

Evaluation report

Evaluation of UNECE project E267 titled “International Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnership: development and implementation of PPP standards and recommendations”



PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS)
An Evaluation Methodology for the SDGs

Report completed on: 29 February 2024
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This report was commissioned by UNECE. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report are those of the external evaluator and do not necessarily reflect the views of the UNECE.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CECI	Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (renamed as CICPPP)
CICPPP	Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CPS	Cooperation and Partnership Section
ECTD	Economic Cooperation and Trade Division
EQ	Evaluation Question
ER	Expected Result
FSU	Former Soviet Union
ICOE	International Centre of Excellence
IFI	International Financial Institution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD/DAC	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
PIERS	PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System
PMU	Programme Management Unit
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
PROJECT	UNECE Project E267: International Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships: development and implementation of PPP standards and recommendations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TCPF	Technical Cooperation Project Form
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Working Party on PPPs	Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships

Executive summary

This document contains the evaluation of the UNECE project E267, “International Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships: development and implementation of PPP standards and recommendations” (hereinafter the project). It was produced by Mr. Dusan Zupka, an independent evaluator selected by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). The evaluation report includes evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Brief overview of the project

The objective of the project was to strengthen national capacity of the UNECE member States and other stakeholders to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). To achieve this objective, the activities focussed on the development and implementation of international PPP standards, guides, tools, declarations and recommendations to support the achievement of the SDGs through sustainable and affordable infrastructure.

The project targeted low and middle-income countries, where there is a lack of capacities to identify and prepare bankable PPPs projects. The project produced 10 PPP standards, guidelines and tools in various sectors and topics in support of the SDGs. Attention was paid to cross-cutting issues such as, women’s empowerment, human rights, and leaving no one behind in different sectors – health, transport, energy, environmental resilience, housing and urban development – with an overall aim to further developing the UNECE PPPs for the SDGs approach. The project also supported the organisation of 6 International PPP Forums and 9 targeted policy advisory activities in countries to raise awareness and showcase best practices on PPPs for the SDGs.

Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope, and intended users/audiences

The present evaluation took place from July 2023 to November 2023. The online interviews were conducted in September and October 2023. As indicated in the terms of reference (TORs) for the evaluation of this project, the purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the project were achieved. The evaluation aims to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the activities that were conducted during the duration of the project.

The evaluation covers the full implementation of the project, from April 2016 to June 2023 (after a no-cost extension), in UNECE member States.

The intended audience of this report is the UNECE secretariat and member States, in particular representatives from beneficiary countries involved in the project.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology was constructed in accordance with the TORs. The evaluation focused on the degree of achievement of the objectives of the project which were “To strengthen

national capacity to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using public-private partnership (PPP)".

Respecting the OECD/DAC criteria for evaluation, the evaluation followed the UNECE Evaluation Policy.¹ The evaluation methodology was informed by research tools specifically developed and tailored for the purpose of this evaluation to build a rich and comprehensive evidence base covering a broad number of stakeholders. As the UNECE Technical Cooperation Project Form (TCPF) for the project did not describe the PPP context in the target countries, this evaluation could not rely on initial baseline data. Taking this into consideration, the evaluator developed a set of specific indicators to assess the results of the project to compensate for the lack of baseline data.

The evaluation research involved several tools, as follows:

- Desk research of existing PPP documentation, literature and data on the Project.
- Online survey, designed by the evaluator, targeting key stakeholders and beneficiaries (with 17 responses).
- Online interviews of a wide range of diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries with the public and private sectors, international organizations, national authorities and academia (with 12 interviews).

Summary of key findings

Relevance/rating: Highly satisfactory

1. The project activities and outputs were highly relevant to the specific needs of the UNECE member States and in particular of those in the beneficiary countries in the area of PPPs.
2. The project was consistent with the priorities, mandate and the programme of work of the UNECE, well aligned with the SDGs and integrated gender, human rights and disability perspectives.
3. The role of UNECE and its International Centre of Excellence on PPPs was appreciated by all stakeholders with expectation of UNECE to continue its strong involvement in PPP capacity building activities in the future.

Effectiveness/rating: Highly satisfactory

1. The expected results and objective of the project have been fully achieved. The challenge linked to the COVID-19 pandemic was successfully overcome by specific mitigation measures (transformation of several events from face-to-face to online mode).

¹ ECE Evaluation Policy, adopted by ECE EXCOM in December 2021: <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021>

2. The project improved the competencies of policy makers and government officials in the beneficiary countries in using PPPs and at the same time paid attention to harmonization and coherence with PPPs activities of other partners operating in the same context.

Efficiency/rating: Highly satisfactory

1. The available resources were adequate for achieving the expected results and transformed into the quality outputs and, overall, within the planned time frame.

Sustainability/rating: Highly satisfactory

1. The partners and beneficiaries own the outcomes of the work. The statements made regularly by the representatives of the beneficiary countries during the annual sessions of the UNECE Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships (Working Party on PPPs) confirmed their commitment to continue PPP activities and to refine existing PPP regulations.

Summary of key conclusions

1. The objective of the project was attained by the activities concentrated on knowledge development, capacity building and PPPs know-how dissemination followed by implementation of international PPP standards, guidelines, tools and recommendations to support the achievement of the SDGs through sustainable and affordable infrastructure.
2. The major challenge faced by the evaluation was stemming from the absence in the Technical Cooperation Project Form for the project of the description of the PPP context in the target countries, and consequently the evaluation could not rely on initial baseline data.
3. The establishment of the International Centre of Excellence, hosted in UNECE secretariat, was crucial and served a decisive purpose to advancing best practices in PPPs, and in particular providing a venue for discourse and development of international PPPs standards, guidelines, and fostering consensus and clarity of the policy space around PPPs.
4. The project was a significant and valuable knowledge development and capacity building initiative, that meaningfully contributed to the capacity development on PPPs in the UNECE member States and beyond.
5. The cross-cutting issues of gender, human rights and disability perspectives were fairly integrated into the project activities. However, there is still a room for improvement in this area, although the UNECE PIERS methodology launched in 2022 will certainly contribute to integrate these cross-cutting issues.
6. The main risks of sustainability have been addressed and the feedback received from the stakeholders' interviews and survey indicates that the partners and beneficiaries own the outcome of the work accomplished by the project.

7. Across the responses to evaluation questions, results of the project are very positive overall placing the Project at the excellent rating, with regards to all four evaluation criteria, the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability.

Summary of key recommendations

1. **Capacity building:** UNECE to continue strengthening national capacity of PPP stakeholders in UNECE member States and beyond, to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using PPPs, including with increased funding. This includes support to UNECE member States in aligning their PPP regulations and legal framework with the UNECE core documents on PPPs for the SDGs, the PIERS methodology, and the PPP standards and guidelines developed in the context of the project.
2. **Dissemination of existing UNECE PPP standards, guidelines and tools with extrabudgetary support:** Scale up the PPP knowledge development and dissemination supported by the implementation of existing UNECE PPP standards, guidelines, recommendations and the PIERS methodology to facilitate the achievement of the SDGs through sustainable and affordable infrastructure. Mobilising extrabudgetary resources is essential for effective dissemination, and a call on donors and development partners to consider making available extrabudgetary support to the UNECE secretariat to meet the ever-growing demand from member States for PPP capacity building is therefore essential.
3. **Awareness raising of cross-cutting issues:** Continue raising awareness of the UNECE member States and beyond about the importance of mainstreaming/integrating cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and disability perspectives into the design and implementation activities of future PPP capacity-building projects. Such future capacity-building projects should always include specific workshops and presentations on cross-cutting issues. Participation of stakeholders in different activities should be recorded in a gender-disaggregated manner.
4. **Gender/disability indicators and targets:** Introduce in future PPP capacity building projects gender/disability-responsive indicators and targets to measure and report regularly the progress made on these cross-cutting issues.
5. **A practical guide on stakeholder engagement:** UNECE Secretariat to ensure that work on a guide on stakeholder engagement in PPPs for the SDGs is launched in 2024 and is completed in due course.

I. Introduction

This study aims to provide UNECE with an external and independent evaluation of the results of the UNECE project E267, “International Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships: development and implementation of PPP standards and recommendations”. The activities implemented during 2016-2023 were funded by two donors, the City University Hong Kong and Tsinghua University Beijing. The implementation was managed by the Cooperation and Partnerships Section of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Trade Division.

The concept of PPPs revolves around a strategic alliance where public institutions and private entities pool their resources, expertise and capacities to jointly design, fund, implement and operate projects that yield mutual benefits. PPPs exhibit versatility, ranging from large-scale infrastructure endeavours such as transportation networks, energy facilities and healthcare systems, to more little-scale initiatives including education programs, urban revitalization etc. By transcending the conventional boundaries that often separate the public and private sectors, PPPs present an avenue for innovation, resource optimization, and inclusive progress.

The project came at a time when the UNECE was mandated by its member States to redefine the PPP model from a value for money and accounting mechanism to a model that is fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda adopted in 2015. Work on this transformation started in 2015-2016, with a series of multistakeholder consultations, including as part of the UNECE intergovernmental machinery. The first concrete outcome of this transformation was the elaboration of 10 PPP Guiding Principles in support of the SDGs. These documents represent the foundation for all subsequent UNECE PPP work. The project accompanied the UNECE throughout this transformation and was instrumental in developing the PPPs for the SDGs approach to put people at the core of infrastructure and public services. The PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS) methodology and the annual editions of the PPP Forums, two outputs of this project, have become UNECE flagships for PPPs in support of the 2030 Agenda. These two flagship activities need to be supported by extrabudgetary funding from donors and development partners in order for UNECE to continue being at the forefront of promoting a PPP model in support of the SDGs.

The project aimed to develop and implement international standards and recommendations on PPPs to support the achievement of SDGs through sustainable affordable infrastructure. The project targeted low and middle-income countries, where there is a lack of capacities to identify and prepare bankable PPP projects. The project produced 10 policy-oriented international PPP standards, guidelines and tools in various sectors and topics relevant to the SDGs, such as women’s empowerment, health, transport, energy, environmental resilience, and housing and urban development, aimed at further developing the UNECE PPPs for the SDGs approach. The project also supported the organisation of 6 International PPP Forums and 9 targeted policy advisory activities to raise awareness and showcase best practices on PPPs for the SDGs. The project resulted in improved dialogue, strengthened national capacity and increased investment in infrastructure related PPPs that contributed to the SDGs.

Background to the evaluation, including the reason for the evaluation and the time frame of the evaluation

The UNECE is actively supporting PPPs with the main objective to increase the knowledge and expertise of governments to identify, negotiate, manage and implement successful PPP projects. This is done through exchange of knowledge and experiences on PPPs by member States, including experts from public and private sectors, particularly in the identification and testing of best practice. UNECE activities in this field have resulted in PPP standards, guides on the best practice, studies and innovative tools that can be exploited in capacity building programmes and training activities.

The project started in April 2016 and its implementation period ended in June 2023 (after no-cost extension).

As customary for all UNECE implemented projects, the results of the project are assessed in terms of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. The results of the evaluation will be used in the planning and implementation of future activities of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Integration Subprogramme. Findings of this evaluation will be used to:

- Improve direct project's follow up actions, implementation of products by project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the project.
- Assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of this project.
- Formulate tailored capacity building projects to strengthen the national capacity in enhancing innovation.

Purpose and objectives of the evaluation, and the primary users/audiences

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the project were achieved. Therefore, the evaluation report presents the information required to provide answers to the evaluation questions defined in the evaluation TORs.

The evaluation measures the levels of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project in:

- developing and agreeing on policy-oriented international Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) standards and recommendations aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in different sectors, and in
- strengthening national capacities of UNECE member States (in particular of beneficiary countries) to implement these standards and recommendations and to identify bankable infrastructure PPP projects that contribute to achieving SDGs.

The evaluation also assesses any impacts the project may have had on progressing human rights, gender equality, disability inclusion, climate change and disaster risk reduction in the context of this engagement. The evaluation finally looks at the activities repurposed to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, and assess, where relevant, UNECE's COVID-19 early response through this project.

1. Description of the project

1.1 Background

PPPs, 2030 Agenda, SDGs and UNECE mandate

The capacity building project E267 came at a time when the UNECE was mandated by its member States to redefine the PPP model from a value for money and accounting mechanism to a model that is fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are set of global objectives adopted by United Nations member states in September 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These goals were created to address a wide range of social, economic and environmental challenges facing the present world. The SDGs are a call to action to reduce poverty, protect planet, and ensure prosperity for all by 20230. There are 17 SDGs, each with 169 specific targets and indicators.²

UNECE as a multilateral platform facilitates greater economic integration and cooperation among its fifty-six member States and promotes sustainable development and economic prosperity through:

- policy dialogue,
- negotiation of international legal instruments,
- development of regulations and norms,
- exchange and application of best practices as well as economic and technical expertise,
- technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.

The UNECE contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of the UN through the regional implementation of outcomes of global UN Conferences and Summits. Its terms of reference have been defined by ECOSOC.

PPPs refocussing with primary attention to people well-being

Work on this transformation of PPPs in UNECE started in 2015-2016, with a series of multistakeholder consultations, including as part of the UNECE intergovernmental machinery. The first concrete outcome of this transformation was the elaboration of 10 Guiding Principles on PPPs in support of the SDGs.³ This document has become the foundation for all subsequent UNECE work on PPPs.

