically incorporated into the original design of the project. Nevertheless, the project has ensured that gender and human rights issues permeate the project, although they are not always explicitly mentioned. Gender aspects do appear in several of the studies undertaken, especially IAs and VPs. In the case of human rights, economic and social human rights such as decent living, education, health and their related rights lie at the very core of the work of the project, within all analytical outputs and to the technical assistance given. Moreover, the STS guidelines, for instance, prepared by the project acknowledge the importance of gender and human rights, and outline how these concerns need to be considered during STS preparation and subsequent implementation. This has been further reinforced when beneficiary countries explore opportunities for new trade agreements, many of which require adherence to global conventions on human rights and gender (for example all EU bilateral agreements have human rights clauses which require endorsing).

Scoring

Criterion	Score	Justification
Gender and Human Rights	4	Gender and human rights were not specifically incorporated into the original design of the project. Nevertheless, the project has ensured that gender and human rights issues permeate the project, although they are not always explicitly mentioned.

5.6. EQ 6: To what extent did the project contribute to beneficiary countries transitioning from LDC status?

The project has **contributed to the incorporation of policies and smooth transition measures aimed at mitigating impacts of graduation and vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents** and the formulation of smooth transition strategies in each beneficiary country (a key expected long – term outcome, as outlined in the inferred ToC, Annex 2), examples include:

- Inclusion of STS into National Development Plan (e.g. Bhutan have incorporated graduation into 13th Five-year Plan, and Lao PDR have incorporated broad thinking on their STS into their 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan - NSEDP),
- Bangladesh's graduation in 2026 aligns with its 8th Five-year plan (2021 – 2025), in which the county has placed considerable emphasis on addressing structural challenges the country will face post-graduation. In addition, Bangladesh has adopted Vision 2041, which spells out a series of measures Bangladesh will implement as it strives towards becoming a high-income country by 2041.
- In each beneficiary country robust consultative mechanisms have been established, with support from the project, to oversee STS preparation, which enhances transparency and accountability of the process.

As already noted above the project has been working with each country on specific aspects of the graduation process to help mitigate vulnerability and build resilience in the formulation of the respective smooth transition strategies. This has included, for instance, in Bangladesh focussing on post-graduation international trade landscape as part of the STS, in Lao PDR providing support to national government who has established the consultative mechanism with trading and development partners whilst drafting their STS; and in Bhutan the STS White Paper is premised on the implementation of its National Development Plan.

Counterparts in each government having demonstrated ownership of mainstreaming resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policymaking and an ability to implement recommendations from the impact assessments, vulnerability profiles as well as smooth transition strategies:

- UNDESA with the Vanuatu National Coordination Committee (NCC) co-designed the services offered under the UNDESA LDC graduation support to be piloted in Vanuatu. By focusing on implementing the Vanuatu STS, and the necessary specific measures required to ensure this, the project helped ensure that the beneficiary country, in this case Vanuatu, provided a clear indication of the concrete issues they wanted to track re graduation.
- Formation of working groups/collaborative mechanisms in all the beneficiary countries to drive STS implementation process. As one key informant noted 'Several working groups under a National Committee on graduation are working on the graduation related issues. Some studies are also under progress. Regular workshops/dialogues with the stakeholders are being organized. Preparation of the STS is also under progress'.
- Formulating policy to support STS – e.g. as one informant noted 'Ministry of Industries has a plan to formulate several policies that would be helpful to ensure smooth transition of the country, for example - logistics industry development policy, Agrofood industries development policy, Chemical industry management guidelines, Support industry development Roadmap etc'
- Complementing support with additional actions to enhance progress towards graduation – such as the development of bi - products (already listed above);
- Bhutan working a strategy to strengthen and diversify its linkages with trading partners, in particular how best to diversify its exports to India.

Counterparts in each government have demonstrated ability to access and share information on new product requirements on export markets (a key expected long – term outcome, as outlined in the inferred ToC, Annex 2). As a result of the ePing training, those trained have begun to use the platform for different purposes. Key informants in Bhutan, for instance, spoke of exporters using the system to access and share export information, and that it had substantially increased transparency on export diversification opportunities. Others spoke of using the information to raise awareness of post-graduation opportunities, especially with regards to working within a multilateral trading system under the WTO, and of the steps required to comply with the requirements to enhance their country's own export performance. A key feature of the ePing platform, which key informants noted, is that the platform increases the availability of relevant data, which is regularly updated, and which provides helpful notifications and alerts (such as those related to proposed draft measures on sanitary, phytosanitary or other agricultural and industrial product requirements). Informants noted that they had used this information to inform policy debates (e.g. as a source of information to inform Bhutan's strategy to diversify its linkages with trading partners, especially with regards to viable opportunities for diversifying its exports to India).

Scoring

Criterion	Score	Justification
Impact	5	The project has delivered what was expected to ensure the beneficiary countries do graduate from LDC status, but further support is still required to ensure the remaining three beneficiary countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Lao PDR) implement their smooth transition strategies as planned.

6. Lessons learned and conclusions

6.1. Lessons learned and good practices

Lesson learned	Good practice
Coordinated, integrated approach ensures less burden on beneficiary countries, and ensures better leveraging of additional resources for enhancing the impact of planned actions	By increasing synergies with other projects, and collaboration with other agencies (such as with UN Resident Coordinator, RCO and UN Country Teams) this not only avoided duplication, and ensured support is integrated and streamlined, it also allowed for greater sharing of information
STS preparation needed guidelines to guide the process	Developed an STS Guidance note, drawing on lessons learned through the preparation of STSs. Importantly the STS Guidance Note is a living document. Is updated yearly in response to country demand, and has been translated into five languages
Analytical work by the project highlighted the long-term structural challenges faced by the beneficiary countries	Working with countries to embed the implications of analytical work by the project into Country Economic/ Development Plans
The framework for a new generation of vulnerability profiles needed to be revised	The scope of Vulnerability Profiles have been broadened by focusing on the extent to which pre-qualification for graduation is synonymous with genuine structural economic progress, a necessary condition for objectivity in the decision to reclassify a country. In addition, expanded the topics in the profiles to include issues of gender and social inequalities
Ex-ante impact assessments by UNDESA and vulnerability profiles prepared by UNCTAD, provide a comprehensive understanding of the relevant impact and vulnerability issues, but it was recognised that there was a need to provide a consolidated, succinct assessment of the analytical work to help policy makers make decisions on whether to recommend a country for graduation or not.	The piloting of Graduation Assessments – which provide a synthesis of the key findings from the IAs and the VPs - have helped CDP members quickly digest the key findings and recommendations to enhance their decision making.
South - South Cooperation/ peer-to-peer learning enhances the learning of beneficiary countries	Facilitating exchanges (such as South-South *Technical Peer Learning on PPPs*) allowed graduating LDCs to share experiences, and learn from others, especially who had recently graduated and had successfully addressed challenges that graduating LDCs are currently facing
Training conducted remotely was viewed as successful, but the project was not able to determine the extent to which the training was being used	Doing follow-up on training to ensure that the capacity building has been effective
COVID-19 led to the project rethinking its capacity-building modality to ensure objectives continued to be met as the project moved activities online	Ensured training materials were far more interactive, through the provision of training videos/webinars. Materials were simplified and translated to enhance their utility, and the pace of delivery was adjusted to

Lesson learned	Good practice
	ensure more meaningful training experiences for participants
Need for a dedicated facility to support graduating and graduated LDCs, and which can ensure greater coordination of relevant UN agencies to maximum effect	Established iGRAD, which offers dedicated timebound graduation-related capacity development support to countries graduating and recently graduated from LDC status in the new decade of action. The Facility was first piloted, before being scaled up.
The pandemic highlighted the digital divide in society. Whilst the project could continue to engage remotely with national governments, it was particularly challenging engaging with local government where connectivity was not as effective.	In future projects, where external shocks like COVID-19 recur, inclusiveness will depend on improvements in access to appropriate technology to allow local level engagement.

