UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

External Terminal Evaluation of the "Technical Support to Eligible Parties to Produce the Sixth National Report (6NR)" Project

Funded by the GEF (Global Environment Facility)

Implemented by UNDP

Under four different project documents covering 64 countries in Latin America, Asia and in mixed regions:

1) UNDP-GEF PIMS ID 6114 LAC – GEF ID Nr 9821 – 17 countries
2) UNDP-GEF PIMS ID 6125 Asia – GEF ID Nr 9826 – 17 countries
3) UNDP-GEF PIMS ID 6126 Mixed – GEF ID Nr 9827 – 17 countries
4) UNDP-GEF PIMS ID 6127 LACII – GEF ID Nr 9840 – 13 countries

By: Christian Bugnion de Moreta, Evaluator

Evaluation timeline: 28th February 2020 to 20th June 2020

Final TE report date: 20th June 2020

Note: the contents of this report reflect the views of the evaluator and not necessarily those of the commissioning agency

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ABT: Aichi Biodiversity Targets

CBD: Convention on Biological Diversity

CO: Country Office (UNDP)

DAC :   Development Assistance Committee

GEF: Global Environment Facility

GPT: Global Project Team

GRES: Gender Results Effectiveness Scale

IEO: Independent Evaluation Office

IRH: Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and CIS (UNDP)

KII: Key Informant Interview

LAC: Latin America and the Caribbean

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

NBSAP: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan

OECD : Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

PB: Project Board

PCU: Project Coordination Unit

PIR: Project implementation report

PME: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

RF: Results Framework

TE: Terminal Evaluation

ToC: Theory of Change

ToR :   Terms of Reference

TPA: Technical Project Advisor

UNBL: United Nations Biodiversity Lab

UNDG: United Nations Development Group

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNEG : United Nations Evaluation Group

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

USD: United States Dollars

6NR: Sixth National Report on Biodiversity to the Convention on Biological Diversity

Executive Summary

Overview of the evaluation object

The current report constitutes the Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project "Technical Support to Eligible Parties to produce the Sixth National Report to the CBD (6NR)". The project started on 29th November 2017 for an initial period of two years, up to 29th November 2019. It obtained a seven-months no-cost extension, and ends on 30th June 2020, after 31 months of implementation. The 6NR project is divided into four Project Documents which each cover one region: Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) I, LAC II, Asia, Mixed Regions covering 64 countries in total (3 projects covering each 17 countries and the LAC II 6127 project covering 13 countries). The total budget for the four project documents is US$ 7,392,000 funded by the GEF Trust Fund and US$ 400,000 by UNDP (US$ 100,000 per project document) excluding the government co-financing.

Evaluation objectives and intended audience

The purpose of this TE is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of the four GEF projects on the preparation of the 6NR in line with the project Results Framework (RF) (hereafter collectively referred to as "6NR project").

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of the project's results, and to draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of the benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming.

The TE audience is primarily UNDP, the GEF and the CBD Secretariat, as well as the countries covered by the project. It is undertaken under the oversight of the UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH). The appointed evaluation manager is also the Technical Project Advisor, while deliverables are cleared by the Chief, UNDP IRH.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach, including:

a) Review/analysis of the project documentation (as listed in the inception report, plus the additional outputs produced by the global project team and listed in the bibliographical annex);

b) 40 Key Informant Interviews (KII) with the national counterparts in eight sample countries (16 persons), the project team (4 persons), UNDP Country Offices (7 countries and 11 persons), 6NR consultants (8 persons), UNDP GEF Regional Technical Adviser (1 person), UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (2 persons), and Secretariat to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) staff (1 person), as defined under the sampling strategy.

Key informant interviews are semi-structured in-depth interviews with respondents using a questionnaire to ensure coherence, consistency, and comparability of results. It includes a perception-based rating scale in line with GEF requirements (six-points for

some criteria, four points or binomial for others) and also leveraged qualitative justification from the KII ratings.

Table 1 KII from evaluator's notes (see complete list in corresponding annex)

Key Informants interviewed	Total	M	F
National institutions (8 countries)	16	4	12
UNDP country office (7 countries)	11	3	8
Consultants (7 countries)	8	2	6
Global project/Regional institutions	8	3	5
Total	**43**	**12**	**31**

For appraising the effects generated by the project, contribution analysis was used to infer the causality about the factors that led to such effects.

No travel or data collection in any country took place, all interviews were done using remote communication means such as Skype, Zoom, MS Teams, from the evaluator's home office location. The total interview time is 41 hours, an average of somewhat over one hour per KII.

Sampling strategy

As indicated in the inception report, a purposive sampling strategy was used to identify eight countries in which the evaluator would interview at least: a) one national counterpart; b) the UNDP CO; c) the consultant recruited to elaborate the 6NR. The eight countries were: **Costa Rica, Haiti, Viet Nam, Algeria, Jamaica, Venezuela, Samoa, and Afghanistan**. Only for Vietnam it was not possible to interview b) and c) and thus one national counterpart was interviewed.

Most important findings and conclusions

The project **implementation** was highly satisfactory. The project objective was fully achieved, and the RF target indicators were easy to track, to report on and were all attained. Data from Project Closure Reports in survey form collected by the UNDP Global Project Team shows that 55 countries strongly agreed or agreed they received effective support (versus seven countries providing a neutral answer and one country disagreeing) during project implementation. Both exit survey data analysis and KII support this rating. All countries interviewed indicated the usefulness of the tools and technical support materials that were provided during the project proved critical to enhance the quality of the 6NR in line with the project requirements.

The actual quality of execution could not be evaluated as there was no strong evidence-base allowing to rate 64 different UNDP CO across each participating country and no rating could be provided on the country-level execution. Nonetheless, globally **execution** was estimated to be satisfactory as the project achieved its expected objective and results. In this particular project where the implementation and execution are both done by UNDP, the evaluator has understood implementation to be related to

the responsibility of the UNDP IRH and the Global Project Team (or GPT, equivalent to the Project Coordination Unit mentioned in the project document, but not used in reports and outputs), while the execution has been individually performed by the UNDP CO in each country.

The GPT showed adaptive management during implementation in reviewing two of the project components: the initially overambitious gender target indicator and the excessively short timeframe to enable countries to submit the 6NR. Both these aspects were presented to the Project Board and as a result the gender target indicator was revised to 50% and the GEF approved a seven-months no-cost extension of the project until 30th June 2020.

The GPT came up with a strong tool to provide an evidence-base for appraising progress and results. **Administering an exit survey to the 64 countries proved highly informative** and gave rise to two types of analytical reports: a) a Project Closure Report Analysis (by project code, in total 4 reports), and b) one Analysis of Gender Responsiveness Report covering all four projects and 64 countries, all prepared in April 2020. This information was useful for the evaluation in order to triangulate findings. **This initiative is a good practice example and should be replicated in future projects.**

A more robust project design, as defined in the UNDP GEF project documents, would have more clearly guided project implementation and execution at the country level. It is weak in that it did not follow the corporate guidance for project development, as it lacked a researched baseline, a theory of change, had limited explanation regarding planning assumptions, and did not address the capacity development strategy to any significant extent. The Results Framework was not formulated according to the RBM principles and corporate guidance documents such as the UNDP PME Handbook. The inclusion of gender as a main requirement was insufficiently explained in the project document and was established without taking into consideration the different operating environment of the 64 countries or using a tool to group the countries according to their level of gender mainstreaming (i.e. using the Gender Seal Certification). The global development challenge was stated, and the governance and management arrangements were clear, though not fully detailed.

The assessment of outcomes show that all ratings are satisfactory or higher. While **project effectiveness is globally rated as satisfactory, some aspects are also highly satisfactory**. **If effectiveness is measured only by the RF indicators, then the rating would be HS.** However, there are different layers of results which are described in the body of the report and their aggregate ratings lead to a global rating of satisfactory. It is strongest on the technical support level and methodological approach, while improvements in the framing gender components and the project design that are outlined in the project document, which drives implementation, are warranted. The project is relevant and has been efficiently managed, although the allocation of resources is a matter of discussion. If countries had a longer timeline to prepare the 6NR, more work could have been done at the country level to widen the already inclusive consultation and data collection processes.

The report identifies significant effects as a result of the project on different levels. This shows that the project played a catalytic role not only in the preparation and submission of the 6NR, but more generally in enhancing awareness, visibility and understanding of biodiversity in the countries and has leveraged strong national ownership. The evaluator recognises the standard-setter role played by UNDP in global projects driving the global agenda.

The **ratings regarding sustainability are also only partially available**. Two of the aspects related to sustainability, namely the socio-political and institutional frameworks appraisals, are not within the remit of the evaluator to assess from a global project of 64 countries each with its socio-political and institutional framework. It is suggested that a specific guidance be prepared for evaluations of global projects, particularly regarding the sustainability, impact and execution criteria.

Table 2 Evaluation ratings as per Annex D of the TOR using the GEF rating scales

Evaluation Ratings:			
a) **Monitoring and Evaluation**	rating	b) **IA & EA execution**	rating
M&E design at entry	**MU**	Quality of UNDP Implementation	**HS**
M&E Plan Implementation	**HS**	Quality of Execution – Executing Agency	**N/A**
Overall quality of M&E	**S**	Overall quality of Implementation/Exec.	**HS/ N/A**
c) **Assessment of Outcomes**	rating	d) **Sustainability**	rating
Relevance	**R**	Financial Resources	**ML**
Effectiveness[1]	**S**	Socio-political	**U/A**
Efficiency	**S**	Institutional framework & governance	**U/A**
Overall project outcome rating	**S**	Environmental	**L**
Impact (effects)	**S**	Overall likelihood of sustainability	**N/A**

RATING SCALES

Ratings for Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution	*Sustainability ratings:*	*Relevance ratings*
6: Highly Satisfactory (HS): no shortcomings 5: Satisfactory (S): minor shortcomings 4: Moderately Satisfactory (MS) 3: Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): significant shortcomings 2: Unsatisfactory (U): major problems 1: Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): severe problems	4. Likely (L): negligible risks to sustainability 3. Moderately Likely (ML):moderate risks 2. Moderately Unlikely (MU): significant risks 1. Unlikely (U): severe risks	2. Relevant (R) 1. Not relevant (NR) *Impact Ratings:* 3. Significant (S) 2. Minimal (M) 1. Negligible (N)
Additional ratings where relevant: Not Applicable (N/A) Unable to Assess (U/A		

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[1] Effectiveness has been broken down according to the different project components and the current rating is the overall effectiveness rating. Some components achieved HS ratings.

Conclusions

The project was ambitious and complex given its scope and the number and variety of participating countries. The actual implementation of the project was strong, despite a project design that could be improved to include the corporate guidance on RBM and PME. At the global level, a lean but effective GPT with the support of the UNDP IRH was able to ensure the project remained on track to achieve the overall objectives. Countries themselves were generally satisfied with the support provided by the project, particularly the technical support received and the methodology used, which enabled them to produce the 6NR in many cases with high quality and in all cases showing improvement over past NRs. Articulation between the global project team, UNDP IRH, UNDP country offices, consultants and national counterparts was generally positive and contributed to the achievement of the results.