The project accompanied the UNECE throughout this transformation and was instrumental in developing the PPPs for the SDGs approach with people at the core. The “PPP and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System” (PIERS) and the annual editions of the UNECE International PPP Forum have become UNECE flagships.

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

³ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2022_07-en.pdf

The UNECE International PPP Forum has become the leading international annual PPP event, and a venue for PPP experts (governments, private sector, academia, NGOs, international organisations, IFIs) to discuss topical issues on PPP and infrastructure finance vis-à-vis the broader issues of sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Forum will continue taking place with a strong capacity building component beyond the project due to its success and additional funding (through a new UNDA project for the period 2024-2027).

The project aimed to develop international standards and recommendations on PPPs to support the achievement of SDGs through sustainable affordable infrastructure. The project targeted low and middle-income countries, where there is a lack of capacities to identify and prepare bankable PPP projects. The project resulted in improved dialogue, strengthened national capacity and increased investment in infrastructure projects using PPPs that contributed to the SDGs.

1.2 Project objectives and expected outcomes

The objective of the project is to strengthen national capacity to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using PPPs. This objective was set up under the understanding that there is a strong interaction between infrastructure, investment and achievement of the SDGs, and significant investment was needed to improve infrastructure in low and middle-income countries.

The expected outcomes of the project are:

Expected outcome 1: Agreed international PPP standards in a number of sectors and sub-sectors to support the sustainable development goals and provide the basis for national PPP implementation.

Expected outcome 2: Strengthened national capacity to implement these international standards and identify bankable infrastructure PPP projects that contribute to achieving SDGs.

1.3 Project strategies and key activities

Project strategy

The Project strategies were defined through several rounds of negotiations in UNECE committees as follows:

- Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (CECI), at its meeting on 12-14 February 2014 (document ECE/CECI/2014/2 dated 27 March 2014) included the development and implementation of international PPPs standards and recommendation in the programme of work of the Team of Specialists on PPPs.
- At its sixth session on 23-24 June 2014, the Team of Specialists on PPPs agreed on the process by which standards are to be developed, and on a list of priority areas for which the standards should be developed and implemented in support of the SDGs (document ECE/CECI/PPP/2014/2).

The project considered the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence (ICoE) on PPPs as a critical catalyst for the implementation of its activities and for achievement of its expected results. In the UNECE Explanatory Note by the Secretariat submitted as an informal document to the Executive Committee,⁴ the overall objective of the ICoE on PPPs is to provide the governments of the member States with innovative PPP delivery and financing options, strategic advice and support, so as to assist their development of local PPP capabilities that deliver value-for-money, fit-for-purpose and sustainable civil and social infrastructures for the benefit of citizens.

The ICoE on PPPs operated under the UNECE and was organized as follows:

A coordinating hub based at the UNECE Secretariat at the Palais des Nations, Geneva accountable to the Working Party on PPPs, its Governing Body / Bureau and to the UNECE senior management. Its main components are:

- Project Teams – Project teams comprising of experts acted as the main drivers for the development of PPP standards/recommendations. Therefore, they were the engines for growth for the ICoE on PPPs.
- Specialist Centres – Specialist Centres supplemented the work of the project teams in two ways. Firstly, they helped in the preparation of best practice guides through the gathering of country-specific experiences. These best practice guides then formed the basis for project teams seeking to produce evidence-based standards. Secondly, Specialist Centres played an integral role in the implementation of future standards.
- UNECE Secretariat – The secretariat plays a facilitating role in the development of standards by expediting communication between the above-mentioned parties and by providing technical support to end users of the knowledge platform. The secretariat is also in charge of maintaining the standards and keeping them relevant to the constantly changing PPP environment.

Project key activities

At its ninth session on 3-4 September 2015, the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships (CICPPP) took note of the list of 28 topics for standards approved by the Team of Specialists on PPPs at its meeting on 18 June 2015. It was agreed that the project would support the following expected accomplishments/key activities:

- (a) Improved dialogue on promoting a policy, financial and regulatory environment conducive to sustained economic growth, innovative development and greater competitiveness
- (b) Strengthened national capacity of countries in the UNECE region to promote good practices and implement UNECE recommendations on a policy, financial and regulatory environment conducive to sustained economic growth, innovative development and greater competitiveness of Subprogramme 4: "Economic cooperation and integration" of the UNECE strategic framework for 2016-2017.

⁴ https://unece.org/DAM/project-monitoring/4-economic-cooperation-and-integration/E182_Explanatory_Note.pdf

(c) Enhanced contribution to the achievement of SDGs 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17.

Finally, the Technical Cooperation Form approved by EXCOM defined the key activities of the project required for achieving its objective and expected results as follows:

- Development of 10 policy-oriented international PPP standards and recommendations for use in national PPP capacity building activities.
- Organization of 5 International PPP Forums to raise awareness on international PPP standards, showcase PPP projects and to share high-level strategic advice from BAB experts to assist in the development of local PPP capabilities of beneficiary countries.
- Organization of 7 targeted policy advisory activities to assist beneficiary countries to identify and prepare bankable PPP projects.

The project design did not include in its proposed strategy, explanation of how the project would contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights, with an emphasis on "leaving no one behind".

However, one of the Project outputs, the PIERS methodology, represents a capacity building tool that incorporates a human rights approach with particular attention to the vulnerable members of society, including women, children, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged. The PIERS methodology safeguards their rights through the just access and equity to public services, economic effectiveness (job creation, especially for women) and their involvement in decision making through proper stakeholder engagement and participation.

1.4 Beneficiaries and target countries

The target countries of the project are the UNECE member States, in particular Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The use of PPPs in all of the targeted countries is relatively young. In all countries, the focus has shifted from centrally planned economy to market economy from the 1990s onwards though is still to mature.

The immediate beneficiaries in these countries were Government officials and other PPP units that have already been established. The majority of PPP actors in these countries still lack a comprehensive understanding of PPPs and how the PPP model could be used to tackle the infrastructure deficit and contribute to achieving the SDGs. The lack of national and international PPP standards is negatively affecting their capacities to identify and prepare bankable projects aligned with the SDGs that will attract investors and private sector concessionaires.

Ideally, citizens should be the primary beneficiaries of PPP projects. However, it is essential to note that the positive effect for citizens depends on well-structured agreements, transparency, accountability, and effective regulations to ensure that the broad public interest is adequately protected and that benefits are realised as intended. Therefore, PPPs can vary significantly in their structure, strategy and outcomes, so their impact on citizens can differ from one project to another.

1.5 Key partners and other key stakeholders

The annual editions of the UNECE International PPP Forum organised under the project have become the leading international annual PPP event, and a venue for PPP experts. These events brought together key PPP partners and stakeholders coming from governments, private sector, academia, NGOs, international organisations and IFIs, to discuss topical issues on PPP and infrastructure finance vis-à-vis the broader issues of sustainable development and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

PPP units are public agencies (often under ministries of economy, finance or Prime Minister offices) that coordinate all PPP-related activities with the line ministries (e.g. ministries of transport, energy, health etc.).

The project stakeholders targeted during the evaluation will be policymakers, government officials, and representatives from the private sector, academia, NGOs, UN agencies, IFIs and other PPP practitioners, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Stakeholders mapping

Stakeholder	Role in the project	Level of influence on the project	Extent to which affected by the project
Governments			
Government of Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Türkiye and target countries	Main stakeholders Advice on PPP approach Monitoring progress	High	Medium
Other UNECE member governments	Advice on PPP approach Monitoring progress	Low	Medium
UN and IFIs			
UNECE	Main stakeholder Project leadership, management	High	High
UN ECLAC, UN ECA	Advice on PPP approach and best practices	Medium	Medium
EBRD	Advice on PPP approach and best practices	Medium	Medium
IFC	Advice on PPP approach and best practices	Medium	Medium
Private sector			

Stakeholder	Role in the project	Level of influence on the project	Extent to which affected by the project
World Economic Forum, KPMG, Infraboost, Infralinx, Societe Generale, Infrakap, EEW Energy from Waste GmbH, CEWEP - The Confederation of European Waste-to-Energy Plants, Medtronic, Fenwick Elliott, Limak, Medicana Sağlık Grubu, Johns Hopkins Aramco Healthcare (JHAH), BaltCap Private Equity Fund	Advice and sharing lessons learned in PPP	Medium	Low
Academia/NGOs			
University Hasselt, IESE Business School, Toyo University, Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure, Human Right 2 Water, Columbia University, St. Petersburg University (GSOM SPbU)	Advice and sharing lessons learned in PPP	Low	Low

Source: the list above constitutes a stakeholder list with whom the evaluator interacted in the course of this evaluation.

1.6 Resources

The Table 2 below shows the intervention under the evaluation and its budget/resources. The project formulation and implementation was supported by the human resources provided by UNECE. The budget and delivery of inputs/activities were managed by the UNECE Cooperation and Partnership Section.

Table 2: Project intervention dates and financial resources

Title of the intervention	International Centre of Excellence on PPP: development and implementation of PPP standards and recommendations

Budget of the intervention	€ 800,000 (circa USD 870,000) – exchange rate at the beginning of the Project	
Project Number	E267	
Dates of the intervention	Start date:	April 2016
	End date:	June 2023

1.7 Link to the Sustainable Development Goals

The project played a positive role in supporting the achievements of the SDGs, in particular SDGs 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17.

The key output of the project, the PIERS methodology is rapidly becoming the premier sustainability project evaluation methodology due to its meticulous attention to the SDGs and the five desirable PPPs for the SDGs outcomes.

PIERS is also a capacity building tool that incorporates a human rights approach with particular attention to the vulnerable members of society, including women, children, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged. PIERS safeguards their rights through the just access and equity to public services, economic effectiveness (job creation, especially for women) and their involvement in decision making through proper stakeholder engagement and participation.

The project activities also included the preparation and publication of two core documents entitled:

- “Introduction to PPPs in support of the UN SDGs”,⁵ and
- “Guiding Principles on PPPs in support of the UN SDGs”.⁶

1.8 Innovative elements

The innovation element of the project is the PIERS methodology that is rapidly becoming the premier sustainability project evaluation methodology due to its meticulous attention to the achievement of the SDGs. The PIERS methodology includes 22 criteria and 95 indicators for the five PPPs for the SDGs outcomes (access and equity, economic effectiveness and fiscal sustainability, environmental sustainability and resilience, replicability, and stakeholders’ engagement).⁷

⁵ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-10/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2022_06-en.pdf

⁶ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2022_07-en.pdf

⁷ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/ECE_CECI_2023_4_2305092E.pdf

It also provides one of the very few sustainability methodologies available in a self-assessment format, providing users (governments but also other stakeholders) an open tool, available free of charge, to assess and monitor their projects' performance against the SDGs. The PIERS methodology has been used in over 200 projects from more than 35 countries, and its sustainability would be ensured through additional funding raised by the UNECE secretariat to assist member States (on a demand basis) to evaluate their projects. The PIERS methodology is available in various languages, and is flexibly and adaptable to all countries, is applicable to all infrastructure sectors, and can be used on small and large infrastructure projects.

In sum, the project has been more than just a number of activities: it has been instrumental in ensuring that the PPP model is fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda by developing the adequate tools for public officials and providing them with the necessary training and capacity building to do PPP projects that contribute to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, environmental – and in doing so to create value for people and value for the planet besides the traditional value for money.

2. Evaluation objectives, scope and questions

Purpose and objectives

As indicated in the TOR, the primary purpose of this evaluation is to assess the extent to which the objectives of the UNECE project E267 “International Centre of Excellence on Public-Private Partnerships: development and implementation of PPP standards and recommendations” were achieved.

The evaluation of the project had the following specific objectives:

- Determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project results in light of its goals and objectives.
- Assess how the project activities contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as the realization of human rights, with an emphasis on 'leaving no one behind' and, if needed, it will make recommendations on how these considerations can be better addressed in future activities of the subprogramme.
- Identify good practices and lessons learned from the project and formulate action-oriented, forward-looking recommendations addressed to the subprogramme for improving future interventions.

In addition, the evaluation of the project will contribute to PPP learning and capacity strengthening. The evaluation questions are attached in Annex 1: Evaluation Matrix.

The results of the evaluation will be used in the planning and implementation of future activities of the UNECE Economic Cooperation and Integration Subprogramme. Findings of this evaluation will be used, when possible, to:

- Improve direct project's follow up actions, implementation of products by project beneficiaries and dissemination of the knowledge created through the project.
- Assess the gaps and further needs of countries in the area of PPPs.
- Formulate tailored capacity building projects to strengthen the national capacity in enhancing innovation in the field of PPPs.

The results of the evaluation will be reported to the inter-governmental Working Party on PPPs and the CICPPP, as well as to the UNECE Executive Committee if required.

Following the issuance of the final report, the Project Manager will develop a Management Response for addressing the recommendations made by the evaluator. The final evaluation report, the management response and the progress on implementation of recommendations will be publicly available on the UNECE website.

Evaluation scope, criteria and questions

The evaluation covered the full implementation period of the project, from April 2016 to June 2023 in UNECE member States, in particular Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan was given a special attention for an in-depth assessment considering ongoing activities linked to PPPs and the country strong leadership in promoting PPPs at regional level and beyond.

