

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Evaluation of the projects funded by the Finnish Government in the area of Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins

I. Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to review the implementation and assess the extent to which the objective of the 3 projects:

- “Developing cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers” (Chu-Talas II);
- “Promoting Cooperation to Adapt to Climate Change in the Chu and Talas Transboundary Basin”;
- “Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the transboundary Chu-Talas basin”

funded by the Finnish Government in frames of Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins (hereinafter “Projects”) was achieved. The evaluation will assess the *relevance* of the projects for the beneficiary countries and the Chu and Talas Commission, *effectiveness* in reaching relevant outcomes, *efficiency* in the use of human and staff resources in reaching project objectives, *sustainability* of projects’ work, *impact* on transboundary cooperation, integrated water resources management and adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins in Central Asia, as well as coordination, synergies and complementarities with other ongoing UNECE projects funded by Finland. The results of the evaluation will support improvement of the future technical cooperation projects and activities implemented by UNECE. The results of the evaluation will be important for the discussion with donors and partner organizations for any future work by UNECE in the area of water resources management and related health outcomes in the Central Asia region and beyond.

II. Scope

The evaluation will be guided by the objective, outcomes, activities and indicators of achievement established in the logical frameworks of the original and revised projects document. The evaluation will consider to what extent the projects improved transboundary cooperation and integrated water resources management and adaptation to climate change in the Chu-Talas river basin. The evaluation will cover the full period of project’s implementation.

The evaluation will assess how gender considerations were included the projects’ design, execution and results. It will make recommendations on how gender can be included in the design of future projects in UNECE.

The full project documentation includes project design, monitoring reports, progress reports to donors, partnership arrangements with relevant actors. All relevant information will be made available, including documentation and interviews, activities of partner organizations, any previous relevant reviews or evaluations conducted, and any other information which pertains to UNECE efforts in the successful execution of the project will be included in the evaluation.

III. Background

The Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of Kazakhstan share the waters of transboundary Central Asian rivers Chu and Talas, which provide essential resources for irrigation of the vast agricultural lands in both countries as well as opportunities for the generation of hydropower. Whereas all facilities for rivers’ regulation, such as dams, water reservoirs and canals, are located upstream in the territory of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan depends on the operation and proper maintenance of these facilities. This situation prompted the two countries to establish a legal basis for the joint operation of water management infrastructure.

In January 2000 the Agreement on the Use of Water Management Facilities of Intergovernmental Status on the Rivers Chu and Talas was signed by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic. In 2003 OSCE, UNECE and UNESCAP initiated the project "Support for the Creation of a Transboundary Water Commission on the Chu and Talas Rivers between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan" (Chu-Talas I) with funding from the United Kingdom, Sweden and Estonia. The project facilitated the establishment of a bilateral Commission in 2006.

The follow-up project "Developing cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers" (Chu-Talas II), funded by Finland, was implemented by OSCE and UNECE in 2008-2011. The project's goals were to broaden the bilateral Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan cooperation, enhance the understanding of the two countries on the available water resources, improve access to information, involve new stakeholders into the process of river management and promote activities for the protection of water ecosystems. The practical outcomes of the Chu-Talas II project included the development of proposals to improve the 2000 Agreement by inclusion of additional water facilities, introduction of integrated water resources management principles, and establishment of basin councils. The project raised awareness of the work of the Commission through the new official web-page and local media. In 2008-2009 the Commission carried out a joint examination of water management facilities. As a result, damage evaluation acts were prepared on the technical condition of the main waterworks along with needs assessment for repair and rehabilitation works for the following years. In addition, a joint study on the relation of groundwater and surface water resources in the Chu river basin was prepared. These results are displayed in the Project Report "Development of cooperation on the Chu and Talas Rivers (Chu – Talas II)".

The project "Promoting Cooperation to Adapt to Climate Change in the Chu and Talas Transboundary Basin" (January 2010 - December 2014) aimed to improve the adaptive capacity of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, to support dialogue and cooperation on the needed steps to design an adaptation strategy in the transboundary context and thereby prevent controversy on the use of water resources. Results of the project are summarized in the brochure "Strengthening cooperation in Adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins of the Chu and Talas rivers. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan", available in English and Russian.

The purpose of the project "Enhancing climate resilience and adaptive capacity in the transboundary Chu-Talas basin" (September 2015 – December 2018), funded by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs under the FinWaterWei II Initiative, is to establish a framework for regular and strategic climate change adaptation action in the Chu-Talas River Basin and enable the Chu-Talas Commission and local authorities to facilitate climate change adaptation in the basin..

Following the adoption of the strategic decision to cooperate closely with the GEF/UNDP project "Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins" (May 2015 – September 2018) the project has provided extensive inputs to the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) and Strategic Action Programme (SAP) processes and developed the TDA annex on climate adaptation. Initially the project completion was planned at June 2018, but UNECE has experienced challenges in carrying out the activities, related to TDA under the GEF funded projects that required additional time to finalize its climate adaptation component. Hence, the project was extended till September 2018.

IV. Issues

The following issues/questions will provide the basis for the evaluation.

Relevance

1. How relevant were the projects to the national needs and priorities of beneficiary countries?
2. How relevant was the design of the projects, in line with the achievements and outcomes of other initiatives?

3. To what extent were the projects' design and development interventions relevant for meeting the projects objective?
4. To what extent the projects were relevant to the UNECE and Water Convention's regular programme of work?