Main recommendations

a) For future implementation

1. Use the 2-pager map synthesis from Samoa as a visual good practice model to be used for all future NR
2. Consider having a nominated and dedicated 6NR focal point in government in the countries to support the elaboration of the NR
3. Facilitate access to vetted technical consultant roster for countries to draw from[2]
4. Preferably invite countries to use national consultants where available, but pairing international consultants with local consultants
5. Provide funds to better communicate and visualize the results of the 6NR through local level dissemination activities once the report is complete
6. Identify how to support the creation of a centralised biodiversity data management information system in governments, especially for spatial data
7. Continue and strengthen technical support in spatial data, GIS and map production capacities, and the availability of the UN Biodiversity Lab for national use
8. More efforts and funds to hold initial in-person regional workshops to set countries on the "right track" and increase interactive exchanges amongst countries
9. Ensure a two-year timeline from the moment the countries obtain the funds until the deadline for submitting the NR (bear in mind that many countries have a lengthy government endorsement process over which the project has no say)
10. Consider alternative implementation arrangements direction through the GPT for those countries that would prefer to have their ministry/agency operate under a NIM rather than a DIM modality
11. Maintain multi-lingual capacities for these global projects (at least English-French-Spanish) to engage with countries

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[2] Despite the fact that the GPT indicated that a spatial roster in three languages was developed and not one country used it, several respondents during the KII indicated that a roster of vetted experts would be useful. The evaluator did not triangulate whether the respondents were aware of the spatial roster.

b) For future projects - CBD

12. Review the format of the CBD reporting template[3]

c) For future project design – UNDP - GEF

13. Strengthen project design through enhanced consultation and review by an RBM expert
14. Review GEF evaluation guidance template and consider preparing specific guidance for global projects that cover large number of countries so criteria (execution, impact, sustainability) and rating scales are suited to the object of the project
15. Address gender mainstreaming through a differentiated approach based on the level of national gender mainstreaming and prioritisation (by groups of countries)
16. Include a section on the capacity development strategy for technical support projects.

1. Introduction

Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of this Terminal Evaluation is to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance of four GEF projects on the preparation of the 6NR in line with the project Results Framework (RF) as described in each of the project documents (pages 17 to 19). Note that all four projects have similar RFs, the only change being the number of countries involved (e.g. given different number of target countries per project).

The UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub for Europe and CIS (IRH) has hired an independent consultant to undertake the Terminal Evaluation of the Project: "Technical Support to Eligible Parties to produce the Sixth National Report to the CBD (6NR)". The project started on 29th November 2017 for an initial period of two years, up to 29th November 2019. It obtained a seven-months no-cost extension, and ends on 30th June 2020, after 31 months of implementation. The 6NR project is divided into four project documents, each covering one region: Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) I, LAC II, Asia, Mixed Regions covering 64 countries in total (3 projects covering each 17 countries and the LAC II 6127 project covering 13 countries). The total budget for the four project documents is US$ 7,392,000 funded by the GEF Trust Fund and US$ 400,000 by UNDP (US$ 100,000 per project document) excluding the government co-financing. According to the information from UNDP IRH that is responsible for project implementation the co-funding figures are as follows:

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[3] Based on the feedback from several respondents from sample countries indicating the reporting template could be revised and improved.

Table 3: Project budget and co-financing as per UNDP IRH information 2020[4] as of 18th June 2020

Co-financing (type/ source)	UNDP own financing (US$)		Government (US$)		Total (US$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
6114 Financial/ In-kind support	100,000.00	109,999.02	1,080,000.00	876,949.40	1,180,000.00	986,948.42
6125 Financial/ In-kind support	100,000.00	109,999.02	2,021,901.91	3,332,729.42	2,121,901.91	3,442,728.42
6126 Financial/ In-kind support	100,000.00	109,999.02	1,622,500.00	1,384,679.80	1,722,500.00	1,494,678.82
6127 Financial/ In-kind support	100,000.00	109,999.02	591,000.00	606,538.99	691,000.00	716,538.01
TOTAL	**400,000.00**	**439,996.08**	**5,315,401.91**	**6,200,897.61**	**5,715,401.91**	**6,640,893.67**

In terms of the co-financing, the countries that have not yet confirmed the information are the following:
PIMS 6114 (LAC): St.Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia
PIMS 6127 (MIX): Grenada

Notwithstanding the co-financing for the above three countries where data has not been yet received, the table shows an increase from planned to actual co-financing of 16.7%.

As the project is coming to completion and in line with UNDP and GEF rules and procedures, the current Terminal Evaluation is being commissioned by UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH).

Scope and Methodology

The <u>scope</u> of the TE is the full implementation period of the projects (29th November 2017 until the time the evaluation is being carried out, May 2020).

<u>Methodology</u>:

As requested in the TOR, the evaluation follows the "Guidance for conducting terminal evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed projects" established by the UNDP

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[4] Note from the IRH – the COVID situation made it impossible for us to collect the information in the standard GEF template and very difficult to obtain detailed data. Some countries are missing particularly from the Caribbean, hence the figures on two projects are lower than planned.

Evaluation Office in June 2012, which are compatible with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) evaluation norms and standards (2017 revision). The TE also adheres to the UNEG ethical guidelines for evaluation. The TE also uses the recent IEO UNDP evaluation guidelines of January 2019 as reference material.

The five criteria for undertaking the assessment are mentioned in the ToR and are the standard criteria used for project evaluations and as requested in the GEF M&E policy: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

The definition of each of the evaluation criterion has been given by the OECD/DAC glossary of key terms in evaluation and results-based management in 2002 and have been reviewed in 2019 as follows[5] :

"Relevance: The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries', global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change
Efficiency: The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way
Effectiveness: The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.
Impact: The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.
Sustainability: The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue."[6]

Tools and methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach including:

a) Review/analysis of the project documentation (as listed in the inception report, plus the additional outputs produced by the global project team and listed in the bibliographical annex),
b) 40 Key Informant Interviews (KII) with the national counterparts in eight sample countries (16 persons), the project team (4 persons), UNDP Country Offices (7 countries), UNDP GEF Regional Technical adviser (1 person), UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (2 persons), UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) staff (1 person), as defined further under the sampling strategy.

KII are semi-structured in-depth interviews with respondents using a questionnaire to ensure coherence, consistency, and comparability of results. It included a perception-

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[5] OECD/DAC, Better Criteria for Better Evaluation, Revised Evaluation Criteria, Definitions and Principles for use, 2019
[6] The TE TOR mention these terms as "concepts" and use a definition which is more specifically tailored to the UNDP mandate. They can be used as defined in the TOR except where the more recent definitions (e.g. efficiency and impact) are found to be more adequate. For impact, the evaluator addressed essentially the effects generated by the project and not the actual impact on biodiversity itself, considering the project is a capacity development project aiming at developing a 6th national report.

based rating scale in line with GEF requirements (six-points for some criteria, four points or binomial for others) and obtain qualitative justification of the ratings from the KII.

Table 4: KII from evaluator's notes (see complete list in corresponding annex)

Key Informants interviewed	Total	M	F
National institutions (8 countries)	16	4	12
UNDP country office (7 countries)	11	3	8
Consultants (7 countries)	8	2	6
global project/Regional institutions	7	3	5
Total	43	12	31

For appraising the effects generated by the project, contribution analysis was used to infer the causality between the identified effects and the factors that led to such effects.

No travel or data collection in any country took place, all interviews were done using remote communication means such as Skype, Zoom and MS Teams, from the evaluator's home office location. The total interview time is 41 hours, an average of somewhat over one hour per KII.

Sampling strategy

As indicated in the inception report a purposive sampling strategy was used to identify eight countries in which the evaluator would interview at least: a) one national counterpart, b) the UNDP CO, c) the consultant recruited to elaborate the 6NR. The eight countries were **Costa Rica, Haiti, Viet Nam, Algeria, Jamaica, Venezuela, Samoa and Afghanistan**. Only for Vietnam it was not possible to interview b) and c) and only one national counterpart was interviewed.

The Evaluator

Christian Bugnion de Moreta has completed 104 evaluations for donors, UN agencies and NGOs over the past 25 years. He is a former member of the Board of the Spanish Evaluation Society and former member of the SEVAL and European Evaluation Society. He is a vetted M&E expert and RBM trainer by the UNDP Panama and Istanbul Regional Hubs, and has trained 294 officials from government and UN agencies over the past ten years on RBM and M&E.

Evaluation constraints and limitations

The evaluation was undertaken during the COVID19 lock-down period and this made access to some information and countries more difficult. In particular, the usual GEF co-financing table could not be fully completed by the UNDP IRH as many UNDP CO and national governments did not have these details available during their work-from-home situations.

Another limitation was that none of the respondents identified in the evaluation TOR were part of the project design set forth in the project document. As the evaluation identified a number of improvements related to the project design, it would have been

useful to discuss these issues with the persons responsible for elaborating the project document during its development.

The enormous volume of documents produced under this project (such as 64 NR, 64 Technical Reviews, all tools, products and outputs of the GPT, Project Implementation Report (PIR), financial reports, monitoring reports, and PB meetings) means that a long preparation time is necessary for this type of evaluation, particularly in order to develop the inception report. The GPT acted as evaluation manager and showed flexibility within the evaluation timeline to accommodate the large documentary review necessary for this evaluation, while clearance for evaluation deliverables was given by the UNDP IRH.

Finally, some of the criteria (e.g. expected results regarding impact as mentioned in the TOR, or certain aspects of sustainability) could not be evaluated given the nature of the project. Similarly, considering that each UNDP CO was the executing agency in the 64 countries, it was not possible to make an evidence-based appraisal of the quality of the execution, although anecdotal evidence is contained in the evaluation report. Specific TOR and evaluation guidance documents for global projects should be developed.

Structure of the evaluation report

The report is structured as per Annex F of the TOR and includes an opening page, an executive summary structured according to the UNEG quality checklist for evaluation reports consisting of five pages, a list of acronyms and abbreviations, an introduction, a project description, a findings section and the corresponding conclusions, recommendations and lessons, as well as the annexes.

2. Project description and development context

The project was initially established with a twenty-four months' implementation period. It started its activities on 29th November 2017 and received a no-cost extension of seven months until its current deadline of 30th June 2020.

The project's overall objective is "**To provide financial and technical support to GEF-eligible parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in their work to develop high quality, gender-responsive and data driven sixth national reports (6NR) that will improve national decision-making processes for the implementation of NBSAPS; that report on progress towards achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABTs) and inform both the fifth Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO5) and the Global Biodiversity Strategy of 2021-2030".**

In order to achieve this objective, the project has identified the following **three specific outcomes**:

1. A functional Steering Committee (SC) is formed to prepare the 6NR, project timelines and methods are developed, funding is mobilized, and training and capacity building activities are complete
2. Stakeholder owned reports for each ABT and/or national equivalent are produced and compiled
3. A stakeholder owned 6th national report is produced and submitted to the CBD

The outcomes are supported by the following outputs:

Outcome 1 outputs:
1.1 The SC is formed, roles for the preparation of the 6NR are assigned, and a production plan and timeline is developed
1.2 Necessary project funding and resources are acquired, including the submission of an Annual Work Plan and a Letter of Authorization and the identification of other funding sources as needed
1.3 Participation in training and capacity building opportunities on the use of the CBD online reporting tool and the development of data that reports on progress in achieving the targets and activities in the post-2010 NBSAP

Outcome 2 outputs:
2.1. Scoping report/zero draft for each ABT and/or national equivalent is prepared
2.2. Consultations with stakeholders are undertaken to verify data and progress assessments and address information gaps for each ABT.
2.3. Report for each ABT and/or national equivalent are developed, which strive to be gender responsive, considering the resources and timeframe of the project in each country.

Outcome 3 outputs:
3.1 The draft 6NR is compiled, undergoes a technical peer review, revised and finalized
3.2 The 6NR is validated and officially submitted to the CBD

The 6NR Project is a technical and capacity development support project to allow the 64 countries covered through the four project documents to prepare the 6NR in line with their obligations under the CBD. The main stakeholders are the governmental institutions in the 64 countries, in addition to the CBD, UNDP IRH, CO, and GEF[7].