The evaluation was guided by the expected objectives of the project, its expected accomplishments, planned activities and estimated costs established in the TCPF. It assessed the results achieved by the project by application of the following evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of all activities implemented during the project duration (April 2016-June 2023).

The evaluation was initiated in July 2023 and concluded in November 2023.

The evaluation TORs, evaluation questions and evaluation matrix are attached in Annex 1 and Annex 4.

3. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology was constructed in accordance with the TOR. It was established in line with the UNECE Evaluation Policy approved by the UNECE Executive Committee on 16 December 2021,⁸ completing the administrative instruction for the evaluation in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/AI/2021/3). The methodology was also aligned with the Organization for

⁸ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/Item%2010_ECE_EX_2021_35_Rev1_Evaluation%20Policy_as%20adopted.pdf

Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee criteria for international development evaluations.⁹

The evaluation focused on the degree of achievement of the objective of the project: “To strengthen national capacity to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using public-private partnership (PPP)”.

When this objective was set up it was assumed that there was a strong interaction between infrastructure, investment and achievement of the SDGs, and significant investment was needed to improve infrastructure in low and middle-income countries. It was also assumed that government officials in the countries targeted by the project lacked an understanding of PPPs and how the PPPs model could be used to address the infrastructure deficit. During the project formulation it was thought that the lack of national PPPs standards in target countries is negatively affecting their capacity to identify and prepare bankable projects that would attract investors and private sector involved in managing of infrastructures.

The evaluation also examined three pillars on which the project was based:

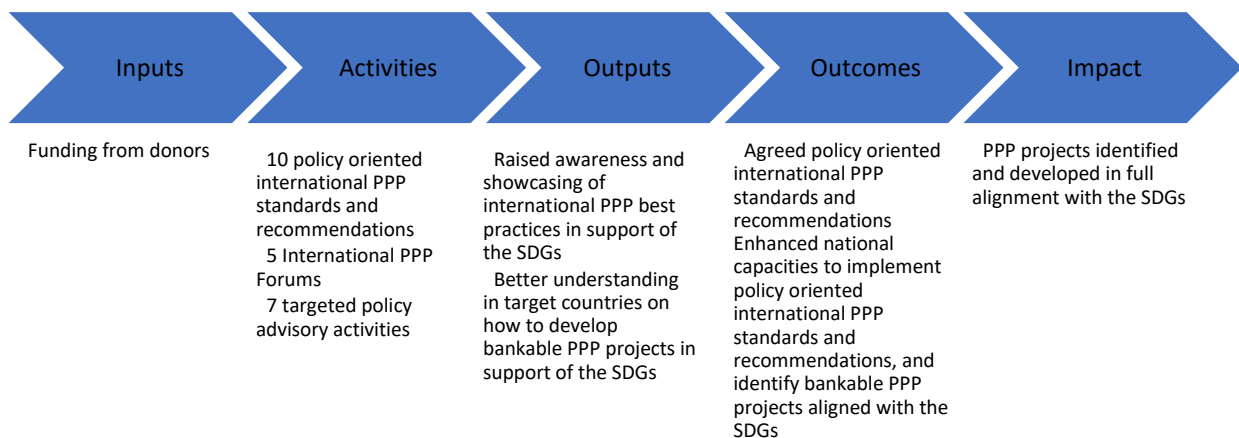
- Ownership in the recipient countries
- Building and developing existing capacities and
- Establishing working modalities with the partner countries and the respective stakeholders.

As already mentioned, the TCPF does illustrate clearly the relations between the components to observe for assessing the progress and impact of the project. Moreover, TCPF did not describe the status of PPPs in the targeted countries at the beginning of the Project and problems that the Project intervention seeks to address, the causes and consequences of this problem and the opportunities that can be leveraged or strengthened to address the problem.

Therefore, a simple theory of change was reconstituted in the context of this evaluation to demonstrate how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impact.

There are many different ways to present a theory of change. For the purpose of this evaluation a result chain, or a pipeline model was applied. It represents the theory of change in terms of boxes, as designed below:

⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>



Source: the result chain above was developed by the evaluator.

The evaluator used a mixed-method approach, including qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw conclusions and findings. The evaluation relied on particular knowledge and practical experience related to analytical studies and research, necessary to conduct this assignment, such as: theory of change based on available documentation, data collection, analysis, triangulation and cross-checking techniques, performance measurement, monitoring and an evaluation matrix.

Depending on the contact information provided by UNECE, the evaluator conducted online surveys and interviews with a wide range of diverse stakeholders from both the private and the public sector, academia, international organisations, and, where applicable, the civil society. To ensure representativeness, the evaluator also surveyed/spoke to government interlocutors whom UNECE has worked with.

The evaluation was conducted based on the following mixed methods to triangulate information:

1. A desk review of all relevant documents, including the project document and information on project activities (monitoring data); materials developed in support of the activities (agendas, plans, participant lists, background documents, donor reports and publications); proposed programme budgets covering the evaluation period; project reports to the donor.
2. Online survey (designed by the evaluator) of key stakeholders and beneficiaries.
3. Interviews (in-person and/or online) of a wide range of diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries (names and contact information received from UNECE) from both the private and the public sector, academia, and international organisations.

The evaluation matrix (see Annex 1) guided the evaluation as the principal analytical tool. This tool was designed by the evaluation based on the TOR, the initial meetings held with UNECE stakeholders and an initial review of the project documents. It contains the evaluation questions to be considered under each evaluation criterion, key indicators of success, as well as the data/information sources and data collection methods used for information/data compilation.

The evaluation matrix is supported in practical terms by the Interview guide (see Annex 2) and the Online survey questionnaire (see Annex 3).

Two related challenges faced during the evaluation were:

- The evaluator made an extra effort to get high response rates for both one-to-one interviews with stakeholders and responses to an online survey.;
- The summer holiday period caused delays but up to 2 months in the interviews and survey responses.

II. Evaluation findings

The evaluation findings are presented in relation to the evaluation criteria and questions, as defined in the evaluation TORs. Findings are based on evidence generated by documentary review, online interviews and electronic survey activities. The findings reflect a systematic and intensive analysis and interpretation of the information and data obtained, and not the subjective judgement of the evaluator. An analysis of cross-cutting issues including gender mainstreaming is also reflected in the findings.

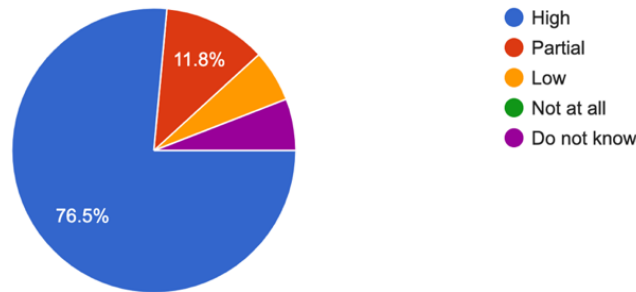
1. Relevance

Key findings: The project was highly relevant to the beneficiary countries and UNECE member States

- The project's activities and outputs were highly relevant to the specific needs of the UNECE member States and in particular of those in the beneficiary countries in the area of PPPs.
- The project was consistent with the priorities, mandate and the programme of work of the UNECE, well aligned with the SDGs and integrated gender, human rights and disability perspectives.
- The role of UNECE and its International Centre of Excellence on PPPs was appreciated by all stakeholders with expectation of UNECE continuing its strong involvement in PPP capacity building activities in the future.

Evaluation question 1: To what extent did the project respond to the priorities and needs of policy makers and government officials in ECE member States and particularly those in the beneficiary countries (low and middle-income countries)? How relevant were the project activities to the countries' needs and priorities, as well as to ECE mandates?

In responding to the evaluation question 1 the participants of the electronic survey assessed the relevance of the project as follows:



The main focus of the project was on the strengthening PPPs in CIS countries, plus Georgia, Ukraine. The status of infrastructure in the majority of former Soviet Union (FSU) countries continues to be far from adequate. These countries have many aging roads, hospitals, schools, railway and airport networks that require significant maintenance and modernization. The quality of energy, health, water and sanitation, housing and urban infrastructure in general varies widely. Some urban areas have modernized the urban infrastructure including health services, while others still have older infrastructure stocks in need of repair and modernization. There are still disparities between urban and rural areas. All interviewed or surveyed stakeholders agreed that that infrastructure requires timely maintenance and modernization not only in FSU region but in all UNECE member States. PPPs play a catalytic role in facilitating infrastructure investment for responding to infrastructure funding deficits. Therefore, there was a broad consensus that the project main focus on infrastructure development and innovation responds to the priorities and needs on policymakers and government officials in UNECE member States and particularly those of the beneficiary countries: Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

Feedback received from one of the survey participants was as follows:

“The PPP standards and recommendations developed by the project are highly valuable to all States around the globe. As an attorney advisor having worked with a number of countries developing their PPP programmes, both in the UNECE region and elsewhere, I can attest that UNECE’s work and materials produced are being actively relied upon and reflected by public officials trying to implement international best practices in their PPPs projects, sectoral activities, and administrative systems.”

UNECE’s terms of reference have been defined by ECOSOC. UNECE’s major aim is to promote pan-European economic integration. UNECE includes 56 member States in Europe, North America and Asia. However, all interested UN member States may participate in the work of UNECE. Over 70 international professional organizations and other non-governmental organizations take part in UNECE activities.¹⁰

The programmes under the responsibility of the UNECE aims to promote regional cooperation and integration as a means of achieving sustainable development in the UNECE region. In this context, UNECE is mandated to contribute to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for

¹⁰ <https://unece.org/mission>

Sustainable Development and the achievements of SDGs. The online interviews and electronic survey outcome confirmed that the project' objective, activities, outputs and outcome were well aligned with the principal aim of the UNECE programme, more specifically with the strategy of the UNECE Economic and Cooperation Division that aims to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the achievement of SDGs 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11 and 17 related to innovation, competitiveness and PPPs.

UNECE Proposed Programme Budget for 2023/Programme performance 2021¹¹ defines UNECE responsibility for facilitating economic integration and cooperation among its member States and promoting sustainable development and economic prosperity in the UNECE region. The mandate derives from the priorities established in relevant Economic and Social Council resolutions, including on the workplan on reform of ECE and the outcome of the review of the 2005 reform of UNECE (resolutions 2006/38 and 2013/1, respectively), and Council resolution 36 (IV). The UNECE region continues to face economic and environmental challenges in addressing the complexity of achieving the SDGs, which remain a source of primary concern to member States. The Commission provides a regional intergovernmental platform from which to address these challenges, such as promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable use of natural resources in the region, protecting the environment, advancing sustainable transport and mobility, strengthening the capacity for measuring sustainable development, fostering innovation and competitiveness and accelerating trade and economic integration, improving access to affordable and clean energy, building urban sustainability and addressing the implications of demographic trends. The work of the Commission is grounded in many of its conventions, norms and best practices that provide sustainable solutions to problems in areas critical to sustainable development, including those spanning national borders. Apart from serving as a platform for Governments and other stakeholders to collaborate in developing legal instruments and formulating policies for sustainable development, UNECE provides specialized and demand driven technical assistance to build the capacity of countries to implement these instruments, policies and best practices, and facilitates their uptake. The main objective and outputs of the project were well aligned with UNECE mandate and responded to the priorities and needs of policy makers and government officials in ECE member States and particularly those in the beneficiary countries. For example, the project assisted in developing the capacity of Governments to formulate and implement PPP projects and policies to support sustainable development approaches. It also supported the UNECE member States by the implementation of capacity-building activities and developing Guidelines on PPPs for SDGs in various critical areas as for example: Waste-to-Energy for Non-Recyclable Waste,¹² Circular Economy in Public-Private Partnerships for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals,¹³ Standard on Private-

¹¹ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/Item%209_ECE_EX_2021_34_ECE_PPB_2023.pdf

¹² ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/3)

¹³ ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/4)

Public Partnerships/Concession Legal Framework in support of the SDGs,¹⁴ Guiding Principles on PPPs for UN SDGs,¹⁵ Introduction to PPPs for the UN SDGs¹⁶ and others.

The project was formulated and implemented in line with the UNECE mandate as described above in promoting sustainable development and economic prosperity in UNECE region by promoting sustainable infrastructure development through PPPs. Its ICOE on PPPs provided a platform for Governments, private sector, academia to collaborate in developing legal instruments and formulating concrete projects for PPPs, provided specialized and demand driven technical assistance to build the capacity of countries to implement the PPPs guidelines, policies and best practices, and facilitates their uptake.

The development of policy-oriented international PPPs standards and recommendations for practical application in the designing and implementation of national PPP projects, capacity development activities and best practices sharing in the framework of the project were highly appreciated by the majority of the interviewed/surveyed stakeholders from target countries as well as by government officials, private institutions and academia representatives from all UNECE member States participating in its activities. Several stakeholders from target countries and beyond (Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Russian Federation) stressed that PIERS, the PPP standards and guidelines focusing on PPPs for SDGs assisted the countries to develop capacities to better assess feasibility of new PPP proposals and to design suitable financial structures for PPPs.