Effectiveness

1. To what extent were the expected accomplishments (outcomes) of the projects achieved?
2. What were the challenges/obstacles to achieving the projects' objectives and expected accomplishments (outcomes)?
3. Have the projects improved capacity of key stakeholders?
4. To what extent were the planned activities sufficient to achieve the expected accomplishments (outcomes) and project objective?
5. To what extent implementation of the projects supported the expected accomplishments of the UNECE regular programme of work under the Subprogramme 1 "Environment" and of the Water Convention's programme of work for 2016-2018?
6. To what extent the projects contributed to integrated water resources management, improved the transboundary water cooperation and adaptation to climate change in Central Asia? What were the synergies that the projects brought along?
7. To what extent the implementation of the projects contributed to the overall objectives of the Water Convention?

Efficiency

1. Were the available resources appropriate to the scale of the projects and the needs identified by beneficiary countries?
2. Were the human and financial resources allocated to the projects used efficiently and commensurate to the project results?
3. Were the resources (financial and human) appropriate to the design of the project?
4. Were the activities implemented according to the planned timeframe?

Sustainability

1. To what extent will the results of the projects continue after completion of the projects in the beneficiary countries?
2. To what degree the projects influenced the policies of beneficiary countries to further pursue cooperation to improve the quality and availability of shared water resources in the face of climate change?
3. Were the measures to enhance sustainability of project results given sufficient attention during the preparation and implementation phases?

Impact

1. To what extent have the projects impacted the legal, institutional and technical capacity challenges at the national and basin levels to effectively address transboundary water problems?
2. To what extent the projects impacted effective decision-making and information exchange between the countries on water quantity, quality and climate change issues? Has the countries' ownership improved as a result of the projects?
3. To what extent the Commission is dependent of external support? Where support is still needed?
4. Do policy contradictions affect implementation and prevent the sustainable achievement of the developmental objectives?

V. Methodology

The methodology for the evaluation will include the following:

1. Desk study of project materials: all relevant projects documents, including projects descriptions, reports, publications, etc. and other information will be provided to the evaluator.

2. Interview with 10-15 key external stakeholders, such as representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, RSE “Kazhydromet”, Ministry of Agriculture and Melioration of Kyrgyz Republic, Hydrometeorological Service of Kyrgyzstan, Chu Talas Commission, NGOs, international and local experts, donors etc. (face-to-face, via telephone and skype, list of contacts to be provided).
3. Interviews with internal stakeholders including the projects team and the Environment Division at UNECE
4. Some of the interviews, in particular with representatives of water management authorities, will be conducted by the evaluator in Astana, Kazakhstan and at the FINWaterWEI II Regional Conference planned for 26-27 September 2018, Bishkek and Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan. In addition, the event will provide an opportunity to meet and discuss the project implementation and results with donor and partner organizations dealing with water management issues in the region.
5. An electronic survey of internal and external stakeholders, conducted in both English and Russian.

UNECE will provide all documentation, support and guidance to the evaluation consultant as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation. The consultant shall be provided the UNECE Evaluation Policy, evaluation report templates and checklists as guidance for the requirements for evaluation reports in UNECE.

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. The evaluation will comply with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards, including due consideration of the gender aspects of the project’s design and implementation. UNECE will provide all documentation as needed throughout the timeline of the evaluation. UNECE will provide support and further explanation to the evaluator as needed.

The evaluation report of maximum 15-20 pages will summarize the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation (with annexes including summaries from data gathering). An executive summary (max. 2 pages) will summarize the methodology of the evaluation, key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

VI. Evaluation Schedule

The evaluation schedule follows:

1. Desk review of all documents provided by UNECE to the Consultant: 25 September - 10 October 2018
2. Developing and preparing interviews: 25-30 September 2018
3. Participation in Bishkek and Issyk-Kul Conference, interviews 26-27 September 2018
4. Follow-up interviews and studies, travel to Astana, Kazakhstan and Geneva, Switzerland as needed 1-30 October 2018
5. Delivery of Draft Report 30 October 2018
6. Comments back to the evaluator after review by project manager and selected project participants 15 November 2018
7. Delivery Final Report 30 November 2018

VII. Resources

Resources available for the evaluation of the projects funded by the Finnish Government in the area of Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the Chu and Talas River Basins are USD 14,000, exclusive of travel costs.

The UNECE Project manager will oversee and provide guidance during the course of the evaluation. The Programme Management Unit (PMU) will provide guidance to the Project Manager and evaluator as needed on the evaluation design, methodology and quality assurance of the final draft report.

VIII. Intended Use/Next Steps

The evaluation will be consistent with the UNECE Evaluation Policy. Following the receipt of the final report, UNECE will develop a management response, and action plan for addressing recommendations made by the consultant. The results of the evaluation shall be considered, together with other project evaluations conducted during 2018, by senior management in UNECE to address systemic inefficiencies or challenges to effective project implementation in UNECE.

IX. Criteria for Evaluators

Evaluators should have:

- An advanced university degree or equivalent background in relevant to the projects disciplines;
- Minimum 10 years of relevant experience; Working experience related to projects or issues in water management in Central Asia is highly desirable;
- Specialized training in areas such as evaluation, project management, social statistics, advanced statistical research and analysis;
- Demonstrated relevant professional experience in design, management and conduct of evaluation processes with multiple stakeholders, survey design and implementation, and project planning, monitoring and management;
- Demonstrated methodological knowledge of evaluations, including quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis for end-of-cycle project evaluations;
- Fluent in written and spoken English and Russian.
- Good computer skills (especially Microsoft office applications).

Evaluators should declare any conflict of interest to UNECE before embarking on an evaluation project, and at any point where such conflict occurs.

Annex: Project documents