No baseline data was researched from past national reports produced and all targets of the Results Framework started from a baseline of zero.

3. Findings
3.1.   Project Design/formulation

None of the GPT members or any of the key informants interviewed were involved in the project design or its formulation. It is understood that the four projects were designed by UNDP GEF Secretariat-HQ, after consultations with the UNDP COs and GEF operational focal points in the countries, and have been finalized for Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) submission by UNDP GEF and then transferred to the IRH.

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[7] Note that the consultative process in each country also included non-governmental agencies, NGOs, private sector

Although IRH requested feedback from the different UNDP COs and virtual regional inception workshops were held, there was no budget for a regional stakeholder planning workshop at the onset of the project, at least, none that followed the guidance from UNDP's PME handbook[8] using the tools mentioned on pages 25 to 30[9]. Considering the variety of stakeholders involved: UNDP, GEF, CBD Secretariat, IRH, UNDP COs and government counterparts in 64 countries, it might have been preferable to hold a joint planning workshop with at least a sample of stakeholders, in order to include in the project design the problem tree analysis, solution pathway, results chain (as per the UNDP PME Handbook chapters 2 and 3) and thereby clarify further the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders (CBD, GEF, UNDP IRH, UNDP CO, but particularly National Entities). While such a consultative process might lead to further delay in the actual start of the individual country 6NR elaboration process, it may in fact compensate the lead time given that the expectations from each stakeholder will be better understood and in particular how the countries can integrate the contents of a "Global" project to their operating environment. Further efforts to streamline the process through a more participatory basis during the design phase of the project may provide subsequent implementation gains and more timely delivery given a better understanding of the participating countries' specific roles and responsibilities.

The current project documents directly translated the expected results at the country level but do not detail how each player and level is involved, nor to what extent, in the accomplishment of the results[10]. Furthermore, the projects do not include a Theory of Change that articulates the elements that lead to a vision for success, which is the first point when looking at project evaluability[11]. Given the complexity of global projects and the fact that each stakeholder has a different level of responsibility, more consultative mechanisms at the design stage may be warranted, and UNDP GEF Secretariat HQ should consider also incorporating an RBM expert in revising the formulation of the results framework to align it to the corporate use of terms such as "outcome" at the end of the project design phase.

While it is clear that the global project(s) were developed and funded by the GEF Trust Fund in support of the CBD to allow 64 countries to submit a "high quality, data driven and gender-responsive 6NR", the different roles played by the IRH, the UNDP Country Offices, and the National Parties could have been more clearly specified.

The assumptions that should drive the project design are not clearly stipulated, but a risk management matrix is presented. The UNDP comparative advantage stems from

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[8] UNDP handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results, 2009, and June 2011 Addendum, http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/documents/english/pme-handbook.pdf
[9] GPT comment: each country received funds to do this type of work during its project inception. It just was not done regionally or globally across the four projects.
[10] KII showed that despite the fact that the project document had been shared with the participating countries, a number of respondents did not feel that the roles and responsibilities of each actor involved in the project was sufficiently clear as the focus was mostly placed on the global project results in the project document.
[11] As per IEO UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, January 2019, point 4.2. table 1

Section V of the project document, which states the effectiveness of an umbrella program mechanism, and that without GEF funds the countries may not be able to develop the 6NR, or do so on too late of a timeline to be meaningful. It is further stated that related capacity building needs will be addressed by the UNDP GPT.

The development challenge is explicitly stated but draws on learning from a range of past different events (various COPs, 3 to 5NR, CBD, etc.) so it is not always noticeably clear which aspect is being addressed by whom and to what purpose. The development challenge is clearly mentioned at the global level.

The management structure is clearly identified in the project design. The project showed a very lean structure in relation to the complexity of the tasks and the challenges linked to having four different projects perform under a shared objective and similar RF with individual reporting for each of the four projects. GPT indicated that the two project design options included submitting four medium-sized projects that bundled countries or 64 individual projects. This resulted in four different projects with different project codes, which means that the project management requirements are four-fold those required for a single project. However, due to project timelines driven by CBD reporting requirements, submission of one large full-sized project was not possible.

None of the sample countries where KII took place indicated any problems in relation with the project management structure, and the UNDP CO had regular contacts with the GPT, so the management arrangements seemed to be satisfactory.

The inclusion of gender is entirely justified from the UN's normative frameworks. However, the project could have benefited further from a differentiated approach in line with the different manners in which countries have the capacity to incorporate (or not) gender in their national reporting efforts. Furthermore, exit survey data and interviews show that the biggest challenge for countries is to access to sex-disaggregated data, as it is often missing. Using the gender seal to provide differentiated support to groups of countries could help design a realistic approach to gender mainstreaming for future technical support projects. In the project, there are countries that came out as clear examples of being gender champions, while others did not place gender as their main priority. It is also important for UNDP to be aware that gender vocabulary (e.g. as used by UNDP in the Gender results effectiveness five-point scale of gender-negative, gender-blind, gender-targeted, gender-responsive, gender-transformative applied in the IEO GEWE evaluation of 2015 p. XV[12]) has recently been translated in French or Spanish and is being used by the IEO through the translated GRES tool[13], although it was not available at the time the 6NR project was initiated. Future global projects should be mindful of including in the design a differentiated approach to gender reflecting the country's situation.

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[12] UNDP IEO, Evaluation of UNDP contribution to Gender Equality and omen's Empowerment, August 2015
[13] Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)

The RF for the 6NR should also include ranges (such as from 75% to 95% or above) instead of set targets: 100% across the 64 countries for all components may not be a technically-informed target, particularly when there is no baseline (something that could have been researched from 3 to 5NR). Stating a 100% achievement may falsely send the message that everything can be achieved as planned without exceptions. However, this is hardly realistic for a global project covering 64 countries across different continents, cultures, languages and contexts.

3.2.   Project implementation

The project design has not changed as far as the evaluator is aware, with the caveat that none of the evaluation respondents had been involved in the project design and could not inform whether any change had taken place from the initial design.

The GPT showed good response capacity during the implementation. Not only were they responsive, but they were committed in providing support to the best of their availability in a complex situation where 64 countries were striving at different paces to achieve the project objective with different levels of capacity on a compressed timeline. Generally, the technical support provided through the range of tools and mechanisms developed by the 6NR project were highly appreciated and deemed as useful and constructive to enable the countries to produce the 6NR. A minor challenge was the timeliness of the support, as not all countries started at the same time nor was the process undertaken with the same speed across the countries. This means that in some case the timeliness of the technical support was not always most adequate for every country.

The project appears to have had an implementation period of 31 months, from November 2017 to 30th June 2020. However, the interviews with the eight sample countries showed that the available time in-country to complete the 6NR process and its submission was in fact much shorter. Initially the 6NR were to be submitted by the end of 2018, but as indicated in the Project Board minutes, 75% of the countries were not able to meet the deadline, so the deadline was pushed back and the project received a seven-months no cost extension. The extension was justified and without such an extension, the number of countries having submitted the 6NR would have been lower. The GEF approved the no-cost extension until 30th June 2020. Countries interviewed reported timelines ranging from six to twelve months for the actual preparation of the 6NR, apparently indicating a long lead time between project approval and actual start of implementation in the country itself.

The global project established a governance structure at different levels:

At the Project Board level, the different stakeholders involved (nine country representatives, IRH Manager, UNDP, CBD Secretariat, UNDP GEF and UNEP) ensured that all primary stakeholders could discuss project implementation and ensure oversight. In these meetings, a number of important decisions were taken, including the acknowledgement of the no-cost project extension of 7 months from 29th November 2019 to 30th June 2020, and the review of the initially overambitious target for gender-responsive reports down from 100% to 50%.

At the country level, UNDP CO were in charge of recruiting the consultants tasked with the elaboration of the 6NR in line with the allocated budget of maximum USD 100,000 per country. Technical support and the financial management of the budget according to the Letter of Authorization per country was provided by the GPT. Partnership arrangements with relevant stakeholders in the regions were done through a series of virtual inception workshops and in-person regional workshops. At the country level, the UNDP consultants worked closely with their national counterparts to ensure an inclusive and collaborative approach to the consultative process needed to engage the different stakeholder groups (government, non-government, public and private sector, local communities, etc.). The project approach and methodology were recognised as very good by the different national stakeholders interviewed at country level, and this was triangulated with the exit survey results which indicated that 96.8% of respondents considered to have an effective stakeholder engagement process.

In terms of M&E activities, the GPT developed a very robust monitoring mechanism that included the required monitoring plan and the PIR which helped inform the current evaluation findings. The team also shared all the products, webinars, tools and outputs prepared during the project implementation that served as technical support to the countries including the 6NR technical reviews. These were made available to the evaluator. In addition, an exit survey was undertaken among the 64 countries covered by the global project. The GPT did an analysis by project reference of the results of the exit survey, as well as a specific report to analyse the gender responsiveness of the 6NRs submitted. The evaluator reviewed the methodology used in the different annexes and the gender analysis report and endorses the methodology as a valid approach to obtain evidence of gender-responsiveness. As a result, the percentage of gender-responsive 6NR is over 50%, with 33 countries out of 64 having provided a gender-responsive 6NR. This tool to assess gender-responsiveness is very useful as there were no technical guidelines provided with the project on this specific issue, so that it should be maintained in future projects as it allows evaluators to triangulate findings and provides a solid tool for appraising the incorporation of the gender aspects. As such, the assessment of the evaluator regarding the use of M&E for implementation is Highly Satisfactory, despite a weak initial design.

Regarding the project finance, the feedback obtained during the interviews shows that financial matters were well managed, and no issue was brought forward regarding the financial management. UNDP appears to have performed well in this aspect, in particular considering the burden of financially managing 64 countries through four different projects with each its financial reporting requirements. GPT is collecting lessons from the countries who return unspent funds in order to determine and understand the country specific financial limitations. At the same time, interviews with national counterparts also indicate that for certain countries, the amount allocated for recruitment of the consultants may not be sufficient and lessons should also be collected from the different countries regarding the financial limitations (if any) experienced for the recruitment of high-quality consultants.

In terms of co-funding, the information was provided by IRH. It should be noted that there is no standard tool or common methodology developed for appraising co-financing by government institutions. IRH and the GPT noted that the COVID situation made it impossible collect the information in the standard GEF template and very difficult to obtain detailed data in many cases, as national counterparts in the UNDP CO and governments were under work-from-home orders around the world during this time. It is the understanding of the evaluator that the total amount of co-financing is actually an estimate of the amount of in-kind support provided plus other types of support. This is meant as a proxy to indicate the level of national ownership, but the actual methodology for the initial co-financing figures contained in the initial project documents is not explained, so it is not possible to verify whether the initial estimates were soundly appraised, nor were the assumptions concerning these national "commitments" specified. It may be useful to develop a common tool for reporting on the national co-financing figures to ensure coherence and consistency across the different countries, particularly for global projects that cover a large number of countries.

M&E design at entry and implementation: Global rating S

The M&E function at the design and implementation phases were done by different teams. As such, it is necessary to separate the M&E in the project design information provided by the project document from the M&E during project implementation.

M&E design at entry : MU

The rating is due to an analysis of the coherence between the contents of the project documents and the results framework, and the corporate guidance from UNDP/IEO/UNDG/GEF regarding M&E. The design is moderately unsatisfactory because the results framework contains no baseline (it could have used the previous NR data as baseline). The formulation of outcomes is incorrect from an RBM perspective and from the UNDP corporate definition of outcomes. The links in the hierarchy of results are not clearly established and the project document does not contain any theory of change. Furthermore, the ambitious targets such as 100% of gender-responsive reports lacks critical assumptions that would allow defining a realistic target. It would be useful for UNDP to put more attention into aligning the design of the next project document with corporate RBM guidance.