Very good alignment of the project with the priorities and needs of policy makers and government officials in UNECE member States and particularly those in the beneficiary countries was confirmed by the statements of participants of the annual sessions the Working Party on PPPs. For instance, during the Sixth session held in Geneva 1-2 December 2022, in her keynote address, H.E. Ms. Ani ISPIRYAN, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia, stressed the importance of upgrading public infrastructure through PPPs in her country to ensure sustainable outcomes, which are critical to the SDGs.

During the same session, H.E. Mr. NARZULLO OBLOMADUROV, Chairman of the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of Uzbekistan, stressed the importance of getting back on track to achieving the SDGs and addressing the climate crisis, which requires uniting efforts and finding integrated and modern "green" solutions. He informed the audience that the transition to a green economy is a priority for Uzbekistan. To ensure this transition, the government adopted a law on PPPs in 2019 to ensure that PPP projects, including in the waste management sector, are in line with the SDGs. He concluded by expressing his appreciation to the UNECE for its ongoing PPP support.

In his keynote address, H.E. Mr. Sharaf SHERALIZODA, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, expressed the importance to develop PPP projects in key infrastructure areas to improve critical social and economic outcomes in rural and urban areas in Tajikistan in line with the SDGs. He informed the Working Party that the current PPPs projects under implementation

¹⁴ ECE/CECI/35

¹⁵ ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/6

¹⁶ ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/7

in Tajikistan are aligned with the country's national development strategy and the SDGs. He further mentioned that the UNECE PPPs for the SDGs approach is consistently used for project selection by Tajikistan's PPP Council and expressed his appreciation to the UNECE for its continuous PPP support.

A very few respondents (17.8%) to the survey found the relevance of the project activities as partial and/or low. These stakeholders stressed the need of additional attention in assuring a modern and efficient PPPs by shifting from traditional public sector approaches which places new demands on government agencies as well as on the private sector. There is rising understanding in these two sectors that the optimal PPPs can bring added value to all partners, if well designed. This partnership demands new thinking and development of capacities in the public sector to design projects including incentives that make them attractive to the private sector. In this context several interviewees stressed that the capacity building activities and international forums have to continue and even increase their focus in terms of information sharing, best practices exchange and transfer of skills and knowledge. Such a focus proved its relevance in contributing to strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation in PPPs at the national, regional and international level.

The UNECE secretariat introduced the PIERS methodology¹⁷ during the fifth session of the Working Party on PPPs in 2021. A high relevance of this methodology was confirmed in the statements of the delegates of Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, the European Union, the Russian Federation and Turkey. This methodology is supported by two additional UNECE publications developed in the context of the project:

- Introduction to Public-Private Partnerships in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals¹⁸
- Guiding Principles on Public-Private Partnerships in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁹

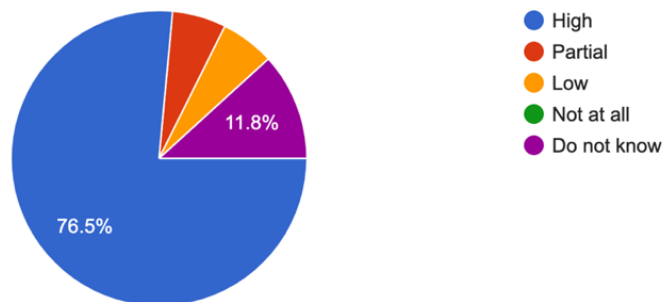
Evaluation question 2: To what extent was the establishment of an International Centre of Excellence valuable for ECE member States?

In responding to this evaluation question the participants of the electronic survey assessed the relevance of the project as follows:

¹⁷ ECE/ CECI/WP/PPP/2021/3

¹⁸ <https://unece.org/ppp/products>

¹⁹ <https://unece.org/ppp/products>



The analysis of the collected information and data showed that the PPPs stakeholders in UNECE member States are well aware that the landscape of PPPs is not without its obstacles and complexities. Negotiation of the conditions of these partnerships requires meticulous planning, transparent communication and adept management of potential conflict of interest. The diversity of private and public partners’ objectives, different regulatory environments, and cultural context across different partners and countries add an extra layer of intricacy. These persisting challenges were addressed successfully by the ICoE on PPPs. The majority of interviewed stakeholders thought that the activities designed and managed by the ICoE on PPPs, e.g. PIERS, PPP guidelines and standards, International PPP Forums, roundtables and capacity building missions to targeted countries offered a great deal of solutions on how to narrow the gap between public and private stakeholders participating in PPPs and respecting the interests of all partners involved.

The UNECE Guidelines on Good Governance in PPPs published in 2008 identified the lack of public consultations as a governance challenge, and called for more public information and transparency throughout the PPP process. The creation of the ICOE on PPPs in UNECE assisted in addressing this gap by organizing annual editions of the International Forum on PPPs, annual session of the Committees on Innovation, Competitiveness and PPPs, and annual sessions of the Working Party on PPPs with a broad participation of the Governments from the UNECE region and beyond, private sector, academia, IFIs, UN system agencies and NGOs.

The UNECE at its International PPP Forum in March 2016 identified that PPP models putting public interest at their forefront should be well identified and promoted in order to realize the 2030 Agenda. The prevailing opinion of the stakeholders participating in interviews and survey was that the ICOE on PPPs proved to be valuable for UNECE member states in supporting the development of a long series of PPP guidelines placing public interests at the forefront and putting at the same time attention to the principle “value for money”.

The ICOE on PPPs demonstrated its added value by organizing and implementing a series of training webinars and study tours. For illustration, the following training webinars/study tours were implemented in 2021:

- (a) Ukraine: training webinar on “Aligning PPP Legislation in Ukraine with the SDGs”, jointly organised by UNECE with the Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade and Agriculture (30 March 2021);

- (b) Belarus: training webinar for public officials at the Ministry of Economy and the PPP Unit of Belarus on the identification of PPP projects compliant with the SDGs (1 April 2021);
- (c) Switzerland: webinar jointly organised with the UNECE Urban Development, Housing and Land Management Unit on innovative financing instruments for sustainable municipal projects, where a number of case studies from UNECE member States were presented and discussed (26 April 2021);
- (d) Switzerland: webinar on the testing and use of the draft PIERS methodology where the preliminary results of a survey for Government users were presented and discussed (26 April 2021);
- (e) Ukraine: training webinar on “How to Design PPP Projects Aligned with the SDGs: the People-first Approach to PPPs”,²⁰ jointly organised by UNECE with the Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade and Agriculture (25 May 2021); and
- (f) United Arab Emirates: Study tour for Kyrgyz government officials in Dubai to learn about PPP institutional capacity in various PPP Units from the UNECE region and beyond (10-11 October 2021).
- (g) A Study tour for Kyrgyz government officials to Turkey facilitated by the UNECE to learn about PPP institutional capacity at the PPP Week in Istanbul on 6-10 December 2021;
- (h) A webinar in Ukraine on 15 December 2021 for PPP practitioners on the identification and preparation of PPP projects compliant with the SDGs.

The creation and leadership of the ICoE on PPPs in UNECE as an independent and neutral brokerage PPP house was instrumental in reducing the initial hesitation of some UNECE member States concerning the advantages of the PPPs for SDGs approach.

In the framework of the project, the UNECE/ICoE on PPPs delivered six PPP capacity development activities from 2016 to 2022, in Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan,²¹ and six International PPP Forums.²²

Evaluation question 3: What takeaways are there for ensuring relevance of future UNECE projects, and International Centres of Excellence in particular?

The majority of interviewees agreed that the relevance of future UNECE capacity-building projects on PPPs will depend from the UNECE capacity to intensify the PPP capacity development

²⁰ The “PPP for the SDGs” approach was previously called the “People-first PPP approach to PPPs”.

²¹ See <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/PPP%20capacity%20building%20activities%20-%20E267.pdf>

²² <https://unece.org/ppp/meetings>

activities to ensure that the PIERS methodology with the accompanying guidelines, standards and recommendations take solid roots in all UNECE member States at both national and local levels.

All the respondents to the survey and interviewees commended the contribution of the project in sharing PPP best practice and successful case studies during the annual editions of the International PPP Forum as a very suitable approach for enhancing the understanding of the Governments, urban authorities/policymakers at the city level, private companies, researchers/academia and NGOs on successful examples of transition of PPPs from the “value for money” exclusive approach towards smarter strategies combining both “value for money” with “PPPs for SDGs” principles, such as “value for people” and “value for planet”.

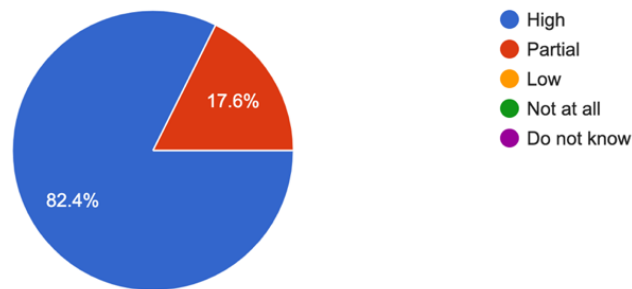
A high percentage of the interviewees considered that PPPs is not a magic tool alone. It has to be supported by strong and proactive leadership, guided by appropriate know-how already tested in successful projects and last, but not least supported by a comprehensive PPPs evaluation and rating system. All these requirements were during the implementation of the project in place thanks to highly professional management and coordination provided UNECE Cooperation and Partnership Section, support provided of high-quality PPP experts, presentation of successful PPPs projects case studies and development of the PIERS methodology.

Strong leadership and professionalism by the secretariat of the ICoE on PPPs ensured that the project has been more than just a number of activities: it has been instrumental in ensuring that the PPPs model is fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda by developing the tools for public officials and providing them with the necessary training and capacity building to do PPP projects that contribute to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, environmental – and in doing so to create value for people and value for the planet.

The UNECE has a substantial database of case studies that showcase elements of the PPPs for the SDGs outcomes that make people the main beneficiaries and which have sustainable development as the core. These case studies can be further promoted to inspire Governments in UNECE countries and beyond to formulate and implement PPPs to be designated as PPPs for the SDGs. These case studies require still to be assessed in an inclusive manner and in line with the 10 Guiding Principles on PPPs for the SDGs.

One of the interviewed stakeholders thought that *“There was a need for a better branding of UNECE and ICOE activities on PPPs to increase ICOE visibility as well as understanding of its terms of reference”*.

Evaluation question 4: To what extent was the project aligned with the SDGs?



In 2015, the United Nations adopted the SDGs as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, calling for the use of and improvement to partnerships between the public and private sector. Feedbacks received from documentary review, interviews and responses to survey confirmed the overwhelming opinion that there was a considerable emphasis on alignment of the Project activities with the SDGs. Several respondents stressed that “The project itself was fundamentally based on SDGs” and contributed directly or indirectly to the achievements of the SDGs, in particular the SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) as well as indirectly to SDGs 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

The SDGs are an opportunity to transform our world, mainstreaming economic development that is multifaceted and:

- Transformational, in an international, global, game-changing sense;
- Inclusive, “leaving no one behind”;
- Fosters resilience, to adapt to and mitigate the multiple challenges presented by climate change;
- Socially and environmentally-oriented, as opposed to only economically-oriented; and
- Circular, moving from a linear to a circular economy to foster more responsible and sustainable production and consumption patterns that will save energy and natural resources based on the “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” rule.

These attributes were also characteristic for the project approach and activities. Achieving such broad economic development objectives/attributes as agreed in SDGs will require huge increases in infrastructure spending which will not be possible in the absence of effective PPPs. The public sector alone will not be able to meet the required quantum of the social and economic objectives; hence the need for partnerships especially with the private sector. As the SDG 17 states, “effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships” will be required to strengthen the means of implementing the SDGs.

The project was an extraordinary tool of the UNECE in developing the PPPs for the SDGs approach and the 10 Guiding Principles on PPPs in support of the SDGs²³ to provide a model that will foster

²³ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/202210/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2022_06-en.pdf
https://unece.org/sites/default/files/202211/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2022_07-en.pdf

access to essential public services for all with sustainable development as its objective and putting people at the core.²⁴

All activities carried out and outputs generated by the project were instrumental in shaping and promoting “PPPs for the SDGs” and oriented towards meeting the needs of the people. The PPPs for the SDGs model is more challenging than the model based on “value for the money” principle. However, concrete PPPs for the SDGs case studies presented during the annual editions of the International PPP Forum demonstrated its feasibility and advantages in resulting in the long-term benefits for the economy and for the people expected to compensate for the short-term possible higher cost, making the PPPs for SDGs model feasible. The examples presented during the interview sessions describing the activities of the PPP Centre in Kyrgyzstan confirmed the feasibility of PPPs for SDGs model also in the context of the UNECE member States with limited financial resources. In Kyrgyzstan this model’s predominant focus is on small community infrastructure such as kinder gardens, swimming pools, farming support, etc.

Several interviewed stakeholders believed that the UNECE International PPP Forums not only raised awareness concerning PPP international standards, provided international platform for showcasing concrete PPP projects and shared best practices presented by high level PPP experts, but also stressed a unique role of PPPs in contributing to the attainment of the SDGs. The also underlined that the project was effective in shifting the PPP focus from being a mere financing tool to becoming an instrument that also provides “value for people” and “value for the planet”. It means to be a catalytic tool fully aligned and consistent with the SDGs.