6.2. Conclusion

The overall conclusion is that the project not only achieved what it set out to achieve but delivered more than was initially planned. Delivery of activities was underpinned by a collaborative approach, which helped tailor activities to the needs of the beneficiary countries. The limited articulation of expected results and targets in the original design of the project did create a challenge for the evaluation, however an inferred Theory of Change was developed to help identify the expected results of the project. Several areas of success have been reported on, which demonstrate that the project deepened awareness and understanding of the implications of graduation from LDC status, that beneficiary countries are taking steps to incorporate policies which will help mitigate vulnerability and build resilience into their respective development plans, and that beneficiary countries are developing appropriate smooth transition strategies.

Factors for the project's success include use of highly competent partners and cooperative operational activities. Beneficiary countries were generally satisfied with the activities delivered by the project, and highly valued the subject matter expertise and training that is being provided by the project and the organisation of inclusive events that promoted peer-to-peer exchanges. Key informants provided a range of different examples of how the project has contributed to improved capacity, and ultimately, also contributing to enhancing progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status.

The project has contributed to the development of smooth transition strategies and has supported efforts for the respective strategies to be adopted into national development plans. By doing this, and through other efforts, the project has enhanced the sustainability of its work, and helped increase the likelihood of countries graduating on schedule.

Initially coordination was not as effective as it could have been, but this has largely been addressed to ensure a far more integrated approach to delivery. The project ensured far greater coherence by the end, and ensured activities were better coordinated, built on earlier successes, and promoted lesson learning across its activities.

The project was effective in adapting and responding to COVID-19, but the pandemic did curtail many of the face-to-face activities. Several activities were delayed because of the pandemic as they could not be replicated remotely. Overall, the project was effective in moving most activities on-line. Beneficiary countries were appreciative of the fact that the project did continue, albeit remotely. An unintended

consequence of the pandemic was that it led the project to innovate and explore new approaches to implementation of project activities (e.g. the approach to ePing training was revised and improved to ensure it was more effective).

The project has undoubtedly been of tremendous value, but there is also a recognition that additional time and investment is required to realise what is still needed to ensure progress toward and beyond graduation. There remains a high demand for this type of support, and a strong sense that beneficiary countries will need ongoing support with implementing their respective smooth transition strategies. Whilst iGrad will undoubtedly prove to be useful in this regard, there are concerns within beneficiary countries as to how iGRAD can be accessed and to what extent it will continue to build on the success of this project. With the project now having established a solid foundation and built close working relationships with the beneficiary countries it will be important to ensure that all key stakeholders are made fully aware of what UNDESA, UNCTAD, and other UN entities will be doing in the future to build on the success of this project.

6.3. Overall rating of the evaluation

Overall, the project has been scored as follows:

Criterion	Score	Criterion	Score
Relevance	6	Sustainability	5
Effectiveness	5	Gender equality and human rights perspective	4
Efficiency	4	Impact	5

7. Recommendations

Given the key findings and conclusions of this evaluation that the project delivered and achieved more than was initially planned through the highly competent partners and cooperative operational activities, only 3 recommendations are made, namely:

For CDPMO:

1) Ensure that DA Project guidelines provide greater clarity on how priority cross-cutting issues (such as gender, human rights, and climate change) can be integrated into project outcome and output indicators and applied in implementation plans and subsequent monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

2) Ensure that DA Project guidelines provide greater clarity with regards to coordination and collaboration between different UN agencies to create synergy and ensure effective division of labour from the outset.

For Project Implementing Agencies (UNDESA/ UNCTAD):

3) Ensure that all key stakeholders are made fully aware of what UNDESA, UNCTAD, and other UN entities will be doing in the future to build on the success of this project, and how they can access this type of support in the future. Further support is still required in line with the types of support already provided, including:

- relevant advisory services to policy makers, including responding to the findings of Impact Assessments and Vulnerability Profiles;
- Graduation support via iGRAD;
- enacting and monitoring implementation of smooth transition strategies; and
- staying abreast of changing international trade requirements through ePING.

Annex 1: Terms of reference

Terms of Reference for Consultant

Department of Policy Development Branch, EAPD, DESA

Final Independent Evaluation: Helping least developed countries (LDCs) pursue structural economic progress toward and beyond graduation (SB-009659/1819F)

A. Background

The project under evaluation was approved under the 11th Tranche of the United Nations Development Account in 2017 for implementation over the duration, May 2018 to December 2021, and in 2021 extended to June 30, 2022. The project, conducted in partnership between UNDESA and the UNCTAD, built on earlier Development Account capacity-building projects to deliver continued support for structural transformation during and after LDC graduation. It aimed to help five Least Developed Countries (LDCs): Bangladesh; Bhutan; Lao People's Democratic Republic (DPR); Myanmar; and Vanuatu enhance their ability to achieve structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status.

By the end of the project, two main accomplishments were expected: (i) a strengthened capacity of government officials to mainstream resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policy-making; and (ii) improved capacity in LDCs, to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports. The project aimed to achieve these accomplishments through the provision of (a) country-specific analytical material on the implications of LDC graduation; vulnerability and resilience-building; and smooth transition strategies; (b) relevant advisory services to policy makers; and (c) action to help project recipients and LDCs in general understand and use the export-related new requirements issued by trading partners.

Accordingly, the project should result in targeted beneficiaries - key stakeholders including selected government officials within the ministries associated with LDC graduation and its implications such as Foreign Affairs, Planning, Finance, Trade and Commerce having enhanced capacities specifically: (i) better understanding of the implications of graduation from LDC status; (ii) incorporating policies aimed at mitigating vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents; (iii) formulating and enacting smooth transition strategies; and (iv) staying abreast with changing international trade requirements.

Project implementation mid-way through the project duration, required modifications due to the onset of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its socio-economic impact on both developed and developing countries. DESA and UNCTAD explored innovative ways to help the five project target countries address the severe disruption to societies and economies, through the project activities and within the broad framework of the project outcomes. Fortunately, all country-specific analytical material on the implications of LDC graduation such as the impact assessments and vulnerability profiles for Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar, and smooth transition strategies for Vanuatu and Bhutan had been delivered and relevant advisory services to policy makers provided. What remained were in-country national and regional workshops and country level training in understanding and using the export-related new requirements issued by trading partners for Bangladesh and Vanuatu. Project

activities remained relevant but for effectiveness and efficiency purposes, delivery modalities were quickly adjusted by DESA and UNCTAD to reflect governments' redirection of government funds and human resources, government functionality and mobility due to border closures and lockdowns, country responses to COVID-19 and to simultaneously maintain graduation momentum.

A framework for a new generation of vulnerability profiles was prepared by UNCTAD in 2020 to broaden the scope of previous vulnerability profiles and used to enhance the vulnerability profiles for Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar that also reflected the implications of COVID-19. An updated and revised white paper was prepared by UNCTAD, to serve as the basis for the preparation of a smooth transition strategy (STS) by Bhutan. DESA produced an STS Guidance Note made available online (LDC Portal) to help graduating countries including non-project target countries such as Angola and Sao Tome Principe prepare their STS.

DESA support to Vanuatu was scaled up to include implementation of their STS taking into consideration COVID-19 implications. As part of the upscaling, a leadershift dialogue was designed and co-facilitated by DESA and two experts from the Pacific to introduce new leadership concepts and shifts in resilient policymaking as a graduated country in the face of multiple adversities in a post-COVID environment. Training material on ePing by DESA under a tripartite cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Trade Centre (ITC), was modified and delivered virtually rather than in-person for Bangladesh and Vanuatu. Similarly, given the impossibility of organizing in-country validation workshops, UNCTAD organized virtual workshops with national stakeholders in Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Myanmar. Gender dimensions in a COVID environment were also considered in delivering virtual training.

Synergies across DESA and UNCTAD specific activities and with other DESA and ESCAP projects were strengthened - combining or leveraging other institutional, human, technical and financial resources and reducing the burden on government officials who were also working from home but did not have access to the technology that project partners use. DESA's Capacity Development Programme Management Office (CDPMO) organized several sessions on the use of new and emerging virtual platforms and tools from the public and private sector for DESA staff, to enhance their capabilities in delivering policy and technical advisory support to developing countries.