M&E Plan Implementation: HS

At the M&E implementation level, the project had simple targets and indicators that could be easily tracked, with a simple and easily verifiable results framework. In addition, the GPT provided all the key outputs produced by the project, including the technical tools, webinars, reports, PB minutes, and 6NR technical reviews, which allowed the evaluator to review evidence of progress in line with the project's outcomes and objective. Furthermore, the project was subject to a PIR (compulsory GEF requirement) which further provided evidence to inform this evaluation.

Additional evidence was provided by the GPT through the exit survey analysis report and gender analysis reports, which both used the exit survey to provide evidence on several of the layers and aspects of the Project implementation not captured in the RF. These reports were further used to triangulate evaluation findings. This exit survey analysis report is a good practice example to be kept and replicated in future projects.

The above leads to an overall combined quality of M&E as: **Satisfactory**

UNDP and implementing partner implementation/execution, coordination and operational issues

Quality of UNDP Implementation: HS

This is a Global Project covering 64 countries with various levels of stakeholders and layers of support from global to regional to country to national institutions. The project has a high level of complexity. Loads of efforts were necessary to achieve the overall Project objective and provide adequate support to the different players involved. The GPT was found to be supportive and responsive during project implementation. UNDP was able to provide an extensive range of technical materials and tools on different critical subjects including tools not endorsed by CBD but found to be useful (e.g. the Data Tracking Tool) under different formats. As mentioned in the Project Closure analysis reports prepared by the GPT, the project provided an impressive package of technical support consisting of:

- Ten technical guidance documents were released on the use of indicators, data management, stakeholder engagement, spatial data, gender equality, and communicating the value of biodiversity in the context of national biodiversity planning and reporting.
- Over 30 webinars and online recordings through the 6NR Online Technical Webinar Series, which were viewed by 1,330 entities participated over 6,500 times through January 2020. (Access here: https://bit.ly/2J47c9f.)
- In-person technical support at 12 global workshops and four 6NR Help Desks on the margins of CBD events, and during eight separate regional workshops.
- Over 48 knowledge management products, including posters, blogs, and story maps, designed and globally showcased to illustrate the importance of monitoring and reporting to achievement of global biodiversity targets, as well as Parties' best practices in the use of spatial data, stakeholder engagement, gender mainstreaming, monitoring indicators, and assessing the effectiveness of NBSAP implementation.
- UN Biodiversity Lab (UNBL) (https://unbiodiversitylab.org/), which UNDP launched in partnership with the CBD Secretariat and UNEP, so that countries could use an online, cloud-based, GIS-free environment to access and analyse 100 biodiversity and development data layers and upload national data to secure private workspaces.
- 18 draft biodiversity status maps that focus on national progress to achieve:
  - ABT 5: degradation within ecoregion, rate of loss within ecoregions 1993 – 2009, rate of forest loss 2000-2017;

- o ABT 11: terrestrial protected area (PA) coverage, marine PA coverage, PA coverage of key biodiversity areas, PA coverage of terrestrial ecoregions, PA coverage of marine ecoregions, PA connectivity with ecoregions, PA management effectiveness, species richness within PA network;
- o ABT 12: species richness, threatened species richness, critically threatened species richness;
- o ABT 14: key usage areas for ecosystem services, key areas for provisioning ecosystem services;
- o ABT 15: carbon stores in the environment, carbon sequestration potential, and carbon stores in PA networks.

One aspect that could possibly be improved further is streamlining the time when countries come on board to be able to fully benefit from all the technical guidance provided. As not all countries started at the same time, those that came on later are the ones that struggled to consume all of the technical guidance. This is a recognised constraint in a project providing technical tools using primarily virtual formats to 64 countries across various continents. It is questionable whether it can be realistically expected to provide timely support to all of the countries covered in global projects of this sort on 64 individualized timelines. Even if inclusive and tailored regional workshops were hosted, each country participating in them would likely be at a different phase of project implementation. The constant efforts and commitment from the GPT to provide the best possible technical support was reported during the sample countries interviews. The appraisal is further triangulated with data from the exit survey undertaken mentioned in the project closure report analysis by the Global Project Team as follows:

Responses from countries regarding understanding of project expectations and requirements:

98.4% of respondents (62) strongly agreed or agreed, one country neutral (1.6%). This indicates that countries understood clearly the objective of the project and what needed to be done.

Responses from countries regarding the global project team communicating information in a timely and effective manner:

80.9% of respondents (63) strongly agreed or agreed (51), 17.5% neutral (11), 1 disagree (1.6%)

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the timeliness of support to 64 countries each with its own rhythm, starting date and dynamics means that it may be very difficult to service 100% of the technical support needs on timely basis to all parties. This may explain the 18 percentage-point difference between the two questions amongst those who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Particularly taking into consideration that 25% of the countries were on time to submit the 6NR as planned originally by end of 2018, while 75% were not.

Countries who agreed they received the tools, processes and best practice to guide execution
88.7% of respondents (62) strongly agreed or agreed (55) and 11.3% neutral (7)

Finally, countries also largely confirmed that effective support was provided, with 87.3% of respondents (63) strongly agreed or agreed (55), 11.1% neutral (7), 1 disagree (1.6%)

At the higher strategic level and linking the project to the global agenda, it may be important to underline that most of the countries expressed satisfaction with the project's operating arrangements. Three national governments interviewed expressed their desire to produce the national report themselves, two working directly with the GPT and one outside of a global project such as this one. Yet all recognized that UNDP has a greater collective bargaining power for advocating for things that countries may not be able to achieve by themselves – through a common and shared approach. It is the view of the evaluator that there is an added value for UNDP to support global projects as it allows greater interaction amongst the countries (including peer exchange and learning) and supports the global development agenda. Notwithstanding the above, three government counterparts (from eight interviewed) also expressed a desire to run their own national report preparation process, two working directly with the GPT within the global project and one outside of a global project such as this one. According to the GPT, governments interested in a NIM implementation structure, rather than the DIM implementation structure primarily used during this project do have the option to do so. A minimal number of countries who requested this option were provided it at project inception. However, a country that is not interested in UNDP support at the global or national level could not receive technical support services from the global project, as they would be submitting individual MSP for an entirely separate project.

Another global advantage of the project is that it was very practical and oriented to the preparation of the 6NR. Despite the different layers from global to country specific, the project architecture was user-friendly and the project was rolled out correctly, which means that some interaction took place in the early stages (although as understood by the evaluator not in the design phase of the project). Several factors determine the success of translating global project to the national results, and UNDP IRH and the GPT were instrumental in this process as it proved supportive and responsive to the national efforts and contributed to the results through a smooth implementation process.

Quality of UNDP execution: N/A for COs

The evaluator understands that in the context of the DIM modality for this project the executing agency is in fact the UNDP CO at country level in the 64 countries covered by the project. It is not applicable to appraise such a process with one global rating representing the 64 countries, and the structure of the project document and its results framework do not address CO performance and execution. The identification of proxy indicators for outputs and outcomes are measuring the concrete results achieved by the project, and thus, implicitly cover the quality of the CO execution as well. The quality of execution question applies to projects that have a single executing agency, and is not

applicable to a global project of 64 countries as in each country an appraisal would have to be made of the project execution, something that is outside the scope of this evaluation given its time-frame and effort level. Furthermore, no specific questions addressed project execution in the monitoring plan or in the exit survey.

From a qualitative perspective through the KII with the eight selected sample countries, feedback showed a generally good level of satisfaction between the UNDP CO and the government and national institutions for the preparation of the 6NR, with one exception linked to the poor performance of the consultant hired to elaborate the 6NR.

From the eight countries interviewed, some UNDP COs were very much involved and supportive, others much less so and relying on the consultants recruited for the project. There is no one-size-fits-all and ultimately each country decides what to take on board. Nonetheless the project objective shows 96% achievement rate (pending the 2 last 6NR)

Since the rating for the quality of execution is N/A, the **overall rating** focuses on **implementation only** and is **Highly Satisfactory**

3.3 Project results
The overall results of the projects have been achieved in line with the project results framework: **Highly Satisfactory**

At the time of the evaluation 62 6NR had been submitted to the CBD, and it is anticipated that all 64 countries will have submitted a 6NR by the project closure on 30th June 2020, yielding a full achievement of the project's objective indicator (i.e. 100% of countries will have produced and submitted a 6NR to the CBD Secretariat). Two 6NR are delayed due to external factors such as natural disaster (Bahamas) and a lengthy cabinet approval process that the GPT cannot influence (Grenada).

KII yielded interesting information regarding the project's perception, particularly in the difference between how they viewed their 6NR and their level of satisfaction with the project (i.e. wider analysis not linked to the 6NR contents). Some countries were a little more critical about the quality of their 6NR, being mindful of the gaps and areas of improvements for future reports and were more positive about their global satisfaction with the project. At the same time, all countries interviewed concurred that both the approach and the contents of the 6NR showed significant improvements compared to earlier NR. The project was thought to bring an added value to seven of the eight countries interviewed.

Relevance : R

The 6NR project is clearly aligned with CBD and GEF biodiversity focus area, in line with countries' obligation as parties to the CBD. The nature of the project, as a capacity development project that informs the 6NR and its submission to the CBD, is relevant to GEF's biodiversity focus area, and is also supporting the UNDP's positioning on biodiversity as part of its strategic support to environmental concerns.

From a qualitative and country specific perspective, KII showed that the countries found the 6NR relevant to their needs in order to comply with the CBD requirements. At the same time, there was a general view that the 6NR also contributed to raising awareness and knowledge about biodiversity in the countries, both within national agencies and governments as well as with other actors, such as civil society organisations, NGOs, and the private sector. As such, the process of elaborating the 6NR contributed to a higher awareness and visibility of biodiversity and a number of ministries in several countries have created a biodiversity unit. The technical support provided was fully aligned with the country's needs for the elaboration of the 6NR.

Effectiveness:

It is necessary to separate the different levels of results to account for the many invisible aspects that are not contained in the project document or the results framework. The section on effectiveness addresses different levels of results with different ratings according to the type of result identified.

Effectiveness in relation to the project RF : HS

All project targets will be reached by the end of the project (including revised gender targets from initial 100% down to 50%). All 64 countries have been able to produce and submit a 6NR to the CBD. Of these, 33 countries were able to develop gender-responsive 6NR, which is the first time that gender was integrated within the requirements for national reports. All target indicators for the outcomes and outputs have been achieved. A global RF for the four projects is included as annex showing the project achieved all its expected targets.

Effectiveness in relation to the establishment of the 6NR: S

Despite the challenges and difficulties of implementing concurrently four different projects covering 64 countries, all countries were able to produce a 6NR. Qualitative analysis from KII shows that the eight countries consulted gave ratings ranging from MS to HS (with a majority of S ratings) regarding the elaboration of the 6NR, with explanation of the challenges and a justification for the rating with concrete examples provided. For the countries who provided MS, the rating was based on the fact that the contents of the 6NR could be further improved, particularly in terms of updated data content.

When comparing the effectiveness of the preparation of the 6NR to the global satisfaction with the 6NR project (i.e. including all dimensions of the project intervention, support, global team, financial allocation, timeframe, project design, approach and expectations), there is a convergence in the ratings in seven of the eight countries interviewed, with a majority of Satisfactory. In one country, however, there are some disparities between the perceptions of national entities ranging from MU to MS regarding the overall project satisfaction, which may reflect a preference for nationally driven projects rather than forming a part of global projects.