A very good alignment of the project with the priorities and needs of policy makers and government officials in UNECE member States and SDGs was confirmed by the statements of participants of the Sixth session of the Working Party on PPPs held in Geneva 1-2 December 2022. For example, H.E. Mr. NARZULLO OBLUMURADOV, Chairman of the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of Uzbekistan, stressed the importance of getting back on track to achieving the SDGs and addressing the climate crisis, which requires uniting efforts and finding integrated and modern "green" solutions. He informed the audience that the transition to a green economy is a priority for Uzbekistan. To ensure this transition, the government adopted a law on PPPs in 2019 to ensure that PPP projects, including in the waste management sector, are in line with the SDGs.

In his keynote address, H.E. Mr. Sharaf SHERALIZODA, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, expressed the importance to develop PPPs projects in key infrastructure areas to improve critical social and economic outcomes in rural and urban areas in Tajikistan in line with the SDGs. He informed the Working Party that the current PPPs projects under implementation

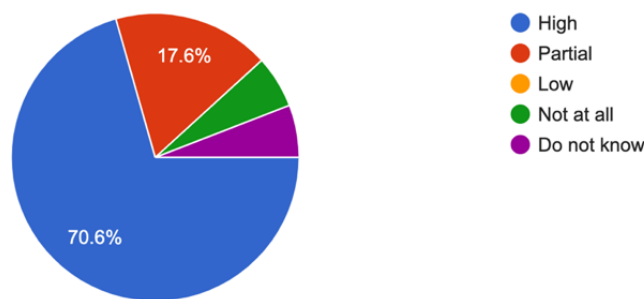
²⁴ The Guiding Principles have defined PPPs for the SDGs as follows: “PPPs for the SDGs” can be perceived as a type of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) designed to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and thereby to be “fit for purpose”. It is defined as an enhanced approach for PPPs that overcomes some of the weaknesses in the way the traditional PPP model has been implemented. PPPs are contract delivery tools for public infrastructure provision involving initial private financing. They include two types: “government-pay PPPs” which are primarily funded by taxpayers and “concessions” which are primarily funded by the users of the infrastructure.”

in Tajikistan are aligned with the country’s national development strategy and the SDGs. He further mentioned that the UNECE PPPs for the SDGs approach is consistently used for project selection by Tajikistan’s PPP Council and expressed his appreciation to the UNECE for its continuous PPP support.

Several interviewed stakeholders believed that the PIERS methodology, the flagship of the project, can be considered as a compass for PPPs for the SDGs by providing a tool that can measure impact and score projects including both infrastructure projects and PPPs for the SDGs. “The PIERS certification is based on the SDGs gathering almost all the 17 SDGs from equity, employment, climate and biodiversity respect to economic viability and financing”, stressed one of the interviewees.

Activities carried out by the project included the production of the video “How PPPs can help achieve SDGs²⁵ and video “UNECE Public-Private Partnerships Evaluation Methodology for the SDGs” (subsequently renamed as the PIERS methodology).²⁶

Evaluation question 5: To what extent were gender, human rights and disability perspectives integrated into the design and implementation of the project? What results can be identified from these actions? How can gender and human rights perspectives be better included in future projects design and implementation?



A gender, human rights and disability perspectives in developing a sustainable project supported by PPPs is about making sure that PPPs actors carry out their work in a way responding to the needs and realities of the people they seek to serve. It means consideration of special needs linked to gender, disability and human rights are included in PPP projects and that PPP actors respect them. A one-size-fits-all approach is most likely to fail.

Shaping of the different types of infrastructure affects people in the societies differently. For example, women, girls, boys and men, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities all have different needs, vulnerabilities and priorities when it comes to different types of infrastructures. The need for gender-differentiated approach in PPPs was

²⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9p3t275eCA&ab_channel=UNECE

²⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxYC2wEck34&ab_channel=PPPPUBPRIPAR

recognized by all interviewed stakeholders of the project. They also noted that the quality of built infrastructure affects groups of population differently as a result of the intersection of discrimination based on social factors such as urban or rural location, sexual orientation, educational background, income, gender, ethnicity, age, class and (dis)ability. At the same time, the prevailing view expressed by several stakeholders was that gender, human rights and disability perspectives did not represent the main focus of the project, however, the importance of mainstreaming of these cross-cutting issues was regularly discussed during the annual editions of the International PPP Forums, online webinars, roundtables and the annual sessions of the Working Party on PPPs. For example, the Working Party on PPPs in 2021 discussed importance of inclusiveness under the subject “How is the People-first PPP approach for the SDGs contributing to the development of green, inclusive, resilient and fiscally sustainable infrastructure?”.

The project dedicated regular attention to gender, human rights and disability perspectives to make sure that these cross-cutting issues are addressed and integrated into implementation of the project activities. Two interviewed stakeholders stressed that cross-cutting issues were regularly discussed during the best practices exchange in Forum meetings and capacity building webinars and missions to target countries. For example, an extensive discussion was dedicated to these issues during the International PPP Forum held in Barcelona, 4-6 May 2022. As put by one interviewee, “the Forum in Barcelona enabled mayors to stress global peace, democracy, respect for human rights and gender perspective and territorial integrity as essential conditions for sustainable development”.

The project actively supported the drafting and publication of specific guidelines “Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment through PPPs for SDGs”.²⁷ The publication provides a general discussion supplemented by examples intended to create awareness and highlight current trends and practices on PPPs that promote women’s empowerment and gender equality. The recommendations contained in this document provide informative context for member States in the ECE region wishing to undertake PPPs that maximize sustainability through women’s empowerment.²⁸ It is structured as follows:

- Section I provides context introducing the concepts of gender equality and women’s empowerment.
- Section II presents a brief discussion on gender equality concerns in PPPs, the importance of creating an enabling environment, and the desired outcomes of women’s empowerment in PPP projects through examples.

²⁷ This document was prepared by the UNECE secretariat, with the extensive input of external consultants, and was last updated in 2023. It builds upon the seven recommendations that emerged from the 3rd edition of the UNECE International PPP Forum in May 2018.

²⁸ See <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/Promoting%20Gender%20Equality%20and%20Women's%20Empowerment%20through%20PPPs%20for%20the%20SDGs.pdf>

- Section III argues the need to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality in each individual stage of the PPP; design, procurement, construction and operations and maintenance.
- Section IV presents a set of voluntary policy recommendations derived from the main findings of the paper.
- Lastly, section V provides a brief conclusion and follow-up steps.

Another important cross-cutting issue, “Access and Equity” represent one of the priority outcomes addressed by the PIERS methodology. The latter defines this area as follows: “Across the 17 SDGs, a key focus is improving access to critical public services for social development and poverty eradication, recognizing that depriving access to one service can have huge negative impacts on people’s livelihoods and wellbeing. Equity could be broadly defined as equal access to the infrastructure and PPP project outputs/services, and that proactive measures are employed, where necessary, to ensure that all citizens interested by the service with due regard to the economically disadvantaged and those who suffer from social exclusion have access to the service in an equitable manner”.²⁹

The PIERS methodology identified the following five criteria to assess any PPP performance against the “Access and Equity” outcome:

- 5.1 Provide essential services;
- 5.2 Advance affordability and universal access;
- 5.3 Improve equity and social justice;
- 5.4 Plan for long-term access and equity; and
- 5.5 Avoid/minimise and mitigate physical and economic displacement.

In addition, a total of 13 indicators were developed to accompany the five criteria.³⁰

The PIERS methodology is a capacity building tool that incorporates a human rights approach with particular attention to the vulnerable members of our society, including women, children, the disabled and the economically disadvantaged. The PIERS methodology safeguards their rights through the just access and equity to public services, economic effectiveness (job creation, especially for women entrepreneurs) and their involvement in decision making through proper stakeholder engagement and participation.

According to approximately 70% of the survey respondents, the mainstreaming issues such as gender, human rights and disability perspectives were well integrated into the design and implementation of the project. At the same time almost 18% believed that this integration was partial, and for some 6% the integration of the mainstreaming issues was not existent. At the same time, the importance of the gender-differentiated, human rights and disability sensitive approach in renovation or building of new infrastructures was broadly recognized during the

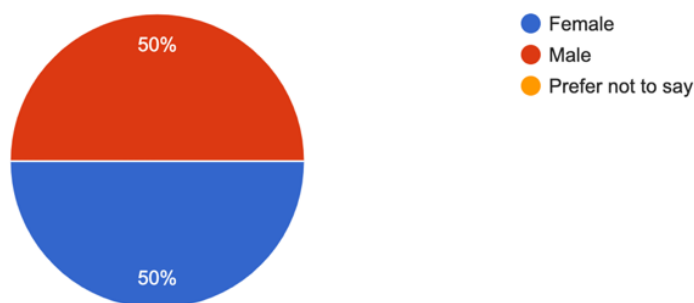
²⁹ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/ECE_CECI_2023_4_2305092E.pdf

³⁰ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/ECE_CECI_2023_4_2305092E.pdf

online interviews. It was also noted that “it was not always easy to mainstream all critical cross cutting issues in all project activities”.

The recognition of the cross-cutting issues was summarized in the statement made in the survey by one stakeholder as follows: “Integration of gender, human rights and disability considerations are pivotal aspects for the success of any project. Some of the strategies that can be considered for these aspects includes stakeholders’ engagement and participatory approaches, compliance with human rights and related policies and regulations, identifying and assessing human rights, gender and disability issues, relevant data collection and analysis for project planning, awareness and capacity building”.

Perfect gender balance was achieved during the implementation of the evaluation survey exercise with 50% responses provided by women and 50% by men, as shown in the following chart:

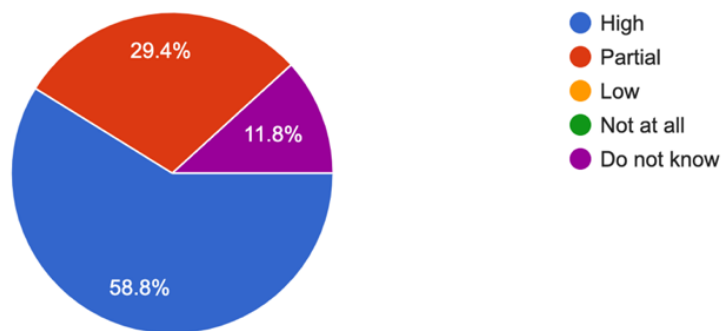


2. Effectiveness

Key findings: The project fully accomplished all of its expected results and objectives

- The expected results and objective of the project have been fully achieved. The challenge linked to the COVID-19 pandemic was successfully overcome by specific mitigation measures (transformation of several events from face-to-face to online mode).
- The project improved the competencies of policy makers and government officials in the beneficiary countries in using PPPs and at the same time paid attention to harmonization and coherence with PPPs activities of other partners operating in the same context.

Evaluation question 6: To what extent were the project objectives and expected results achieved?



According to the TCPF the objective of the project was “to strengthen national capacity to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using public-private partnerships (PPPs).”

The departure points for assessing the degree to which the project achieved its expected objective was taking stock of the level of achievement of planned activities and expected results actually delivered. The TCPF envisaged delivering two main results:

- A) Expected result (ER) 1: Agreed international PPP standards in number of sectors and sub-sectors to support the sustainable development goals and provide the basis for national PPPs implementation.
- B) Expected result (ER) 2: Strengthened national capacity to implement those international standards and identify bankable infrastructure PPP projects that contribute to achieving SDGs.

Table 3: Overview of the extent of achievement of planned activities and expected results

Planned activities	Achievement of activities	Expected results	Achievement of results
1: Development of 10 policy-oriented international PPP standards and recommendations for use in national PPP capacity building activities.	Fully achieved and exceeded by development of 18 policy oriented international PPP standards and guidelines	1: Agreed international PPP standards in a number of sectors and sub-sectors to support the sustainable development goals and provide the basis for national PPP implementation.	Fully achieved

<p>2: Organization of 5 International PPP Forums to raise awareness on international PPP standards, showcase PPP projects and to share high-level strategic advice from BAB experts to assist in the development of local PPP capabilities of beneficiary countries.</p>	<p>Fully achieved and even exceeded by organization of 6 International PPP Forums</p>	<p>2: Strengthened national capacity to implement these international standards and identify bankable infrastructure PPP projects that contribute to achieving SDGs.</p>	<p>Fully achieved</p>
<p>3: Organization of 7 targeted policy advisory activities to assist beneficiary countries to identify and prepare bankable PPP projects.</p>	<p>Fully achieved and even exceeded by organization of 8 policy advisory missions in beneficiary countries</p>		

The evaluation noted that the project with the creation of its flagship, the PIERS methodology, the publication of two core documents, “Introduction to PPPs in support of the SDGs”³¹ and “Guiding Principles on PPPs in support to SDGs”,³² as well as publication of 18 policy-oriented standards, tools and guidelines including PPPs Standards for key aspects of PPPs³³ the ER 1 was fully achieved and even exceeded.

The document “Public-Private Partnerships and Infrastructure Evaluation and Rating System (PIERS): An Evaluation Methodology for the Sustainable Goals” was adopted by the Bureau of the Working Party on PPPs during its Sixteenth session, Geneva, 31 may-2 June 2023.³⁴ The document was originally published on 1 October 2021 in ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2021/3, and was endorsed by the Working Party on PPPs at its fifth session in November 2021 and was subsequently adopted by the Committee at its fifteenth session in May 2022. It has to be stressed that the PIERS methodology application/refinement and the International PPP Forum will continue beyond the project.