The initial total budget was $800,000 but reduced to $745,729 in 2021, to allow for reallocation of funds towards new COVID-response projects, required by the Development Account. The project will be operationally completed on June 30, 2022.

B. Evaluation Objectives and Criteria

Objectives
The objective of the evaluation is to undertake an independent assessment of the expected accomplishments of the project and to determine its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. It will be conducted with two main purposes:

1) accountability for results – to prove whether the project has achieved what it set out to achieve for selected stakeholders and target countries;

2) learning – to determine what worked, what did not work, what could be improved in future project design and to draw on lessons learned that could improve the overall quality and strategic focus of future programming and interventions.

Criteria

The evaluation will assess the extent to which the project's aim to help the five LDCs from the Asia-Pacific region increase their chances of achieving structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status was achieved. In doing so, apply the following criteria:

1. Effectiveness: Evaluate the extent to which the project accomplishments have been fulfilled by the end of the project implementation period, measured by the indicators of achievement provided in the project document. Analyse if concrete results were delivered, countries capacities enhanced, and countries continue to use the tools and further develop capacities for evidence-based and data driven policy and decision-making.

1.2 Analyse how the project activities contributed to the outcomes and in turn resulted in the two main project accomplishments and subsequent impact on the intended beneficiaries. Analyze the implementation strategies of the project with regard to their potential effectiveness in achieving the project outcomes and impacts, gender balance, and unexpected results and factors affecting project implementation (positively and negatively).

2.Efficiency: Assess the overall value of the project activities and outcomes in relation to the resources expended, including, if possible, the added value by additional resources or substantive contributions, i.e., those beyond the project's original work plan and budget. How efficient was the project in using the financial and human resources provided to implement planned activities and achieve the target outcomes within the set workplan/timelines and below budget or achieve more with the same resources?

2.2 How efficiently did the project overcome operational challenges such as COVID-19 or use it as an opportunity to innovate and explore new approaches to project implementation?

2.3 To what extent have the project's governance and management structures and processes enabled, or hindered, the delivery of its activities? (this is particularly important in the context of the project to look into what worked and what did not in co-implementing the project between DESA and UNCTAD as in the areas of collaboration, coordination, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and advocacy, etc.)

3.Relevance: Assess the relevance and coherence of the project's design regarding country needs and how the project is perceived and valued by the target country and groups. Ascertain the significance of the contributions made by the project to beneficiary countries, governments, institutions, individual and other key stakeholders. This component should include an assessment of the quantity, quality and usefulness of the activities and outcomes.

4.Sustainability: Assess the extent to which the benefits/results/activities will continue after the project has come to an end, from the perspective of beneficiary countries, individuals, institutions and other key stakeholders. How well did the project

partners/implementers maximize synergies with earlier work to maintain continuity as well as linkages to emerging and changing needs of the countries?

5.Gender and human rights perspectives: To what extent have gender & human rights concerns been integrated into this project's design and implementation? To what extent have DESA and UNCTAD promoted and encouraged gender sensitive approaches and gender inclusive participation in the project activities?

Furthermore, the evaluation will identify lessons learned, good practices and recommendations for the key stakeholders to improve implementation of project activities on sustainable graduation from LDC status and smooth transition towards sustainable development.

The evaluation report will be shared with the project stakeholders, including beneficiary countries, upon their request. The evaluation report will be uploaded to its online evaluation database i-eval discovery.

Evaluation questions:

The following are the evaluation questions that have been identified at this stage of the evaluation. The evaluator should identify which questions will be reviewed in the inception report. The questions below will be assessed considering the objective, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievement, means of verification and planned activities as set forth in the project document.

The evaluation will focus on the following main questions:

1. Did the project strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders in the beneficiary countries to better understand the implications of graduation from LDC status?

2. Did the project lead to the incorporation of policies and smooth transition measures aimed at mitigating vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents and the formulation of smooth transition strategies in each beneficiary country?

3. Are the beneficiary countries better prepared and on track with their preparations for graduation with at least five national counterparts in each government having demonstrated ownership of mainstreaming resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policymaking and an ability to implement recommendations from the impact assessments, vulnerability profiles as well as smooth transition strategies?

4. Did the project improve the capacity in the five countries to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports?

5. Did the project result in at least two to four national government counterparts in each recipient country having demonstrated ability to access and share information on new product requirements on export markets and are using the ePing tool/platform and information to comply with the requirements and enhance the countries' export performance?

6. Did the project lead to an increased understanding from public and private sector beneficiaries in each recipient country on new product requirements from trading partners with at least one stakeholder in each country effectively using the ePing system?

7. To what extent did the project address gender sensitivities, gender equity and human rights perspectives in the design and delivery of its activities?

8. To what extent did the project use external shocks such as COVID-19 as opportunities to innovate and explore new approaches to implementation of project activities?

9. Did the project review identified risks and implement mitigating actions outlined in the project, if and when necessary, in an effective and timely manner and update the project document to reflect new risks?

Effectiveness:

What have been the achievements of the overall project objectives/accomplishments?

Has the knowledge sharing, outreach and advocacy on the importance of country-led evidence-based preparation for graduation and smooth transition towards sustainable development and achievement of SDGs by graduating countries in the country and among the cooperating partners?

If country-specific indicators were used, how effective was the project in monitoring and capturing country tailored support, contextualized results and impact?

Efficiency of resource use:

To what extent, did the project leverage resources to promote the project results and accomplishments, gender equality and inclusivity?

Was the monitoring and evaluation system results-based, and did it facilitate a project adaptive management?

Impact orientation and sustainability:

Which project-supported tools have been institutionalized, or have the potential to, by recipient countries, partners and/or replicated by external organizations?

To what extent has the project linked with and used existing project outcomes and initiatives such as the LDC Portal maintained by DESA and the ePing platform maintained by the WTO?

To what extent has the project actively promoted sustainability in each of the recipient countries including government, private sector and civil society, UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams and bilateral partners in the life of the project?

To what extent are project accomplishments sustainable beyond the project life?

Work assignment

This Evaluation will be conducted as an independent exercise, based on documentation related to the project, online communication including interviews and e-mails with national stakeholders - government officials, private sector, civil society, development and trading partners from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao PDR, and Vanuatu in beneficiary countries; other key individuals from the UN system who engaged in the project by the two project partners (DESA; UNCTAD). The above-mentioned persons are expected to provide information, opinions and assessments to the consultant (henceforth, the "Evaluator"), upon his/her request.

The evaluation will be undertaken from 26 July to 30 September 2022. The Evaluator will liaise with the DESA/Economic Analysis and Policy Division (EAPD)/Development Policy Branch and the DESA/Capacity Development Programme Management Office (CDPMO) for logistics and administrative issues, while conducting the evaluation independently.

The draft report to be prepared by the Evaluator will be delivered to DESA/EAPD and circulated for comments to UNCTAD, international project consultants and national project consultants in beneficiary countries. All comments to the draft report will be compiled by DESA/EAPD and will be transmitted to the Evaluator with suggestions for additions or modifications.

(c.1) Methodology

The evaluation will encompass:

I. **Meetings** (online) with the Evaluation Oversight Group (EOG) comprising of a key government stakeholder from each of the five project countries (excluding Myanmar) to promote recipient countries' direct and strategic engagement and shared ownership of the project results. The meetings, will occur at three stages of the evaluation to:

    a. At inception of the evaluation (10 Aug 2022), provide an opportunity for project partners and DESA/CDPMO to explain the objective and scope of the independent evaluation, strategic role of the oversight group and their schedule of engagement with the evaluator and project.

    b. Draft report stage (23 September 2022), allow the evaluator to share key findings from the desk review and interviews, share a brief outline of the evaluation report and key headlines and solicit feedback from the EOG.

    c. At the conclusion of the evaluation (7 October 2022), obtain EOG feedback on the evaluation approach and methodology and usefulness of having an EOG as a key part of future project evaluations.

II. **A desk review** of project documents including, but not limited to:

    a. The project document, reports and other outputs produced by the project, activity reports (such as results of evaluation surveys of workshops, studies), financial reports of DESA/CDPMO, budget information, progress reports, and selected relevant correspondence.

    b. Other project-related material produced by the project staff, partners, or beneficiary country counterparts.