All 6NR reports have been technically reviewed by the GPT and have been submitted to the CBD. While it is always possible to do more and both the GPT and the countries have identified areas of improvement for future national reports, the project was effective in ensuring the elaboration, writing and submission of the 6NR for all countries involved.

Specific aspects linked to the effectiveness of the 6NR reporting process

While the project document does not fully detail the incorporation in this 6NR project of the elements that make up the requirements for the submission of the CBD, it is clear that from previous experience and NR some lessons had been identified that were incorporated into the manner in which the 6NR was going to be produced. While the contents of the 6NR were subject to a standard reporting template provided by the CBD Secretariat and approved by its Conference of the Parties, which drew some criticism from the countries interviewed in order to ask for CBD improvement for the next round of national reports, the approach and methodology of the 6NR also incorporated key elements which contributed to the quality of the 6NR.

In relation to the production of a data driven 6NR: S

Data collection and management remains a challenge across all participating countries. Not one country has an integrated data management system for biodiversity where all information is readily available to prepare national reports. Some countries were more successful than others in incorporating the data. Some had limited data available. In some countries, the data had to be purchased from other government agencies. Operational contexts vary, but a number of interviews mentioned that, in absence of an integrated information management system and database with all the relevant information, the data collection process starts anew for each round of NR preparation. This common challenge was already identified by the GPT, and the evaluation does support specific recommendations to address this limitation to enhance efficiency of the data collection process. Data content was improved through the different technical support tools and workshops held, and a particular area of interest was the incorporation of spatial data. Countries found that the Technical Reviews contributed to higher quality 6NR. This was triangulated with exit survey results in the project closure analysis report, stating that the Technical Reviews contributed to improving 6NR:

89.1% (of 64) strongly agreed or agreed (55), 10.9% neutral. Therefore, this time-consuming exercise is a useful tool that should be maintained and endorsed for future national reports.

Another aspect of data quality was the surge in the 6NR of spatial information. In addition to having a specific GIS expert consultant as part of the GPT who contributed decisively in generating maps and providing technical information to the parties, the UN Biodiversity Lab (UNBL) was open to all countries to use over 200 global spatial datasets that they could combine with national data to develop spatial analysis and maps with to help produce the 6NR. A total of 30 countries, identified through the exit survey, are aware and using the UNBL, while another 33 countries are aware of the UNBL, but are not using it (mainly given the fact the UNBL data was not officially validated, as

confirmed during the country interviews). Data produced in the outputs of the GPT shows a significant increase in the number of maps included in the 6NR amongst the countries (compared to previous NR). UNBL is a recognised asset that should be maintained in the future, as additional support in this area is likely warranted. Most countries have limited knowledge and technical capacity to develop these maps and analyses and recognized this as an area for future support.

In relation to the consultation process: HS

One of the high points of the 6NR project is the way in which the consultation process within countries with the different stakeholders was carried out. The methodology used allowed to engage different stakeholders through widespread consultations. In all countries interviewed, the approach was found to be inclusive and participatory. Countries interviewed indicated the process to have been more inclusive than during previous NR preparation. A number of good practice examples were cited from different countries, ranging from the inclusion of indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) in the consultation process, ability to leverage community-level engagement and data through the GEF Small Grants Programme (mentioned in two countries), involvement of the private sector, participation of women's groups, intra-governmental coordination (i.e. creation of biodiversity cell in different ministries). The examples are reported in countries' respective 6NR but the evaluation was able to triangulate the qualitative evidence with the exit survey results, which showed that **96.8% of respondents (61 of 63) strongly agreed or agreed that the project used an effective stakeholder engagement process** (with two neutral answers).

While the consultative process of the 6NR is another example of good practice, interviews indicate that more could have been done in some countries with more time and resources. In regard to the geographical dimension of the consultations, not all countries were able to hold consultations outside of their capital, hence limiting the participation of some stakeholder groups, nor were the financial resources always sufficient to ensure the widest possible consultative process down to the community level.

In relation to the gender responsiveness: overall MS

Gender was added in the project design phase and project documents without a clear explanation of how to make a gender-responsive national report. This is the first-time gender figured as a requirement for the NR for UNDP supported countries, but no baseline was provided nor did the project document recognize the diversity of countries placing gender at different levels of priority. This component used a top-down approach with a single target that does not reflect the realities of 64 countries when analysing gender mainstreaming. The project had a number of limitations and constraints in trying to ensure gender responsiveness:

First, "gender responsive" is a specific vocabulary in UNDP that deals with the different levels of gender mainstreaming (e.g. negative, blind, sensitive, responsive, transformative). These concepts have now been translated into French and English

through the IEO GRES tool which will facilitate the understanding of the concepts in multiple languages.

Second, UNDP' Gender seal process shows different countries are at different levels of gender mainstreaming. The 6NR project design could have planned incorporating the gender dimension in groups of like-minded countries using the Gender Seal[14] as common denominator for forming the different groups. If countries had not gone through the certification process, a similar ranking process could have been developed in order to address the specific constraints of the different groups, but with an adaptive approach that reflects the operational challenges of the 64 countries divided in groups.

Third, it is the belief of the evaluator that the initial target of 100% of countries being able to produce a gender-responsive 6NR was ambitious but unrealistic. It is beyond the remit of this project to change the gender dynamics in the 64 counties, and by providing such an ambitious target, it may actually create an expectation that making a gender-responsive NR is a simple task. It is not, and the target was rightly revised to a 50% of countries covered in the project during the Project Board Meeting.

Rating for the design of the gender component in the project document: U

Despite not being involved in development of the project document, the GPT provided sustained technical support through webinars, on-line courses, discussions and workshops as well as a number of tools that could be used by each country to include gender aspects in the 6NR, including in the 64 technical reviews and a Gender Action Plan.

Rating regarding the support of the global team in regard to gender : S

Ultimately, countries, and not the project team, had to decide the level of importance given to gender considerations. Two countries interviewed clearly stated that gender was not the main priority in the elaboration of the 6NR, whereas two others had a very strong engagement on gender mainstreaming through the 6NR process which led not only to shared good practices but also created further spin-offs in the country to develop gender-responsive biodiversity projects. The sample of countries interviewed showed a wide range of perceptions regarding gender, but half of the countries recognised that it was challenging to develop a gender-responsive 6NR.

The main limitations when trying to produce a gender-responsive 6NR were provided in the Analysis of the Gender Responsiveness of 6NR to CBD report of April 2020[15] based on the exit survey as being, in decreasing order:

- Absence of Sex Disaggregated Data (SDD) as the single most common challenge
- Lack of gender-sensitive indicators/NBSAP

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[14] https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/people/gender-equality/transforming-workplaces-to-advance-gender-equality/gender-equality-seal-for-undp.html
[15] See table 3 in the report for figures

- Lack of stakeholder's involvement and/or interest

Qualitative analysis from the sample country interviews echoed these as main challenges. While the first two are linked to technical aspects, the third is more linked to political will and prioritisation.

Regarding the rating for the GPT in gender, the findings are again triangulated with the gender responsiveness report of April 2020, which provides the following information:

- Country perception that its project team received support to better mainstream gender into the national reporting process (58 respondents):

78% strongly agreed or agreed (45), 17% neutral (10), 3% disagreed (2), and 1 strongly disagreed (2%)

Country perception that the project team strove to produce a gender responsive 6NR (58 respondents):

67% strongly agreed or agreed (39), 17% neutral (10), 16% disagreed (9)

Based on the methodology for identifying gender responsiveness[16], 33 countries produced a gender-responsive 6NR, which is above the revised target of 50% corresponding to 32 countries.

Capacity Development: clarifying the concepts during the project design phase

This project is considered as a capacity development project to provide financial and technical support to 64 parties to the CBD to produce the 6NR. The project RF indicates that through proxy indicators, the different products and outputs of the project reflect a level of capacity development which is warranted for the production of the 6NR. While the GEF evaluation guidance does not require a specific rating for capacity development, the evaluator indicates that the actual capacity development provided to produce the 6NR was appraised as strong or very strong by participating countries[17] yielding a **S to HS rating** (triangulated with country interviews). From the perspective of defining the contribution of these capacity development efforts to the global corporate efforts, the rating would be **MU**, as these were not properly identified or addressed in the project document.

The project data and qualitative interviews have shown that the different tools and technical materials have been effective in supporting the preparation of the 6NR. Therefore, evidence shows that the success of the 6NR project partly stems from the technical support provided. What the project should identify is how it is contributing to the global UNDP efforts to mainstream capacity development in its interventions, and how the technical support provided actually converged and aligned with the global corporate efforts on capacity development.

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[16] As described in Annex III of the gender analysis report
[17] See Project Closure Report Analysis for all four projects

Another question is to what extent knowledge transfer has actually taken place, and whether this knowledge will be institutionalised and remain available for the next NR. Country interviews suggest a much more nuanced response, particularly considering the limitations of the operating environment, and notably a) the lack of a dedicated focal point in government for the 6NR, b) staff availability, c) time to instil capacity development, d) a baseline of capacity development needs for each country's responsible party, e) agreement and consensus on the capacity development process.

Addressing knowledge transfer though an exclusive and dedicated counterpart in government

The project benefitted from the identification of a CBD focal point for each country. These often high-ranking officials were actively supporting the 6NR process but interviews showed they were often overloaded and had limited time and availability to dedicate to the 6NR process. Some countries suggested that national consultants should be recruited by the government ministry or agency as exclusive and fully-dedicated counterparts for the preparation of the 6NR. In particular, they would be able to benefit from the knowledge transfer linked to the actual process of elaborating and writing the 6NR, which could be useful in the future for the preparation of the National Reports. Other countries suggested hiring more staff for this same purpose. In the sample of countries interviewed all government counterparts already had a very heavy workload and the suggestion of a "NR preparation assistant" hired to this end may be an interesting suggestion to be addressed by the CBD.

UNDP has specific corporate guidance on what constitutes capacity development. Two of such documents are "Supporting Capacity Development, the UNDP approach", 2007, and "Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer", 2009, that detail clearly the concepts and steps involved when engaging in capacity development interventions. It is not clear if and to what extent such guidance has been incorporated into the design of the project, as the project document does not devote any paragraph to the issue of capacity development. Furthermore, the GEF published a guidance "Monitoring Capacity Development in GEF Operations"[18], Dec. 2015, that provides a framework for monitoring capacity development initiatives. There is no reflection of the key concepts related to capacity development in the project design, rather a global assumption that technical support provided through the project will instil the technical capacity to produce the 6NR. This is a very narrow view of capacity development and is limited to the production of the 6NR. However, the needs and objectives of the countries, of the UNDP, of the GEF, and of the CBD Secretariat go beyond the one-time production of a

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[18] https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/environment-energy/integrating_environmentintodevelopment/monitoring-guidelines-of-capacity-development-in-gef-operations.html

NR. Contributing to capacity development is a long-term process that entails different phases and includes, at a minimum, as determined by the UNDG and as mentioned in the above mentioned GEF guidance document:

a) Engaging partners and building consensus
b) Assessing capacity assets and needs
c) Formulate capacity development strategies
d) Implement capacity development strategies
e) Monitor and evaluation capacity development efforts

The GEF guidance also presents a Capacity Development Scorecard applicable at project level (p. 17 to 22) which can be applied in order to monitor and evaluate capacity development efforts.

It is understood that capacity development encompasses much more than the production of a single NR and may require a specific programmatic and long-term approach to support and achieve institutional transformation. However, a project that is based on technical support should at least dedicate some efforts to show how it is aligned to the corporate guidance on capacity development, and devote a clearer explanation on exactly what sort of "capacity development" is being sought and how it is supporting capacity development in the countries of implementation.

Despite the notable contributions of the capacity building efforts of the GPT to the achievement of the project results, some country interviews show that absorption capacity from national counterparts may be limited and, in some cases, did not exist, for the reasons explained in the third paragraph of this section. Capacity development requires an institutional commitment and agreement, and dedicated counterparts that can benefit from the knowledge transfer process. The issue is linked to the actual capacity and availability of the government to benefit from the capacity building efforts when time is short and there are competing priorities, and not to the actual provision of the technical support and capacity building activities themselves.

Efficiency: S

Based on the information provided by UNDP IRH, the project delivery rate as of 31.12.19 stood at 86.5%. A budget of almost USD 1 million for 2020 should lead to an expected final delivery rate of close to 100% by the end of the project on 30.06.2020, with a 96.4% delivery as of end May 2020.

Table 1: Project delivery rate based on UNDP IRH data from May 2020

Project ID	Total budget	2017 expenditures	2018 expenditures	2019 expenditures	2020 expenditures (January-May), incl. commitments	TOTAL	Balance

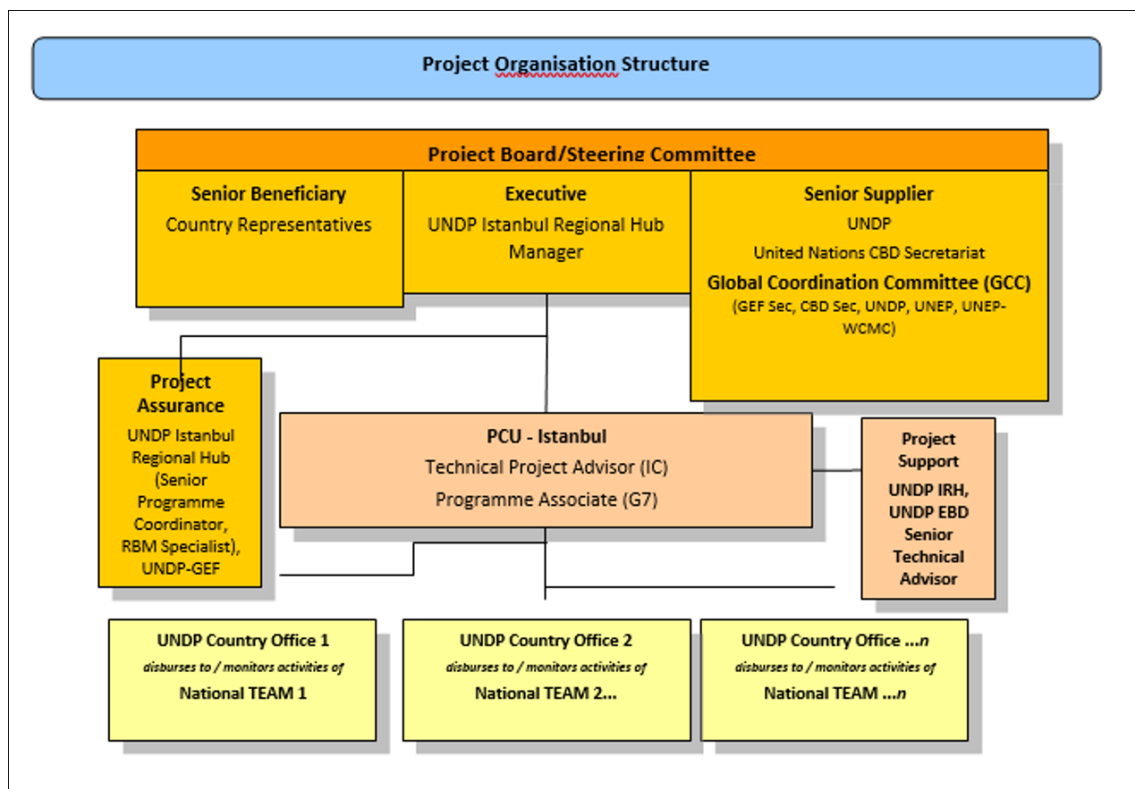|							
106960 (LAC)	1.963.500,00	8.677,60	849.652,16	752.969,24	244.207,00	1.855.506,00	107.994,00
106961 (Asia)	1.963.500,00	8.063,61	1.056.122,05	795.237,41	39.543,00	1.898.966,07	64.533,93
106962 (LAC II)	1.501.500,00	2.574,03	695.055,17	584.784,76	188.219,00	1.470.632,96	30.867,04
106963 (MIX)	1.963.500,00	2.574,05	973.116,41	663.559,98	257.762,00	1.897.012,44	66.487,56
Global figures	7.392.000,00	21.889,29	3.573.945,79	2.796.551,39	729.731,00	7.122.117,47	269.882,53

Delivery rate as of May 2020: 96.4%

Financial data indicates that at the end of 2019, there was still a substantial amount of the project budget that was not spent. This may give the impression that the project budget was sufficient to cater for all the costs involved in the project and achieve the stated objectives. However, when undertaking the country interviews, the evaluator also found that half of the sample countries (four) indicated more could have been done with additional resources and a longer implementation period. While it appears to be contradictory, it may in fact indicate that the compressed timeframe (something that all countries interviewed recognized) for producing the 6NR means the possibility to fully utilise the available funds was not always there or understood. Be as it may, the project budget for the first six months of 2020 show a proactive workplan in areas where gaps and further support were identified, so that the efforts that are undertaken in 2020 are not only part of the 6NR process but also aim at further capitalising on the catalytic effects generated by the project and aim at contributing to the sustainability of the process.

The country interviews revealed no major issues regarding the efficiency of the financial management. One exception was reported where the work of the consultant hired was not up to the required standards and expectations, which obliged the country to identify another consultant that was able to complete the process. Seven of eight countries considered the project to represent good value for money. No issues were identified regarding the financial aspects. However, country interviews did indicate that the time for the country to complete the 6NR was certainly not the 31 months project timeframe, as certain countries reported having to prepare the 6NR in a period of 6 to 8 months only. Although the GPT ensured all funds were released to the countries by 31 December 2017, this links back to the individualized starting dates that countries undertook and the different pace with which countries were able to prepare and submit the 6NR, some of which did meet the CBD's requested deadline of 30 Dec 2018.

Project management: S

The project structure as indicated in the project document is the following:

Project Organisation Structure

Project Board/Steering Committee

Senior Beneficiary	Executive	Senior Supplier
Country Representatives	UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub Manager	UNDP
		United Nations CBD Secretariat
		Global Coordination Committee (GCC)
		(GEF Sec, CBD Sec, UNDP, UNEP, UNEP-WCMC)

Project Assurance
UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub (Senior Programme Coordinator, RBM Specialist), UNDP-GEF

PCU - Istanbul
Technical Project Advisor (IC)
Programme Associate (G7)

Project Support
UNDP IRH, UNDP EBD Senior Technical Advisor

UNDP Country Office 1	UNDP Country Office 2	UNDP Country Office ...n
disburses to / monitors activities of	*disburses to / monitors activities of*	*disburses to / monitors activities of*
National TEAM 1	**National TEAM 2...**	**National TEAM ...n**

The project governance structure performed well and benefited greatly from the participation of Country Representatives in the Project Board (PB) meetings. The PB meetings took place at critical times and were instrumental in adapting some aspects of the project (such as a review of the gender targets, the extension of the project timeline) while also providing good information to all its stakeholders, including the GCC. Specific mandatory tools such as the PIR were also useful to inform the current evaluation report. Feedback from the interviews with the key stakeholders showed a solid and well-performing management structure, including for the Project Assurance process undertaken by the IRH.

The GPT (or PCU) is a small structure composed essentially of consultants, in order to keep the costs to a minimum, and one UNDP staff as programme associate. As per the project document, there is one Technical Project Advisor, one UNDP Programme Associate, and currently two consultants supporting this global team for the project implementation. Some changes took place in the structure of the supporting consultants during the life of the project. Under the GPT, there were also specialised consultancy services delivered by highly qualified consultants, particularly for spatial data. However, with the project broken into four separate documents each with its project identification number and reporting requirements, the workload on financial management and project management is quite intensive. The evaluator considers the resources made available to the global project team seem to be on the low side taking into consideration the management-intensive project structure and the amount and type of technical support and tools that were provided. Feedback from countries regarding the support and engagement of the GPT, where such a relationship was established, was systematically positive and extended to the entire GPT including all the consultants

contributing to the preparation of the different materials and tools. A special mention must be made about the capacity of the GPT to communicate also in French and Spanish, something that was highly appreciated by the Francophone and Spanish-speaking countries interviewed. One challenge as well as lesson is to try to set up dates and times that are convenient for all countries. For example, weekends do not always cover Saturday and Sunday, so activities planned on Fridays may curtail participation. Similarly, participating countries are on vastly different time zones, but interviews indicated that a great effort in flexibility and adaptability was made to accommodate this constraint. Finally, the aspects related to internet access are also a limitation in three of the countries interviewed, and the challenge of virtual communications should not be underestimated.

Country ownership

The figures of co-financing are proxy indicators of national ownership, and these are mentioned in Table 3. However, as there is no common tool for appraising the in-kind support, the amounts reported by the countries should be taken as an indication of the level of ownership. In the end, the diversity of countries represented in the project also means that each country has a different interest and level of priority concerning biodiversity.

Qualitative interview with the sample countries indicated, however, that even in those countries that did not have biodiversity as a top government priority, the project was taken very seriously as an opportunity to achieve something useful for the country. A number of respondents indicated that through the consultation process, awareness of biodiversity was raised not only among the government and national agencies, but also in the civil society, private sector, IPLCs, amongst women associations, as well as regional and international actors. All countries provided examples of in-kind support and how, in half of the sample countries, the results actually exceeded their expectations (with one country where it did not fulfil expectations). But more importantly, the process of elaborating the 6NR is linked to the wider process of addressing national biodiversity conservation, and the information obtained and produced during the 6NR is a baseline for the majority of the countries that allows a) to evaluate its performance in line with its strategy, or b) to actually lay-out the basis for developing a national strategy (in one country), c) to pursue the efforts beyond the production of the 6NR to address the remaining gaps in line with the longer-term country needs. As such, this project appears to go beyond the production of the 6NR and seems a good stepping-stone for the countries to gradually increment the quality of their national report while bringing attention and raising awareness on the importance of biodiversity.

Mainstreaming

According to the GEF TE guidance, mainstreaming relates to how GEF projects support UNDP country programming, in particular UNDAF and CPAP. This would have required the evaluation to review 64 UNDAF and CPAP, and the evaluation was not able to address this aspect for lack of time.

Sustainability

Financial resources: ML

Given the unexpected COVID19 situation, UNDP IRH has struggled to get the necessary information due to work-from-home and shelter-in-place orders around the world coinciding with this information collection effort. The financial co-financing figures mentioned in Table 3 seem to indicate an overall commitment higher than initially planned, despite the fact that three countries have not provided a response given the COVID situation. Nonetheless, the incomplete amount reported in co-funding is almost 17% higher than planned, with a global co-financing volume from governments of USD 6.2 million versus a planned target of USD 5.3 million.

As mentioned before, it could be useful to provide a template at the beginning of the project, to report on in-kind contributions to each government as currently there is no common tool and methodology to report on the amounts and it appears to be left up to the government to estimate the amount of in-kind support provided.

Qualitative appraisal: Despite almost 1 USD million remaining by the end of December 2019, as endorsed by the PB, additional activities are planned until the end of the project on 30th June 2020. A number of these are spin-offs from the 6NR process and contribute to the sustainability of the process that was triggered with the elaboration of the 6NR (and in some cases earlier from the establishment of the National Strategy).