The PIERS methodology has rapidly become the premier sustainability project evaluation methodology due to its meticulous attention to the SDGs and the five desirable PPPs for the SDGs outcomes. It is also one of the very few methodologies available in a self-assessment format, providing users (governments but also other stakeholders) an open tool, available free of charge, to assess and monitor their projects’ performance against the SDGs. PIERS has been used in over 200 projects from more than 35 countries, and its sustainability is ensured through additional funding raised by the secretariat to assist member States (on a demand basis) to evaluate their projects.

³¹ ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/6

³² ECE/CECI/WP/PPP/2022/7

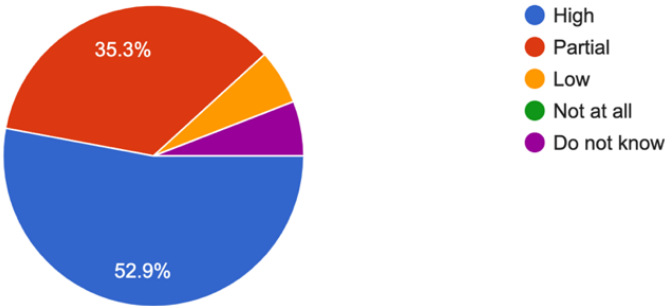
³³ <https://unece.org/ppp/products>

³⁴ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/ECE_CECI_2023_4_2305092E.pdf

Feedback received during the stakeholders’ interviews confirmed that the ER 2 was also fully achieved. Prevailing view was that the project has been more than just a number of activities: it has been instrumental in ensuring that the PPP model is fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda by developing the tools for public officials and providing them with the necessary training and capacity building to implement the international standards contained in PIERS and to identify and do bankable infrastructure PPP projects that contribute to achieving SDGs by concentrating on the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social, environment – and in doing so to create value for people and value for the planet. UNECE deployed 8 policy advisory missions to beneficiary countries and organize 6 International PPP Forums to strengthen their capacities to implement international standards and identify bankable infrastructure PPP projects that contribute to achieving SDGs. The objective of the project was thus fully achieved.

The evaluation noted a certain degree of discrepancy between very positive feedback received during the online interviews and written responses to the survey indicating the high effectiveness of the project in achieving its objective and results and a relatively “low” percentage of high effectiveness rating (58.8%) reflected in the chart linked to the evaluation question 6. The chart is based on the survey inputs. The possible explanation of this discrepancy may be stemming from the remarks made by two stakeholders in the survey, as follows: “We will share the project outcomes with the stakeholders soon, so, it's a bit early to talk and assess the results” and “As the dissemination of the PIERS Methodology is at an early stage it has not reached the full potential yet, but it is being accepted globally”.

Evaluation question 7: To what extent did the project improve the competencies of policy makers and government officials in the beneficiary countries to using Public-Private Partnerships to deliver sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure in support of the SDGs?



Almost 53% of the survey participants declared that the project improved the competencies of policy makers and government officials in the beneficiary countries to using PPPs to deliver sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure in support of the SDGs to a high extent. At the same time, 35.3% of the survey participants felt that the same effectiveness parameter was achieved to a partial extent and some 6% rated the extent as low.

For illustration of the contradictory statements made during the survey exercise, the evaluation proposes the following two examples:

“I think it is reasonable to assume that project improved the competencies of policy makers, government officials and other PPP stakeholders by providing a platform that supports policy reforms, project implementation, knowledge sharing and lessons learned, sustainable development, SDG alignments for the PPP projects, affordability and access, training and capacity building”.

“Probably in some developed countries the project improves the competencies of policy makers and government officials, but in [others] UNECE PPP policy is very little represented among decision makers”.

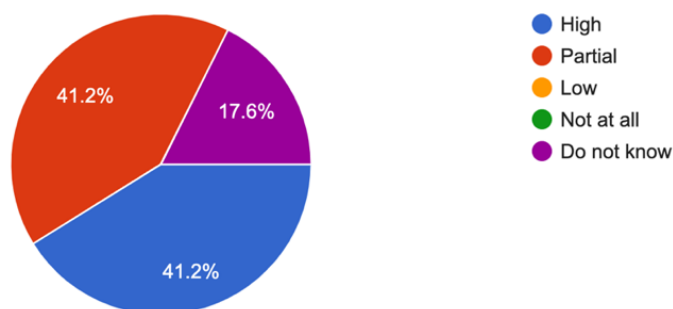
The diverging views expressed by stakeholders confirmed the evaluator’s findings that the evaluation rates as high the effectiveness of the project in improving the competencies of policy makers and government officials in the beneficiary countries to using PPPs to deliver sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure in support of the SDGs. It has to be stressed that besides the national/regional capacity building activities to improve the capabilities of public officials in member States in using PPPs to deliver sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure in support of the SDGs, the project has also contributed to supporting and shaping the International PPP Forums into the premier international PPP gathering. The presentation of case studies demonstrating PPP projects was considered by the majority of interviewed stakeholders (including stakeholders from recipient countries - Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan) as a highly effective tool for improving the competencies of policymakers and government officials in the beneficiary countries to using PPPs. Additionally, the International PPP Forums were always well attended by the policymakers and government officials from beneficiary countries.

The PIERS methodology represents the only sustainability methodology publicly available free of charge to help governments in the beneficiary countries to using public-private partnerships to deliver sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure in support of the SDGs to ensure that their PPPs and infrastructure projects are of high quality, circular, resilient, affordable, fiscally responsible and sustainable. During the online interviews with the government officials (Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine) it was confirmed that the project has considerably improved the competencies of policy makers and government officials in using PPPs in delivering sustainable and affordable infrastructure, by exchanging of best practices, case studies from various countries with different levels of social and economic development and supported the creation and/or strengthening capacities of national PPPs units and centres.

Another interview participant stressed the positive impact of the capacity development webinars and competitions among the PPP projects organized during the International PPP Forums on improving competencies of all participating stakeholders in designing and implementing PPP project that are sustainable, affordable, people-oriented and supporting SDGs. For example, during the last UNECE International PPP Forum, in Athens on 3-5 May 2023, participating

countries presented 49 PPP Case Studies during the UNECE PPP and Infrastructure award 2023.³⁵ Among the 49 PPP Case Studies presented there were also case studies from the target countries of the project (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan) and case studies from countries situated in different continents, in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania.

Evaluation question 8: To what extent are the project activities coherent and harmonized with those of other partners operating within the same context, particularly those of other UN system entities and IFIs (International Financial Institutions)?



A broad participation of specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, academic institutions and independent experts in the sessions of the Working Party on PPPs was instrumental in improving harmonization of the project activities with those of other partners operating within the same context. For example, the following specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations participated in the last two sessions of the Working Party:

Sixth session in 2022: the African Development Bank, the Eurasian Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Ukraine and the World Bank.

Fifth session in 2021: the African Development Bank, the Eurasian Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Ukraine and the World Bank.

A harmonization effect was also boosted by the participation of delegates from non-UNECE member States in the Working Party on PPPs sessions as observers, such as: Algeria, Brazil,

³⁵ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/Case_Study_Database_PPP_Forum_2023.pdf

Burkina Faso, Congo, Egypt, Gambia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Nigeria, Oman, Peru, Senegal, the Philippines, Tunisia, Qatar and Uganda.

Similarly, the evaluation observed a large participation of PPP stakeholders coming from different backgrounds, in the annual editions of the International PPP Forum organized within the project annually since 2016 to 2023. For illustration, the 6th UNECE International PPP Forum, held on 4-6 May 2022 in Barcelona, Spain was attended by more than 400 participants. 140 speakers joined the Forum, with more than half attending in-person (this was a great achievement considering that most of the UNECE region was still emerging from the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic). Over 20 sessions were held on topics such as climate change, the circular economy, digital transformation, green procurement, the blue economy and waste-to-energy, among other cross-cutting themes. Furthermore, different case studies were showcased at the Forum for their contribution to sustainable development and were selected using the PIERS methodology.³⁶

It was noted that 82.4% of the survey respondents indicated that the extent of coherence and harmonization of the project with PPP activities of other partners operating within the same context, particularly those of other UN system entities and IFIs was high or at least partial. Low level, or absence of the progress in harmonization/coherence with other partners were not reported. One of the respondents believed that “coordination with IFIs seemed to function quite well despite the fact that SDGs may not be their major concern being financially oriented, but there is still a kind of competition between the various UN entities dealing with PPP and not a sufficient cooperation as far as SDGs are concerned which may not be a priority of other UN organizations”.

Online interviews resulted in several interesting statements. One interviewee said: “PPP is characterized by a jungle of different players and initiatives in PPPs and it would not be fair to push UNECE to do exactly the same as others but rather look for the approach based on best practices. As a matter of fact, UNECE is only UN entity with an intergovernmental body dedicated to PPPs where all activities are approved by the member States on yearly basis.”

Another opinion expressed during the interviews was: “The UNECE had to be cautious to avoid reinventing the wheel by close dialogue and cooperation with IFIs, UN partners and other PPPs players”.

The UNECE PPP programme has therefore found its PPP niche in a very crowded space, by being at the forefront of sustainability topics and pushing the boundaries of how PPPs were traditionally implemented, and by providing a unique platform for its member States and the international PPP community at large.

Evaluation question 9: What were the challenges/obstacles (including COVID-19) to achieving the expected results? How successfully did the project overcome these?

³⁶ [https://unece.org/media/economic-cooperation-and-integration/Public-Private-Partnerships-\(PPP\)/news/367442](https://unece.org/media/economic-cooperation-and-integration/Public-Private-Partnerships-(PPP)/news/367442)

For the majority of the interviewed/surveyed stakeholders, the global pandemic emergency caused by the COVID-19 was a challenge in achieving the expected results. One interviewee said: “The COVID-19 pandemic posed unique challenges to the project as globally we were under ‘Force Majeure conditions’, as there were uncertainties around supply chain, market sensitivities and economic uncertainties affected timelines and viability of all initiatives.” This challenge was successfully overcome thanks to the creativity of the UNECE Secretariat responsible for implementing the activities. For example, during the COVID-19 emergency, some meetings have been postponed and the activities concentrated on drafting PPP guidelines and other documents.” Another stakeholder characterized this period in his input to the survey: “The major challenge during COVID-19 for many project proponents and member States was of conducting field activities for the development of projects. Under the circumstances, the implementation of the project continued effectively by:

- focusing on Build Back Better for enhancing resilience of the project implementation that address such pandemic risks, and
- adopting an online or hybrid approach for holding discussions, webinars and Forums to keep momentum going forward”.

Indeed, the meetings organized by the project during the pandemic including the International PPP Forum were moved from face-to-face mode to online and/or hybrid events. For example, the Forum held in 2021 was 100% online. The Forum included a number of high-level debates on topical issues linked to 'Building Back Better' as well as sustainable development. The event also considered a contest for projects to be awarded 'Building Back Better', and those short-listed were showcased during the Forum.

Another participant of the online survey enlarged the challenges to achieving the expected results as follows: “Challenges to achieving the expected results can vary depending on the country, sector, and specific project details. Some common ones are:

- Broader political support and stakeholders buy-in.
- Long term commitment to PPP programme.
- Projects identification and prioritization.
- Access to financing and funding especially planning funds for PPPs.
- Market conditions.
- National capacity and expertise to deliver PPPs.”

The evaluation noted that some of these challenges were not relevant in the context of the project implementation, while those of relevance were successfully addressed.

What constituted another challenge to achieving the expected results was the plurality of PPP stakeholders involved in the project activities (governments with different levels of social and economic development, private sector, academia, NGOs, UN agencies, IFIs) with different and sometimes contradicting visions of PPP main objectives. This challenge was gradually reduced resulting in a positive outcome that was the adoption of the PIERS methodology, standards and guidelines by the UNECE CICPPP.

Another challenge/obstacle to achieving the expected results constituted the war conflict in Ukraine which brought serious limitation of travelling abroad for PPP stakeholders from Ukraine as well as for organization of capacity development missions/workshops in the country affected by the war. The impact of this challenge was discussed during the interview with the representative of the PPP Centre in Kyiv. The interview confirmed that this challenge/obstacle was overcome by delivering a series of online capacity building and coordination webinars by the project.

Evaluation question 10: What (if anything) has prevented the project from achieving the desired results?

Interviewed stakeholders and the results of the online survey did not identify any major issues that have prevented the project from achieving the desired results. A vast majority felt that the expected results of the project were fully achieved, as demonstrated above in Table 3.

Nevertheless, some stakeholders felt during the interviews that since PPP projects targeting infrastructure rehabilitation/development represent a very large package and therefore the implementation of these international standards is complicated and can be hampered, since it requires considerable amounts of financial resources that might be difficult to raise in the less developed countries

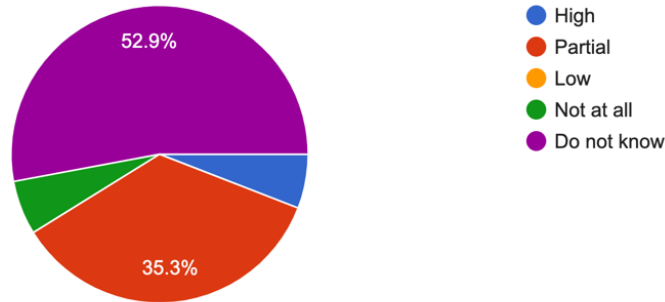
Another future challenge linked to the implementation of the international standards, guidelines and the PIERS methodology delivered in the framework of the project is linked to the reality that in the majority of the former Soviet Union countries, the public institutions prefer to hold the full control of critical infrastructure projects, as indicated by two stakeholders during the interviews.