III. **Interviews** with key individuals from the UN implementing organizations, from the beneficiary countries (excluding Myanmar) and other project stakeholders, as described below. The Evaluator shall determine whether to seek additional information and opinions from other persons connected to the implementation of the project.

      a. Bangladesh

      b. Bhutan

      c. Lao PDR

      d. Vanuatu

IV. Gender and human right perspectives must be integrated and well addressed in the process of the evaluation as well as in the evaluation report. A gender-responsive methodology, methods and tools, and data analysis techniques should be selected. At the same time, human rights considerations should be integrated in the following, where applicable: evaluation scope of analysis; evaluation criteria and questions design; methods and tools, and data analysis techniques; evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

(c.2) Tasks:

Desk review of key reference documents related to the project: project document, analytical and technical products, training materials, workshop reports, coordinators' reports, financial reports, the DESA/UNCTAD mission reports and relevant correspondence, documents produced by the project personnel and country counterparts.

- Development of full evaluation methodology as per (c.1)
- Preparation of a brief inception report
- Conducting interviews virtually for four countries
- Preparation of the draft report
- Incorporating comments from the stakeholders
- Submission of the final report

Expected outputs and delivery dates

The consultant shall deliver a draft report and a final evaluation report, as follows. An inception report will be delivered by 10 August 2022, a draft evaluation report (see outline in Annex I) shall be delivered to DESA by 15 September 2022. The final version will be submitted to DESA by 30 September 2022, after incorporating the comments and suggestions.

Outputs	Target due date
(1) Inception report	10 Aug 2022
(2) Draft report	23 September 2022
(3) Final report	10 October 2022

Fee and payment schedule

The Consultant's fee is $24,000 and payment will be initiated upon successful completion or implementation of expected tasks as mentioned in the schedule below upon certification from the evaluation manager that the tasks have been satisfactorily carried out.

Output	Payment
(1) Inception report	• US$ 4,000
(2) Draft report	• US$ 10,000
(3) Final report	• US$ 10,000

Evaluation ethics

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation' (http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102). The Evaluator should demonstrate independence, impartiality, credibility, honesty, integrity and accountability to avoid any bias in her/his evaluation. The Evaluator must address in the design and implementation of the evaluation, such as procedures to safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers. The Evaluator will follow the standard Code of Conduct which should be carefully read and signed.

Duration of contract

Evaluation will be undertaken from 29 July to 10 September 2022.

Duty Station or Location of Assignment

Home-based.

Travel

Travel to project target countries will only be considered, if the evaluator deems it necessary and with a strong justification. All travel arrangements including travel cost (airfare/DSA/airport transfers) will be organised by DESA except for any visa and COVID-related requirements for project target countries.

Performance Indicators

Compliance with the terms of reference, including timeliness and quality of the deliverables, as assessed by DESA/EAPD:

- o Quality of consultation and data collection process;
- o Clarity of inception outline, presentation of evaluation report and recommendations;
- o Usefulness of evaluation process; and
- o Timeliness of delivery of outputs.

Qualifications

- Advanced university degree (Master's degree or equivalent) in economics, social sciences, development or related field is required. Additional monitoring and evaluation qualifications are an advantage.

- A minimum of 10 years work experience in monitoring and evaluation of programmes or projects in the economics, sustainable development, trade and issues related to LDCs and graduation is required.
- Knowledge and experience of sustainable development in developing countries in particular LDCs, as well as capacity building and training activities is required.
- Country experience and knowledge of Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Myanmar and/or Vanuatu are an advantage.
- Excellent analytical, writing and inter-personal communication skills.
- Fluency in oral and written English is required.

Supervisor/Project Manager:

Name: Mr. Roland Mollerus
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Annex I. Contents of the Evaluation Report

The suggested outline of the report is as follows:

CONTENT	PAGES (estimate)	COMMENTS
Title and Opening pages	1	Title of the evaluation intervention Timeframe of the intervention and date of the evaluation report Countries of the evaluation intervention Name of Evaluator Name of the organization commissioning the evaluations Acknowledgments
Table of contents	1	List of chapters, sections, boxes, tables, figures and annexes with page references
List of acronyms and abbreviations	1	In alphabetical order, these are written out in full the first time they are used in the report
Executive summary	3-4	A stand-alone section that should include: • A brief overview of the intervention (project) • Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and intended users/audience. • Evaluation approach and methodology • Summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations
1. Introduction	1-2	• 1.1 A brief overview of the project, start and end dates, the DA implementing entity(ies) and other collaborating agencies • 1.2 Background of the evaluation including the reason for the evaluation and evaluation timeframe • 1.2 Purpose and objectives and the primary users • 1.3 Scope (including evaluation questions)

CONTENT	PAGES (estimate)	COMMENTS
2. Description of the Intervention	1-3	• 2.1 Background - description of the project context, including key issues addressed by the project and relevant key social, political and economic, demographic and institutional factors • 2.2 Project objectives and expected accomplishments/results • 2.3 Project strategies and key activities • 2.4 Beneficiaries and target countries • 2.5 Key partners and other key stakeholders • 2.6 Resources • 2.7 Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) • 2.8 Innovative Elements (if applicable)
3. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions	1-2	• 3.1 Objective and purpose • 3.2 Scope, criteria and questions
4. Methodology	1-3	• 4.1 Methodological approach and rationale • 4.2 Sampling strategy for qualitative and quantitative data collection methods (surveys, interviews, field visits, etc.) • 4.3 If applicable, criteria used to select countries for field visits or in-depth assessments • 4.4 How gender and human rights perspectives were integrated in the data collection methods and tools, and the data analysis techniques • 4.5 Limitations to the methodology and how they were addressed
5. Findings	5-10	• 5.1 General: supporting information for the performance assessment • 5.2 Performance assessment: assessment against the evaluation criteria • 5.3 Other assessment: assessment against other relevant criteria (optional) • 5.4 Sustainability of the project
6. Lessons learned and conclusions	1-5	• 6.1 Lessons learned and Good Practices • 6.2 General conclusions and comments that follow from the findings • 6.3 Table of ratings of the evaluation, overall rating and additional comments, if any
7. Recommendations	1-3	• Recommendations based on the conclusions, which can be addressed to the project management and staff, project partners, and other relevant stakeholders
Annexes		I. Terms of reference for the evaluation II. Project Results Framework III Evaluation Matrix IV. List of documents reviewed V. List of interviewees

CONTENT	PAGES (estimate)	COMMENTS
		Other annexes as required (e.g. schedule of work undertaken by the Evaluator, inception report, reports of meetings, interview summaries, questionnaires etc.)

Annex II. Role and Responsibilities of the Evaluation Oversight Group

Composition: The Evaluation Oversight Group (EOG) will comprise of four government officials each representing their countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao PDR, Vanuatu) as project recipients.

1. *Bangladesh*: Mr. Anwar Hossain, Joint Secretary, Support to Sustainable Graduation Project, Economic Relations Division, Ministry of Finance. Email: hmanwar6264@gmail.com; Phone: + (880) 02-4811-0742; +(880) 1711-524-185
2. *Bhutan*: Ms. Tashi Choden, Gross National Happiness Commission *(LDC focal point during project period).* Email: tchoden@gnhc.gov.bt; Phone: + (975)
3. *Lao PDR*: Ms. Somphet Viengdalat, MOFA focal point for the mission. Email: viengdalatsomphet@gmail.com; Phone: + (856)
4. *Vanuatu*: Mr. Sanlan William, Head United Nations Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade (MoFAICET). *(Focal point for National Coordinating Committee on LDC Graduation).* Email: swilliam@vanuatu.gov.vu; Phone: + (678) 554-2947