Anecdotal evidence from sample interviews also supported the view that an important level of co-funding and commitment was shown from participating countries.

Socio-political: U/A

It is not possible to evaluate the risks in 64 countries that have vastly different socio-political contexts in the timeframe and scope of this evaluation. Some countries have stable democratic systems, but others are experiencing a conflict situation, or a complex socio-political environment. A number of countries have been affected socially and economically by the COVID19 pandemic.

Institutional framework and governance: U/A

Again, the high number and the variety of countries covered by the project does not allow an in-depth evaluation of this aspect within the number of days allocated to the evaluation.

The evaluation found that some of the common concerns expressed across countries interviewed regarding their institutional frameworks were:

➢ the high level of staff turn-over in government institutions,
➢ overstretched national counterparts,
➢ the lack of a nominated dedicated focal point for the 6NR in government,
➢ challenges to data collection and sharing within and amongst government institutions and agencies,

- ➤ the lack of a unified and systematic management system for biodiversity data,
- ➤ financial and human resources.

Environmental: L

The production of national reports to the CBD are embedded in the countries' obligation that directly relate to environmental sustainability. The CBD itself works to ensure this aspect. It is a core aspect of the project which is expected to be pursued in all countries that are parties to the CBD.

Overall likelihood of sustainability: U/A

Considering that it was not possible to assess the 64 countries' socio-political and institutional frameworks to identify the likelihood of sustainability, applicability to provide an overall rating is thwarted as only some aspects of sustainability could be addressed.

Impact (effects generated by the project) – rating Significant

Many different effects were generated by the 6NR at various and complementary levels:

- a) During the production of the 6NR
- b) As part of the processes that build upon 6NR and continue after its completion
- c) Given spin-offs and new projects linked to or based on the 6NR process and/or 6NR itself

Production of the 6NR – rating Significant

Significant effects were found and recognised during the sample country interviews about the ability of the countries to produce a relatively high-quality, nationally owned 6NR that included spatial data and maps, and mainstreamed gender. For some countries, it was the first time they were able to complete such a process. While the report quality has room for improvement in the future, the 6NR products are consistently reported as a significant change from earlier NRs from sample countries interviewed, with improved approaches, methodology, and tools.

Processes that build upon 6NR and continue after its completion – rating Significant

6NR is a tool to evaluate the country's situation regarding biodiversity and the NBSAP/ABTs. It feeds into decision-making and reflexion on the way forward and revising/adjusting national priorities. A number of sample countries considered the 6NR as a baseline against which future progress may be measured. Almost all countries interviewed indicated how the process used to produce the 6NR was still on-going through the increase in awareness and importance of biodiversity for the country. Some countries reported having produced a summary of the 6NR in local language for dissemination at local level. As such, dissemination activities are particularly important to build a critical mass of stakeholders from all sectors of society who understand, are committed to and support biodiversity conservation.

Spin-offs and new projects linked to the 6NR process – rating Significant

All sample countries interviewed indicated spin-offs and provided concrete examples of new projects as a result of the 6NR project. The 6NR project has had a catalytic effect in many ways which are not captured through the current design of the project results' framework and exceeds the RF targets. The positive dynamics towards giving higher importance to biodiversity have been strongly felt in the countries interviewed. This shows that the 6NR project exceeded its initial objective of producing the 6NR, with significant side effects reported on three different but related levels.

4. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons

Conclusions

The project was ambitious and complex, given its scope and the number of participating countries. The actual implementation of the project was strong, despite a project design that could be improved to incorporate the corporate guidance on RBM and PME.

At the global level, a lean but effective project team with the support of UNDP IRH was able to ensure the project remained on track to achieve the overall objective. Countries themselves were generally satisfied with the support provided by the project, particularly the technical support received and the methodology used, which enabled them to produce the 6NR in many cases with high quality and in all cases showing improvement over past NRs. All targets of the project RF were reached at global, outcome and output levels.

Articulation between the GPT, UNDP IRH, UNDP country offices, consultants and national counterparts was generally positive and contributed to the achievement of the results.

Constraints linked to time pressure to deliver the 6NR and budget allocation (for increased local consultation and rolling out the 6NR to local level) should be reviewed to maximise the already significant effects generated. Beyond the production of the 6NR, awareness and interest in biodiversity has been enhanced in all sample countries interviewed through the process and methodology used in the project.

Corrective actions for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project:

- **For GEF/CBD regarding the project design[19]**
1) Hold an initial workshop to discuss with the extended stakeholders the design of the project, as indicated in the UNDP PME handbook section 2.2., but particularly with

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[19] This analysis is based on the evaluator's understanding that the project design was already finalised when it was given the UNDP IRH as implementing agency. The project does not appear to have been changed since its inception, with the exception of the 7 months no cost extension. The limitation for this analysis is the fact that none of the interviewees participated in the actual project design. As it is unclear whether the design follows CBD or GEF templates or represents a middle ground, the evaluator addresses the corrective action to both for future global project documents.

the Implementing Agency and a sample of countries. At present, the design is too centred on the GEF/CBD objectives and does not incorporate enough the different layers and the countries into the design and articulation of the project, leading to a top-down project document that has not always easily translated into the national realities of the countries involved.

2) Each project's RF indicates the targets and indicators to appraise progress at the objective and outcome levels. Each project also has a brief intervention strategy mentioned under III. of the project document. However, the strategy consists of two paragraphs, one of which refers to another project which is supporting the "achievement of the Strategic Plan" through the GEF-funded "Global Support to NBSAP" project. This is not equivalent to a fully-fledged Theory of Change (ToC) that indicates how the different outputs contribute to the outcomes and how the outcomes contribute to the objective. As mentioned in the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines of 2019, point 4.2 table 1 Evaluability, the first point on the evaluability checklist is for the project is to have a clearly defined ToC. In the case of the 6NR project, the objective is clearly defined; it is also clear that this is a capacity development project in its essence, to enable 64 countries to submit their 6th National Report to the CBD. But the different steps and steppingstones towards achieving the objective could have been better explained, and a ToC diagram would also help visualize better the assumptions and conditions necessary to bring about the desired change process. The use of a problem tree analysis and solution pathway as recommended in guidance documents would have clarified the rationale for the different entry points used in the project architecture (consultative approach, data quality, spatial data, gender).

3) In regard to the structure of the project RF, the outcome statements are technically not written as outcome statements, but as outputs. Each outcome is actually written as a completed activity or set of activities, but it does not evidence the change in institutional capacity (or human behaviour) as defined in the UNDG RBM guidance 2012 and the UNDP PME Handbook of 2009 (and addendum of June 2011).

4) The eight different outputs are all outputs except for output 1.3. which is actually written as an activity.

5) While UNDP works on consensus basis with its stakeholders, the complexity of a 64 countries' intervention requires a strong project design that is supported by good RBM practice to facilitate its implementation. It is suggested that the project design goes through a peer review by an RBM expert to ensure the coherence and consistency of the different parts of the project document, while reviewing closely the Results Framework, the target indicators (including use range or thresholds rather than fixed targets) and the means of verification (e.g. M&E design at entry).

6) GEF should consider providing a specific evaluation guidance for global projects that cover a large number of countries, in order to review some of the evaluative criteria and adjust these to the nature of the project (e.g. particularly sustainability aspects, execution and impact).

- **For the CBD**

1. Try to minimise turnaround time between the moment the countries express interest and the actual start of the project implementation, as some countries expressed a loss of interest and governmental changes during the period which affected the commitment to the project's results.
2. Almost all countries interviewed considered the deadline for the submission of the NR as too short. In fact, KII indicated some sacrifices had to be made in the consultation and capacity development processes in order to meet what has been appraised as a very tight deadline. The project extension allowed more countries to produce the 6NR, while at the initial December 2018 deadline only 75% of the countries were able to submit the document.
3. Countries interviewed expressed the need to review and adjust the reporting format used for the NR, and mentioned the difficulty of the on-line submission process, particularly for those countries with a weaker and less reliable internet connection

- **Actions to follow up or reinforce initial benefits from the project**

These actions are already taking place at this time through the resources available in the budget for 2020 as reported by the UNDP IRH. The following activities have been initiated, in line with the approval of the Project Board:

"University of Geneva ($7,980): University of Geneva (UNIGE) supports the maintenance and storage costs for the UN Biodiversity Lab (UNBL), currently in beta version. The purpose is to ensure that the UNBL beta version remains usable and accessible for countries while UNDP develops an API version of the site. The budget is $7,980.

University of Northern British Colombia (UNBC) ($62,500): UNBC is providing the project with technical expertise to pilot the development of new spatially based biodiversity monitoring and reporting tools. UNBC works with small subset of the countries (4) supported by this project to pilot these methods with the purpose of accelerating the development of an identified need to provide technical support to create more spatially based, high quality, and data driven monitoring and reporting systems. Colombia, Kazakhstan, Peru are identified as able to use the data they collected during the 6NR project to see if the methods developed in the UNBC-Costa Rica pilot can be successfully applied for a similar purpose in their countries. The budget is $92,500.

National Geographic Society (NGS) ($246,300): NGS is working on transition the UNBL from its current beta version to a fully functioning API website that is powered by the EarthPulse Platform. Because they will be leveraging the existing features, which have cost NGS $1.75M USD, NGS can use this platform to rapidly consume the existing UNBL data, projects, and functionalities at a low cost and on an accelerated timeframe. This activity allows the project team to rapidly respond to this important country-identified need. It will result in rapidly providing a more functional, and sustainable UNBL platform that will support Parties in their continued monitoring and reporting to the CBD at a low cost. The budget is $246,300.

Case studies: The project team has hired case study writers to prepare case studies to document the progress being made by a variety of stakeholders to implement, monitor and report on their achievements to the CBD, including from women and indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs). The case studies focus on community groups and initiatives that have made a significant contribution to the achievement of ABTs and that can serve as examples to other countries. The budget is $35,000.

Pilot projects in selected countries: The Global 6NR Project is working with a subset of countries, including the UNDP Country Offices and Ministries of the Environment to leverage the results of its 6NR using advances in spatial planning to strengthen the capacity of policymakers to better manage their natural resources for people and the planet. Pilot projects were selected based on an assessment to determine which UNDP-supported countries had the best data-readiness, political support, and responsiveness to conduct a pilot project, based on their performance during the 6NR project. Pilot projects were started with Colombia, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan, and Peru to advance methods to use spatial data collected during 6NR development to improve country capacity to more effective monitor and report on biodiversity. Additionally, Ecuador is piloting ongoing work on data validation. The overall budget for all pilot countries is $82,200."

More globally, the project could also provide funds to better communicate and visualize the 6NR through local level dissemination activities. It is also recognised that biodiversity data is scattered and difficult to obtain and use. There is no country that has a centralised management information system in government with all relevant biodiversity data for the production of the NR. This means that additional efforts are warranted to support the creation of centralised data management systems in the countries, something which could be part of the future directions of a support project. In case of a follow-up project to support the 7NR, the process should be launched as early as possible in order to benefit from the positive dynamics created with the 6NR project and building upon its achievements.

Corrective actions for implementation

The implementing agency, UNDP IRH, gained high marks for the implementation of this project. This relates to the extent to which the GPT was able to provide the necessary financial and technical support in order to achieve the project objective, with effective oversight from the Project Board. Notwithstanding the latter, there is always room for improvement, and the qualitative interviews with the sample countries also provided some specific actions that could be taken to improve future project implementation. Of course, these limitations are sometimes due to factors which are outside of the control of the global project team, so the adaptive management cannot fully respond to some of the stated challenges. Nonetheless, in order to facilitate potential future project's implementation, the following issues should be addressed.

1) Consider having the countries identify a focal point in the government of each country for the NR that is fully available beyond the length of any one project on

national reporting. Feedback from countries indicate that government officials are often understaffed and very busy with a wide range of tasks and many responsibilities. Despite their eagerness and interest in support the production of the NR, they are not always available (some travel quite often). Countries could benefit from a nominated counterpart as focal point for the 6NR or the recruitment of a national consultant or additional staff to this end.

2) All countries would welcome the creation of a vetted roster of technical consultants that the countries can draw from in case of need. While UNDP is centralising its many consultants' rosters into one central roster, it would greatly facilitate the recruitment of high-quality technical consultants for the future (i.e. for writing the NR, for spatial data/GIS, etc.) if the roster could be made accessible to the countries[20].

3) Preference should be given to national consultants to produce the NR, and only when no such possibility exists should international consultants be hired for the preparation of the 6NR (this does not apply to specific technical consultancies, only for the lead NR writer)[21]. Even in this case and considering the intricate relationship within and among government agencies, a national consultant should be hired as counterpart to (or pairing with) the international consultant to facilitate the contextual understanding of the operating environment and of governmental relations. It is recommended that the international consultant should be posted in the country where the NR is being produced in order to facilitate the consultation process and access to data and information exchange. This however obviously has cost implications which may require additional resources.

4) It is challenging for a large number of countries across many different time zones to attend project inception workshops and related technical trainings about the project at the same time, which leads to challenges with comprehensive dissemination of project materials. Yet, holding 64 virtual or in-person inception workshops would also not be possible. Therefore, while the global team should continue to host virtual regional inception workshops in the early stage of a project like this, they should also schedule a virtual follow-up meeting with each country when they commence work on the project with a full team once the consultant and focal point for the projects are identified. This will ensure that the appropriate points of contact for all countries better understand the project's objectives, timeline, deliverables, contact points and technical tools.

5) Regional workshops were seen as highly important, but the entire project did not envisage any regional workshop as part of the budget as all workshops were to be held virtually, so future projects should have a specific budget for regional workshops and travel allowance for UNDP and government staff rather than relying exclusively on on-line tools. Regardless of the recognised high quality of the on-line tools, anecdotal evidence suggests that regional workshops are useful learning

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[20] Although the GPT indicates that such a roster was done for GIS and not used once. There is a disconnect between the findings of the evaluator and the use of the roster developed by the GPT.
[21] As indicated by the GPT this was the guidance issued and IC contracts were only made when a national consultant could not be found.

exercises which contribute to improve and facilitate the preparation of the NR by the countries.

6) Countries indicated a compressed timeframe for the preparation of the 6NR. It is suggested that if a two-year timeline can be given to a country between the moment the project starts and the submission of the NR, an even more inclusive consultation process can be held, contributing to higher visibility and reaching out more to local communities (which may also require an adjustment of funds)

- **Proposals for future directions underlining main objectives**

There are two different levels of support that should be envisaged: the financial/technical support to the hard data collection, preparation, and visualisation (including the generation of detailed spatial maps and analyses), and the process and wider relationships that are developed through a global project that is somewhat of a standard setter for NR (particularly compared to past NR).

The evaluation found evidence that the main challenges that require further capacity development support relate to:

1) Biodiversity data production and management (including spatial data)
2) Review and refine biodiversity target indicators
3) Supporting communication on the value of biodiversity

The GPT has also identified similar concerns and defined more precisely the technical support required through two papers dated 14th February 2020[22] labelled "Towards a common monitoring and reporting framework for implementation during the post-2020 period of CBD" in regards to the capacity needs identified during the 6NR period aiming at "integrating spatial data into the Convention on Biological Diversity's post-2020 Monitoring and Reporting Framework" in relation to the use of spatial data. The evaluator's findings support the contents of the suggested next steps contained in these two papers as they encompass the overriding concerns and incorporates the lessons from the 6NR implementation.

Looking at the project's approach and soft-skills rather its technical contents, a useful improvement would be to have longer delivery period for the production of the NR, and more funds to a) enhance consultations at local and community level during the preparation and, most importantly, b) roll-out the results of the NR to the local and community level after the NR has been endorsed, with a synthesis in local language that contributes to supporting communication (and using the suggested 2-pager map presentation mentioned as best practice hereunder).

Best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success

The evaluation found a very large number of good practices relating the project performance. In fact, most of these good practices are mentioned as case studies in the

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[22] Both papers authored by Dr. J. Ervin, C. Supples, A. Virnig, and M. Marigo, written for UNDP

6NR reports themselves. However, countries were all proud to provide examples of good performance linked to the 6NR. A small selection from the sample countries interviewed, which is not exhaustive but illustrative, is presented hereafter.

The following best practices were identified through qualitative analysis, linked to specific countries:

1) Two-pager coloured-map of all ABT results and NBSAP targets for Samoa[23] with a coloured implementation scale. This allows a visual understanding of the overall situation of the country without having to read through large reports. It is reportedly being used for decision-making and should be a requirement for future NR as a best practice model.

2) Gender integration in Costa Rica was particularly successful and went beyond the remit of the 6NR as a gender gap analysis was conducted and the good practice example was shared with other countries. Specific gender-responsive programmes were developed as a result (Mas Natura, Mas Mujeres). Another aspect in which good practice was identified was in the participation of the IPL in the consultation process and the use of spatial data.

3) Inclusion of local communities and community ownership was a strong component in Venezuela. Interviews indicate that they had 60 good practice examples, too many to incorporate them all in the 6NR.

4) The participatory consultation process was highly appreciated in Haiti. Although there was no national strategy, the project provided the necessary support to prepare and submit the 6NR, in a complex socio-political context.

5) Similarly, in Jamaica the inclusive and consultative process through the project methodology meant that it contributed a higher level of ownership.

6) In Vietnam, the good practice was linked to the evaluation of the country's performance through the preparation of the 6NR, and also regarding the inclusive consultation process.

7) In Algeria, an inter-ministerial committee was set up for the strategy and was used for the 6NR, and a review committee was set up for the 6NR. Over 250 people were consulted.

8) In Afghanistan despite a constraining security situation the country was able to produce a 6NR that leveraged government ownership and interest and submit it in professionally written English language.

These are but a few examples of different illustrations of the contribution of the project to good performance. The different analysis reports written by the global project team also provide more details for each of the specific technical areas, particularly the Project Closure Report Analysis that were prepared in April 2020 based on the exit survey.

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[23] Developed by Project consultant James Atherton under the title "Samoa's Sixth National Report to the CBD: Summary for Decision Makers", Draft, November 2018

In terms of worst practice (or suggestions for practice improvements), the most serious challenge was finding the adequate profile for the consultants tasked with the preparation of the 6NR. In some countries, it proved very difficult and took a long time to identify the adequate profiles. In one case, the quality of the product prepared was not accepted by the country and had to be reviewed and adjusted by another consultant. It could be useful to identify if there is an "model" consultancy team required for this type of project, as different countries made different uses both in the number and typology of consultants that were engaged for the preparation of the 6NR.

Considering the global agenda setting function of the UNDP and the interaction between the countries in these global projects, there is a sense that all parties share a common agenda and are part of a wider challenge that require the collaborative effort of all countries by participating in a global project. In this aspect, UNDP plays a role of keeper of the global agenda and contributes to add value through this global support. However, more country interaction through workshops and regional workshops may be necessary to increase the level of exchange and interaction amongst the countries.

Another issue is that for UNDP COs to provide effective technical capacity development, it needs to have a higher level of technical resources than those currently available in the countries. For this, the UNDP COs need to be sensitised (in some countries the environment project portfolio does not include biodiversity projects and experts) and it is important for UNDP to ensure it has the highest level of technical capacity available to provide the most effective support to the countries, both through the Global Project Team and the UNDP IRH but also through the UNDP COs.

Lessons learned

The key lessons identified by the GPT and presented to the PB are the following:

1. **Technical reviews** lead to drastically improved national reports, and should be compulsory before the final report is submitted to CBD
2. **More achievable** project's deadlines are necessary, recognizing constraints countries may face and length in the implementation procedures
3. **Spatial analyses** are necessary for accurate national reporting
4. Technical guidance and tools facilitating the reporting process should be **jointly prepared**, **released early** and **endorsed** by the CBD
5. **In-person meetings and workshops** are as critical to project success as virtual ones are; the budget and work plan of the project should take this into consideration
6. **Effective, long-term** national data management systems are needed
7. Support is needed to continue refining **biodiversity indicators**
8. Significant work remains to fully **mainstream gender** and capture, quantitatively and qualitatively, the contribution of both women and men

9. 6NR results should be used to identify **nature-based solutions** and provide guidance to update future national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

These lessons are also supported by the evaluator. But additional lessons learned were also identified, namely:

1. The **methodology for stakeholder engagement** was highly successful in contributing to inclusive stakeholder participation and was instrumental in the improvement of the national report
2. The **baseline** for formulating the results should be **researched going back to previous NR evaluations** to have a solid baseline
3. **The targets** regarding expected results should be realistic and achievable (as are indicators) and **indicate a range or threshold** instead of a fixed number (e.g. 75 to 90%, over 75%) as a 100% target completion does not do justice to the challenges and complexities of the process required to achieve the results
4. **More exchanges and participation between the project design team, the GPT, and an RBM expert** is required to ensure initial design issues can be addressed at the onset, including the formulation of the results framework and theory of change. Once the project document is signed, there is no flexibility to amend the project contents.
5. **The project governance structure is sound** and has contributed to a successful implementation of the project.

The evaluation formulates the following recommendations, which summarise the points presented above, without having established a priority-level for the recommendations:

Recommendations

a) For future implementation
1. Use the 2-pager map synthesis from Samoa as a visual good practice model to be used for all future NR
2. Consider having a nominated, dedicated, long-term focal point in the national government of each country to support the elaboration of the NR
3. Facilitate access to vetted technical consultant roster for countries to draw from
4. Preferably invite countries to use national consultants where available, but pairing international consultants with local consultants
5. Provide funds to better communicate and visualize the 6NR through local level dissemination activities once the report is complete
6. Identify how to support the creation of a centralised biodiversity data management information system in governments, especially for spatial data
7. Continue and strengthen technical support for the use of spatial data, GIS and map production capacities during monitoring and reporting efforts, and the availability of the UN Biodiversity Lab for national use
8. More time, resources and funds to hold initial regional workshops to set countries on the "right track" and increase interactive exchanges amongst countries

9. Ensure a two-year timeline from the moment the countries obtain the funds until the deadline for submitting the NR (bearing in mind that many countries have a lengthy government endorsement process over which the project has no say)
10. Consider alternative and/or options for those countries that would prefer to have their ministry/agency operate under a NIM rather than a DIM modality
11. Maintain multi-lingual capacities for these global projects (at least English-French-Spanish) to engage with countries

c) For future projects - CBD
12. Review the format of the CBD reporting template[24]
   c) For future project design – UNDP - GEF

13. Strengthen project design through enhanced consultation and review by an RBM expert
14. Review GEF evaluation guidance template and consider preparing specific guidance for global projects that cover large number of countries so criteria (execution, impact, sustainability) and rating scales are suited to the object of the project
15. Address gender mainstreaming through a differentiated approach based on the level of national gender mainstreaming and prioritisation (by groups of countries)
16. Include a section on the capacity development strategy for technical support projects.

5. Annexes

- TOR
- List of persons interviewed
- List of documents reviewed
- Evaluation Question matrix
- Questionnaire used
- Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form
- Power Point presentation of main findings
- Inception report
- Projects RF

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[24] Based on the feedback from several respondents from sample countries indicating the reporting template could be revised and improved.