3. Efficiency

Key findings: The resources of the project were adequate and the project management was highly efficient in implementing the planned activities

- The available resources were adequate for achieving the expected results and transformed into the quality outputs and, overall, within the planned time frame.

Evaluation question 11: Were the resources adequate for achieving the results and what was the additional cost of managing the International Centre of Excellence?



The number of UNECE staff and time dedicated to the Project included:

- a. Six and half months of P5 level staff member (1 month per year)
- b. Six and half months of P4 level staff member (1 month per year)
- c. Six and half months of P3 level staff member (1 month per year)

By any realistic consideration the time available for the UNECE staff for the coordination and implementation of such an ambitious project would not be adequate. However, the in-house manpower gap was very successfully closed by hiring 10 high quality PPP consultant, as follows:

- a. Five consultants x 10 months
- b. Five consultants x 2 months

In addition, 2 individual contractors were hired for project support for a duration of 18 months over the 78-month duration of the project.

The estimation of the ratio of the financial, human and other resources, and outcomes is not easy especially when dealing with PPPs and capacity building in all the UNECE region, at national and local/community levels. Moreover, there are some PPP projects stimulated by the project that will generate more tangible results in infrastructure development after completion of the project.

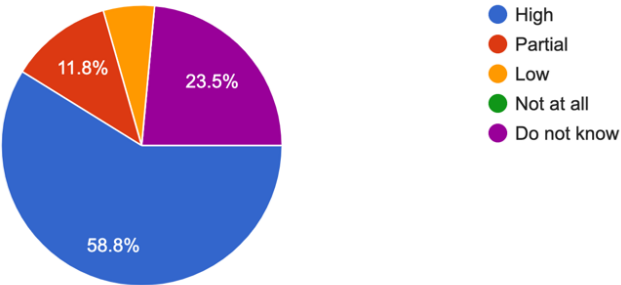
The majority, 52.9% of the participants of the survey, found this question irrelevant for the non-UNECE participants (academia, private sector, UN agencies, IFIs), since they had no information neither concerning the financial and other resources allocated to the project, nor concerning the management cost/arrangements of the international Centre of Excellence. One surveyed stakeholder felt that “there was a heavy reliance on volunteer experts’ support because of a shortage of resources for very important tasks that needed to be accomplished”.

Similarly, several interviewees believed that the project was heavily dependent on volunteer experts’ involvement because of the “limited financial and in-house human resources”. Another survey’s participant noted that “there will be lag between the upstream development and dissemination of guidelines and standards delivered by the project, and seeing the results on ground through PPP projects implemented by the member States. The limited resources have already constrained the faster roll out of the PPPs for the SDGs. More resources would help the UNECE in the delivery of timely results for the achievement of SDGs by 2030.”

The majority of the participants in the survey and interviews were not aware of what was the managing cost and/or additional cost of managing the ICOE on PPPs. However, it was noted that the ICOE on PPPs was able to mobilize additional resources in kind (expert support, travel expenses coverage by partner institutions, host countries for the International PPP Forum, financial and in-kind support etc.). In this context, the prevailing feeling was that UNECE Secretariat achieved an impressive number of outputs given its small staff directly dedicated to the project and limited financial resources provided by the donors.

Project management was able to address successfully the dilemma about how to achieve the expected results with the available budget. At the same time, several interviewees stressed that PPP is an extremely complex topic involving many different issues linked to economic, social, environmental and other areas related to the development and maintenance of sustainable and user-friendly infrastructure. Logically, more could be achieved with more resources. This feeling was reflected also in the survey, in which some 12% of participants felt that the resources were adequate to achieving the results to a low extent and even not adequate at all.

Evaluation question 12: Were the results achieved on time and were all activities organized efficiently?



Three interviewees strongly felt that the relatively smooth and timely implementation of the project was facilitated by the continuous oversight of the UNECE Working Party on PPPs, as its Bureau regularly scheduled on its agenda the updates on the progress in delivering the project’s outputs. It was also highlighted, in the course of the interviews, that the collaboration between UNECE and other UN agencies was seamless and efficient and that partners exemplified the best commitment to teamwork taking advantage of the synergies between them.

Several interviewees noted that the UNECE Secretariat performed well in terms of the quality and timeliness of the information provided, the responsiveness of the staff, and the facilitation of the meetings. Respondents emphasized that in spite of limited resources, the Secretariat provided timely and efficient services to all bodies and processes established under the project.

The UNECE Secretariat showed a high efficiency in planning, facilitating, guiding and implementing the planned activities according the planned schedule. Evidence collected during the interviews suggests that even with the limited manpower in UNECE, sufficient and timely support for the efficient implementation of the project was provided. All planned activities and

expected results/outputs were delivered on time. Some minor delays in delivering certain activities during the COVID-19 did not prevent achieving all expected objectives by the end of the Project.

Table 4: Expenditure report for the UNECE project E267 (1 January 2017 to 30 June 2023)

Budget Class	Fiscal Year	Expenditures (USD)
1. Staff and personnel costs	2017-2023	430 063,40
2. Contractual Services	2017-2023	123 389,44
3. Operating and Other Direct Costs	2017-2023	3 012,33
4. Travel (staff travel and Meeting participants)	2017-2023	145 287,86
5. UN Programme Support Costs	2017-2023	89 186,95
Total	2017-2023	790 939,98

The project implementation rate was very low during its initial year. The initial delays were wiped out during the second year. The first year of the COVID-19 emergency, 2019, experienced the lowest degree of the planned activities implementation. In 2020 and 2021 many project activities shifted from face-to-face to on-line modes, resulting in gradual increase in the implementation rates. All activity delays were fully wiped out during the last two years, 2022 and 2023. In the TCPF, there is no schedule for the delivery of the activities/outputs. The only requirement in the TCPF was to undertake all the activities within the project duration. The only timebound activity implied from the project document were the annual International PPP Forums which were held annually with the exception of 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The rest of the activities were implemented within the project planned duration.

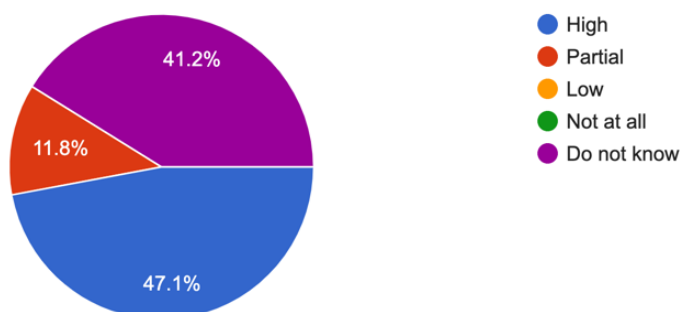
While there were limited human resources dedicated to the project, the outcome from the interviews suggests that the UNECE staff provided sufficient and timely support to all external stakeholders who have asked for technical advice, information or guidance. All the substantial issues in the inquiries sent through email were resolved through the support of the UNECE staff on time.

One obstacle limiting the evaluator in assessment of the efficiency criteria was rooted in the fact that the UNECE Secretariat did not produce annual progress reports concerning the project. This situation was justified by UNECE by the fact that the donor did not require the UNECE secretariat to produce reports on the project activities nor on the project expenditures. Therefore, there are no annual reports pertaining to this project.

Nevertheless, the UNECE secretariat reported the activities implemented under this project to the annual sessions of the Working Party on PPPs and the CICPPP. The reports were agreed upon by member States and include a summary of the feedback and discussions – including on the project activities – held during the Working Party and Committee sessions. Therefore, to sum up, although no annual reports were prepared because there was no such requirement (neither by

the donor nor by the UNECE guidelines and rules), detailed discussions and reporting was done as part of the intergovernmental meetings.

Evaluation question 13: To what extent were the resources used economically and how could the use of resources be improved?



The evaluation was faced with similar challenge as has already been mentioned in response to the evaluation question 11: almost half, 47.1% of the participants of the survey, found this question irrelevant for the non-UNECE stakeholders, since they had no information concerning the financial and other resources allocated to the project.

Concerning the cost-effectiveness and financial efficiency, the evaluator was not made aware of any substantial concerns regarding cost effectiveness or costliness and considers that, taking into consideration the complexity and ambitious character of the project the outputs achieved have been delivered at a reasonable cost.

The project implementation and management were assessed as very competent and properly organized: UNECE staff members responsible for the project implementation were all knowledgeable and well organized. This was confirmed also during the survey and interviews.

The human resources required for the project were a combination of consultants and UNECE staff. The detailed structure of these resources is available under evaluation question 11 above. The use of these resources is judged as optimal.

The project relied on the expertise and knowledge of staff within the UNECE Secretariat to deliver a number of activities including the preparation of PPP standards and guidelines, capacity development mission in beneficiary countries, preparation, facilitation and follow-up to the Working Party on PPPs and the CICPPP, annual editions of the International PPP Forum and advisory to the stakeholders. Quality assurance and consistency in achieving broad acceptance of PPPs standard, guidelines, tools, capacity development webinars for and mission to beneficiary countries demonstrates economic use of the resources.

This example of response received during the online survey summarize well the feeling of several other stakeholders interviewed by the evaluator: “Notwithstanding the budget and resources constraints, sponsorship and voluntary participation of many institutions and pro bono

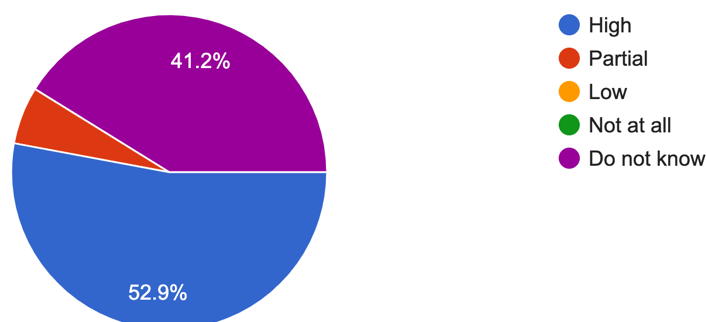
involvement of worldwide experts, enabled UNECE to be economical and efficient. I think further optimization of the resources should not be attempted as it will impact their capacity to continue the planned work and deliver the intended results. On the contrary the resources need to be enhanced”.

4. Sustainability

Key findings: The evaluation finds that the lasting results and ownership by beneficiary countries and project’s stakeholders

- The partners and beneficiaries own the outcomes of the work.
- The statements made regularly by the representatives of the beneficiary countries during the annual sessions of the UNECE Working Party on PPPs confirmed their commitment to continue PPP activities and to refine existing PPP regulations.

Evaluation question 14: What measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the project ended and to what extent have these measures addressed the existing risks for sustainability?



The existing risk of sustainability could be represented by:

- Lack of UNECE Secretarial and UNECE member States interest to continue PPPs capacity building activities in the future.
- Decline in the interests of the countries and municipalities to host the PPPs International Fora in the future.
- Slow pace in the alignment of the existing regulatory and legal provisions for PPPs with the PIERS, PPPs guidelines and standards adopted in the course of A267 in UNECE member States.
- Frequent changes in the public administrations of the UNECE member States and particularly in the countries targeted by the project.
- Lack of cooperation and information sharing with and engagement of other important actors in PPPs, as for example IFIs, UN agencies etc.

Again, an important percentage of the survey respondents (41.2%) were unable to identify and assess what measures were adopted to ensure that project outcomes would continue after the

project ended and to what extent have these measures addressed the existing risk for sustainability. The evaluation faced the same challenge during the online interviews.

The evaluation exercise noted that the following measures/activities addressing the risks of sustainability, that were also validated during the interviews, are taking solid roots:

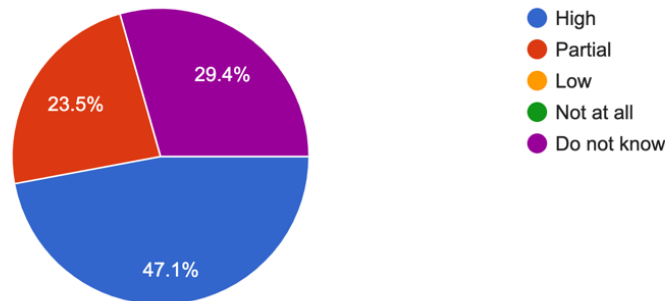
- During the interviews UNECE Secretariat expressed its commitment to continue PPP capacity building activities in the future and to this end, new financial resource was mobilized through the UNDA.
- The interests of the countries and municipalities to host the International PPP Forum in the future was expressed during the Forums a held in 2021, 2022 and 2023.
- In 2022, UNECE fielded a policy advisory mission to Uzbekistan on PPPs in the waste sector.
- Several statements by the UNECE member States during the Working Party on PPPs confirmed the political will for alignment of the existing regulatory and legal provisions with the PPPs for the SDGs approach, PIERS, and the PPP guidelines and standards adopted in the course of the project in UNECE member States.³⁷ During the fourth session of the Working Party on PPPs “The panellists appreciated the very valuable, and potentially impactful work undertaken by the Project Team in developing the draft Evaluation Methodology and expressed their interest and readiness to contribute to its further development and implementation. They also emphasised the relevance of supporting the transition to a circular economy and commended UNECE for its timely work on topics of cross-cutting policy relevance.”³⁸
- The level of cooperation and information sharing with other important actors in PPPs, as for example IFIs, UN agencies is promising. It is confirmed by the participation and confirmation of engagement of these stakeholders during the sessions of the Working Party on PPPs. For illustration, the last 6th session of the Working Party on PPPs was attended by the following specialized agencies and intergovernmental organizations: the African Development Bank, the Eurasian Development Bank, the International Finance Corporation, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Ukraine and the World Bank.
- Given that the International PPP Forum, a core activity of the project, has now become a permanent UNECE PPP activity, it should ensure that new public officials will continue to

³⁷ For example, the statement of Armenia during the sixth session of the Working Party on PPPs: <https://unece.org/ppp/wpppp6>

³⁸ https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/ECE_CECI_WP_PPP_2020_02-en.pdf

learn about the best practices in PPPs and receive capacity building and trainings during this forum in the future.

Evaluation question 15: To what extent do the partners and beneficiaries ‘own’ the outcomes of the work? How is the stakeholders’ engagement likely to continue, be scaled up, replicated, or institutionalized?



The evaluation noted a fairly strong feeling of ownership and commitment – certainly of the public officials from UNECE region but also of the majority of the interviewed stakeholders representing private sector, academia, UN agencies and IFIs. This was reflected in the feedback received in the online survey with 70.6% of respondents evaluating ownership of the outcomes of the project as high (47.1%) or partial (23.5%). The remaining 29.4% of stakeholders were not able to assess the ownership of the outcomes due to the limited time dedicated to the project.

An encouraging degree of ownership of the outcomes of the work undertaken by the project and the commitment to continue and scale up the PPP related activities was confirmed by several statements delivered during the annual sessions of the Working Party on PPPs. For example, during its sixth session held in Geneva 1-2 December 2022, in her keynote address, H.E. Ms. Ani ISPIRYAN, Deputy Minister of Economy of Armenia, stressed the importance of upgrading public infrastructure through PPPs in her country to ensure sustainable outcomes, which are critical to the SDGs. She informed the Working Party of a new law enacted in 2019 in Armenia, further revised in 2021, and expressed her appreciation to the UNECE for the PPP support received by Armenia to ensure that the improvement in its legal and regulatory framework is translated into concrete projects that attract sustainable financing. During the same session, H.E. Mr. NARZULO OBLUMUDAROV, Chairman of the State Committee for Ecology and Environment Protection of Uzbekistan, stressed the importance of getting back on track to achieving the SDGs and addressing the climate crisis, which requires uniting efforts and finding integrated and modern "green" solutions. He informed the audience that the transition to a green economy is a priority for Uzbekistan. To ensure this transition, the government adopted a law on PPPs in 2019 to ensure that PPP projects, including in the waste management sector, are in line with the SDGs. He concluded by expressing his appreciation to the UNECE for its ongoing PPP support.

The growing number of a wide variety of PPP stakeholders including the beneficiary countries in the annual editions of the International PPP Forum (more than 600 participants in 2023) confirms that the partners and beneficiaries’ engagement will continue with high probability of scaling up their PPP activities as well as the ‘ownership’ of the project outcomes. Interest to organize these

Forums in the future, coming from several countries, also confirm ownership of the PPPs for the SDGs approach developed and promoted by UNECE and growing engagement to continue PPP related work.

At country level, the national PPP stakeholders' engagement is reflected in setting of the national PPP Units in 42 countries in the Europe and Central Asia regions. This includes PPP Units in all beneficiary countries of the project, namely in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.³⁹ This high level of institutionalization of PPPs creates suitable conditions for the stakeholders' engagement, its continuity, replication and scaling up.

The interview with the Director of the PPP Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic demonstrated a high degree of ownership of the outcomes of the project, as one example of the beneficiary countries. Activities of this Centre demonstrate the commitment to sustainable PPPs for SDGs with UNECE support and its proactive role in boosting interest and practical involvement of other Central Asia countries. For example, in 2023, the PPP Centre of the Kyrgyz Republic organized an International PPP Conference in Bishkek.

The PPP Unit is a specialized unit of the Investment Promotion Agency of the Kyrgyz Republic. The PPP Unit has been established under the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic on PPPs with a primary aim to identify, assess, support and monitor PPP projects as well as consult investors and facilitate long term partnership with mutual benefits. Since 2009 when PPPs were introduced in Kyrgyzstan, 66 projects have been implemented in the country, providing access to critical public services to more than 1 million citizens. These PPP projects are the driving forces of the economic and social development in Kyrgyzstan in sectors such as healthcare, education, transport, and renewable energy. As a convener of several PPP regional conferences, the Centre plays an important catalytic role in the Central Asia region. During the last International PPP Conference in Bishkek, on 28-29 September 2023,⁴⁰ the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan, Mr. AKYLBEK ZHAPAROV said in his opening statement: "We need to make PPP one of the most important mechanisms in the implementation of the country's social and economic policy".⁴¹

Interview with the Head of the PPP Agency in Ukraine showed that PPPs are considered as an important vehicle for reconstruction of the infrastructure destroyed by an ongoing war in the country. The PPP Agency in Ukraine was able to bring the methodology, standards and guidelines developed by the project to municipality level to prepare for the post-war reconstruction. Several municipalities in Ukraine, for example the municipality of the city of Mykolaiv, provided feedback concerning the key documents developed by the project that allowed to combine a top-down with a bottom-up approach in developing effective PPPs.

Another confirmation of the partners and beneficiaries to continue, replicate and/or scale up their engagement in PPPs was confirmed by the beneficiary countries, together with other UNECE member States' requests addressed to the UNECE Secretariat to develop a guide on stakeholder

³⁹ <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/overview/international-ppp-units>

⁴⁰ <https://jointchambers.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PPP-Conference-Agenda.pdf>

⁴¹ [https://unece.org/media/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/Public-Private-Partnerships-\(PPP\)/news/383796](https://unece.org/media/Economic-Cooperation-and-Integration/Public-Private-Partnerships-(PPP)/news/383796)

engagement which is planned for 2024. This is a clear sign of their willingness of upgrading the level of PPP stakeholders' future engagement. This guide is now included in the programme of work of the Working Party on PPPs.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

1. Conclusions

The evaluation reached the following conclusions:

1. The objective of the project was to strengthen national capacity of the UNECE member states and other stakeholders to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using PPPs. All activities implemented, outputs produced and outcomes attained supported directly this objective.
2. To achieve the project objective, the activities concentrated on knowledge development, capacity building and dissemination followed by implementation of international PPP standards, guidelines, declarations and recommendations to support the achievement of the SDGs through sustainable and affordable infrastructure.
3. All partners involved in the project activities developed a shared vision that “PPPs if well designed can play an important catalytic role in attracting private sector interest funds for infrastructure development serving all.”
4. As the TCPF issued for the project did not describe the PPP context in the target countries, this evaluation could not rely on initial baseline data. Taking this into consideration, the evaluator designed a specific Evaluation matrix (see Annex 1) including a set of indicators to assess the results of the project despite the lack of baseline data.
5. The project document lacked a framework enabling a structured analysis of progress with respect to timing of delivery of expected activities and outputs. In addressing this shortcoming, the evaluator drafted a Theory of Change as part of the evaluation methodology. The reconstituted Theory of Change established the logical link between inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes leading to expected impact/objective.
6. In the absence of the initial baseline information and data, the relevance was justified against the following indicators/information:
 - outcomes for the sessions of the UNECE Committee on Economic Cooperation and Integration (CICPPP);
 - contribution to achievement of SDGs;
 - the alignment with the objectives of UNECE and its Economic Cooperation and Integration subprogramme; and
 - support requested by UNECE member States and in particular by the beneficiary countries of the project.

The project was relevant to a great extent considering its consistent alignment with all above-mentioned indicators.

7. The establishment of the ICOE on PPPs hosted in UNECE secretariat was highly appreciated by some 80% of the interviewed and surveyed stakeholders. The establishment of the ICOE was crucial to advancing best practices in PPPs, and in particular providing a venue for discourse and development of international PPP standards, and fostering consensus and clarity of the policy space around PPPs. There is really no other organization or multilateral institution bringing together stakeholders in the same way as the UNECE to focus on developing valuable PPPs for SDGs, for the Planet and for people as the main focus.
8. Approximately 70% of the survey respondents indicated that the cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and disability perspectives were well integrated into the design and implementation of the project. However, the evaluation did not find any evidence proving that these issues were integrated into the design of the project. The Technical Cooperation Form did not pay attention to this area. Nevertheless, the implementation phase covered well the gender, human rights and disability perspectives. For example, the deliberations held during the annual editions of the International PPP Forum and capacity development missions to beneficiary countries and webinars paid attention to the cross-cutting issues. The project actively supported the drafting and publication of specific guidelines “Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment through PPPs for SDGs”. Another important document prepared in the context of the project, defined five key criteria to increase “Access and Equity”, supported by indicators for ensuring that all citizens affected by PPPs, with due regard to the economically disadvantaged and those who suffer from social exclusion, have access to the necessary infrastructure in an equitable manner.
9. The project objective and expected results have been achieved and the stakeholders have been equipped by PPP core documents, the PIERS methodology, standards, tools and guidelines that have taken solid roots in the UNECE member States. The annual editions of the International PPP Forum demonstrated improvements of national capacities to identify bankable infrastructure PPP projects supporting the SDGs and to implement them according to the international standards developed in the course of the project.
10. The UNECE used very efficiently its unique mandate to stimulate the inter-governmental and inter-agency dialogue and consensus building in the UNECE region and beyond. This mandate was supported by very good UNECE in-house competencies/knowledge of PPPs and recruitment of top-quality experts supporting UNECE during the project implementation. The annual discussions/negotiation held during the sessions of the Working Party on PPPs, CICPPP and the International PPP Forum were instrumental in building consensus concerning the PPPs standards and guidelines. Coherence and harmonization of the project activities with other partners active in PPPs (UN system entities, IFIs) have improved, however there is still a room for improvement.

11. The financial and human resources allocated to the project's activities were adequate and sufficient for the achievement of the project's results. The resources were used very efficiently by combining in-house financial and human resources with the resources provided by the donors and the voluntary inputs provided by several experts coming from academia and the private sphere. Planned activities were organized efficiently and results were achieved on time. The timeline of some activities of the project was affected by external factors such as COVID-19 pandemic and administrative procedures.
12. The sustainability of the project can be justified against two factors:
 - To what extent has the project adopted the measures addressing the existing risk of sustainability, indicated in the evaluation response to the question 14 above. The evaluation concluded that these risks have been addressed to a fair extent.
 - There are encouraging indications that the project stakeholders' engagement will continue. The readiness to continue this engagement was repeatedly confirmed by the UNECE member States delegates during the sessions of the Working Party on PPPs, growing interest of the countries/municipalities to host future International PPP Forums and the request addressed to UNECE secretariat by its member States to develop a guide on stakeholder engagement in PPPs for the SDGs which is planned for 2024.

2. Recommendations

1. Capacity building: UNECE to continue strengthening national capacity of PPP stakeholders in UNECE member States and beyond, to support the SDGs through the delivery of sustainable, affordable and high-quality infrastructure using PPPs, including with increased funding. This includes support to UNECE member States in aligning their PPP regulations and legal framework with the UNECE core documents on PPPs for the SDGs, the PIERS methodology, and the PPP standards and guidelines developed in the context of the project.
2. Dissemination of existing UNECE PPP standards, guidelines and tools with extrabudgetary support: Scale up the PPP knowledge development and dissemination supported by the implementation of existing UNECE PPP standards, guidelines, recommendations and the PIERS methodology and to facilitate the achievement of the SDGs through sustainable and affordable infrastructure. Mobilising extrabudgetary resources is essential for effective dissemination, and a call on donors and development partners to consider making available extrabudgetary support to the UNECE secretariat to meet the ever-growing demand from member States for PPP capacity building is therefore essential.
3. Awareness raising of cross-cutting issues: Continue raising awareness of the UNECE member States and beyond about the importance of mainstreaming/integrating cross-cutting issues such as gender, human rights and disability perspectives into the design and implementation activities of future PPP capacity-building projects. Such future capacity-building projects should always include specific workshops and presentations on

cross-cutting issues. Participation of stakeholders in different activities should be recorded in a gender-disaggregated manner.

4. Gender/disability indicators and targets: Introduce in future PPP capacity building projects gender/disability-responsive indicators and targets to measure and report regularly the progress made on these cross-cutting issues.
5. A practical guide on stakeholder engagement: UNECE Secretariat to ensure that work on a guide on stakeholder engagement in PPPs for the SDGs is launched in 2024 and is completed in due course.

Annexes

Annex 1: Evaluation matrix

Annex 2: Interview guide

Annex 3: Electronic survey design

Annex 4: Evaluation TOR

Annex 5: List of documents reviewed

Annex 6: List of individuals interviewed