Purpose: The purpose of having an EOG is to encourage direct and strategic engagement of recipient countries in evaluations of projects they have benefited from and to promote shared ownership of project results.
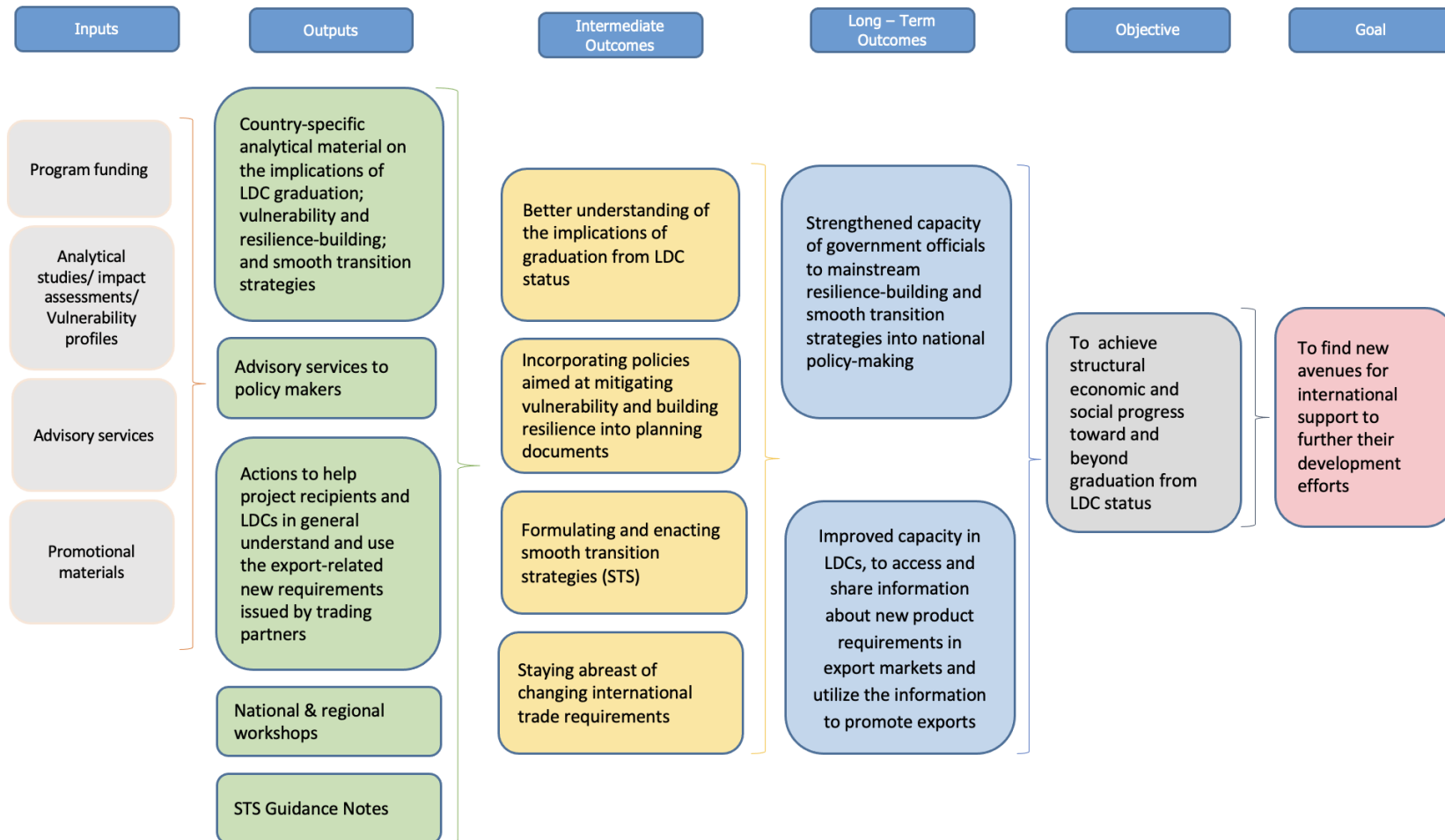
Role and role of the EOG is to provide a country perspective

Role and Responsibilities: The role of the EOG is to provide a holistic country perspective on the project design, implementation including mode of delivery of activities, results achieved and how they have contributed to the targeted impact in their countries. In doing so, the EOG members will be required to:

1. Read all the documents shared by DESA/UNCTAD before the evaluation begins.

2. Engage in three EOG meetings that will occur at various stages of the evaluations:

   a. At inception of the evaluation (**10 Aug 2022**). EOG members will have an opportunity for project partners and DESA/CDPMO to explain the objective and scope of the independent evaluation, strategic role of the oversight group and their schedule of engagement with the evaluator and project.

   b. Draft report stage (**23 September 2022**). The evaluator will share key findings from the desk review and interviews, share a brief outline of the evaluation report and key headlines, and solicit feedback from the EOG.

   c. At the conclusion of the evaluation (**10 October 2022**). EOG will be invited to provide feedback to the Project partners, DESA/CDPMO and evaluator on the evaluation approach and methodology and usefulness of having an EOG as a key part of future project evaluations.

Annex 2: Inferred Theory of Change

Helping LDCs pursue structural economic progress toward and beyond graduation: Inferred ToC

Inputs	Outputs	Intermediate Outcomes	Long – Term Outcomes	Objective	Goal

Inputs:

Program funding

Analytical studies/ impact assessments/ Vulnerability profiles

Advisory services

Promotional materials

Outputs:

Country-specific analytical material on the implications of LDC graduation; vulnerability and resilience-building; and smooth transition strategies

Advisory services to policy makers

Actions to help project recipients and LDCs in general understand and use the export-related new requirements issued by trading partners

National & regional workshops

STS Guidance Notes

Intermediate Outcomes:

Better understanding of the implications of graduation from LDC status

Incorporating policies aimed at mitigating vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents

Formulating and enacting smooth transition strategies (STS)

Staying abreast of changing international trade requirements

Long – Term Outcomes:

Strengthened capacity of government officials to mainstream resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policy-making

Improved capacity in LDCs, to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports

Objective:

To achieve structural economic and social progress toward and beyond graduation from LDC status

Goal:

To find new avenues for international support to further their development efforts

Annex 3: Evaluation Matrix

The following evaluation matrix was used to guide the approach used in this evaluation.

EQ and relevant OECD-DAC criteria	Measure of progress	Data sources	Data analysis & triangulation
EQ 1. To what extent is the project addressing the needs of the beneficiary countries and is perceived to be of value? (**Relevance**)			
1.1. Are the objectives of project still relevant to needs of the beneficiary countries?	• Project objectives align with the needs of the beneficiary countries	• Review of relevant government policy documents • Synthesis of reports • Interviews with key stakeholders	Triangulation across different document sources, checked against interviews
1.2. Is the project seen to be of value to the beneficiary countries	• Contributions made by the project are valued by beneficiary countries • Beneficiary countries appreciate the quality and usefulness of the project deliverables	• Synthesis of progress reports • eSurvey data • Interviews with key stakeholders	Triangulation across reports and survey data, and checked against interviews
EQ 2: To what extent is the project doing the right activities? (**Effectiveness**)			
2.1. Has the choice of activities by the project been appropriate in the light of the overall objectives?	• Planned activities are informed by relevant analysis of the needs of the beneficiary countries • Activities addressed specific needs of the beneficiary countries • Project enhanced capacity • Beneficiary countries are using tools to enhance data driven policy and decision-making • Results-based M&E system facilitated adaptive project management	• Progress and Annual reports • eSurvey data • Interviews with key stakeholders	Triangulation across reports and survey data, and checked against interviews

EQ and relevant OECD-DAC criteria	Measure of progress	Data sources	Data analysis & triangulation
2.2. Were project activities inclusive, and were they implemented in an inclusive way?	• Activities have promoted inclusiveness by engaging with stakeholders at both the national and at local/ provincial level • Activities have promoted inclusiveness by engaging with stakeholders from a wide geographic representation	• Progress and Annual reports • eSurvey data • Interviews with key stakeholders	Triangulation across reports and survey data, and checked against interviews
2.3. Are there activities the project should have implemented but did not?	• Project has been able to adapt to evolving needs and/or changes in policy priorities	• Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across survey data, and checked against interviews
EQ 3: To what extent is the project doing things right? (**Efficiency**)			
3.1. Which activities have worked best and what are the lessons to be drawn from positive experiences?	In effect this sub-question requires conclusions to be drawn from other questions objectives to provide forward looking strategic recommendations		
3.2. To what extent did the project deliver value for money?	• Resources were used cost-effectively • Resources were used in a timely and economic way • Project was able to leverage additional resources or substantive contributions • Project delivered as expected • Project managed and mitigated against risks appropriately and in a timely manner	• Annual reports • Interviews with key stakeholders	Triangulation across different reports, checked against interviews
3.3. How has the program adapted to the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?	• Project used external shocks such as COVID-19 as opportunities to innovate and explore new approaches to implementation of project activities	• Progress reports • Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across reports and survey data, and checked against interviews
3.4. Has the project's governance structure been appropriate to facilitating project strategic intervention,	• The project was well governed and well managed	• Interviews with key stakeholders	Triangulation across interviews

EQ and relevant OECD-DAC criteria	Measure of progress	Data sources	Data analysis & triangulation
implementation and progress towards results and objectives?	• The co-implementation between UNDESA and UNCTAD enabled efficiency		
EQ 4: To what extent will the benefits of the project be sustained? (**Sustainability**)			
4.1. To what extent did the project partners/implementers maximize synergies with earlier work to maintain continuity as well as linkages to emerging and changing needs of the countries?	• Project partners have managed to build on earlier successes to maintain continuity with respect to graduation from LDC status	• Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across survey data, and checked against interviews
4.2. Is it reasonable to expect that the project's activities may have an effect, or a further effect, on graduation from LDC status by the beneficiary countries in the longer term	• Project activities are likely to have an effect on the investment environment in the future	• Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across survey data, and checked against interviews
EQ 5: To what extent have gender & human rights concerns been integrated into this project's design and implementation? (**Gender and Human Rights**)			
5.1. To what extent have UNDESA and UNCTAD promoted and encouraged gender sensitive approaches and gender inclusive participation in the project activities?	• Activities have clearly integrated and addressed gender and human rights issues	• Progress reports • Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across reports and survey data, and checked against interviews
5.2. Is the proportion of the portfolio of activities that addresses gender and human rights issues consistent with expectation at this stage of implementation?	• The project is meeting realistic expectations pertaining to enhancing gender and human rights	• Progress reports • Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across reports and survey data, and checked against interviews
EQ 6: To what extent did the project contribute to beneficiary countries transitioning from LDC status?			

EQ and relevant OECD-DAC criteria	Measure of progress	Data sources	Data analysis & triangulation
(Impact)			
5.1. To what extent did the project strengthen government to mainstream resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policy-making?	• project led to the incorporation of policies and smooth transition measures aimed at mitigating vulnerability and building resilience into planning documents and the formulation of smooth transition strategies in each beneficiary country • counterparts in each government having demonstrated ownership of mainstreaming resilience-building and smooth transition strategies into national policymaking and an ability to implement recommendations from the impact assessments, vulnerability profiles as well as smooth transition strategies	• Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across survey data, and checked against interviews
5.2. To what extent did the project improve capacity to access and share information about new product requirements in export markets and utilize the information to promote exports?	• Counterparts in each government have demonstrated ability to access and share information on new product requirements on export markets • Counterparts in each government are using the ePing tool/platform and information to comply with the requirements and enhance the countries' export performance	• Interviews with key stakeholders • eSurvey data	Triangulation across survey data, and checked against interviews

Annex 4: List of documents received

Completed Activities	Implementing Entity	Remarks
Project Progress Reports: • 2018 • 2019 • 2020 • 2021	UNDESA & UNCTAD	
EA1. A1. A1.1. Three ex-ante impact assessments for **Bangladesh**: IA BGD **Lao PDR**: IA LAO PDR **Myanmar**: IA MYANMAR	UNDESA	Available on the UN Committee for Development Policy (CDP) website
EA1. A1. A1.1. Three vulnerability profiles for **Bangladesh**: VP BGD **Lao PDR**: VP LAO PDR **Myanmar**: VP MYANMAR	UNCTAD	Available on the (CDP) website and on the UNCTAD website
EA1. A1. Additional Activities due to CDP decision to pilot graduation assessments in two countries - Graduation Assessments for Lao PDR: GA LAO PDR Myanmar: GA MYANMAR	UNDESA/UNCTAD	Available on the (CDP) website
EA1. A1. A1.2 Annual Monitoring Report to CDP - BTN White paper with inputs to STS preparatory process issued: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/aldc2021d5_en.pdf	UNCTAD	Available on the UNCTAD website
EA1. A1. A1.2. **Vanuatu**: LDC Portal STS VTU	UNDESA	Available on the LDC Portal website
EA1. A2. A1.3 In-person workshops for Lao PDR: LAO PDR Workshop Gradjet	UNDESA	Available on the LDC Portal website
EA1. A2. A1.3 Vanuatu to prepare STS: STS Preparation VTU Geneva	UNDESA/UNCTAD	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA1. A2. A1.3 Bangladesh virtual workshop on Vulnerability Profile:	UNCTAD	Available in UNCTAD sharepoint
EA1. A2. A1.3 Bangladesh – Mission report on Production Transformation Policy: BGD PTPR Mission Report on national consultations	UNDESA/OECD Development Centre	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA1. A2. Additional to A1.2 Vanuatu to implement national STS: Leadershift Dialogue: VTU Leadershift Dialogue Programme	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA1. A2. Additional to A1.2	UNDESA	

Vanuatu to implement national STS: [Public-Private-Partnership Policy – policy and technical support – Mereseini to provide the documents later today]		
EA2. A3. A2.1 & A.2 (virtual) ePing training materials for Bangladesh: ePing training materials BGD	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA2. A3. A2.1 & A2.2 (in-person) Bhutan: ePing Training Materials BTN	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA2. A3. A2.1 (in-person) Lao PDR: ePing LAO PDR Training materials	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
Ea2. A3. A2.1 & A2.2 (in-person) Myanmar: Capacity Development-Projects-DA-SB-009659-1819F-ePing	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA2. A3. A2.1 & A2.2 (virtual) Vanuatu: ePing Training VTU	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint
EA2. A3. A2.1 ePing Promotional Materials	UNDESA	Available in UNDESA sharepoint

Annex 5: List of key informants

Organisation	Name	Contact Details
UNDESA	Mr. Roland Mollerus	mollerus@un.org
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	Mr. Daniel Gay	DANIEL.GAY@oecd.org
	Ms Marcia Tavares	tavares3@un.org
	Ms. Teresa Lenzi	lenzi@un.org
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	Mr Giovanni Valensisi	Giovanni.Valensisi@untad.org
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	Mr. Nyingtob	norbun@un.org
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UNOHRLLS	Ms. Susanna Wolf	wolf1@un.org
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	Group interview with Bangladesh officials – names listed below	
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	Group interview with Bhutan officials – names listed below	
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	Group interview with Lao PDR officials – names listed below	

Bangladesh On-line Group Discussion

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2	Mr. Mohamad Masud Rana Chowdhury, JS, ERD	Email: mmrcpersonal@gmail.com
3	Mr. A. K. Azad, DS, ERD	akazadjewell@gmail.com
4	Ms Farida Yasmeen, Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Email: farida.yasmeen@mofa.gov.bd Cell - 01761488846
5	Mr. Ziauddin Ahmed, Director, BBS	Email: ziaubd@yahoo.com Cell: 01552411302
6	Mr. Md. Salim Ullah, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Industries	Mobile: 01557863557 E-mail: saspolicy@moind.gov.bd
7	Mr. M. Jahirul Quayum, DS, Finance Division	Email : m.j.quayum@gmail.com Cell: 01819254099
8	Khondoker Mostafizur Rahman NDC, Registrar, DPDT	Email: registrar@dpdt.gov.bd Cell: 01719848840
9	Mr. Mohammad Mozammel Hossain, Director, DGDA	Email: barna1999@yahoo.com

Sl.	Representatives of various organizations	Email and Cell no
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10	Mr. S M Shafiuzzaman Secretary General Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries	Mobile: 01713-095959 E-mail: bdass@bol-online.com
11	Mr. S.M. Jahangir Alam (Manik) Director, FBCCI	Mobile: 01713-004118 E-mail: 1968manik@gmail.com
12	Mr. Asif Ashraf Director, BGMEA	Mobile: 01711-521090 E-mail: asif@urmigroup.net

Bhutan On-line Group Discussion

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4) Tashi Choden <tchoden@gnhc.gov.bt>,
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7) Khedrup Dorji <khedrupd@gnhc.gov.bt>
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Discussion group on ePing

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3) Pem Zam, DOT, MOEA (pzam@moea.gov.bt)
4) Rhea Gurung, DOT,MOEA (rhea.moea@gmail.com)
5) 5.Kuenzang Dorji, DOT,MOEA (kuenzangdorji@moea.gov.bt)
6) Sangay Yeshi, DOT, MOEA (syeshi@moea.gov.bt)

Lao PDR On-line Group Discussion

name/ LAST NAME	Function	Email address
1. Mr. Daovy VONGXAY	Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Head of Delegation)	daovyvongxay@gmail.com
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6. Mrs. Sisavanh DIDARAVONG	Deputy Director General of Development Research Institute (DRI)	didaravongs@gmail.com
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8. Mr. Vilaysook SISOULATH	Deputy Director General of Social Statistic Department, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment	vilaysooks@gmail.com
9. Ms. Sengphet SENGMEUNG	Deputy Director of Statistic and Information Center, Department of Planning and Cooperation, Ministry of Industry and Commerce	Sengpheths@gmail.com
10. Ms. Souvipha INTHAVONG	Deputy-Director of Multilateral Trade Division, Department of Foreign Trade Policy, Ministry of Industry and Commerce	s.inthavong@laoftpd.com

Annex 6: Survey Data[3]

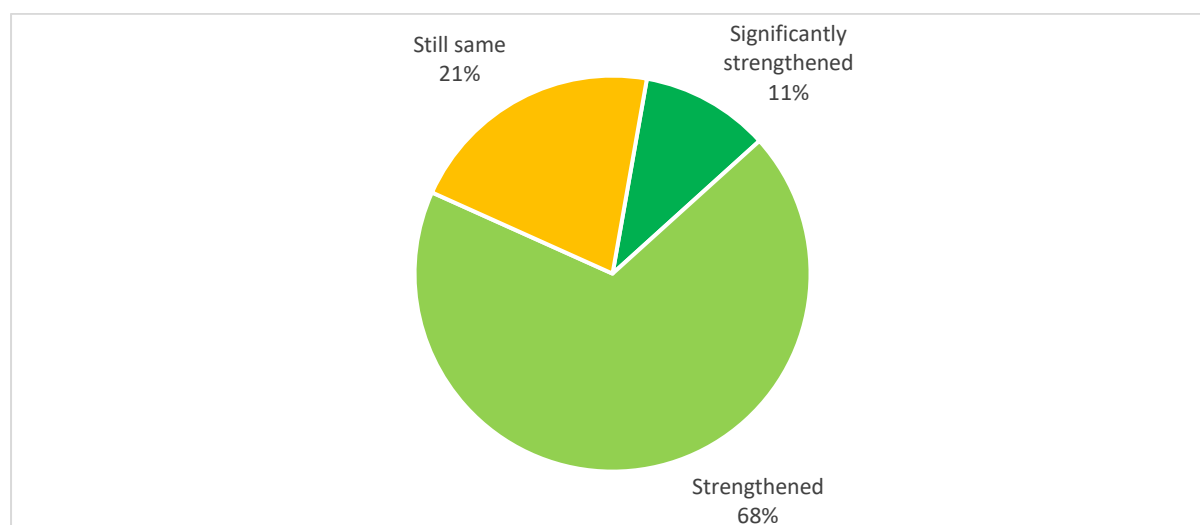*Figure 7: Q3. Rate the following support provided by the project to your Ministry*
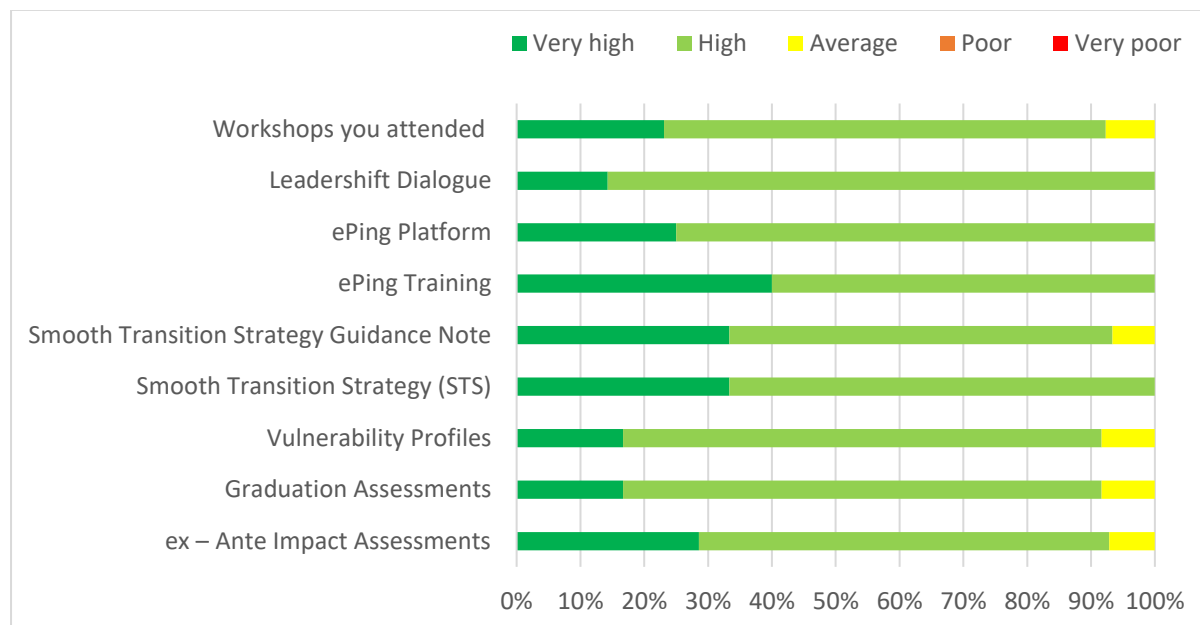
*Figure 8: Q4. To what extent do you believe that your Ministry's capacity has been strengthened to allow it to **help develop national policies** which will promote a smooth transition from LDC status?*

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[3] Responses to the closed questions only.

*Figure 9: Q6. To what extent do you believe that your Ministry's capacity has been strengthened to allow it to **access and share information to promote exports**?*
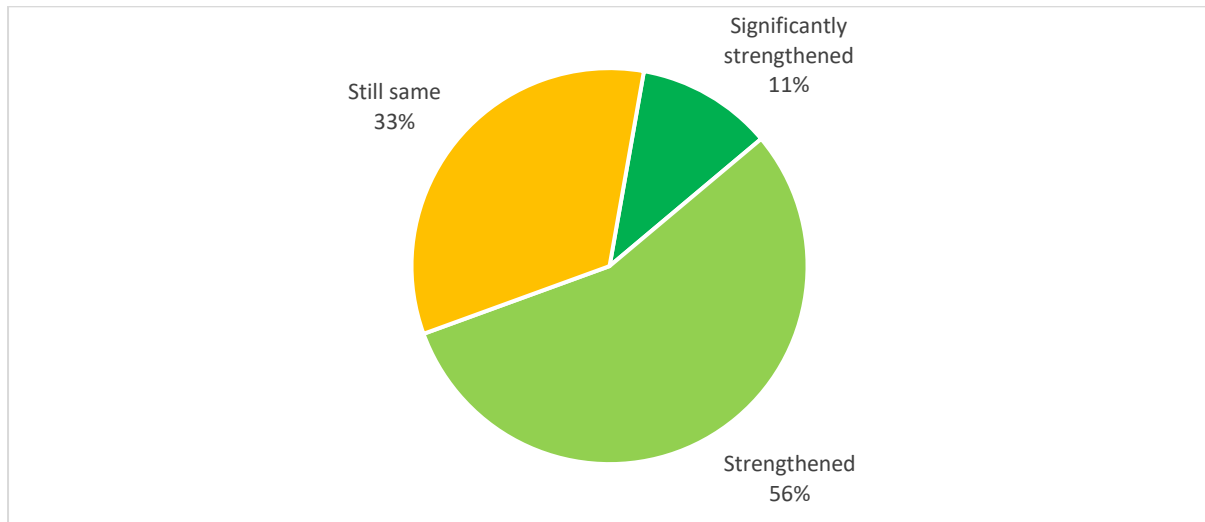
Figure 10: Q8. Thinking about your Ministry's interaction with the project, how strongly would you disagree or agree with the following statements:
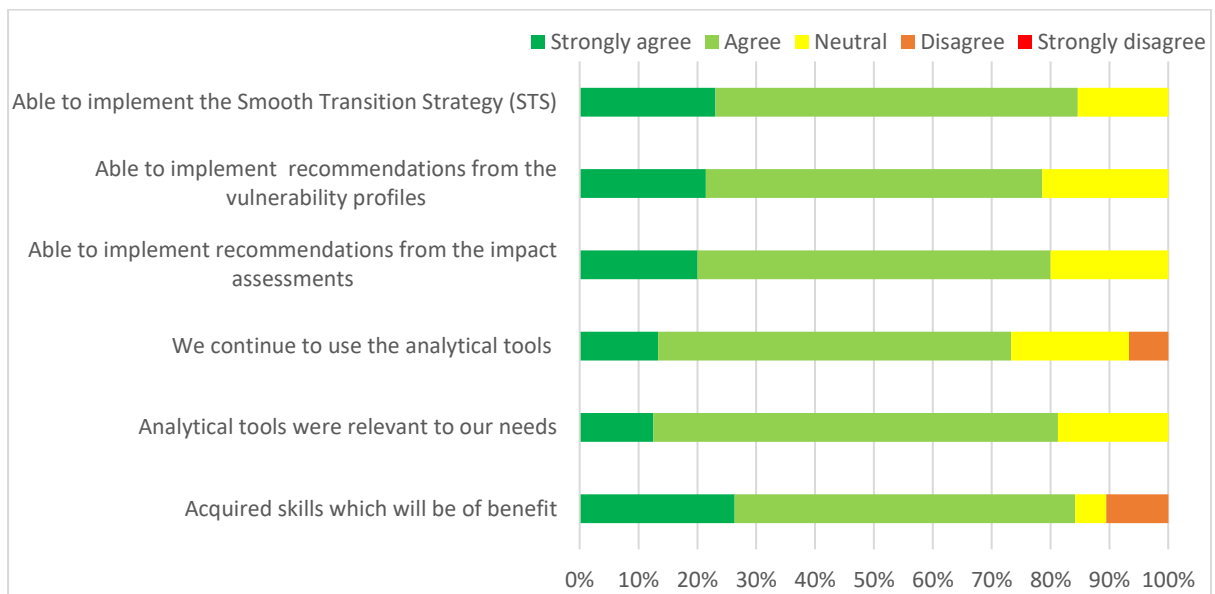
Figure 11: Q8 CONT'D. Thinking about your Ministry's interaction with the project, how strongly would you disagree or agree with the following statements
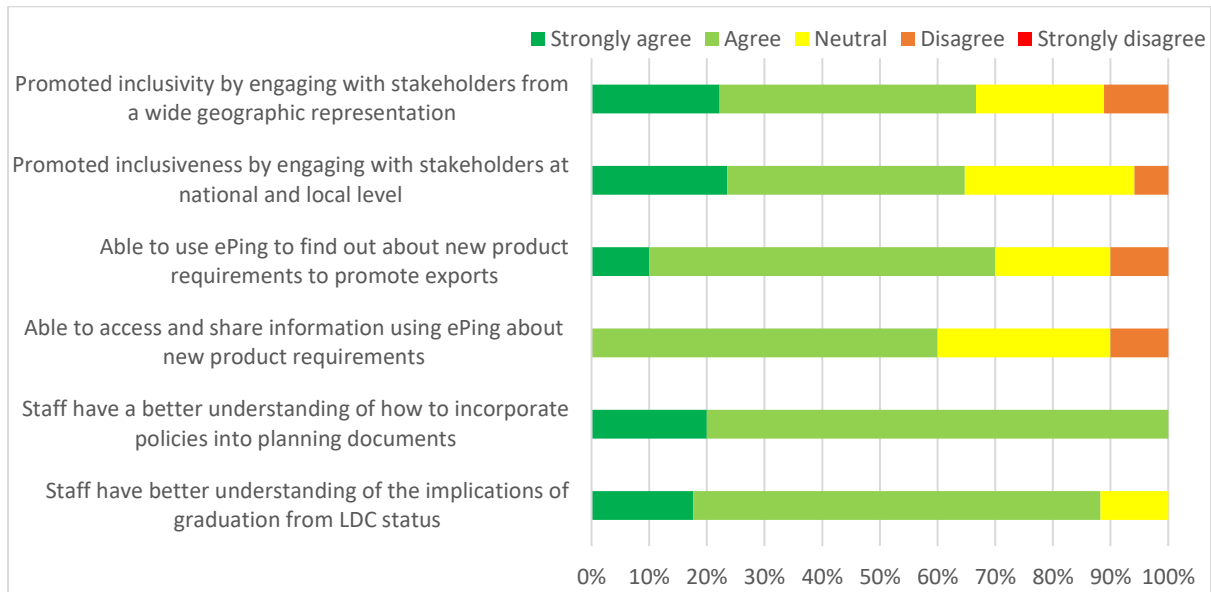

Figure 12: Q8 CONT'D. Thinking about your Ministry's interaction with the project, how strongly would you disagree or agree with the following statements:
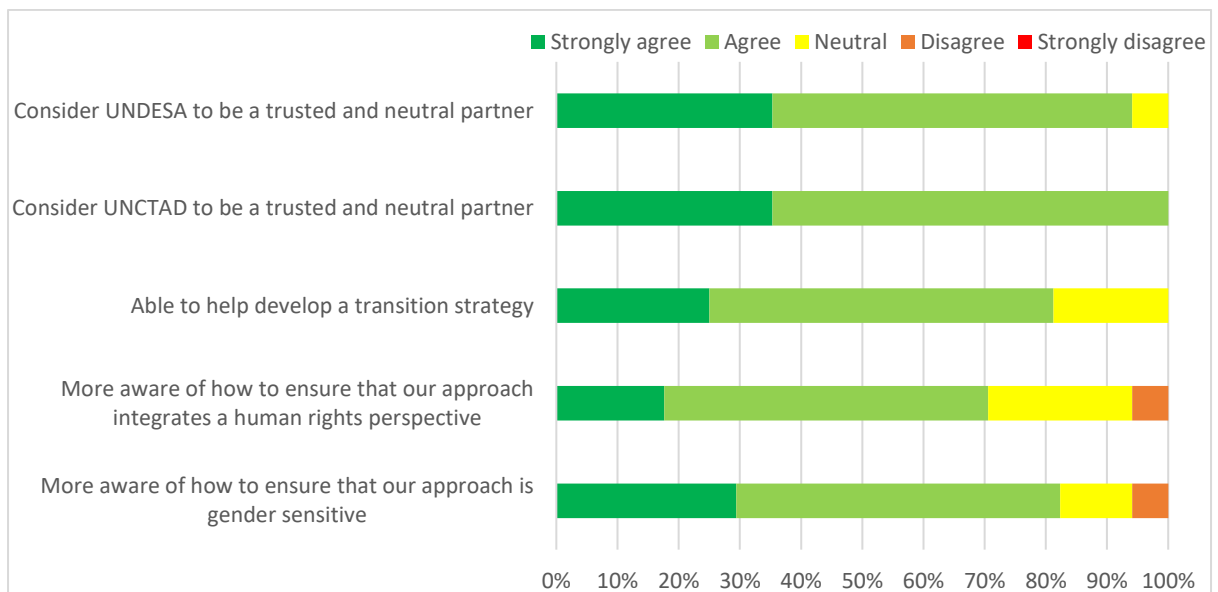
Figure 13: Q9. As a result of COVID-19, the project had to make various changes in how the different activities were delivered. Please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects: