Terminal Evaluation Report

"Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus"

Project Title	Capacity building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus
PIMS	6161
GEF ID	9895
Country	Republic of Belarus
Region	RBEC
Date Project Document Signed	19 July 2019
Project End Date	19 January 2024
Project Budget	USD 840,000
Project Expenditure at the Time of Evaluation	USD 698,945 (including commitments) as of 1st November 2023
Funding Source	GEF
Implementing Partner	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus (MNREP) with UNDP Support
Implementing Agency	UNDP

November 2023

Disclaimer

This report is the work of two independent evaluators and does not necessarily represent the views, or policies, or intentions of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and/or of the Government of the Republic of Belarus.

Executive Summary

Project Information

Project Title:	Capacity building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus		
UNDP Project ID (PIMS #):	6161	**PIF Approval Date:**	15 September 2017
GEF Project ID (PMIS #):	9895	**MSP Approval Date:**	5 November 2018
Quantum Award ID:	00107084.1	**Project Document (ProDoc) Signature Date (date project began):**	19 July 2019
Country(ies):	Republic of Belarus	**Date project manager hired:**	01 September 2020
Region:	Europe & Central Asia	**Inception Workshop date:**	22 December 2020
Focal Area:	Climate Change - Mitigation	**Midterm Review date:**	N/A
GEF-6 Strategic Programs:	CCM-3 Program 5	**Planned closing date (including extension):**	19 January 2024
Trust Fund:	GEF	**If revised, proposed closing date:**	
Executing Agency:	UNDP		
Implementing Partner (GEF Executing Entity):	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus (MNREP) with UNDP Full Support		
NGOs/CBOs involvement:	• NGO Green Economy • NGO Gender Perspectives • Association of Young Christian Women • NGO Ecological Initiative • NGO Belarusian Ecological Movement		
Private sector involvement:	• CJSC Agrokombinat Nesvizhsky • LLC "Belgips-ECO • KPMG • Stantec		
Geospatial coordinates of project sites:	Street lighting project in Bereza city: • Latitude: 52°31′53″ N • Longitude: 24°58′42″ E Street lighting in Novogrudok city: • Latitude: 53°35′39″ N • Longitude: 25°49′08″ E Street lighting in Polotsk city: • Latitude: 55°29′16″ N • Longitude: 28°47′08″ E Wind project in Nesvizh • Latitude: 53°17'53" N • Longitude: 26°43'18" E Restoration of degraded peatlands in the Grichino-Starobinskoe peat deposit • Latitude: 52°43'43″ N • Longitude: 27°27'04″ E Afforestation project in the Logoisk district • Latitude: 54°12′31″ N • Longitude: 27°51′19″ E		
Financial Information			
PPG	at approval (USD)	at PDF/PPG completion (USD)	
GEF PPG grants for project preparation	50,000	48,917.83	

Co-financing for project preparation	0	0
Project Financing	at CEO endorsement (USD)	at Final Evaluation (USD)
(1) GEF financing:	840 000	698,945 (including commitments) as of 1st November 2023
(2) UNDP contribution:	1,030,000	526,586.51
(3) Government:	6,927,500	13,847,483
(4) Other Partners:	109,780	373,040
(5) Total co-financing [2+3+4]:	8,067,280	14,747,109.51
Project Total Cost [1+5]:	8,907,280	15,446,054.51

This report presents the main findings of the Terminal Evaluation Report of the project "*Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus*," funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The project, which began on July 19, 2019, with an original closure date set for July 19, 2022, extended to January 19, 2024, due to implementation delays and external factors like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical instability in the region. It aimed to support the Government of Belarus in implementing its GHG emission reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement, focusing on three interlinked components: enhancing NDCs and market-based finance mechanisms, strengthening GHG accounting and MRV systems, and implementing MRV demonstration projects. The evaluation, conducted between September and November 2023, represents an independent assessment of the project's progress, offering feedback and actionable recommendations to UNDP, the Government of Belarus and other stakeholders. The project was assessed using OECD DAC criteria and UNEG standards, employing a mixed-methods approach that included documentary review, interviews, questionnaires and information triangulation.

Project Design

The project was designed to take a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to improving climate policy and building technical capacities in Belarus. It aimed to enhance empirical data for NDC modeling, expand access to climate finance, strengthen MRV systems, and demonstrate MRV best practices through pilots. While the design was adequate in many respects, with a solid logic and theory of change, some gaps were identified. Specifically, the design lacked explicit considerations for sustaining built capacities over the long-term and scaling up successful pilots nationally. Additionally, risks related to restricted civil society involvement and private sector limitations were not fully accounted for in the stakeholder engagement plan. Opportunities to incorporate lessons learned and synergies from other relevant interventions could have been used more effectively during the project’s formulation. Overall, the project design established a good foundation, but could have been strengthened in certain areas through more extensive analysis and planning during the design phase.

Project Implementation

The project experienced several implementation delays due to external factors including a lengthy national registration process, COVID-19 disruptions, and regional instability. The project adapted to these challenges through various strategic adjustments, including focusing on the Global Carbon Council for carbon credit registration, modifying the approach for MRV pilot projects, partnership adjustments, remote work arrangements, etc. While some activities lagged, the project achieved reasonable progress through pragmatic solutions. The project received an extension until January 2024, allowing it to catch-up on some of the delayed activities.

Stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements played a crucial role, involving key government ministries, local authorities, NGOs, academia, the private sector, and international organizations. Challenges in engaging civil society and the private sector were noted, primarily due to the restrictive environment in Belarus and the dominance of state-owned enterprises.

In terms of finance, the project was originally budgeted at USD 8,907,280, with a GEF grant of USD 840,000 and co-financing of USD 8,067,280. However, financial management showcased variability in budget execution across components and years, reflecting the project's adaptive responses to external challenges and implementation issues. The project emphasized key areas like emissions modeling and MRV system development, yet faced underutilization of the budget due to external factors and implementation challenges.

Despite its robust design, the implementation of the M&E system faced challenges. While it supported adaptive management in the face of external pressures like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical issues, data collection and accessibility issues were noted.

UNDP provided adequate oversight and operational support, though more timely decision-making could have expedited activities. As National Implementing Partner, MNREP offered sustained engagement and coordination, but could have advocated more actively during registration. The M&E system tracked outputs sufficiently, but improvements in annual reporting and budget alignment were needed. Risk management responded adequately to unforeseen events, indicating flexibility. Overall, despite severe external shocks, committed stakeholders and adaptive strategies enabled the project to deliver substantive outputs aligned with original aims.

Project Results

The project has been largely aligned with Belarus's national priorities and needs related to climate change mitigation, including national legislation, government programmes, and international commitments. It complements UNDP's and UN’s strategic focus on sustainable natural resource management and energy efficiency. The project's contributions to GHG emission reductions, MRV systems, renewable energy, and energy efficiency directly support GEF climate change mitigation goals. The project pursued an inclusive stakeholder approach, leveraging partnerships across government entities and international organizations. Although the project engaged a number of private sector and civil society representatives, their role has

been limited due to the Belarusian economic structure and restrictive environment for non-state actors. While government institutions like MNREP have demonstrated good ownership, the engagement of local communities in the pilot sites could have been stronger.

The project has contributed to strengthening the country's analytical foundations for NDCs, building capacities for market mechanisms, and demonstrating MRV systems through pilots. Key achievements under Component 1 include producing reports on mitigation scenarios, integrating gender considerations into the NDC update process, and developing a roadmap for Article 6 cooperative approaches. The project's capacity-building activities, engaging over 169 participants, have further improved understanding and utilization of these models. Key achievements under Component 2 include establishing a comprehensive GHG accounting framework, modernizing the MRV system, and conducting tailored training programs for various stakeholders. Key achievements under Component 3 include the demonstration of the working of MRV frameworks in actual practice and the process of registering the projects with the Global Carbon Council. Overall, the project has contributed to Belarus's climate action capabilities by strengthening NDC and MRV systems, assessing mitigation scenarios, training specialists, and implementing pilots. While the project developed valuable analytical tools, formal integration into national frameworks will be important to further pursue to fully realize benefits. Also, more outreach will be useful to expand the knowledge of economic actors about the benefits of emission reductions.

The project's sustainability is shaped by multiple factors. Socially, the project's technical focus limits direct community engagement, yet it offers broader societal benefits and includes gender considerations, leading to a likely positive social impact. Financially, while the project promotes market-based mechanisms and potential scalability, its conceptual nature and the absence of key financial institutions like the Ministry of Finance in project activities render its financial sustainability only moderately likely. Institutionally, the project has successfully developed crucial policy frameworks and tools, but their formal adoption by government entities remains uncertain, affecting institutional sustainability. Environmentally, the project aligns with national and international climate commitments, but its impact is limited by challenges in project registration with carbon market entities, though this is partially mitigated by a partnership with the Global Carbon Center.

The project demonstrates potential for a catalytic effect and replication beyond its completion. It has established institutional frameworks, enhanced capacity building, and developed key policy and legislative tools. The production of knowledge products, such as reports on gender-disaggregated statistics and climate change mitigation scenarios, provides a valuable resource for future policy formation and initiatives. The project has disseminated best practices, contributing to national capacity building in GHG accounting and MRV systems. However, challenges remain in ensuring broader impact. The formal adoption of crucial project deliverables like the economic and GHG emission model by government institutions and the scaling up pilot initiatives will be crucial for achieving broader impact.

Lesson Learned

The experience of the project highlights two key lessons - the need for flexible and responsive management strategies that allow for real-time adaptation to unexpected changes, and the importance of building in flexibility and adaptive management from the start to navigate complex bureaucratic and macro-level environments. As evidenced by the project team's ability to adjust to limitations caused by COVID-19 and geopolitical issues, an agile approach is essential for optimizing resources, mitigating risks, and ensuring continued relevance and efficacy amidst uncertainty. These lessons demonstrate that embedding adaptability into both project management and design is crucial for resilience and effectiveness when implementing complex initiatives with lengthy timelines in dynamic regulatory contexts.

The following table summarizes the scoring of this project based on the terminal evaluation.

Monitoring and Evaluation	
Overall quality of M&E	MS
M&E design at project start up	MS
M&E Plan Implementation	MS
IA & EA Execution	
Overall Quality of Project Implementation/Execution	MS
Implementing Agency Execution	MS
Executing Agency Execution	MS
Outcomes	
Overall Quality of Project Outcomes	S
Relevance	R
Effectiveness	MS
Efficiency	MS
Sustainability	
Overall likelihood of Sustainability:	ML
Financial resources	ML
Socio-economic	L
Institutional framework and governance	ML
Environmental	L
Overall Project Results	

The evaluation also identified the following key recommendations for project stakeholders.

Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeframe
Recommendations on Project Design These recommendations apply to the future design of similar projects by UNDP and MNREP and as such they have a forward-looking nature. ***Skills and Capacity Development:*** UNDP and MNREP should consider measures that not only create capacity, but also sustain it beyond the project's timeframe. This could include the embedding of capacity building activities within local institutions or the creation of permanent roles dedicated to climate change mitigation. In similar projects in the future,	UNDP and MNREP	Continuous and Long-term

UNDP and MNREP could partner with universities or training institutions to create stable training courses on relevant topics like GHG inventories, climate policy, etc., and provide certification for them. Ideally, future project could include a human resource development plan that includes training, mentorship, and succession planning to ensure continuity of expertise. ***Scalability and Replication:*** During the design of similar projects, UNDP and MNREP should pay greater attention to the process of scaling up, including project document considerations of mechanisms for replication, engagement approaches at the national and local level, and clear benchmarks for success. ***Synergies with Other Interventions:*** During project design, UNDP and MNREP should identify potential linkages with related initiatives in the sector/country and explore opportunities for coordination and joint activities. They should also actively seek insights and lessons learned from other UNDP projects and similar international initiatives to enhance project design and implementation strategies.		
Recommendations on Project Implementation <u>Short-term Recommendations</u> • The Project Team should conduct a financial review to concentrate resources on critical unfinished activities and determine how much of the project budget it will be able to spend until the end of the project, as well as and how that spending can be carried out in the most effective way. • Regular project reviews and frequent check-ins between UNDP and the Project Team should take place in this period to expedite the completion of outstanding activities. <u>Long-Term Recommendations</u> These recommendations apply to the future design of similar projects by UNDP and MNREP and as such they have a forward-looking nature. ***Enhance Reporting Quality:*** UNDP should seek to enhance the quality of data collection and reporting by its project teams. Key project data should be collected and be readily available. The CO M&E officer should ensure that this information has been collected and is readily available. Project staff will need training on this from the CO. UNDP should also improve the quality of annual reports to be more informative, transparent, and reflective of actual project achievements and challenges. ***Engagement with Local Communities:*** Where possible, UNDP should strengthen engagement with local communities in pilot locations to ensure their perspectives and impacts are taken into considerations and local ownership is stimulated. This will also contribute to a disaggregated perspective, including a gender perspective.	Project Team, UNDP and MNREP UNDP and MNREP	Short Term Long-Term

Tracking Training Results: UNDP should seek to establish methods for tracking training and workshop outcomes, including feedback mechanisms to assess their effectiveness. ***Demonstration of Additionality:*** For projects related to carbon credit markets, UNDP should establish clear criteria and methodologies to demonstrate additionality in its projects, identifying more clearly emissions reductions attributable to its projects.		
Recommendations on Project Results <u>Short-term Recommendations</u> • As a priority until the end of the project's timeframe, the project should seek to promote the adoption and approval of the deliverables it has created. Ideally, the project should develop a clear action plan and tracking methods for securing formal adoption of outputs like the NDC model, MRV systems, and legislative frameworks into national climate policy, etc. • The project team should develop a sustainability (or exit) plan, outlining handover procedures, capacity building, and requirements for sustaining project initiatives. As part of this plan, the project team should document its deliverables and share lessons learned, good practices, and model methodologies to catalyze replication across sectors and locations. • The project team should develop localized outreach events in the pilot regions to catalyze enthusiasm for the adoption of MRV systems among local administrations and enterprises. • In the remainder of the project's lifetime, the Project Team has the opportunity to communicate more widely and actively the benefits of the pilots, both in terms of environmental impact and potential economic gains, to entities and stakeholders across the country. This will require a more active outreach campaign and awareness raising engagement by the project. <u>Long-Term Recommendations</u> ***Leverage MNREP's Role:*** The parties should leverage MNREP's role in government to more proactively facilitate the formal adoption of the project's deliverables (models, frameworks, guidelines, etc.). ***Community Involvement:*** In projects that involve local pilots, UNDP should seek to involve local communities to ensure that their needs and perspectives are considered. ***Engagement of National Financial Entities:*** In future projects, UNDP should seek to engage national financial entities, such as the Ministry of Finance, as their involvement is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of market-based climate finance mechanisms.	Project Team UNDP and MNREP	Short Term Long-Term

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES

TABLES

BOXES

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACC - Approved Carbon Credits
AFA - Administrative/ Financial Assistant
AFOLU - Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
BelNIC – Belarusian Scientific and Research Center
CCM – Climate Change Mitigation
CDM – Clean Development Mechanism
CO – Country Office
CPD – Country Programme Document
CTA – Chief Technical Adviser
DAC – Development Assistance Committee
DNA – Designated National Authority
EIA – Environmental Impact Assessment
ERC – Evaluation Resource Center
GCC – Global Carbon Council
GEF – Global Environment Facility
GHG – Greenhouse Gas
HRBA – Human Rights-Based Approach
IRENA – International Renewable Energy Agency
ITA – International Technical Assistance
ITMO – Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes
NDC – Nationally Determined Contribution
LED – Light Emitting Diode
LPAC - Local Project Appraisal Committee
LULUCF - Land Use, Land-use Change and Forestry
MNREP - Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus
MRV - Measurement, Reporting and Verification
M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation
NASB - National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
NDC – Nationally Determined Contribution
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFP - Operational Focal Point
PDD – Project Design Document
PIR - Project Implementation Report
PM - Project Manager
PMU - Project Management Unit
RTA – Regional Technical Adviser
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
SER - State Environmental Review
SESP - Social and Environmental Screening Procedure
SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
TE – Terminal Evaluation
TOC - Theory of Change
ToR – Terms of Reference
UN – United Nations
UNDAF – United National Development Assistance Framework
UNEG – United Nations Evaluation Group
UNDP – United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNSDCF - United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of the terminal evaluation of the mid-sized project titled "*Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus*" implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Belarus and financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP office in Belarus[1] and was carried out during the period September – November 2023 by a team of two independent experts. This chapter provides an overview of the objectives and methodology of the evaluation.

1.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation is to provide an independent external view of the progress of the project near its completion point, and to provide feedback and recommendations to UNDP and other project stakeholders. Based on the terms of reference (ToR), the objectives of the terminal evaluation were to:

- Identify potential project design issues;
- Assess progress toward achievement of expected project objective and outcomes;
- Identify and document lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in overall enhancement of UNDP and GEF programming in the region;
- Make recommendations necessary to help consolidate and support sustainability of the project results.

This evaluation provides recommendations for follow-up activities, which require a management response prepared by UNDP. As such, the evaluation report is envisaged to serve as an accountability tool for the stakeholders to assess the implementation of the project, while providing specific and achievable recommendations to stakeholders in order to inform future programming. Furthermore, the evaluation findings may be used for further programme development in the field and resource mobilization.

1.2. Evaluation's Scope and Methodology

The evaluation's scope encompassed all activities and resource disbursements that took place within the project's lifetime until the point of this evaluation (31 October 2023). The ToR that guided the evaluation process are attached in Annex I of this report. The evaluation focused on the following key issues as required by the ToR:

- Project design and its effectiveness in achieving stated objectives.

[1] In accordance with UNDP and GEF Monitoring and Evaluation policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation upon completion of implementation to provide a comprehensive and systematic account of the performance by evaluating its design, process of implementation and achievements vis-à-vis GEF project objectives and any agreed changes during project implementation.

- Assessment of key financial aspects, including planned and realized budgets, co-financing, etc.
- The project's effectiveness in building the capacity of local institutions and strengthening policy frameworks to encourage sustainable development.
- Strengths and weaknesses of project implementation, monitoring and adaptive management and sustainability of project outcomes, including the project's exit strategy.
- Recommendations, lessons learned, best practices that may be used in similar UNDP and GEF projects.

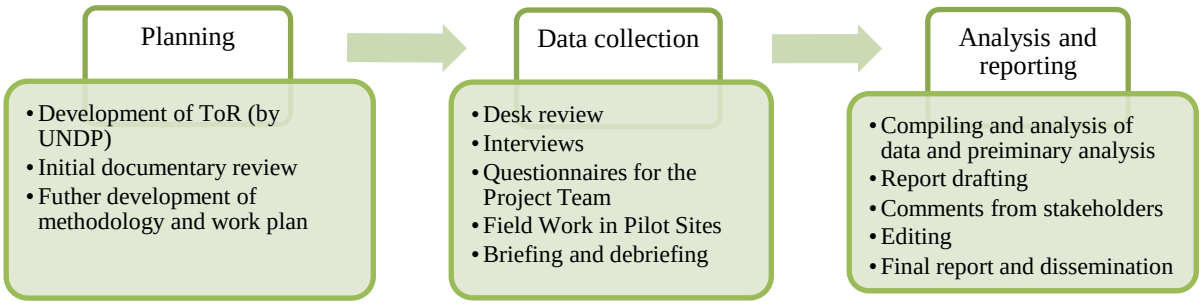
The evaluation used OECD DAC criteria and definitions followed the norms and standards established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG). It was guided by UNDP's and GEF's evaluation guidelines, and in particular:

- "*Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Development Results*"[2]
- "*Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects*"[3]

The methodology was based on mixed methods and involved the use of commonly applied evaluation tools such as documentary review, interviews, information triangulation, analysis and synthesis. A participatory approach was taken for the collection of data, formulation of recommendations and identification of lessons learned.

Evaluation activities were organized according to the following stages: i) planning; ii) data collection; and, iii) data analysis and reporting. Figure 1 below shows the three stages and the main activities under each of them.

Figure 1: Evaluation Stages



Evaluation Planning

Key project documentation was provided by the project team with the evaluation team through a shared drive, and the evaluation team conducted a preliminary review. A preliminary evaluability analysis showed that the project's outputs, indicators, baselines and the available data provided by the project team allow for an effective evaluation of the project. The evaluability analysis was underpinned by the evaluation matrix included in Annex III of this report.

[2] http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/documents/english/pme-handbook.pdf
[3] https://erc.undp.org/pdf/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf

Data Collection

The data collection process involved further reviewing of the project documentation and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and partners (see Annex IV for a list of interviewees and Annex V for a list of data sources). The data collection process also involved a questionnaire with the project team consisting of several parts.

Specifically, the data collection process consisted of the following components:

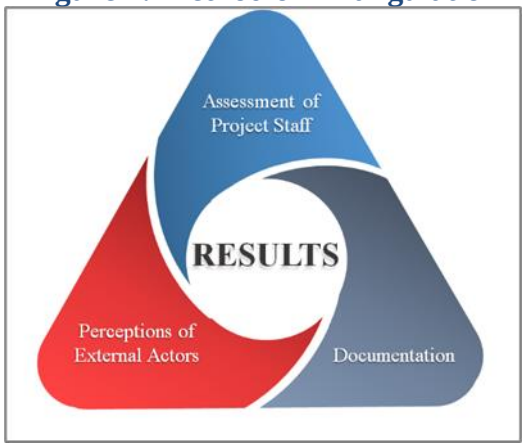
- ***Documentary Review*** - The evaluation team completed the analysis of all relevant documents, project documents and progress reports, as well as country development policies and strategies (shown in Annex V). Documents from similar and complementary initiatives, as well as reports on the specific context of the project formed part of the analysis.
- ***Questionnaire with Project Team*** – To gather more detailed information for the evaluation and establish the main issues to be followed up in the interviews with the stakeholders, the evaluation team developed a detailed questionnaire that was used to solicit the response/feedback of the project team and consultants.
- ***Semi-structured Interviews*** – The list of stakeholders that were interviewed for this evaluation is provided in Annex IV. The list was discussed and agreed with UNDP and the project team and updated accordingly. Interviews involved key stakeholders – in particular, project team and board members, government partners, UNDP Country Office (CO) staff, Regional Technical Adviser (RTA), the pool of national experts, etc.
- ***Field Work*** – Field work was conducted by the national evaluator in three pilot sites (Grichino-Starobinskoye, Logoisk, Nesvizh). The observations and interviews that took place during the field visit enabled the evaluation team to better assess project implementation and stakeholder perception.

The data collection process took into account gender considerations. All efforts were made to ensure that to the extent possible the information gathered was classified by sex and other pertinent categories. Additionally, efforts were made to utilize data sources and methods that promoted the inclusion of a diverse set of stakeholders, including those who are most vulnerable.

Data Analysis

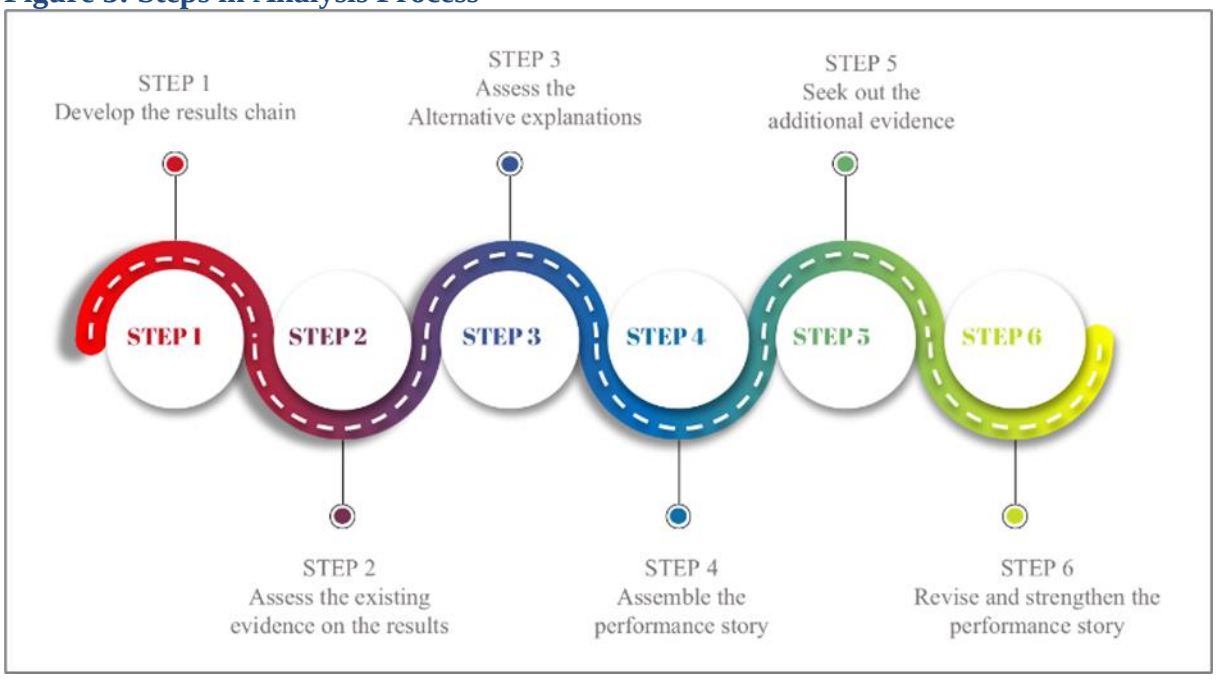
Information obtained through the documentary review and interviewing process was triangulated against available documented sources, and then synthesized using analytical judgement. The method of triangulation is shown in Figure 2 below. This helped ensure that the evaluation results are reliable, accurate, and representative of the project's overall performance.

Figure 2: Method of Triangulation



Some basic questions that were used in the analysis of the collected information are shown in Annex II of this report. Figure 3 shows the steps that were taken for the analysis.

Figure 3: Steps in Analysis Process



The analysis was conducted on the basis of standard criteria of evaluations of GEF-funded project such as relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, etc.

- ***Relevance,*** covering the assessment of how the project relates to the main objectives of the UNDP Country Programme, and to the development priorities at the local, national, and global level;
- ***Effectiveness,*** covering the assessment of the extent to which the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved in a timely and cost-effective manner;
- ***Impact***, covering the assessment of the extent to which the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status;
- ***Efficiency,*** covering the assessment of the quality of project implementation and adaptive management; adequacy of planning and financial management; the quality of monitoring

and evaluation; the contribution of executing agencies in ensuring efficient implementation;

- ***Sustainability,*** covering likely ability of the intervention to continue to deliver benefits for an extended period of time after completion.

The analysis covered aspects of the project's design, including the extent of stakeholder participation during the formulation; replication approach; design for sustainability; linkages between the project and other interventions within the sector or in the beneficiary countries; adequacy of management arrangements, etc.

Cross-cutting Issues

The evaluation team used gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensured that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are incorporated into the evaluation report. The evaluators assessed the project's approach to gender, including how gender considerations were incorporated into project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It examined gender-disaggregated data collected by the project or the evaluation exercise. The evaluation team interviewed project stakeholders and beneficiaries to gather perspectives on how the project impacted women and men differently. The TE also examined the inclusion of other vulnerable groups in project activities, including persons with disabilities, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups.

Table 1 below shows the scale used to rate the various dimensions of this evaluation. This is the standard scale used in GEF-funded projects.

Table 1: Rating Scale

Scale Rating	Description
6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution exceeded expectations
5 = Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution met expectations.
4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution more or less met expectations.
3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution was somewhat lower than expected
2 = Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution was substantially lower than expected
1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in the quality of implementation/execution
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation and execution

Table 2 below shows the scale used to rate the various dimensions of the project's sustainability. This, as well, is the standard scale used in GEF-funded projects.

Table 2: Sustainability Rating

Ratings	Description
4	Likely (L) There are little or no risks to sustainability
3	Moderately Likely (ML) There are moderate risks to sustainability
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU) There are significant risks to sustainability
1	Unlikely (U) There are severe risks to sustainability
Unable to Assess	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability

1.3. Evaluation Limitations

All possible efforts were made by the evaluation team to minimize the limitations of this evaluation. The evaluation ToR did not foresee a country mission by the international evaluator. While not ideal given the importance of person-to-person contacts and the observation of pilot activities on the ground, the decision is understandable given the logistical challenges resulting from sanctions imposed on Belarus. As a mitigating measure, the national evaluator focused on in-person meetings and visits to project sites. While UNDP CO's assistance was crucial in the conduct of this evaluation, the process would have benefitted from a more cooperative stance by the project's manager, especially in the provision of data and information to the evaluation team in a timely manner.

1.4. Ethical Considerations

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations". The evaluators have safeguarded the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures that ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing data collection and reporting. The consultants have also ensured security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process is solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses with the express authorization of UNDP and partners.

1.5. Report Structure

The evaluation report begins with an overview of the evaluation objectives and methodology (current chapter). The second chapter provides a description of the project and the country context (following chapter). The third chapter presents the main findings of the report and consists of three parts: assessment of project design and formulation; assessment of project implementation; and, assessment of the results along the standard dimensions of relevance, ownership, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The fourth chapter identifies key "lessons learned", whereas the following (fifth) summarizes the main conclusions. The last (sixth) chapter provides a set of recommendations. Additional information is provided in the annexes attached to this report.

2. DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1. Project Start and Duration

The project started on 19 July 2019 and was designed to run for three years. Delays in project implementation and Covid-19 disruptions to operations resulted in a no-cost extension being granted on 1 April 2022, for 18 months, until 19 January 2024. The following are the project's milestones.

Table 3: Project Milestones

Milestone	Date
PIF approval	15 September 2017
CEO endorsement date	5 November 2018
Project Document Signature Date (project start date)	19 July 2019
Project Inception Workshop	22 December 2020
Date of the Mid-term Review	-
Extension request	24 March 2022
Extension approval	01 April 2022
Expected date of Terminal Evaluation	10 November 2023
Planned Closing Date (including extension)	19 January 2024

2.2. Development Context[4]

Belarus has made progress in decoupling economic growth from greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, largely as a result of energy efficiency investments and a reduction in oil's share in the energy supply. While the economy grew, GHG emissions increased only modestly, with the majority originating from energy use, followed by agriculture and waste sectors. Belarus is a net carbon sink. While the country expects its emissions to remain flat or decrease due to the commissioning of a new nuclear power plant, long-term prospects for sustained low-carbon growth beyond 2020 are limited. Existing cost-effective mitigation options have largely been implemented, and continued economic growth is expected to drive an increase in emissions.

In terms of policy frameworks, Belarus has multiple documents in place aimed at promoting low-carbon, climate-resilient development, including the Energy Security Concept and the National Strategy for Sustainable Development until 2030. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection is executing a specific programme to address climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Belarus has committed to reducing its GHG emissions through its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The NDC outlines a target of reducing GHG emissions by a significant percentage from 1990 levels by 2030, excluding land use and forestry sectors. The NDC of Belarus was updated and communicated to the UNFCCC secretariat on 08 October 2021. The

[4] This section relies primarily on information from the Project Document and the Terms of Reference of the evaluation.

new update of the NDC of Belarus shall be communicated to the UNFCCC secretariat in the year 2025 and include the updated target for the year 2035, as required by Decision 6/CMA.3.

2.3. Problems Targeted by the Project

The "*Capacity building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus*" project was designed to provide an analytical basis for the update of the NDC target of Belarus for the year 2035 and establish sectoral GHG emission/absorption targets, including the GHG emission reduction/absorption target for the AFOLU/LULUCF sector (Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use / Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry). As such, the general purpose of the project was to assist the Government of the Republic of Belarus to implement its GHG emission reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC in the context of the national SDGs.

The table below shows the main barriers identified in the Project Document as the main challenges faced by Belarus in its pursuit of its climate change mitigation goals. These barriers largely conform to common challenges faced in climate policy development and implementation, particularly in transitioning economies like Belarus. The actions (means) outlined in the Project Document to overcome these barriers are summarized in the table below and closely aligned with the project components and outcomes, which provides an overall targeted approach for the project.

Table 4: Barriers to Climate Change Mitigation

Barrier	Means of overcoming the barriers
Insufficient analytical basis, knowledge and capacities to establish, assess and justify realistic yet ambitious national and sectoral NDC targets and identify appropriate market-based climate finance mechanism to support their implementation	Component 1 was envisaged to address this barrier by strengthening national capacities and analytical basis to improve and expand sectoral coverage of NDCs (Outcome 1.1), as well as by helping to identify and prepare roadmap for introduction of market-based climate finance mechanisms in support of NDC implementation (Outcome 1.2)
Lack of robust and internationally-recognized and compliant system to measure, report and verify (MRV) GHG emission at national and sectoral level, in particular in the AFOLU sector which is one of the key sectors in Belarus for both climate change mitigation and adaptation	Component 2 and 3 was envisaged to address this barrier by developing roadmap and recommendations on introduction of sectoral MRV systems, including key design elements, such as sectoral coverage, emission quantification methodology, reporting procedures and platform, quality assurance and enforcement (Outcome 2.1) and by road-testing and demonstrating their practical applications in the context of pilot MRV projects (Outcome 3.1).
Lack of practical experience with implementation of market-based climate finance mechanism and their MRVs	Component 3 was envisaged to address this barrier by facilitating implementation of pilot climate change mitigation projects, monitoring and verification of their results in line with established international practices for format-based climate finance mechanisms and MRVs (Outcome 3.1)

Barrier	Means of overcoming the barriers
Difficulties in attracting external, including private sector, finance to climate change mitigation projects leading to insufficient investment in low-carbon development	The project's aim was to enable Belarus to implement market-based mechanisms and thus attract additional resources for low-carbon development by identifying appropriate mechanisms in line with national and sectoral priorities and mitigation potential (Component 1), establishing (Component 2) and testing (Component 3) of the internationally-recognized MRV system to measure and quantify GHG emission reductions so that they are transferrable to and acceptable by third parties and therefore can be traded on the market basis.

Below is an analysis of these key barriers and their proposed solutions:

- ***Insufficient Analytical Basis and Knowledge for NDCs***: The project has sought to address this barrier through Component 1, which was aimed at enhancing the country's analytical capacities for developing a realistic, yet ambitious NDC. This is important for Belarus, as it can guide the development and revision of the NDC in line with global climate targets. Outcome 1.1 and 1.2 were specifically tailored to create an analytical underpinning for the NDC and provide a roadmap for market-based climate finance mechanisms. This was a reasonable approach to improve the analytical basis of climate policy planning.

- ***Lack of Robust Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Systems***: The project addressed this second challenge Components 2 and 3, especially given the importance of the AFOLU () sector in Belarus. Outcome 2.1 focused on developing a roadmap and recommendations for sectoral MRV systems, including essential elements like quantification methodology and reporting procedures. By linking this with Outcome 3.1, which aimed to road-test these MRV systems in pilot projects, the project ensured both the design and the practical applicability of the MRV systems are scrutinized.

- ***Lack of Practical Experience with Market-Based Climate Finance***: This barrier was envisaged to be addressed through Component 3. Outcome 3.1 aimed at implementing pilot projects that would not only test the MRV systems, but also the market-based mechanisms for climate finance. This was a crucial step for gaining practical experience and was complementary to the analytical work performed under Component 1.

- ***Challenges in Attracting External Finance***: This was one of the more complex barriers, affecting not just Belarus, but many nations attempting to transition to a low-carbon economy. The project aimed to overcome this barrier by enabling Belarus to attract additional resources through market-based mechanisms. By focusing on identifying appropriate mechanisms (Component 1), establishing MRV systems (Component 2), and testing them (Component 3), the project was envisaged to create a comprehensive pathway for attracting external finance, including from the private sector. Further, ensuring that the MRV systems were internationally-recognized was meant to facilitate the trading of GHG emission reductions, making them attractive to third parties.

Overall, the actions to address the barriers were realistic, clearly identified, and well-articulated in relation to the project objectives and indicators.

2.4. Immediate and Development Objectives

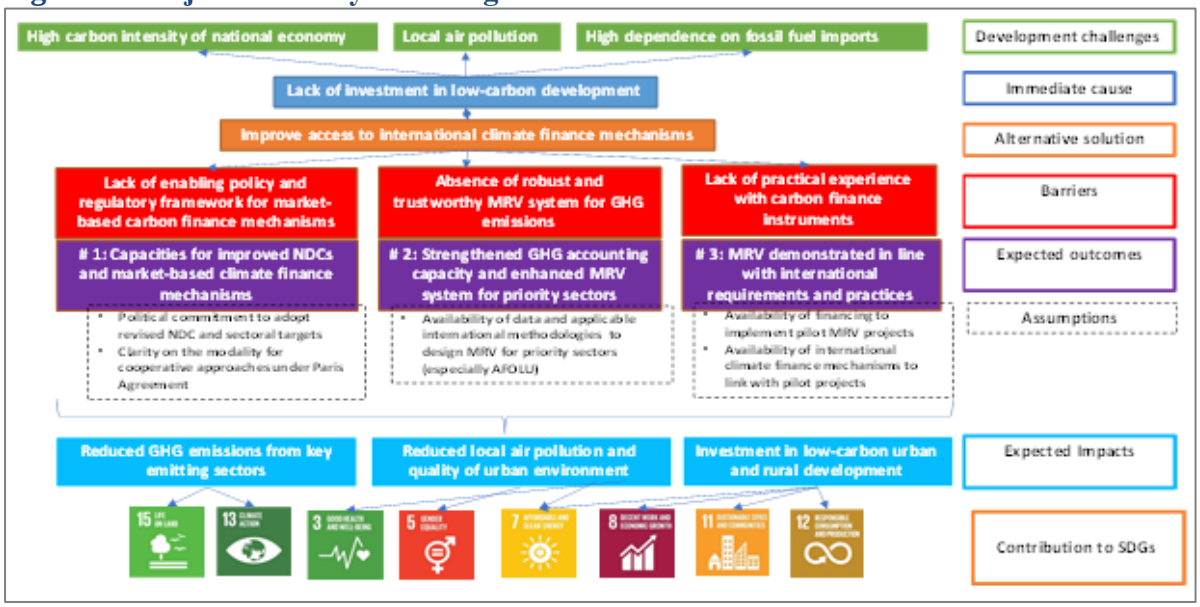
The project's main development objective was to build Belarus' capacities to design and implement market- based climate finance mechanisms, to improve and continuously update its NDC, as well as to set-up a robust MRV system for GHG emissions in the priority sectors.

The project was designed as a package of three inter-linked components aimed at comprehensively addressing the barriers identified in the previous section of this report. The first component addresses capacity and knowledge constraints related to preparation and update of national and sectoral NDC targets, as well as limited awareness about market-based climate finance mechanisms. Under the second component, the project was expected to set-up and strengthen the MRV system, specifically for the priority sectors identified in the NDC. The third component, in partnerships with a number of local and international organizations and initiatives, was designed to support the development and implementation of MRV pilots in selected sectors to facilitate interactions and learning-by-doing for all stakeholders involved in the MRV system.

2.5. Theory of Change

The project was designed to assist the Government of Belarus in fulfilling its GHG emission reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement, within the context of the national SDGs. As noted previously, the project's key objectives include building Belarus' capacities to design and implement market-based climate finance mechanisms, enhancing and continuously updating Belarus's NDCs, and establishing a robust MRV system for GHG emissions in priority sectors. The figure below, taken from the Project Document, shows the project's Theory of Change (ToC).

Figure 4: Project's Theory of Change



The project's Theory of Change consists of the following logical flow:

- ***Objectives***: The project's primary objective has been to build Belarus' capacities for climate finance mechanisms, improve NDCs, and set up a robust MRV system.
- ***Activities***: The broader activity areas included capacity-building workshops, policy consultations, technical support for MRV system development, and support for the update and implementation of Belarus's NDC.
- ***Outcomes***: The project was designed to address key policy, capacity, and finance aspects of climate change mitigation to achieve its objectives.

This flow suggests a generally well-designed logic where activities are geared to overcome identified barriers and achieve the project's objectives. The outcomes, in the form of capacity built and systems established, seem naturally aligned with these activities. The box below shows the project's TOC reconstructed by the evaluation team for the purpose of this evaluation.

Box 1: Project's Theory of Change

The project's TOC may be synthesized as follows:

Initial Condition:
Belarus has made international commitments under the Paris Agreement to reduce GHG emissions, but faces challenges in implementing these commitments effectively and efficiently. The country has existing policy frameworks, but there are barriers to achieving the desired emission reduction and sustainable development goals.

Assumptions:
1. Government's will and commitment to climate action continue.
2. Availability of international and national funding for climate-related projects.
3. Public sector is open to adopting market-based climate finance mechanisms.
4. Technical expertise is accessible or can be developed in-house for MRV and NDC implementation.

Inputs:
1. Technical assistance in the design and implementation of market-based climate finance mechanisms.
2. Capacity-building activities for updating and continuously improving NDCs.
3. Support for establishing a robust MRV system for GHG emissions in priority sectors.

Activities:
1. Support the review and updating of the NDC through consultations and technical analyses.
2. Conduct capacity-building workshops for policymakers and relevant stakeholders.
3. Provide technical assistance for the development or enhancement of MRV systems.
4. Pilot the use of MRV systems to obtain climate financing for additional investments.

Outputs:
1. Increased capacity among stakeholders to engage in market-based climate finance mechanisms.
2. A functional, reliable MRV system for monitoring GHG emissions.
3. Updated and more ambitious NDC aligned with both international commitments and national priorities.

Short-term Outcomes:

1. Enhanced institutional capacity for climate finance mechanisms.
2. Improved policy frameworks for GHG emission reduction.
3. Effective MRV system leading to data-driven decision-making.

Intermediate Outcomes:

1. Increased financial investments in low-carbon technologies and projects.
2. Higher compliance with updated NDCs.
3. Improved data quality and reporting accuracy in MRV systems.

Long-term Impact:

1. Achieve or exceed GHG emission reduction targets set in the NDC.
2. Contribute to global climate change mitigation efforts.
3. Realize sustainable development goals without compromising economic growth.

This TOC – derived from the project's results framework - outlines a logical and coherent pathway from inputs to long-term impacts, supported by a set of realistic assumptions. It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how the project's activities could lead to the desired outcomes and impacts, contingent on certain assumptions holding true.

2.6. Expected Results

As noted previously in this report, the project has consisted of three main components: (1) *Capacity building for improved NDCs and market-based finance mechanisms*; (2) *Strengthening GHG accounting and MRV systems*; and, (3) *Implementation of demonstration projects using MRV best practices*. The specific outcomes identified in the Project Document are included in Box 2 below.

- The first component was designed to strengthen Belarus's NDCs by developing a well-calibrated economic and emissions model that identifies mitigation pathways, and sets quantifiable targets at both the sectoral and national levels. Outcome 1.1 aimed to provide the analytical foundation upon which future policies can be anchored. In doing so, it was expected to enable policy-makers to make informed decisions about the allocation of resources in the most cost-effective and impactful manner. Outcome 1.2 envisaged the development of a strategic roadmap for market-based climate finance mechanisms such as emissions trading and project-based crediting. This is crucial for creating financial incentives for GHG reductions and facilitating the implementation of NDCs.

- The second component was envisaged to ensure accurate, transparent, and consistent reporting of GHG emissions, which is vital to the integrity and success of any climate policy. Outcome 2.1 sought to overhaul the existing MRV system. By implementing a facility-based MRV for large emitters and crafting sector-specific guidelines for areas like AFOLU and municipalities, the project anticipated greater transparency and reliability in emissions data. This would also be facilitated by the inclusion of study tours and a robust legal/regulatory framework to ensure compliance and effective oversight.

- The third component, focused on demonstration projects, functions as a 'proof of concept' for the MRV methodologies being developed. Outcome 3.1 was envisaged to provide an on-the-ground application of MRV best practices in diverse sectors such as buildings, lighting, peatlands, and forests. These small-scale MRV projects were designed to not only validate the guidelines, but also serve as learning experiences that can be scaled up and replicated. Moreover, the results from these demonstration projects were expected to inform future iterations of the MRV guidelines and ensure they are both practical and effective.

Box 2: Project's Expected Outcomes

The following are the project's main outcomes:

1. Capacity building for improved NDCs and market-based climate finance mechanisms to support NDC implementation.
   - Outcome 1.1: Improved NDCs with detailed economic and emissions modeling to explore mitigation pathways and establish sectoral and national targets.
   - Outcome 1.2: Roadmap for introducing market-based climate finance mechanisms like emission trading and project-based crediting.

2. Strengthened GHG accounting and MRV system for key sectors.
   - Outcome 2.1: Enhanced and strengthened MRV system with facility-based MRV for large emitters and project-based MRV guidelines for other sectors like AFOLU and municipal. Includes study tours, and legal/regulatory framework.

3. Demonstration projects using MRV best practices.
   - Outcome 3.1: Small scale MRV projects implemented in sectors like buildings, lighting, peatlands, and forests to test MRV methodologies and inform the development of MRV guidelines.

2.7. Total Resources

In the Project Document, the total cost of the project was estimated at USD 8,907,280. This amount was envisaged to be financed through a GEF grant of USD 840,000, and an additional USD 8,067,280 in parallel co-financing. The following sections of this report detail how these allocations materialized in the course of the project and how the expenditure of these resources took place.

2.8. Main Stakeholders

With a total budget of USD 840,000 the project was implemented by the UNDP CO in Belarus in partnership with MNREP. The project was implemented following UNDP's direct implementation modality, with MNREP serving as the Implementing Partner. UNDP retained authority over managing the project, monitoring results, and authorizing expenditures. UNDP has provided independent oversight, quality assurance and troubleshooting support. This project assurance role has supported accountability through objective monitoring and assessment of the PM's performance and milestones. MNREP's first Deputy Minister served

as the project's director and the Ministry provided premises to accommodate the PMU, as well as access to telephone and Internet services.

Strategic guidance has been provided by the Project Board, which is chaired by UNDP and MNREP and which has included other relevant government agencies and partners. The Board has reviewed the project's progress, provided direction on strategic issues, and has approved project work plans and budget revisions. It has decided on course corrections when needed. Board decisions have been made by consensus, ensuring collaborative oversight.

The project's stakeholder engagement plan, presented in the Project Document, took a multi-faceted approach to addressing climate change in Belarus. Below is a breakdown of the stakeholders' roles, mandates, and how they aligned with the project's components:

- ***Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (MNREP)***: As the National Implementing Partner, MNREP has had overarching responsibility for climate change policy, NDC targets and MRV system development. It was designated as the lead and coordinator for all project components. Its mandate aligns well with the project objectives, making it a suitable implementing partner.
- ***Ministry of Economy***: Engaged primarily in Component 1, its role was related to the updating of the NDC. Given its responsibility for national sustainable development strategy, SDG framework, and investment coordination, the Ministry of Economy was strategically positioned to link climate goals with economic planning.
- ***Energy Efficiency Department of the State Committee for Standardization***: With a key role in Component 2 and 3, its mandate was crucial for setting up the MRV framework for the energy sector, including energy efficiency and peatland restoration projects. This alignment is important for the project's activities in these critical areas.
- ***Ministry of Forestry***: Engaged in Component 3, its mandate for national forestry sector programs aligned well with the project's aims for sustainable forest management. Its technical expertise was directly related to the pilot projects on forestry practices.
- ***Ministry of Construction and Architecture***: Responsible for MRV setup in the Residential Buildings sector under Component 2, its role was relevant to achieving residential energy efficiency. By virtue of its mandate, it was an instrumental institution for the scaling of the project's impact beyond the pilot phase.
- ***Ministry of Housing and Utilities***: Engaged in Component 3, this ministry had a specific role in projects related to energy-efficient public lighting and efficiency in heat supply systems. This sector-specific engagement makes it a key partner for addressing utilities-related emissions.
- ***National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB)***: A research institution with a mandate to explore natural resource management, it was particularly crucial for Components 2 and 3. The Academy's expertise in eco-system-based GHG emission accounting provide technical support to the project's MRV methodologies.
- ***Partner Municipalities***: Their role in the project's Component 3 positioned them as essential for implementing Sustainable Energy Action Plans and MRVs in urban sectors.

Given their mandate, their engagement was envisaged to ensure the ground-level implementation of the project's objectives.

Overall, the stakeholders identified in the project document were highly relevant to the respective project components and outcomes. Their mandates were closely aligned with project objectives, making the plan well-conceived. However, there was room for expanding stakeholder engagement to include inter-ministerial coordination, local communities, and the private sector to further enrich the project's multi-stakeholder approach.

2.9. Key Partners

The key partners of this project are UNDP Belarus and MNREP. UNDP Belarus has supported the project from inception to implementation, playing a multifaceted role that includes identifying objectives, drafting the concept and detailed proposal, and approving the Project Document. MNREP has served as the National Implementing Partner for the project, with oversight and management provided by its Department of Air Impact Control, Climate Change and Expertise. The First Deputy Minister of MNREP has acted as the project's National Coordinator, also chairing the Project Board.

2.10. Evaluative Context

A Mid-Term Review was not carried out for this project, and no other implementing partner has evaluated this or a closely linked project.

3. FINDINGS

The findings of this evaluation are organized in the following sections: i) Project Design; ii) Project Implementation; and, iii) Project Results.

3.1. Project Design

This section examines the project's logic and design features by focusing on the adequacy of the project's logic, results framework, management arrangements, identification of risks and assumptions, use of lessons learned from other projects, linkages with relevant UNDP or donor projects, gender responsiveness, planned stakeholder engagement, and social and environmental safeguards.

3.1.1. Analysis of Project Logic and Planning

The project was designed to take a multi-pronged approach to improving climate policy formulation anchored on empirical data in NDC modelling, increased access to climate finance through market mechanisms, enhanced technical capacity for MRV systems, and practical demonstrations of MRV best practices. These outcomes were envisaged to collectively contribute to Belarus's overarching goal of building climate resilience and reducing its carbon footprint. Beyond the sphere of climate change, the project aimed to capture broader development impacts. By establishing and implementing a comprehensive MRV framework, the project was envisaged to lead to better management of climate-related resources, potentially enhancing income generation opportunities, especially in sectors directly affected by climate change initiatives. The pilot projects, particularly in energy efficiency and peatland restoration, were designed to provide direct and indirect economic benefits, thereby supporting livelihoods. The project envisaged a Gender Action Plan, ensuring gender considerations were fully integrated into the NDC mitigation sector analyses. It emphasized the equal participation of women in various project components, such as capacity building for improved NDCs, market-based climate finance mechanisms, and in the stakeholder consultation process. As such, this project does not operate in silos, but takes a holistic approach towards its goal.

For all the strengths of the project's design, there are also some design weaknesses identified in the course of this evaluation. The following are the main ones:

- ***Skills and Capacity***: Although the project aimed to build national capacities, there were no explicit considerations in its design of how this capacity was going to be sustained, especially in terms of human resources.

- ***Scalability***: The project was designed with a particular focus on demonstrative pilots (Component 3). The Project Document included a short paragraph on the project's replication approach, which connects the pilot projects to relevant state sectoral programmes. However, the approach lacks depth and specificity in several critical aspects. The box below provides more details on the challenges of the project's replication approach, as it was laid out in the Project Document. It would have been beneficial to have

included in the project design more detailed considerations and analysis for how to scale these pilots to the national level.

Box 3: Project's Replication Approach

The following are the key challenges of the project's replication approach outlined in the Project Document:

- While the document indicates that a mandatory regulatory framework for MRV will be established under Component 2, it does not provide details on how this framework will facilitate the scaling-up of pilot MRVs. A more explicit articulation of how the regulatory environment will encourage or mandate scaling would have strengthened the approach.
- The document is silent on the financial mechanisms that will be employed to scale the pilot MRVs. While it refers to State Sectoral Programmes, there is no mention of how these will be financially supported for replication or what kind of investment is expected from public or private sectors for scaling-up.
- The document does not mention stakeholder involvement in the scaling-up process. Given that stakeholder engagement is critical to the successful replication of projects, particularly in the public sector, guidelines for how stakeholders will be involved would add value.
- Although the document mentions the adoption of methodological guidelines for mandatory MRV systems, it does not detail what these guidelines will entail. Given that the strength of the MRV system is a key performance indicator, more information on the guidelines' structure, content, and application would have enhanced the replication approach.
- The document lacks a clear timeline and milestones for scaling the pilots, either during the project life or beyond. Inserting a timeframe for key activities and goals related to scaling could make the replication approach more operational.

Overall, the project's replication approach outlined in the Project Document is not fully developed and insufficiently clear.

3.1.2. Analysis of Resource and Results Framework including Indicators

The project's Results Framework is generally adequate, establishing clear indicators with quantifiable targets. It also notes critical risks and assumptions that could influence the project's success. The framework integrates elements of financial mobilization, policy alignment, capacity building, and practical demonstration. The analysis of the indicators, summarized in the box below, shows that they generally meet the SMART criteria. The following are some additional positive aspects of the framework.

- The framework aligns well with the project's objectives, components, and outcomes. The indicators are relevant and capture key results.
- The framework includes a good mix of output, outcome, and impact indicators that cover policy improvements, capacity building, MRV systems, investment mobilized, and GHG reductions.
- Baseline data is provided for most indicators, though some baselines were not determined. End-of-project targets are quantified where possible.

- Risks and assumptions are identified for each objective and component and seem reasonable.
- The number and scope of indicators is appropriate - not too many and also not too few. The total number of indicators is manageable.
- The indicators are a mix of quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative indicators help track hard results, but qualitative ones capture important process improvements.

Box 4: Assessment of Project Indicators

- Indicator 1 is Specific, Measurable, Attributable, Relevant and Time-bound. Updating the NDC with sectoral targets is a clear and relevant goal for the project.
- Indicator 2 is reasonably SMART, though the direct relationship/attribution may be questionable since external factors also influence investment mobilized.
- Indicator 3 is SMART, though direct relationship/attribution to the project may be questionable.
- Indicator 4 is reasonably SMART. Updating the NDC is attributable to the project and time-bound.
- Indicator 5 is reasonably SMART. Developing climate finance mechanisms is specific, attributable to the project, and time-bound.
- Indicator 6 is reasonably SMART. Improving the MRV system quality is attributable to the project and time-bound.
- Indicator 7 is reasonably SMART. Developing MRV laws is attributable to the project and time-bound.
- Indicators 8, 9 and 10 are SMART. Expanding sectoral MRV coverage is attributable to the project and time-bound.
- Indicator 11 needs more specificity once pilots are defined to be considered SMART. Setting gender-disaggregated targets would strengthen it.

For all the positive factors above, there are also shortcoming that should be taken into account in the development of future projects by the project partners.

- The means of data collection are mostly not specified. There is a need to add more specifics on data sources for some indicators like surveys or reporting systems.
- The project should have ensured that the baselines were established before project start for all indicators.
- The framework could have included an indicator for capacity building outputs (e.g., number of people trained on MRV).
- The framework could also have included an indicator for the adoption/implementation of the roadmap for market mechanisms under the project's Component 1.
- A key weakness of the framework is the lack of gender disaggregation for the relevant indicators.

Overall, the Results Framework is adequate, captures key intended results, and provides a good basis to track the project's progress. With some exceptions noted above, it provides a good basis for assessing achievement of project objectives.

3.1.3. Assumptions and Risks

The risks identified in the Project Document included some key potential obstacles that could hinder the project's progress, especially around achieving consensus, coordination, and securing adequate funding. The assumptions generally seem reasonable, provided there is continued political will and capability to implement the project.

The following are the main risks identified in the Project Document:

- Lack of consensus on scope and ambitions of NDC
- Insufficient resources from co-financing partners
- Coordination issues between agencies delaying activities
- Beneficiaries unwilling to share data for MRV systems
- Funds not allocated to finance pilot projects as expected

The following are the main assumptions identified in the Project Document:

- Project approved and implemented in a timely manner
- High capability of national technical staff maintained
- Sustained public policy support for Paris Agreement
- Required regulatory documents for MRV adopted
- Funds allocated to finance pilot MRV projects
- MRV systems cover socio-economic and gender impacts

Overall, the identified risks and assumptions are valid, emphasizing the need for an adaptive management approach. They cover both institutional and operational elements, and are intrinsically related to the project objectives and indicators. For example, the risk that consensus will not be reached on the NDC or MRV systems is realistic, given the complex political and technical nature of such agreements. This risk still remains at the point of this evaluation, given that none of these instruments have been adopted or approved formally by the government. Also, the risk related to co-financing partners lacking resources or state funding not being allocated as planned is very realistic. Another very realistic risk in hindsight is the one related to the need for coordination between various agencies. This project's progress has been heavily dependent on inter-agency cooperation, a challenge that has resulted in delays in project implementation.

Two unforeseen external events (externalities) had a significant effect of the project. First, the COVID-19 pandemic had a substantial impact on the project's implementation, primarily due to restrictions on travel and in-person meetings, which affected stakeholder engagement, capacity-building activities, and the overall pace of the project. Also, the geopolitical instability in the region, especially the conflict in Ukraine, has had significant direct effects on the project.

This instability created challenges with the economic sanctions that ensued, travel and logistical complications, and disruptions in regional cooperation initiatives. As will be seen further in this report, especially in the section on Adaptive Management, UNDP and the project team have spent considerable effort dealing with these challenges.

3.1.4. Lessons from other Relevant Projects Incorporated into the Project Design

The design of this project does not seem to have benefitted from any lessons from other relevant projects. No other projects or experiences are mentioned in the Project Document. This is a missed opportunity because there are a wide variety of projects out there that aim to support national climate change mitigation systems, many of which are interventions of other UNDP country offices. The design of this project would have greatly benefitted from those experiences. These projects provide insights into the types of risks that are likely to be encountered, whether these are financial, political, or operational. Understanding how these projects have successfully (or unsuccessfully) engaged with key stakeholders would have informed a more effective design of the project's stakeholder engagement plan – an area which as will be seen further in this report has experienced some shortcomings. Furthermore, projects that have successfully mobilized resources would have offered valuable lessons on partnership models, co-financing arrangements, and other mechanisms for financial leveraging.

3.1.5. Planned Stakeholder Participation

The project's stakeholder engagement plan, included in the Project Document, demonstrates an overall adequate approach to involving a wide range of national and international actors. The box below shows the stakeholders that were identified in the Project Document. This list includes governmental, non-governmental, academic, and international entities, in line with the multi-disciplinary approach to the project's implementation.

Box 5: Stakeholders Identified in the Project Document

National Stakeholders:

1. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus
2. State Committee for Standardization of the Republic of Belarus, Department for Energy Efficiency
3. National Statistical Committee, Division of Environmental Statistics of the Principle Division of Agricultural and Environmental Statistics
4. Ministry of Economy, Department of Green Economy, Division of Economics of Ecosystems of the Principal Division for Sustainable Development
5. Ministry of Housing and Utilities, Department of Research and Development Support and Technical Audit of the State Production Association "Belvodokanal"
6. Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Radiology and Environment of the Division of Investment and Innovation
7. Ministry of Energy, Division of Energy Efficiency, Environment and Science
8. Ministry of Forestry, Division of Forestry Management
9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Division of Sustainable Development of the Principle Division of Multilateral Diplomacy
10. International Public Association "Gender Perspectives"
11. NGO "Green Economy"

Research and Academic Institutions:

1. Belarusian Scientific and Research Centre "Ecology" of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection
2. Scientific and Research State Enterprise "BELTEI" of Concern Belenergo of the Ministry of Energy
3. Research Center of the Institute for Privatization and Management of Belarus
4. Energy Institute of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
5. Scientific Center for Bioresources of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus
6. Belarusian State Technological University

International Stakeholders:

1. International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)
2. UNDP-Russian Experts on Demand Programme 2022
3. UNDP-Russian Experts on Demand Programme 2023
4. Global Carbon Council (Qatar)

The following is a brief analysis of the strengths of the stakeholder engagement plan.

- ***National Level Engagement***: National stakeholders are coordinated by MNREP. This ministry provides varied expertise from energy to forestry and agriculture, thereby contributing to the integrated approach required for the project.
- ***Project Board***: The establishment of a Project Board comprised of key stakeholders ensures shared decision-making, and fosters accountability. It acts as a convergence point for multi-sectoral inputs.
- ***Technical Expertise***: The engagement of scientific and research institutions adds a layer of technical rigor to the project. It enables data-driven decision-making and scientific methodologies into the project, especially beneficial for components requiring complex analyses like MRV systems and emissions trading.
- ***International Partnerships***: Collaboration with international organizations such as the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and Global Carbon Council (Qatar) promotes the transfer international best practices and enhances the project's credibility.
- ***Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing***: The inclusion of workshops and training seminars in the engagement plan indicates an active strategy for capacity building, knowledge transfer, and skills enhancement among stakeholders. This is vital for building local capabilities.

However, the evaluation identified also some challenges related to the stakeholder engagement plan outlined in the Project Document.

- ***Challenging Civil Society Involvement***: The operational environment for non-governmental organizations in Belarus has become increasingly restrictive, creating an external barrier to meaningful participation. These constraints manifest in various forms including, but not limited to, stringent registration requirements, obstacles to foreign funding, and an overarching legal environment that limits freedom of expression and association. This complicated context for CSOs has affected the project's ability to engage with civil society, which has challenged the project's stakeholder engagement approach. The Project Document could have provided better guidance to UNDP and the project team

on how to deal with a situation where the possibilities for engagement with civil society are very limited.

- ***Limitations of the Private Sector***: Also, the private sector remains quite weak in Belarus, which has had major implications for how this sector was engaged by the project. This is also reflected in the project's engagement plan which envisaged limited participation from the private sector, particularly industries and corporations that are directly implicated in emissions and climate change.

Overall, the stakeholder engagement plan is adequate in several dimensions. The inclusion of varied stakeholders, from governmental ministries to international agencies and non-governmental organizations, is key for the execution of the project. However, it has been challenged by the limitations that civil society and the private sector face in the country.

3.1.6. Linkages with Other Interventions in the Sector

No linkages to other relevant interventions in the sector or other UNDP projects were identified in the Project Document. This is a missed opportunity, as far as the design of the project is concerned, because this project could have been formulated in closer synergy with the other UNDP projects in the country office's environmental portfolio. UNDP Belarus has extensive experience with the management of GEF-funded projects – some of them with very good results. Several of these projects – especially in the areas of energy efficiency, peatlands restoration, renewable energy – are quite relevant to the current project, and especially the pilot initiatives. Leveraging insights from these projects would have shortened the project's learning curve, making implementation more efficient and effective. By not identifying and integrating these synergistic opportunities within the project design, the current project has missed on some key advantages that could have otherwise been harnessed for its benefit.

3.1.7. Gender Responsiveness of Project Design

The Project Document included a gender analysis, focusing on the gender situation in Belarus. This analysis was based on data from government studies, donor agencies, and multilateral development banks. The gender analysis aimed to understand how women and men are differently affected by climate finance mechanisms and identified opportunities for women to act as agents of change. It recognized the high rank of Belarus on the OECD "*gender index*", highlighting the high level of female human development indicators and gender-neutral legislation in Belarus. However, it also noted disparities in economic opportunities and earnings between women and men.

Gender issues were integrated into the project's strategy and theory of change. The Project Document recognized that addressing gender inequality and empowering women could enhance the effectiveness of climate action. It envisaged a Gender Action Plan, detailing gender-related results. This plan was expected to include specific gender-related indicators, targets, budget, timeframe, and responsible parties for each component of the project.

The Project Document does not explicitly discuss the UNDP Gender Marker rating assigned to the project. Without this information, it is challenging to evaluate whether the gender marker rating was realistic and backed by the gender analysis findings.

Overall, the Project Document demonstrates an adequate commitment to integrating gender considerations through detailed analysis, the requirement for an action plan, and alignment with national gender policies. However, there are gaps in the documentation regarding the specifics of gender expertise involved and the evaluation of the UNDP Gender Marker rating.

3.1.8. Social and Environmental Safeguards

The Project Document provides in some level of detail an analysis of the environmental and social risks identified through the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) in accordance with the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards. Additionally, it outlines the management measures as per the Project Document SESP and management plans.

The primary environmental risk identified relates to biodiversity conservation, specifically the restoration/rewetting of peatlands. This activity was identified to involved a moderate risk of adversely impacting valuable habitats and adjacent forests, potentially leading to flooding and loss of these areas. To address this risk, the project proposed several mitigation measures, including the preparation of a scientific justification for rewetting by experts to ensure no adverse impact on valuable habitats and adjacent forests, development of design documentation based on this scientific justification to guide construction works, conducting Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and State Environmental Reviews (SER) if required, to ensure that no significant adverse impact is expected from the proposed rewetting projects, and commencement of construction works only after receiving positive outcomes from the scientific justification, EIA, and SER. The project was categorized as having "*Moderate Risk*" due to its focus on "s*oft*" activities like studies and the establishment of national MRV systems, as well as the potential risks associated with the peatland ecosystem restoration.

3.2. Project Implementation

The project went through a number of important stages during its lifetime. The following is the chronology of key events that marked the project's conceptualization and implementation phases.

- PIF approved on 15 September 2017
- MSP on 05 November 2018
- LPAC Meeting on 21 December 2018
- RA signed Project Document 19 July 2019
- Project Registration completed on 13 May 2020
- Hiring of Project Management Unit on 1 September 2020
- Inception Workshop held on 22 December 2020
- Original Operational Closure of the Project set for 19 July 2022
- Revised Operational Closure of the Project set for 19 January 2024

The expected date of financial closure of the project is 19 January 2024. All substantive work of the project is envisaged to be completed by the end of 2023.

3.2.1. Adaptive Management

The project's implementation experienced several challenges and delays that were caused primarily by external circumstances beyond the project's control. The main external circumstances that have affected the project include:

- National process for registration of International Technical Assistance (ITA) projects;
- COVID-19 pandemic;
- Geopolitical regional crisis since February 2022 and the sanctions imposed against Belarus;
- Delay in the adoption of the framework for land use projects by the Global Carbon Council (Qatar).

The project reacted to these challenging circumstances in different ways.

- The delay caused by the national ITA registration process established by the Government of Belarus for all technical assistance projects that are required to be registered by the Ministry of Economy of Belarus in order to be allowed to be implemented in Belarus. The delay due to the national registration of this project with the Ministry of Economy took more than one year, which affected all project implementation timelines. The Project Document had been signed on 19 July 2019 with the project planned start date envisaged to be May 2019. However, the project had to undergo the national registration process established by the Government of Belarus for technical assistance projects that are required to be registered by the Ministry of Economy of Belarus prior to be allowed to be implemented in Belarus. The registration date of this project in the Database of Technical Assistance Programmes and Projects maintained by the Ministry of Economy of Belarus was 13 May 2020. Only after being registered by the Ministry of Economy, the project could initiate the hiring of the Project Manager, took over the position on 01 September

2020. Therefore, the actual project implementation started around 1.5 years later than the planned start date due to the delay caused by the registration process. As a result of these delays, the project was unable to support directly Belarus's last NDC which was updated and communicated to the UNFCCC Secretariat on 08 October 2021. The project's work around the NDC modelling was organized to support the upcoming update of the NDC which is expected to be communicated to the UNFCCC Secretariat in the year 2025 and include the updated target for the year 2035, as required by Decision 6/CMA.3.

- The COVID-19 pandemic also led to delays in implementation of project activities. Due to the unfavorable epidemiological situation, it was necessary to extend the deadlines for submitting bids for the tenders, which led to significant delays in hiring consultants. The extended COVID-19 sicknesses of multiple consultants hired to implement individual project activities required extensions of the concluded consultancy contracts. COVID-19 also influenced the project's delivery, as the COVID-19 pandemic required some of the activities to be carried out remotely, which eventually led to some of the budget being unspent.

- The sanctions against Belarus created additional challenges and caused some delays. More specifically, Component 3 of the project envisaged close collaboration with international carbon market entities in order to register MRV pilot projects, conduct independent verification and confirmation of GHG emission results of the MRV pilot projects in line with applicable international standards and procedures (voluntary standards and/or Article 6 provisions), preparing certificates of GHG emission reduction/absorption achieved by the MRV pilot projects and placing them in relevant carbon markets. The sanctions led to a situation where some international carbon market entities were not willing to deal with projects from Belarus. In addition, the MRV pilot projects had to be validated and verified by foreign companies accredited by specific carbon market entities for such validation and verification services. However, international travel was needed for the validation and verification of the MRV pilot projects. Many flights were suspended from to/from Belarus, which made international travel challenging. The geo-political situation and the on-going military conflict in the region further aggravated the situation with international travel to/from Belarus and the willingness of international partners to engage with the project implemented in Belarus. In response to these challenges, the project decided to focus on the Global Carbon Council (Qatar) as the voluntary carbon market entity for the registration of the carbon credits resulting from the MRV pilots.

- There was also a delay in the adoption of the regulatory framework for land use projects by the Global Carbon Council (Qatar). This slowed down the progress of implementation of two MRV pilot projects in (1) restoration of degraded peatlands at Grichino-Starobinskoye peat extraction site, and (2) forestry project in the Logoisk region, which could not implement the activities of the Global Carbon Council's project cycle due to the unavailability regulatory framework for land use projects and relevant templates. As an alternative option, the two MRV pilot projects implement the activities of the project cycle

for the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework for Climate Change (UNFCCC), as according to the adopted UNFCCC decisions, the cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC will be based on the project cycle, methodologies and experience generated during the implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC.

- The project underwent a notable modification in its strategy, receiving an extension from the Board and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Initially, the project was scheduled to conclude on 19 July 2022, but this deadline was extended to 19 January 2024. This change was prompted by various implementation delays detailed in this report. The additional time granted by the extension enabled the project team to catch up on several activities that were lagging in the project's timeline.

Overall, the project has encountered severe external challenges and in response to them has made some pragmatic adjustments – especially, with regards to the timelines, extension, partnerships, and plans to work around constraints and keep moving forward. This adaptive approach has enabled the project to deliver toward some of its objectives despite the odds.

3.2.2. Stakeholder Participation and Partnership Arrangements

The project developed and leveraged partnerships with both direct and tangential stakeholders. Given its multisectoral nature, it is inconceivable that this project could have been implemented without a partnership with various stakeholders involving key ministries and national bodies, as well as local level entities, civil society organizations, research institutes, private sector companies and international organizations. These partnerships were essential for the project's activities, particularly in areas like capacity building for improved NDC modelling and market-based climate finance mechanisms.

The following is a brief analysis of the main partnerships established by the project and the challenges encountered in the pursuit of some of these partnerships.

- ***Government ministries and agencies*** - The project worked closely with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Department of Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Industry, National Statistical Committee, Belarusian State Centre for Accreditation, BelHidromet, and others. Partnering with these key government bodies was necessary for integrating the project's outputs into national policies, regulations, and programmes. Government stakeholders were generally supportive of the project's objectives. They were involved both in technical and decision-making processes, contributing to the efficiency and effectiveness of the project's implementation. These stakeholders were crucial in areas like updating and strengthening the NDC modeling, GHG accounting, and establishing the MRV framework.

- ***Local authorities*** - The project collaborated with regional and municipal authorities from selected regions of Belarus, especially in the context of the six pilots that were pursued

under this project. Their involvement helped tailor recommendations to local contexts and facilitate implementation.

- ***Non-governmental Sector and Academia*** – The project has engaged in its activities several NGOs focused on climate change or environmental issues.[5] Partnerships with institutes like BelNIC Ecologia brought technical expertise to inform project activities and outputs. Academics from the NASB contributed knowledge to strengthen methodologies and build national capacity. However, generally speaking, the engagement of non-state actors in this project has been limited, especially in comparison to other countries where the involvement of these entities is very strong and dynamic, especially from an advocacy perspective. It should be noted and clearly understood here that the room for engagement with civil society, and even community organizations, is very limited in Belarus due to the absence of these entities and the restrictive environmental for non-governmental bodies. So, the scope of the project for stronger partnerships in this area has been very limited. As such, the limited engagement of civil society in the project cannot be attributed to the project's design or execution; rather, it is largely influenced by external factors.

- ***Private Sector*** – The project has also engaged several private sector companies in its activities.[6] However, similarly to the case of non-governmental organizations, the involvement of the private sector, especially entities involved in emissions and climate change, has been comparatively more limited than in other countries where private sector entities play a much stronger advocacy role in climate change target setting. Again, the main reason for this is external and related to the fact that the private sector remains weak in the Belarus economy, which is dominated by state-owned enterprises overseen by the central government institutions.

- ***Exchanges*** - Working with the Belarusian Currency and Stock Exchange and Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange offered insights into operationalizing carbon trading mechanisms.

- ***International Organizations*** – The project has cooperated with several international organizations, such as the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), UNDP Climate Promise, UNDP Russian Federation, UNDP Kazakhstan, and the Global Carbon Council (Qatar). These cooperations have enabled the project to achieve alignment with international standards and access to global expertise.

Project partnerships that were motivated by the need to mainstream the gender perspective in project activities and results revolved around the development of guidelines for collecting sex-disaggregated data, crucial for establishing baselines and monitoring gender impacts. Partnerships with experts in MRV methodologies and international good practices enabled the integration of gender indicators into sectoral systems. The project also engaged with various

[5] The following are example of NGOs engaged by the project in its activities: NGO Green Economy, NGO Gender Perspectives, Association of Young Christian Women, NGO Ecological Initiative, NGO Belarusian Ecological Movement.

[6] The following are example of companies engaged by the project in its activities: CJSC Agrokombinat Nesvizhsky, LLC "Belgips-ECO, KPMG, and Stantec.

stakeholders for capacity building and integrating gender into policy frameworks, such as the Emissions Trading System's regulations. As noted elsewhere in this report, the project's engagement was more pronounced with formal institutions than grassroots groups. As noted elsewhere in this report, this is a consequence of the restrictive environment for non-state entities.[7] A more diverse partnership approach would have been desirable as it would have enhanced the understanding of gender dynamics at the community level, although admittedly the possibilities for doing this were extremely limited in the environment of Belarus. Overall, the formulation of the Gender Action Plan allowed the project to take a more systematic approach to institutionalize gender considerations in partnerships. The project was based on a good understanding of the gender landscape in Belarus, based on the Gender Action Plan, which helped it identify specific gender issues related to climate change in the country.

The project's partnerships have been important for its public awareness contributions. Through assessments and capacity-building initiatives, the project has raised awareness among its partners about the intricacies and benefits of data and market mechanisms in climate policy. This education and knowledge sharing were crucial in illuminating complex concepts and promoting informed participation. This effort significantly improved officials' understanding of climate policy instruments like emissions trading systems. By translating technical analysis into practical guidance, the project helped ensure that policy decisions are informed by a deep understanding of market dynamics and environmental implications. At the level of the general public, the project's effects on public awareness have been rather limited, primarily because the project was not designed to operate at that level, but was primarily focused to cooperate with technical experts from the government and some specialized non-state entities.

3.2.3. Project Finance and Co-Finance

This section provides an overview of the project's financing and expenditures, based on information provided by the project team.

In the Project Document, the total cost of the project was estimated at USD 8,907,280. This amount was envisaged to be financed through a GEF grant of USD 840,000, and an additional USD 8,067,280 in parallel co-financing.

The table below shows planned expenditures from the GEF budget. The budget data reveals several key trends with regard to budget allocations, expenditures, and execution rates across components and periods. In 2019, the project reported no expenditure as that was a year of waiting for the completion of the registration process while approved budget in the ProDoc is $371,803. In 2020, all four components were severely under-spent, with execution rates ranging from 3% to 6%. The total expenditure for that year was $12,629 against a budget of $ 296,013 marking an overall execution rate of just 3%. This confirms the slow start to the project, including delays in project implementation. By contrast, 2021 showed signs of increased spending, but with inconsistencies. Component 1 and Component 4 both had execution rates exceeding 100%, indicating overspending relative to the budget. Component 1

[7] There is limited active presence of Women's groups, gender-focused NGOs, and generally civil society organizations, actively operating in Belarus these days due to the stringent operating criteria that are in place for this sector.

spent $105,833 against a budget of $86,900 (122% execution rate), and Component 4 spent $13,209 against a budget of $11,698 (113% execution rate). Component 2 and Component 3, however, underperformed with execution rates of 29% and 11% respectively. The total expenditure for 2021 was $157,102 against a budget of $294,711, resulting in an overall execution rate of 53%. In 2022, Components 1 and 2 significantly overspent at rates of 234% and 261%, respectively, indicating adjustments in project activities and a catch-up from slower spending in earlier project phases. Component 3 continued to show modest spending at 38%, while Component 4 spent a little over its allocated budget at 106%. The total execution rate for the year rose to 108%, indicating that the project had entered a more active phase. The total expenditure for 2022 was $187,852 against a budget of $173,486, showing an overall execution rate of 108%. For the year 2023, data provided as of November, including commitments, shows expenditures of $341,363, the highest of any year in the project's lifetime and almost double from the previous highest year.

Table 5: Budgeted Expenditures by Fiscal Year

No.	Component	Budgeted (as per ProDoc)	Spent	Execution Rate
Year 2020[8]				
1	Component 1	$152,100	$4,981	3%
2	Component 2	$112,500	$3,301	3%
3	Component 3	$90,602	$3,401	4%
4	Component 4	$16,601	$946	6%
4	**Total**	**$371,803**	**$12,629**	3%
Year 2021				
1	Component 1	$86,900	$105,833	122%
2	Component 2	$93,800	$26,853	29%
3	Component 3	$102,313	$11,206	11%
4	Component 4	$11,698	$13,209	113%
4	**Total**	**$294,711**	**$157,102**	53%
Year 2022				
1	Component 1	$31,000	$72,641	234%
2	Component 2	$23,700	$61,948	261%
3	Component 3	$107,085	$40,802	38%
4	Component 4	$11,701	$12,461	106%
4	**Total**	**$173,486**	**$187,852**	108%
Year 2023 - as of November 2023 (including commitments)				
1	Component 1		$117,924	
2	Component 2		$90,193	
3	Component 3		$125,567	
4	Component 4		$7,679	
4	**Total**	**$0**	**$341,363**	
ALL YEARS				
1	Component 1	$270,000	$301,379	112%
2	Component 2	$230,000	$182,295	79%

[8] First year of the project was 2019, but expenditure in this year was 0.

No.	Component	Budgeted (as per ProDoc)	Spent	Execution Rate
3	Component 3	$300,000	$180,976	60%
4	Component 4	$40,000	$34,295	86%
4	**Total**	**$840,000**	**$698,945**	83%

As can be seen from the summary table above, for all years combined the cumulative expenditure across all components is $698,945 against an overall budget of $840,000, resulting in a total execution rate of 83%. The table below shows that Component 1 has had an execution rate of 112%, Component 2 with 79%, Component 3 with 60%, and Component 4 with 86%. So, looking at the overall budget execution from inception to the current point, the project has an 83% execution rate, suggesting that the majority of the allocated funds may be utilized by the project's end.

Table 6: Budget Execution Rates by Fiscal Year

Component	2020	2021	2022	Total
Component 1	3%	122%	234%	112%
Component 2	3%	29%	261%	79%
Component 3	4%	11%	38%	60%
Component 4	6%	113%	106%	86%
Total	**3%**	**53%**	**108%**	**83%**

Overall, the project has demonstrated substantial variances in budget execution rates across different components and fiscal years. This is reflective of the implementation challenges that the project has encountered (see Chapter 3.2.1. Adaptive Management). There seems to have been a need for a more rigorous re-evaluation of budget allocations and expenditure patterns to align them more closely with project objectives and timelines.

Co-financing

Table 7 below provides a detailed overview of the sources of co-financing, as reported by the project team. As can be seen from the table, various entities have contributed financially to the project – government ministries such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Forestry, Ministry of Housing and Utilities, and other entities like the UNDP EU4Climate project and NGO Green Economy. The following are their respective contributions.

- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection: Contributed a total of $456,974.
- Ministry of Energy: Contributed $7,632,624.
- Ministry of Forestry: Contributed $674,000.
- Ministry of Housing and Utilities: Contributed $5,083,885.
- UNDP EU4Climate project: Contributed $526,586.51.
- NGO Green Economy: Contributed a total of $373,040.

Table 7: Co-financing[9]

Co-financing (type/source)	UNDP financing (US$)		Government (US$)		Partner Agency (US$)		Total (US$)	
	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual	Planned	Actual
Grants	900,000		6,829,500	13,634,527.00	99,780	353,040.00	7,829,280	13,987,567.00
In-kind support	130,000	526,586.51	98,000	212,956.00	10,000	20,000.00	238,000	759,542.51
Totals	**1,030,000**	**526,586.51**	**6,927,500**	**13,847,483.00**	**109,780**	**373,040.00**	**8,067,280**	**14,747,109.51**

The total co-financing for the project, as per the information provided by the Project Team, amounts to $14,747,109.51. All the above figures have been provided by the project team and have not been independently verified by the evaluation team or any other third party.

Also according to the Project Team, the total volume of investment mobilized for the implementation of MRV pilot projects amounted to USD 3,398,000. This sum is broken down as follows:

- Implementation of LED-based street lighting in Novogrudok city of Belarus where inefficient street lighting systems were replaced with LED lamps with technology "*smart light*" that is controlled by lighting control systems – USD 296,000.
- Implementation of LED-based street lighting in Polotsk city of Belarus where inefficient street lighting systems were replaced with LED lamps in Polotsk city of Belarus – USD 1,630,000.
- Implementation of LED-based street lighting in Bereza city of Belarus where inefficient street lighting systems were replaced with LED lamps with equipped with automation technology and control system – USD 775,000.
- Nesvizhsky 1.8MW Wind Power Project in Belarus related to the installation of 1.8 MW wind turbine generator (WTG) for the captive use of zero-emission electricity generated by the renewable energy source wind – USD 468,000
- Increasing the forest cover of the Logojsk district by planting forestry crops on different types of land – USD 18,000.
- Restoration of degraded peatlands in the degraded peat deposit Ladovo in the Gomel district – USD 211,800.

According to the Project Manager, the selection of the pilots by the project was made on the basis of government plans for investments. Various ministries provided the project with letters of support and outlined their intended actions within the scope of their respective programmes. The project's selection criteria were aligned with initiatives already planned by government partners. Several programmes presented by the ministries served as co-financing for this project.

While this approach ensures alignment with national priorities and potentially expedites project implementation by leveraging government support and co-financing, it raises questions

[9] The information in these table was provided by the Project Team and has not been verified by the evaluation team. Any verification of this information would have taken months, given that responses to such enquires by Belarusian state entities are provided through written communications which take months. As such, a process like that falls outside the scope of this evaluation.

concerning the "*additionality*" criterion that is central to carbon credit projects. "Additionality" refers to the notion that a carbon credit project should result in emissions reductions or carbon sequestration activities that would not have occurred in the absence of the carbon credit project. What in fact could be the case here is pre-determination of the pilots at the level of line ministries before the start of the project. In such a context, demonstrating additionality would require a rigorous assessment to differentiate between emissions reductions that would have happened anyway due to government programs, and those that are directly attributable to the UNDP project. This is outside the scope of this evaluation, but is something that project stakeholders should take into account in such projects.

Financial Management

The project's financial data across several years shows a nuanced picture of budget management and execution (as illustrated by Table 5 above). The varying spending across components and years indicates variability in project management, with some components showing over-expenditure, due to reallocations to meet project needs, and others underutilizing funds, due to challenges in implementation. This pattern of spending reflects a project characterized by variable financial absorption across its components, with certain areas achieving or surpassing expected financial outputs while others remain more conservative in their expenditure. The overall spending rate suggests that, despite these variances, the project has been able to use most of its financial resources. The significant over-expenditure in some components may necessitate a review of project management approaches and budget estimations to ensure balanced and efficient resource allocation for the remainder of the project's timeline.

As far as fund allocations are concerned, the project has adequately concentrated financial resources on key priority activities like the emissions model, which is instrumental in establishing GHG emission baselines and mitigation scenarios, and the MRV systems. Also, the allocation of resources towards capacity building in GHG accounting and the MRV system, including study tours for Belarusian specialists, indicates a targeted approach to budget utilization. Despite effective use in certain areas, the project reported a cumulative delivery of about 83% of the expected budget (including commitments) at the point of the evaluation. This underutilization of the budget suggests the need for more adequate planning and the financial execution, despite the effects of the challenging external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic and regional instability. In the remainder of its lifetime the project should seek to fully capitalize on available financial resources and achieve the outstanding activities with full budget utilization. No information related to financial audit was made available by the project to the evaluation team.

3.2.4. Monitoring and Evaluation

The following is a summary of the assessment of the design and implementation of the project's M&E system.

Design

The M&E plan presented in the Project Document was quite comprehensive in scope, covering the key requirements for both UNDP and GEF-financed projects. It included baselines, indicators, and the conduct of the current terminal evaluation. The results framework included both UNDP mandatory indicators and project-specific indicators. As shown in Section 3.1.2 of this report, the project's results framework included SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) indicators. These indicators were crucial for setting quantifiable targets, allowing for effective monitoring and evaluation of the project's progress and impact. Baseline values were provided for each indicator in the results framework table. The M&E plan specified data collection methods for each indicator. It also describes the project's overall M&E approach including annual monitoring, PIR reporting, oversight missions, etc. The M&E plan included a terminal evaluation to be conducted 3 months before operational closure of the project.

The M&E outlined the specific roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders for carrying out various M&E tasks over the lifespan of the project. Key oversight mechanisms were incorporated, including monitoring by the Project Board, Implementing Partner, UNDP Country Office, and UNDP-GEF team. The plan included the standard UNDP and GEF processes such as an inception workshop and report, annual GEF Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), and a terminal evaluation upon project completion. Additionally, it detailed project-specific M&E activities like monitoring risks and tracking the implementation of management plans. A budget for M&E activities was provided, indicating adequate investment into M&E.

The Project Document outlined a clear structure for oversight and specific responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation activities. Day-to-day tracking of results, risks and management plans were assigned to the Project Manager. This regular monitoring enabled the identification of delays or issues needing corrective action. The Project Manager has been responsible for developing detailed annual work plans to help guide routine implementation and monitoring.

Also, the M&E plan discussed the involvement of the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP), stating that the GEF OFP would be involved in the project inception workshop to finalize the M&E plan. It also specified that the GEF OFP would provide input to the annual PIR report and would be consulted during the terminal evaluation process. The M&E plan also specified how the project would keep the GEF OFP informed. This involvement was critical for maintaining transparency and ensuring that the GEF OFP was up-to-date with the project's progress and any emerging issues or challenges.

While the M&E plan is reasonably strong in breadth of coverage, a few areas would have benefited from further elaboration to support effective project implementation.

- While the plan assigns clear responsibilities for M&E, additional details could have been provided on practical coordination mechanisms between stakeholders. For example, it would be beneficial to outline the working relationship between the Project Manager and UNDP CO on day-to-day M&E and results reporting. Additionally, the role of the UNDP-GEF RTA in quality assurance could have been elaborated more clearly.

- More details could have been provided on the data sources, collection methods and specific timelines for monitoring indicators and completing M&E tasks.
- The system lacks indicators for gauging the level of governmental commitment and institutional adoption of the project's key outputs.
- Additionally, some of the costs attributed to UNDP for oversight and support for M&E seem low, and it would be prudent to re-confirm those amounts are adequate to fulfill UNDP's role.
- Lastly, supplementing the annual Project Board meetings with semi-annual project reviews could have provided helpful regular check-ins on progress and issues.

Overall, the monitoring and evaluation plan covered key requirements for UNDP and GEF projects, and included appropriate oversight structures. With some enhancements to provide more robust implementation details on data collection, timeframes, and budgets, the plan will enable systematic tracking of results and progress toward objectives throughout the project's lifetime.

Given all the above, the rating of "Monitoring and Evaluation" at project start-up/design is "Moderately Satisfactory".

Implementation

The project's M&E activities were framed by both UNDP and GEF requirements, focusing on annual and periodic assessments to ensure effective achievement of project results. These M&E activities were designed not only to fulfill compliance mandates, but also to provide feedback for adaptive management. Given the very challenging circumstances this project has experienced, the M&E system has contributed to the undertaking of the adaptive measures noted in the previous sections of this report. From daily management to annual reviews and end-of-project evaluations, the M&E system has provided important insights for dealing with the evolving political and regional challenges. The feedback loop has facilitated the communications between different stakeholders, especially the Project Team and the Project Board. These communications have ensured that the M&E data was not only collected, but also utilized to adapt the project's strategic direction.

The M&E plan included a specific M&E budget of $39,500 from the GEF grant, indicating it was sufficiently funded. The M&E structure involved various stakeholders, with primary functions assigned to the Project Manager, Project Board, MNREP, UNDP Country Office, and IRH. The following is a brief analysis that each of these stakeholders has played in the M&E process.

- ***Project Team***: A key role of the Project Team was to generate information about the project and circulate it to the relevant decision-making bodies. The role of the Project Manager has been important for the adaptive measures that were taken in response to the deteriorating external environment, as the manager has been responsible for the day-to-day monitoring and risk assessment, thereby providing the first level of data collection and interpretation and communicating any project setbacks to higher tiers, allowing for corrective measures.

The annual work plans have served as guideposts for this role, enabling the Project Manager to track progress against pre-established targets and timelines.

- ***Project Board***: The Board has functioned as the ultimate decision-making body, and as such in its adaptive decision making it has used feedback from the M&E system provided by the Project Manager. Meeting nine times since the launch of the project (see the figure for the board meetings), the Board has been responsible for taking corrective actions and has engaged in project reviews, including the appraisal of Annual Work Plans. The frequent meetings of the Board show that its involvement has been particularly attentive to feedback received from the Project Team, with the help of the monitoring system. As such the Board has played an important role in ensuring that the project remained aligned with its original objectives, making necessary adjustments in the project's strategies.

- ***Implementing Partner***: Using feedback from the M&E system provided through the Project Manager, MNREP has provided guidance to the project through its role in the Project Board. It has also provided direct support through its engagement in project activities and practical assistance with space and other logistics to the Project Team. MNREP has also had a distinctive role in supplying crucial data, especially for the modeling and forecasting analyses. The national alignment of data has been important for ensuring that the project's data supported national systems.

- ***UNDP***: The CO has provided an additional layer of oversight and support. UNDP's oversight, informed by the feedback received from the M&E system, has provided an external perspective on the project's on-the-ground operations, which is essential for an unbiased monitoring.

- ***Istanbul Regional Hub***: IRH is another entity that has supported the M&E structure. The Regional Technical Advisor has provided quality assurance and troubleshooting support, underlining the project's accountability and credibility.

While the design of the M&E system seems to have been generally adequate, based on standard UNDP templates that populate most UNDP project documents, the implementation of the M&E system could have been more effective. Although the project has monitored key changes in the external environment and made pragmatic adjustments to timelines, partnerships, and plans, it could have addressed some operational challenges more energetically.

- The project's results framework specified data collection methods for each indicator, suggesting systematic data gathering. However, obtaining the information that was necessary for this evaluation from the Project Team was not easy. This information was not readily available and the evaluation team had to create templates for the collection of data.

- The annual progress reports do not provide a complete picture of the project. Some of the information provided in the reports is repetitive. They consist primarily of a description of detailed activities, with limited focus on the actual achievement of results and what those results mean for the country.

- The M&E plan indicated that monitoring reports would be discussed with stakeholders and project staff. This does not seem to have been done consistency in practice because a lot of significant information was not readily available at the point of evaluation. With the exception of the Inception Workshop, Project Board meetings' notes are limited and do not provide in depth information.

- The project team should have tracked more carefully the trainings and workshops organized by the project. The project did not collect any feedback from participants on the quality of trainings or workshops.

- Based on the budget analysis, there also seems to have been a need for a rigorous re-evaluation of budget allocations and expenditure patterns to align them more closely with project objectives and timelines.

- The M&E plan includes monitoring social and environmental risks, but in practice limited information seems to have been collected on this front. The M&E system has not yielded significant data related to vulnerable groups, especially in the pilot sites. At the same time, with some exceptions related primarily to head counting, to there has not been a rigorous monitoring of women's and men's perspectives on various project aspects.

While the M&E system's design aligns with standard UNDP templates, its implementation has been fraught with challenges that have hindered effective project monitoring. The implementation of the M&E system demonstrates significant gaps.

Given all the above, the rating of "Monitoring and Evaluation" at implementation is "Moderately Satisfactory".

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Rating
M&E design at entry	**MS**
M&E Plan Implementation	**MS**
Overall Quality of M&E	**MS**

3.2.5. Implementation and Execution

The project was implemented by the MNREP with the support provided by UNDP in accordance with the standard Assistance Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Belarus and UNDP.

Performance of Implementing Agency (UNDP)

UNDP Belarus has provided the project with timely, continued and adequate support. It has supported the project from inception to implementation, playing a multi-faceted role that includes identifying objectives, drafting the concept and detailed proposal, and approving the Project Document. UNDP's role has been particularly crucial in shielding the project from the severe external challenges, particularly those related to the political situation in the country and the regional geopolitical dynamics. UNDP has also been instrumental in devising solutions to the challenges presented to the project by the COVID-19 crisis and the sanctions imposed by several countries on Belarus. UNDP and the project team have continuously assessed risks and devised responses to them. This indicates proactive risk management. The project's documents note regular meetings between the project team, the UNDP programme officer, and the IRH regional technical advisor to discuss risks and define responses, suggesting a collaborative approach to risk management.

Furthermore, UNDP has been actively involved in initiating project activities, supervising progress through its participation in the Project Board, and overseeing the execution of planned actions. On the financial front, UNDP's responsibilities have encompassed approving expenditures and conducting independent audits. UNDP has also played a crucial in facilitating and coordinating activities with higher levels of government.

UNDP has offered advisory support, leveraging its experience from similar initiatives in other countries. It has also facilitated cooperation with other UNDP offices in the region, which has helped address the challenges related to the lack of strong national expertise in emissions trading and market-based climate finance mechanisms. The project benefited from extensive technical assistance provided by the Regional Technical Advisor at UNDP's IRH, as well as from international and local consultants. This advisory role encompassed guidance on budget allocation and operational decisions, including the process for securing an extension for the project. Further, UNDP has been critical in offering operational support, particularly in procurement activities, which were vital given the project's infrastructure focus.

There are two specific areas where UNDP could have enhanced its contribution to the project. First, in terms of monitoring, UNDP could have been more proactive, particularly in addressing the project's delays. Also, UNDP could have established higher standards for the quality of annual reporting by the project team (better organized, more informative, and more candid and transparent). Furthermore, some evaluation participants noted that UNDP's decision-making process was sometimes slow and bureaucratic, which may have caused some delays project activities.

Given the above, the rating of Implementing Agency's performance in the project is "Moderately Satisfactory".

Performance of the Executing Agency

MNREP served as the National Implementing Partner for the project, with oversight and management provided by its Department of Air Impact Control, Climate Change and Expertise. As such, MNREP has coordinated all project components, ensuring relevant inputs and co-financing from project partners. The First Deputy Minister of MNREP acted as the National Coordinator. MNREP has been actively involved in the project's initiation and has offered sustained support throughout its execution, even as the project faced external challenges and delays beyond its control.

Despite the numerous challenges mentioned throughout this report, including the lack of national expertise in emission trading and market-based climate finance mechanisms and the impact of sanctions, MNREP has actively supported the project, enabling it to make progress in the completion of most of its activities. The project's achievements are foremost achievements for MNREP – especially, the updating of the detailed economic and GHG emission model for Belarus, the report on "Climate Change Mitigation Scenarios Costs Benefits and Impacts for the Republic of Belarus," and the training approximately 100 representatives of key stakeholders on the GHG emission modeling approach.

As part of the leadership of the project's board, MNREP has played a key role in the undertaking of the adaptive measures highlighted in this report, including the establishment of partnerships with entities like the Global Carbon Council to address challenges in registering MRV pilot projects. MNREP has been actively involved in the project board meetings, with eight of them taking place since the launch of the project.

One area where MNREP's involvement could have been stronger is in the registration of the project with the national authorities. As noted previously in this report, this process took a long time and had a particularly negative effect on the project. In particular, the registration delay impacted the project's ability to support Belarus's NDC update in a timely manner. As part of the government, MNREP could have played a stronger advocacy role in the registration of the project. Also, MNREP could have been more proactive in facilitating the formal adoption and practical implementation of the project's analytical tools and policy instruments, especially given the noted lack of formal commitment from other relevant entities. Additionally, as in the case of UNDP, MNREP could have demanded higher standards in the preparation of annual reports and other monitoring documents by the project team (better organized, more informative, and more candid and transparent).

Given the key role of MNREP, but also some of the challenges identified in this report, the rating of Executing Agency's performance in the project is "Moderately Satisfactory".

UNDP Implementation/Oversight & Implementing Partner Execution	**Rating**
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	**MS**
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	**MS**
Overall quality of Implementation/Oversight and Execution	**MS**

3.2.6. Risk Management

As noted in previous sections of the report, the Project Document did an adequate identification of risks with the potential to affect the project. While the risk identification appears to have been generally adequate, an initial oversight appears to have been the underestimation of the complexity and time required for the national registration process. In hindsight, we know that the consequences of this oversight were significant, leading to a delayed project start and impacts on the project's alignment with Belarus's NDC timeline. This has been an ongoing challenge for UNDP Belarus for many years now. The Country Office should plan accordingly for this cumbersome process and should take into account the time that is needed to complete the process.

The project team has monitored risks on an ongoing basis through a Risk Register, which overall is a comprehensive document that outlines various potential risks, their causes, impacts, and strategies for mitigation. The register provides a structured approach to risk management, ensuring proactive measures are in place to address potential challenges in the project's execution. The register identified several risks related to the project activities, including political, regulatory, financial, operational, and environmental/social risks. It outlined proposed risk management measures to mitigate these risks. The risk identification and management measures has functioned adequately, with risks identified at early stages and management responses proposed.

As noted in previous sections of this report, the project encountered severe unanticipated risks that could not have been envisaged at its inception. Key risks were the COVID 19 pandemic, and the sanctions imposed against Belarus and the geopolitical situation.

- The COVID-19 pandemic created significant unforeseen difficulties that required adaptive management. COVID-19 led to a reorganization of the project's workflow, but also delays in procurement and contract extensions. Specifically, COVID-19 led to delays in hiring consultants and implementing activities due to lockdowns, travel restrictions, and illnesses. To address the hiring delays, the project extended the deadlines for submitting bids for tenders. This provided more time for potential consultants to prepare adequate proposals amidst the pandemic. Once consultants were hired, COVID-19 illnesses and preventive quarantines caused further delays. The project took an adaptive approach of extending their contracts. The shift to remote work due to COVID-19 also posed challenges for activities originally planned as in-person. The project adapted by modifying the activities to be performed remotely where feasible. This remote pivot demonstrated flexibility to keep the project moving forward despite limitations on travel and in-person gatherings. While some budget remained unspent due to pandemic constraints, the project appeared to prioritize delivering planned activities through adaptive means rather than rigidly sticking to the original modes and timelines. This adaptation enabled progress with the execution of the project activities despite COVID-19 disruptions.

- The sanctions and geopolitical situation had a concrete impact on the project's implementation. For example, they reduced the pool of national consultants available to

implement project activities as many specialists and experts relocated outside Belarus to avoid sanctions. Component 3 of the project, which involved close collaboration with international carbon market entities, was particularly affected. Sanctions led to international carbon market entities being unwilling to deal with projects from Belarus. This situation made it challenging to validate and verify MRV pilot projects, as it required international travel which was complicated due to suspended flights to/from Belarus. To address these challenges, the project established a partnership with the Global Carbon Council in Qatar, allowing the submission of project documents of existing already implemented projects. This approach indicates that the project team adapted its strategy in response to the new risks, showing flexibility and responsiveness to the changing geopolitical and economic landscape.

Overall, the project faced several significant risks, some unforeseen, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical challenges, and others perhaps underestimated like the registration process. These risks significantly affected project implementation, causing delays in the start date, hiring of consultants, and execution of specific project components like the MRV pilot projects. The project board and team demonstrated adaptability in managing these risks. The project adapted its strategy, including a shift of the strategic approach for some activities, as evidenced by strategic decisions like refocusing on the Global Carbon Council and shifting to the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, and an extension of the project timeline to accommodate these challenges.

3.2.7. Social and Environmental Standards

The project implemented several safeguard management measures in line with the Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP) endorsed at the CEO Endorsement stage. The revisions to the SESP appear to have been appropriate, considering the evolving geopolitical situation and its impact on project execution. The timely identification and integration of these risks into the project's risk management framework contributed to adaptive and responsive management. The risk identification and management measures were generally aligned with the safeguards outlined in the SESP.

One specific environmental/social risk identified in the course of the project was the biodiversity conservation risk related to the pilot project on rewetting degraded peatlands (risk #12). The project's pilot site for rewetting degraded peatlands was situated in an area previously used for industrial peat extraction. This location was chosen because it is neither in nor near habitats of endangered species or protected natural areas.[10] The proposed risk management measure was appropriate - selecting a pilot site that did not impact protected areas or endangered species habitats. This measure was in alignment with the safeguards identified in the SESP.

[10] In Belarus, environmental impact assessments are mandatory for industrial peat extraction activities to prevent adverse environmental effects. It should be noted here that the project did not undertake the rewetting of the peatlands itself. Instead, the project was responsible for measuring and reporting GHG emission reductions. These reductions are a result of rewetting activities carried out by different stakeholders.

The project's Risk Register did not identify any social risks at the local level, such as impacts on the local communities where the pilots were implemented. This could have been particularly the case in the peatlands project, where changes in the hydrological regime could have created impacts for local communities. It would be advisable for the project such as this one to undertake due diligence on these potential social risks and develop appropriate management plans as needed. Consultations with affected communities should inform the process. As noted previously in this evaluation report, one aspect of this project that could have been strengthened was the engagement with local communities in the pilot locations.

3.3. Project Results and Impacts

This section provides an assessment of the project's progress in the accomplishment of RRF targets, as well as an examination of achievements along the standard dimensions of UNDP evaluations: i) relevance - the extent to which the project was relevant to the country's priorities and needs; ii) effectiveness - whether the project was effective in achieving the planned results; iii) efficiency - whether the process of achieving results was efficient; and, iv) sustainability - the extent to which project benefits are likely to be sustained. It also includes the assessment of other considerations and cross-cutting issues.

3.3.1. Relevance

This section provides an assessment of the project's relevance. While there may be many criteria for assessing relevance, here it will be assessed along the following dimensions: i) alignment with national priorities; ii) alignment with UNDP, UN and GEF Strategic Priorities; iii) Stakeholder Engagement; and, iv) Relevance to and Complementarity with Other Initiatives.

Alignment with National Priorities and Needs

The project is overall highly relevant to both the environmental and developmental priorities and needs of Belarus. It was designed in a manner that is well-aligned with existing initiatives and commitments that the government has undertaken at both domestic and international levels.

- ***Alignment with Country Needs*:** The project aligns with national priorities, as evidenced by the development of an Economic and GHG emission model of Belarus until 2050, covering key economic sectors. This model aids in establishing GHG emission baselines and mitigation scenarios, crucial for national and sectoral NDC targets. The project also helps Belarussian state organizations and companies explore the possibility of access to international financial mechanisms for the financing of projects that reduce emissions. This potential for increased access to financing is particularly relevant now for Belarus that the country is subject to significant economic sanctions, which have reduced the financing opportunities for economic actors.

- ***Alignment with National Legislation*:** The project is well-aligned with national initiatives, as evidenced by the recent legislative measures taken by Belarus. The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 294-Z directly addresses the impact of climate change on various sectors, including human health and economic activities. The law also provides regulatory provisions for anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. This dovetails well with the objectives of the project, which seeks to build capacities in emission trading and measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) processes. The legislative changes supplement the powers of the Council of Ministers to establish procedures for limiting greenhouse gas emissions, maintaining state and production accounting, and planning measures to mitigate climate impacts. These legislative underpinnings are in coherence with the technical competencies that the UNDP project aims to enhance.

- ***Synergy with Government Programmes*:** The project is also coherent with the government's programme for 2020-2025 and the National Action Plan for the Development of the Green Economy. Given that a section within the national action plan is specifically devoted to climate change issues, and annual reporting mechanisms are already in place, the project is well-positioned to contribute meaningfully to these existing frameworks. The project aligns with other national frameworks, such as the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2021-2025. In particular, MNREP representatives indicated the value of the project in enhancing governmental competencies in climate-related issues. The project's focus on the NDC modelling and MRV systems supports MNREP in fulfilling quarterly reporting requirements. Improved data collection and analysis will enable better informed policy decisions.

- ***Alignment with Belarus's International Commitments*:** The project also aligns Belarus with international climate commitments by facilitating the updating of its NDCs, which is a requirement under the Paris Agreement. As such, the project supports Belarus in its commitment to implement Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. This enhances the country's efforts to contribute to global climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Moreover, the project facilitates the necessary adjustments in national laws and regulations to comply with international obligations, thereby increasing Belarus's accountability and effectiveness in global environmental governance. Overall, this indicates a commitment to global climate goals and contributes to international cooperation.

Overall, the project is well-aligned with Belarus's national and international priorities in the area of climate change mitigation. It complements existing legislative frameworks and policy objectives, and has the potential to contribute to ongoing and planned governmental activities.

Alignment with UNDP, UN and GEF Strategic Priorities

The project is fully aligned with the UNDP Belarus Country Programme Document (CPD) 2016-2020 and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Belarus for 2016-2020. The project aligns with the UNDP's CPD by addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, focusing on building institutional capacities and introducing market-based climate finance mechanisms. It contributes directly to Output 3.1, which is focused on sustainable management of natural resources and increasing energy efficiency.

The project is also fully aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and CPD for the Republic of Belarus for the period 2021-2025, particularly in relation to Outcome 2 of both documents. This outcome is centered on climate action and its critical role in the development of a low-carbon economy and global efforts to tackle climate change. The project's focus on GHG emission reductions and MRV systems directly addresses climate change impacts on Belarus's economy and environment. By building capacities in these areas, the project contributes to the development of a low-carbon economy. While the project's primary focus is not directly on vulnerable groups, its environmental impact and contributions to climate change mitigation have indirect benefits for these groups. The

project integrates gender considerations, aligning with the UNSDCF's focus on gender-responsive emergency preparedness and resilience.

The project is also well-aligned with key GEF climate change and sustainability goals. In particular, the project contributes to the following focal areas:

- Climate Change Mitigation - The project's focus on MRV systems, carbon trading mechanisms, renewable energy, and energy efficiency align with GEF priorities around facilitating low-emission development and access to climate finance.
- Sustainable Forest Management - The forestry and peatlands MRV methodologies developed by the project relate to GEF objectives around sustainable management of forest resources.
- Sustainable Cities - The urban MRV pilot projects on energy efficient street lighting support GEF aims to promote urban sustainability and low-carbon cities.

The project contributed to the achievement of several SDGs in the following ways:

- SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy: By developing MRV systems and exploring carbon trading mechanisms for renewable energy and energy efficiency, the project promotes increased adoption of clean energy technologies. This supports SDG 7's aims around expanding renewable energy and improving energy efficiency.
- SDG 11 - Sustainable Cities and Communities: The project's work on MRV methodologies and pilot projects for energy efficient street lighting helps make cities and human settlements more sustainable. This aligns with SDG 11's targets around providing access to sustainable transport systems and enhancing sustainable urbanization.
- SDG 13 - Climate Action: At its core, this project strengthens capacities and frameworks for climate change mitigation and reporting. The proposed carbon trading systems incentivize emission reductions. These outcomes directly support SDG 13 on urgent climate action.
- SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals: The project's emphasis on multi-stakeholder engagement fosters partnerships around climate goals. Collaborations with the private sector, civil society, and across government agencies exemplify SDG 17.

Beyond the clear contributions to these SDGs, the project also indirectly supported:

- SDG 8 on economic growth through the job creation and export potential of carbon trading mechanisms.
- SDG 12 on responsible production and consumption by enabling industries to monitor and reduce emissions.
- SDG 15 on land ecosystems via the MRV systems and carbon trading for forestry and peatlands.
- SDG 5 on gender equality by integrating gender considerations into project activities and recommendations.

Stakeholder Engagement

The project's stakeholder engagement approach has been generally proactive and inclusive, especially in light of the country context marked by the challenges described in previous sections of this report. The project has tried to adhere to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan presented in the Project Document, by seeking to the extent possible to bring together a wide range of national and international actors. MNREP has played a key role as the national implementing partner, leading and coordinating all aspects of the project within the government. This commitment has extended to the technical officials from the government institutions who have been integral in the project's analytical work, especially the modelling of GHG emissions and the development of the VMR framework. The project has also successfully engaged international partners, leveraging their best practices. Their contributions have been vital in promoting the sustainability of the project's outcomes. Contacts with the IRH Regional Technical Advisor have been part of this engagement, providing the project with useful technical advice.

The local entities involved in the project's pilot activities have shown limited motivation, primarily focusing on immediate economic concerns like profit realization and product sales over environmental goals, unlike MNREP which actively promotes the project's environmental objectives. This limited enthusiasm is partly due to a lack of recognition of the project's long-term financial and environmental benefits, which could change significantly once the entities realize and monetize the benefits from carbon credit certificates. Additionally, civil society and private sector engagement in the project has been constrained due to the restrictive environment in Belarus and the small size of the private sector. Overall, the project would benefit from stronger involvement of these entities to enhance its relevance.

To enhance stakeholder understanding and support for project activities, the project has organized various training and consultative workshops. These events have focused on increasing awareness of GHG emission modeling, MRV systems, and the project's long-term objectives. Specific training on the application of the economic and GHG emission model of Belarus and workshops on national and sectoral NDC targets have been particularly useful. Furthermore, knowledge exchange initiatives, such as the study tour to Kazakhstan, have significantly bolstered the understanding of MRV and Emission Trading systems among Belarusian specialists. These initiatives have fostered a conducive environment for the implementation of such systems in Belarus, enhancing both national expertise and stakeholder commitment to the project's goals.

Relevance to and Complementarity with Other Initiatives

This project builds on a long history of cooperation between UNDP and MNREP in Belarus. UNDP has been a key international organization in Belarus in the area of environmental protection and climate change. UNDP Belarus has developed a long-standing cooperation with MNREP, which has allowed it to implement many projects over the years. UNDP's projects in the area of peatland and wetland restoration have been particularly high-profile and successful. The current project actually builds on this experience not only by leveraging the partnership with MNREP, but also by using the foundations of previous cooperation on issue such as peatland restoration or energy efficiency.

Also, in the initial stages of the project, some cooperation took place with the project "*EU Technical Assistance Project for Climate*" (EU4Climate), funded by the European Union and implemented by UNDP, and the non-governmental organization "Green Economy". Furthermore, the project organized a consultative workshop titled "*Market based climate finance mechanisms. Emission Trading System*", which was held in partnership with Kazakhstan and UNDP Accelerator Lab and attended by 57 representatives of key stakeholder groups, who increased their awareness and provided their feedback on the viability of introducing the Emission Trading System in Belarus for the "energy", "municipals" and "construction" sectors in Belarus and provided recommendations on each key element of the "*Roadmap for the implementation the Emission Trading System in Belarus*."

Overall, the project is relevant to the country's needs and priorities. By taking a holistic approach that encompassed carbon pricing, MRV capacities, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, this project contributes to institutional and policy development in Belarus. The project exemplifies the integrated nature of the SDGs and how climate action can catalyze broader sustainable development.

Based on the examination of project activities and the opinions of stakeholders interviewed in the course of the evaluation, the project is rated as "Relevant".

3.3.2. Ownership

National ownership is a critical factor in determining the success and sustainability of the project. It can be assessed from different perspectives, based on the engagement of various national stakeholders with the project and the roles they have played in its activities.

Engagement of Government Institutions

MNREP has been the key government institution that has exerted direct ownership over the project. For MNREP, the project is not just a valuable asset but a necessity. It provides the essential tools and methodologies to establish GHG emission baselines and develop mitigation scenarios. These elements are fundamental for accurately setting both national and sectoral Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets. Given that NDC targets are a critical component of Belarus' international commitments under climate change agreements, the project's contributions are directly aligned with MNREP's mandate and objectives. The model also enables MNREP to make informed decisions and strategic plans based on comprehensive data and scenarios.

It should also be emphasized that this project has coincided with a very difficult period for Belarus, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020 and the regional instability stemming from the conflict in Ukraine. These circumstances have further been compounded by the imposition of severe sanctions on Belarus by various countries. While in the initial stages of the project there seems to have been a lot of focus and enthusiasm on the side of MNREP and

other ministries on this project,[11] over time this sentiment seems to have waned, primarily with regards to some of the sectoral ministries involved with the project. MNREP nevertheless has remained very interested in this project, has fully supported it and has exercised leadership to the extent that has been possible for it. The fact that the First Deputy Minister of MNREP has served as the project's National Coordinator indicates high-level commitment. Moreover, the significant involvement of MNREP employees as project experts highlights the project's national ownership and its integration into the institutional framework of the ministry. This not only ensures that the project benefits from the expertise and experience within MNREP but also contributes to the development of institutional memory, ensuring that the knowledge and skills acquired during the project are retained within the ministry for future application.

The motivation of the representatives of the entities involved with the pilots at the local level appears to have been more limited. For several of these local entities, the impetus to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions has not been as pronounced as other immediate concerns. Issues such as profit realization, product sales, and internal management have taken precedence over environmental objectives. This divergence in priorities is quite distinct from that of MNREP, which has been actively promoting the project at the local level. The limited enthusiasm at the local entity level partly stems from a restricted understanding of the project's benefits. So far, these entities have not fully realized the tangible, financial advantages that could result from participating in the project. Their focus remains largely on immediate, direct economic gains, which has led to a somewhat myopic view of the project's broader environmental and long-term economic benefits. A key turning point for these local entities is likely to be the realization of the financial benefits derived from carbon credit certificates. Once these entities are able to see and, more importantly, monetize these credits, their perspective on GHG emissions reductions may shift significantly. The ability to sell carbon credits for real money will tangibly demonstrate the practical benefits of participating in the project, potentially aligning their immediate economic interests with longer-term environmental objectives.

Also, a design shortcoming of the project with implications for its national ownership is the absence of key national financial institutions, most notably the Ministry of Finance, in its implementation. Given that the project focuses on initiating market-based climate finance mechanisms, it inherently presupposes a commitment to financial resources for climate-related activities. The engagement of national financial entities in shaping and managing these financial mechanisms is crucial for embedding ownership at the national level, a factor lacking in the project's design and execution.

Another challenge in fostering stronger ownership has been due to the need for a more defined framework for inter-ministerial coordination in the area of climate change mitigation. While each ministry involved has specific roles and responsibilities, the project's stakeholder engagement approach would have benefitted from further clarity in defining processes for cross-ministerial collaboration. This nuanced approach to coordination is particularly

[11] This is evident in the minutes of key events, such as the Inception Workshop. The workshop minutes reflect enthusiasm and active participation by government stakeholders, including a high number of representatives in attendance, substantive questions, and thoughtful discussions.

important given the overlapping responsibilities of the various government institutions engaged in the project. Enhancing the structure and clarity around inter-ministerial coordination would not only aid in smoother project implementation, but also help in effectively managing overlaps and filling any potential gaps in the project's execution.

Engagement of Non-government Organizations and Local Communities

Although the project involved several NGO representatives in its activities, especially in the role of technical experts, the engagement of non-government organizations in the project has been limited. This has been due to the increasingly restrictive environment for civil society organizations in Belarus in recent years. The number of operating CSOs is quite limited now and their activities have become very limited, including in areas such as environmental protection and climate change. Also, the project's engagement approach would have benefitted from stronger involvement of local communities as a key stakeholder group. The involvement of these communities would have added value to the implementation of the pilot projects. Recognizing the inherent complexities of involving non-state entities in the current political context, it still might be beneficial to explore additional avenues for incorporating community representation, particularly at the pilot project level. Such engagement could enhance the project's relevance and effectiveness by ensuring that also the needs and perspectives of local communities are taken into account.

Engagement of Private Sector

While several private sector companies have been involved in the project, the extent of private sector participation, particularly from entities directly involved in emissions and climate change, has been limited compared to other countries where private sector entities often play a more significant role in shaping climate change policy. This difference can be attributed to country context, especially the structure of Belarus's economy, which is predominantly characterized by state-owned enterprises under the oversight of central government institutions. Considering the project's emphasis on market-based mechanisms and the goal of attracting external finance, the current level of private sector involvement represents an area where there is potential for improvement. Engaging more private sector stakeholders would provide valuable additional resources and expertise, enhancing the project's reach and impact.

Promoted and led by MNREP, the project has been well-aligned with Belarus's needs and international climate commitments and has shown resilience during challenging times, including the COVID-19 pandemic and regional tensions. Despite some limitations in stakeholder engagement, the project has provided significant contributions in the area of climate change policy.

3.3.3. Effectiveness

As noted in previous sections of this report, the project has consisted of three inter-linked components.

- The first component has addressed capacity and knowledge constraints related to preparation and update of national and sectoral NDC targets, as well as limited awareness about market-based climate finance mechanisms in Belarus.
- Under the second component the project has focused on developing MRV systems, specifically for priority sectors identified in the NDC.
- The third component has focused on the implementation of MRV pilots in selected sectors to gain practical experience and facilitate interactions and learning-by-doing for all stakeholders involved in the MRV system.

The following is a brief assessment of the project's activities and achievements in each of these three areas.

Component 1

The Republic of Belarus updated its NDC and communicated it to the UNFCCC Secretariat on October 8, 2021. This update was part of a recurring process, with the next update scheduled for 2025, incorporating targets for the year 2035 as mandated by Decision 6/CMA.3. In this context, the project was designed to provide the analytical foundation for the future targets set in the upcoming NDC. One of the project's key activities has been the establishment of an analytical basis for updating Belarus's NDC targets. This work involved a comprehensive analysis of emission trends, potential areas for emission reductions, and the economic implications of different target scenarios. Assessments of renewable energy and energy efficiency options were conducted with IRENA and integrated into the model.[12] Reports translated into Russian were shared with stakeholders. Furthermore, reports were produced analyzing mitigation scenarios, costs and benefits for Belarus until 2050. These reports provide analysis to help set enhanced NDC targets. Also, the project developed recommendations on collecting gender-disaggregated data to support gender impact assessments of mitigation actions. Guidance was prepared on integrating gender considerations into the NDC update process. The project compiled a detailed report on sustainable development co-benefits, which was then shared with stakeholders. This report was presented at various consultations and workshops, ensuring widespread dissemination and stakeholder engagement. This analytical work provides policymakers with the data and insights needed to make informed decisions on

[12] In addition, an Excel tool with the output of the cost-effectiveness analysis done by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) focusing on mitigation options in Belarus's power, transport and buildings sectors as an effort to support Belarus in the process of updating its NDC. The IRENA's tool contains three tabs:

- Emission and cost savings: this tab presents the results of the cost-effectiveness analysis in terms of emission and cost savings of each individual mitigation option studied.
- Abated emissions: this tab presents the abated emissions of individual mitigation options, as well as by sector and total abated emissions.
- Emissions scenario calc.: this tab allows the user to calculate the absolute emissions of two scenarios: with conditional and unconditional mitigation options. It needs the baseline emissions scenario as input. The calculations use the datasets of abated emissions from IRENA's analysis.

the upcoming NDC commitments. The box below lists the studies and research conducted with the support of the project.

Box 6: Studies and Research Conducted by the Project

- Report "*Climate Change Mitigation Scenarios, Costs, Benefits and Impacts for the Republic of Belarus until 2050*"
- Report "*Assessment of Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Options*" conducted with IRENA
- Report with recommendations on collecting gender-disaggregated statistics
- Report on integrating gender considerations into the NDC update process
- Training materials on the GHG emission model for agriculture, energy, industry, LULUCF, transport, and waste sectors
- Presentations from workshops on updated national and sectoral NDC targets
- Informational leaflets on the modeling approach and results for agriculture, energy, industry, LULUCF, transport, and waste sectors
- Report on market-based mechanisms and methodologies for assessment
- Report on methods of assessment of market-based mechanisms on economic development
- Report on effects of market-based mechanisms on economic development and GHG reductions in Belarus until 2050
- Report with recommendations and roadmap for implementing an emissions trading system in Belarus
- Report with recommendations and roadmap for establishing a facility-based MRV system in energy and industry sectors
- Reports with recommendations and roadmaps related to Article 6 participation and cooperative approaches
- Reports prepared and shared after each UNFCCC negotiation session

The project conducted assessments of potential domestic market-based mechanisms compatible with NDCs and Article 6 guidance. Focus was placed on emissions trading systems. To identify appropriate domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms, an assessment of viability of most widely used domestic market-based mechanisms for deployment in Belarus was conducted and presented in the following reports: *Market-based mechanisms used to reduce GHG emissions*; *Methodologies for assessing market-based mechanisms aimed at reducing GHG emissions*; *Methods of assessment of the effects of market-mechanisms on economic development of the country*; *Effects of market-based mechanisms on economic development and GHG reductions in Belarus until 2050*. Recommendations and a roadmap were developed on Belarus' preparedness to participate in Article 6 cooperative approaches, including on governance arrangements and a prototype ITMO registry system.

Further, the project organized capacity building activities, including trainings and workshops, to promote understanding of the models and use of results. Over 169 participants from government, academia, industry attended. Informational materials were developed and distributed. The box below summarizes the training and capacity development activities supported by the project.

Box 7: Training and Capacity Building Activities Supported by the Project

- Two training workshops held on the detailed economic and GHG emission model for Belarus until 2050, with over 169 participants from government, academia, and industry.

- 2 consultative workshops held to collect feedback on the GHG emission model and use of results for setting NDC targets.
- Informational leaflets distributed on the modeling approach and results for key sectors.
- Consultative workshop held on market-based mechanisms and introducing an ETS in Belarus, with 57 participants.
- Consultative workshop held on establishing a facility-based MRV system in energy and industry, with 81 participants.
- Workshop held on recommendations and roadmap for Article 6 participation and cooperative approaches, with 57 participants.
- Belarusian specialists participated in UNFCCC negotiation sessions on Article 6 issues.
- Workshops held annually to build capacity among stakeholders on Article 6 negotiations and outcomes, with 44 participants in 2021 and 53 in 2022.
- Reports prepared and shared after each UNFCCC negotiation session.

The project has also facilitated the participation of national specialists in UNFCCC negotiations, enabling them to gain first-hand knowledge and understanding of the Article 6 developments and prepare for effective implementation. The box below provides more details on the project's role in this area.

Box 8: Project's Support for Participation of Experts in UNFCCC Negotiations

The following are some more details on the Belarusian specialists participating in UNFCCC negotiations:

- Belarusian specialists from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and other government agencies attended the UNFCCC negotiations related to Article 6 and market-based mechanisms.
- The key sessions attended were:
- SBSTA 52 (June 2020)
- SBSTA 54 (May-June 2021)
- COP26 (November 2021)
- SBSTA 56 (June 2022)
- COP27 (November 2022)
- During these sessions, the specialists participated in the negotiations, attended contact groups, met with other country negotiators, and gathered information.
- The specialists focused on the negotiations related to the detailed rules and guidance for cooperative approaches under Article 6, such as governance, reporting requirements, accounting guidance, and transition of Kyoto Protocol mechanisms.
- After the sessions, the specialists prepared reports that summarized the key outcomes and decisions related to Article 6.
- These reports were shared with relevant government agencies and other stakeholders in Belarus to help build their capacity on the evolving Article 6 guidance and decisions.

Since the first step in the establishment of the Emission Trading System is to establish the facility-based MRV system, a report with the Roadmap and recommendations on the establishment of the facility-based MRV system that are based on the analysis of international best practice and cover all key aspects of introducing the facility-based MRV system in the "energy" and "industrial processes" sectors (sectoral coverage and coverage of GHG gases,

GHG emission quantification methodology, reporting procedure, schedule and reporting platform, quality assurance/quality control and enforcement) and describe the approach to integrating the collected data and monitored indicators into the National Platform for Statistical Reporting of the SDG Indicators was prepared.

A consultative workshop on the establishment of the facility-based MRV systems in the energy and industrial processes sectors has been attended by 81 representatives of ministries (Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Ministry of Industry, state organizations (National Statistical Committee, Belarusian State Centre for Accreditation, Department of Energy Efficiency, Belhidromet), research institutes of line ministries (BelNIC Ecologia), Belarusian Currency and Stock Exchange, Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange, key industrial enterprises, private sector representatives, local and regional authorities and mayor offices, NASB.

To enhance the impact and sustainability of project results, an additional activity related to the development of a prototype of the national registry for the facility-based MRV system in the energy and industrial processes sectors to be covered by the market-based climate finance mechanism called the Emission Trading System as well as the registry user manual have been currently developed to enable the recording, storing and using data collected through the facility-based MRV system for the implementation of the Emission Trading System in Belarus that is compatible with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. The national registry for the facility-based MRV system in the energy and industrial processes sectors has been prototyped to be fully compatible with the registry of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) to enable Belarus' participation in cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, to be aligned with the national GHG inventory of Belarus and the National Platform for Statistical Reporting of the SDG indicators.

Furthermore, to enhance the impact and sustainability of project results, an additional activity related to the preparation of legal and regulatory documents regulating the authorization of transfer of ITMOs under climate finance mechanisms (cooperative approaches) towards third parties' NDC and the use of ITMOs from the third parties towards the NDC of Belarus have been currently developed.

Overall, the main activities and achievements under Outcome Area 1 can be synthesized into three main pillars: 1) establishing an analytical foundation for NDC updates; 2) building capacity for engaging with market-based climate finance mechanisms; and 3) strengthening MRV systems. These pillars are interlinked and collectively contribute to the overarching goal of enhancing Belarus's ability to meet its climate commitments and engage effectively with international mechanisms.

Component 2

This component focused on "*Strengthened Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Accounting Capacity and Enhanced System of Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV)*." The overarching objective was to strengthen the institutional and technical capabilities of the Republic of Belarus in GHG accounting and MRV systems. A cornerstone of activities under this outcome

was the enhancement of the GHG inventory system. The project supports the establishment of a comprehensive GHG accounting framework that adheres to international standards and guidelines. This involved the development and implementation of protocols for data collection, analysis, and reporting. The aim is to ensure that the GHG inventory is both comprehensive and accurate, serving as a reliable foundation for policy formulation and international reporting.

In parallel, there was a concerted effort to modernize the MRV system. Given that MRV is an indispensable component for both national and international climate action, the project targets the development of a robust, transparent, and standardized MRV process. This entailed streamlining data collection methodologies, enhancing data quality control, and automating reporting mechanisms. The MRV system is further designed to be modular, allowing for easy adaptability to emerging international norms and technological advancements.

Capacity building was another critical aspect of this component. Through training programmes and workshops, stakeholders across various sectors were equipped with the knowledge and skills required for effective GHG accounting and MRV operations. These programs were tailored to meet the specific needs of different stakeholder groups, thus ensuring a wider reach and greater impact.

Inter-agency collaboration was also facilitated to ensure that the GHG accounting and MRV systems are not working in silos but are integrated into a cohesive national framework. This involved coordination between governmental bodies, research institutions, and industry stakeholders. Such collaboration ensured that the systems was not only technically sound but also practically feasible and aligned with national priorities.

Achievements under this outcome have been multi-dimensional. The establishment of a robust GHG accounting framework and a modernized MRV system represents a substantive advancement in Belarus's climate action capabilities. These systems not only fulfill international reporting requirements but also provide valuable data that can inform national policy. Capacity building efforts have led to a skilled and informed workforce capable of sustaining these complex systems. Lastly, the success in fostering inter-agency collaboration sets a precedent for holistic, integrated approaches to climate governance.

Box 9: Capacity Development and Studies and Research Supported by the Project

Research, Studies, and Reports:

- Recommendations and roadmap for facility-level MRV system in energy and industrial sectors
- Report on international best practices for MRV in energy/industry sectors
- Report on Belarus' existing MRV legal framework and system functioning
- Recommendations for establishing facility-based MRV system in energy/industry sectors
- Roadmap for introducing facility-based MRV systems in Belarus
- MRV methodologies for restoration of degraded peatlands, afforestation/reforestation, energy efficiency in public lighting, and wind energy
- MRV plans for 6 MRV pilot projects
- Project documents submitted for 3 energy efficiency and 1 wind energy MRV pilot projects
- Recommendations for integrating MRV into Belarus' climate change legal/regulatory framework

- Draft climate change law and regulatory architecture recommendations
- Updated NDC and long-term low emission development strategy for Belarus
- Legal and regulatory documents enabling mandatory facility-based and project-based MRV

Training and Capacity Building:

- Workshops held to gather feedback on facility-based MRV recommendations/roadmap for energy/industry sectors
- Informational materials on facility-based MRV distributed to 82 organizations
- Workshop held with 44 stakeholders to gather feedback on AFOLU/LULUCF and urban sectors MRV methodologies
- MRV methodologies pilot tested through 6 MRV pilot projects
- Workshop planned to gather feedback on finalized MRV methodologies for AFOLU/LULUCF and urban sectors
- Consultations held to discuss climate change law and regulatory architecture recommendations
- Workshops held to discuss updated NDC and long-term strategy
- Workshops planned to discuss legal/regulatory documents enabling mandatory MRV systems

The following box summarizes the draft laws and regulations that were drafted with support from the project.

Box 10: Draft Laws and Regulations Supported by the Project

Draft Laws and Regulations

- Recommendations and roadmap for establishing a facility-based MRV system in the energy and industrial sectors
- Draft climate change law for Belarus
- Recommendations for the regulatory architecture and climate change by-laws in Belarus
- Draft updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) for Belarus
- Draft long-term low emission development strategy for Belarus until 2050
- Draft national legal, policy and regulatory documents on MRV to serve as a chapter in Belarus' Ecological Code
- Draft national legal and regulatory framework for implementing an emissions trading system in Belarus
- Draft national legal and regulatory framework for implementing project- and sector-based market mechanisms in the agriculture, forestry and land use (AFOLU) sector
- Draft national legal and regulatory framework for implementing project- and sector-based market mechanisms in the municipal/urban sector

In summary, these key legal and regulatory documents cover:

- Establishing a facility-based MRV system for the energy/industry sectors
- Overall climate change legislation and regulatory architecture
- Economy-wide GHG mitigation targets and strategies (NDC and long-term strategy)
- Dedicated MRV chapter in the Ecological Code
- Market mechanism frameworks with embedded MRV components

Overall, the project's second component addressed the intricacies of GHG accounting and MRV by developing robust systems, building capacities, and fostering inter-agency collaboration. These activities and achievements have contributed to the strengthening of

Belarus's ability to meet its climate commitments and effectively participate in global climate governance mechanisms.

Component 3

The project's third component centered on "*Demonstration Projects using Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) Best Practice*." The primary objective of this outcome was to bridge the gap between theoretical MRV frameworks and practical implementation through targeted demonstration projects. This served a dual purpose: to validate the MRV best practices developed under the project and provide actionable insights for scaling these practices at a national level.

The first activity under this component was the identification and selection of suitable demonstration pilots. These pilots – shown in the box below - were chosen based on a set of criteria that included their potential for GHG emission reductions, feasibility, and alignment with national climate goals. Importantly, these projects also served as testing ground for the MRV best practices developed earlier in the project, thereby offering a practical dimension to the theoretical/analytical frameworks. These pilots were estimated by the project to reduce CO2 emissions by 452.7 tCO2 per year and 6,790 tCO2 over 15 years. The total direct GHG emission reductions that are expected to be achieved over the investment lifetime of the MRV pilot projects is estimated to be 41,140.5 tCO2eq.

Box 11: Pilot Projects

The following MRV pilots were selected by the project:

1. Implementation of LED-based street lighting in Novogrudok city. The total GHG emission reductions that will be achieved over the lifetime of the investment of 15 years is 1,459.5 tCO2eq.
2. Implementation of LED-based street lighting in Polotsk city. The total GHG emission reductions that will be achieved over the lifetime of the investment of 15 years is 2,212.5 tCO2eq.
3. Implementation of LED-based street lighting in Bereza city. The total GHG emission reductions that will be achieved over the lifetime of the investment of 15 years is 3,118.5 tCO2eq.
4. Nesvizhsky 1.8MW wind power project related to the installation of 1.8 MW wind turbine generator (WTG) for the captive use of zero-emission electricity generated by renewable energy. The project is implemented in the village Amlyncy, Nesvizh district, Minsk region. The total GHG emission reductions that will be achieved over the lifetime of the investment of 15 years is 12,450.0 tCO2eq.
5. Pilot project in restoration of degraded wetlands located in the North-Eastern part of formally peat-producing area of the Grichino-Starobinskoe peat deposit. located in the Soligorsk district of the Minsk region and occupies an area of 450.7 ha, which was previously under agricultural use. The total GHG emission reductions that will be achieved over the lifetime of the investment of 30 years is 9,900.0 tCO2eq.
6. Pilot project in forestry in the Logoisk district of Minsk region where afforestation activities will be conducted on openings not covered by forest of the total area 34.9 ha. The total GHG emission reductions that will be achieved over the lifetime of the investment of 30 years is 12,000.0 tCO2eq.

The MRV pilot projects covered:

- 1 wind power project
- 3 energy efficient street lighting projects
- 2 land use projects (afforestation/reforestation and peatland restoration)

Once the pilots were selected, the next crucial step was the customization and application of MRV best practices to these specific cases. This involved tailoring the general MRV guidelines to fit the unique characteristics and requirements of each demonstration project. Activities such as data collection, emissions measurement, and impact assessment were then executed in accordance with these customized MRV protocols.

The MRV pilots were submitted on 03 June 2022 to the Global Carbon Council based in Qatar (a voluntary carbon market entity) for the registration (the procedure is shown in the box below). There was a delay in the adoption of the regulatory framework for land use pilots by the Global Carbon Council. This slowed down the progress of implementation of two MRV pilot projects in restoration of degraded peatlands at Grichino-Starobinskoye peat extraction site and forestry project in the Logoisk region, which could not implement the activities of the Global Carbon Council's project cycle due to the unavailability of adopted by the Global Carbon Council regulatory framework for land use projects and relevant templates. As an alternative option, the two MRV pilot projects in the land use sector implement the activities of the project cycle for the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC, as according to the adopted UNFCCC decisions, the cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC will be based on the project cycle, methodologies and experience generated during the implementation of the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC.

Box 12: Procedures of the Global Carbon Council for Issuance of ACCs

Overview of the process for the issuance of Approved Carbon Credits (ACCs) by the Global Carbon Council (GCC):

Project development: The project developer develops a GHG reduction project that meets the GCC's eligibility criteria. The project must be real, measurable, verifiable, additional, and permanent. The project developer must also develop a PDD that describes the project in detail, including the project's methodology, monitoring plan, and expected GHG emission reductions.

Project validation: An independent verifier validates the PDD and assesses the project's compliance with the GCC's standards. The verifier will review the project's methodology, monitoring plan, and expected GHG emission reductions. The verifier will also conduct a site visit to verify the project's existence and to assess the project's implementation risks.

Project registration: Once the PDD is validated, the GCC registers the project. This means that the project is eligible to generate ACCs.

Project implementation: The project developer implements the project and monitors the GHG emission reductions. The project developer must collect data and maintain records to support the verification of the GHG emission reductions.

Project verification: An independent verifier verifies the GHG emission reductions achieved by the project. The verifier will review the project's monitoring data and records. The verifier will also conduct a site visit to verify the GHG emission reductions.

ACC issuance: The GCC issues ACCs to the project developer based on the verified GHG emission reductions. ACCs are issued in digital form and are stored in a registry.

ACCs can be purchased by organizations to offset their own greenhouse gas emissions. This allows organizations to take action on climate change even if they are unable to reduce their emissions directly.

Monitoring the performance of these demonstration projects was another key activity under this component. This was where the enhanced MRV system came into play, providing real-time and accurate data that allowed for performance tracking. This enabled ongoing adjustments and refinements to both the demonstration projects themselves and the underlying MRV protocols, thereby optimizing outcomes.

Capacity building remained a consistent theme even under this outcome. Stakeholders involved in the demonstration projects underwent specialized training to ensure that they were equipped to implement MRV best practices effectively. This helped in building a cadre of professionals well-versed in state-of-the-art MRV techniques, which was essential for the long-term sustainability of these initiatives.

In terms of achievements, the implementation of demonstration pilots validated the MRV systems developed under the project. It provided empirical evidence supporting the feasibility of these practices, thus supporting their credibility. Furthermore, the insights gained from the implementation of these demonstration pilots contributed to the refinement of the MRV system. The capacity-building activities enhanced the human capital, contributing to the availability of skills in Belarus related to MRV systems.

Overall, the third component has promoted MRV best practices through the demonstration pilots. This has to some extent validated the MRV frameworks and contributed to their ongoing refinement and adaptation. Moreover, this component achieved a synthesis between theoretical concepts and practical applicability, thereby enriching both the MRV system and Belarus's climate action capacities.

Achievement of Project Results

The status of project indicators at the point of this evaluation is shown in the results framework table in Annex VI of this report based on data provided by the project team. This data is not validated by the evaluation team or any third party.

According to the results framework data by the project team, the project has achieved all targets set in the results framework. The following is a summary of the achievements of the individual indicators reported by the project.

1. **Mandatory Indicator 1**: This indicator monitors the integration of climate targets into development plans, budgets, and private sector strategies. The project has reported the updated the GHG emissions model for Belarus to include LULUCF/AFOLU sector targets, with the updated NDC target for 2035 set to a 37% reduction below 1990 levels. Although the actual integration has not taken place because the NDC has not been prepared yet, according to the project, this indicates progress towards integrating more comprehensive and ambitious climate targets.

2. **Mandatory Indicator 2**: Focused on the volume of investment for zero-carbon development, the project has mobilized USD 3,469,000, surpassing the public investment target of USD 2.2 million. This indicates strong financial commitment and mobilization towards climate projects.

3. **Mandatory Indicator 3**: Addressing direct GHG emission reductions, the project reports a total reduction of 41,140.5 tCO2e, slightly above the target, demonstrating effective outcomes in emission reduction.

4. **Indicator 4**: Concerning the status and sectoral coverage of NDCs, the project expanded the scope of the upcoming NDC through the emissions model to include key sectors responsible for the majority of GHG emissions and absorption, meeting the target and ensuring a comprehensive national climate action framework.

5. **Indicator 5**: Evaluating the status of domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms, the project identified appropriate mechanisms and a roadmap for their implementation, achieving the indicator target and laying the groundwork for future financial structures to support climate action.

6. **Indicator 6**: This indicator assesses the quality of the MRV system. The project significantly improved the MRV systems, covering all sectors and establishing robust facility-based systems in energy and industry, indicating a successful enhancement from a varied baseline quality.

7. **Indicator 7**: Examining the legal and regulatory framework for MRV, the project has developed and proposed draft MRV laws and by-laws. The achievement is in progress, with a draft law incorporated into the Ecological Code Concept, moving towards formalizing the legal basis for MRV systems.

8. **Indicator 8**: This measures the scale of the building sector MRV system. An alternative wind power project was selected due to overlap with another initiative, indicating adaptability and coordination with other stakeholders.

9. **Indicator 9**: Looking at the scale of the lighting sector MRV system, the project exceeded the target by covering 4,989 lighting fixtures, illustrating successful implementation and potential for replicable MRV methodologies in the lighting sector.

10. **Indicator 10**: Measuring the number of hectares of natural resources covered by MRV, the project more than doubled the target, covering 485.6 hectares and showcasing effective scaling of MRV in natural resource management.

11. **Indicator 11**: Evaluating the number of users and beneficiaries of pilot MRV systems, the project recorded participation of 98 individuals, including a gender-disaggregated count, demonstrating engagement and inclusivity in pilot activities.

Table 8: Achievement of Project Results

Indicator Number	Indicator Formulation	Achievement Status
Mandatory Indicator 1	Existence of targets for low emission and climate-resilient development in development plans, strategies, budgets, private sector business plans, and strategies	Achieved
Mandatory Indicator 2	Volume of investment mobilized and leveraged by the project for zero-carbon development	Achieved
Mandatory Indicator 3	Direct GHG emission reductions over the investment lifetime	Achieved
Indicator 4	Status and sectoral coverage of NDCs	Achieved
Indicator 5	Status of domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms	Achieved
Indicator 6	Quality of MRV System	Achieved
Indicator 7	Status of legal and regulatory framework for MRV	Achieved
Indicator 8	Scale of building sector MRV system	Not Achieved
Indicator 9	Scale of lighting sector MRV system	Achieved
Indicator 10	Number of hectares of natural resources covered by MRV	Achieved
Indicator 11	Number of users and beneficiaries of pilot MRV systems, including female	Achieved

As can be seen from the table above, the project has achieved or is on track to achieve most of its indicators. The above analysis indicates that the project has made significant advancements, particularly in updating the NDC, mobilizing investment, reducing GHG emissions, enhancing the MRV system, and establishing legal frameworks, all of which are pivotal for meeting Belarus' climate goals. Continued progress and the formal adoption of the developed tools and methodologies will be critical for sustaining these achievements and ensuring their long-term impact.

For all the achievements under this project enumerated in the above paragraphs, several challenges have constrained the effectiveness of the project's contributions.

- One of these constraints is the need for formal adoption by state entities of the analytical tools and policy instruments developed by the project. Despite the project's success in generating valuable tools like the NDC model, market-based financing roadmap, MRV systems, and draft legislation, these remain unincorporated into official policy and procedural frameworks. The evaluation identified the need for formal commitments from key government entities, such as the MNREP and sectoral ministries, to institutionalize and operationalize these tools. Without such formalization, the project's work risks being relegated to the realm of theoretical exercises rather than actionable policy instruments. For the longevity of the project's outcomes, it is imperative to secure formal commitments for the adoption and utilization of these tools. An exit strategy formulated by UNDP and the project team could facilitate the institutionalization of these assets, thereby enhancing the project's ultimate impact on national environmental and climate objectives.

- The project's effectiveness has also been limited by the absence of a well-defined strategy for scaling the pilot initiatives. While the project's third component aimed to practically apply the MRV methodologies developed in the second component, it has not delineated a financial and operational roadmap for this expansion that lays out roles and actions for stakeholders, public nor private sector investment expectations, timelines, or milestones for the scaling process.

- Also, the registration of the pilots' carbon credits and the obtaining of the certificates remains work in progress. This will be an important step that should be pursued by the project to really demonstrate the practical effects of the project. It is not clear, though, who will pursue this important objective, if the GCC is not able to complete its due diligence by the end of the project's lifetime. This is something that UNDP and the project team need to discuss with the government partners and should be included in the project's exit strategy, which is highly recommended by this evaluation.

Given the significant challenges, but also considering the contributions that have been provided by the project, the rating of the project's effectiveness is "Moderately Satisfactory".

3.3.4. Efficiency

To assess efficiency, the report focuses on two aspects that are closely associated with efficient project management. These parameters are categorized into the following categories: i) Resource Allocation and Cost Effectiveness; and, ii) Project Management and Timeliness.

Resource Allocation and Cost Effectiveness

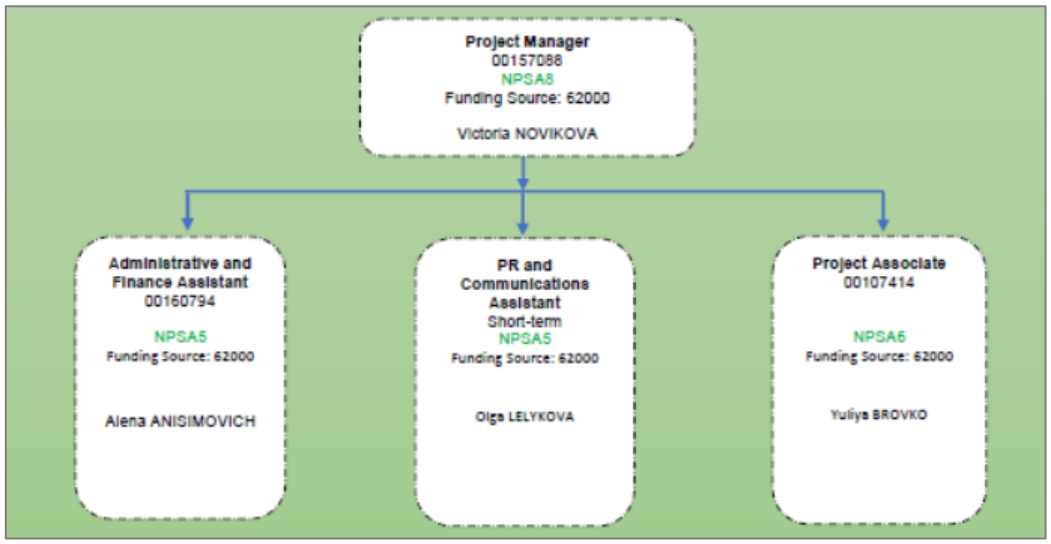
The project has focused its limited resources on the achievement of key expected milestones, such as developing an economic and GHG emission model that encompasses key economic sectors. This model has laid a solid foundation for establishing GHG emission baselines, creating mitigation scenarios, and assessing impacts on sustainable development. Also, the project's investments in strengthening GHG accounting capacity and enhancing the MRV system have been adequate. Initiatives like study tours for Belarusian specialists are prime examples of strategically allocating resources towards building essential knowledge and expertise in these domains. Such efforts have been important in improving the understanding and capabilities of local experts in carbon trading and environmental issues.

Despite encountering significant challenges, the project has made progress, particularly in launching the pilot projects and improving national capacities in emissions modelling and measurement. However, the project's overall expenditure amounted to approximately 72% of the anticipated budget. This underutilization of funds suggests opportunities for further efficiency in resource management. A more optimized resource allocation would have enhanced the project's impact and would have ensured a more comprehensive utilization of the available budget.

As shown in the Project Finance section of this report, the project's budget analysis revealed considerable fluctuations in budget execution across different components and years. The project experienced a sluggish start in 2020 with severe under-spending across all components, resulting in a mere 3% execution rate. This is attributed to early-stage delays including the completion of the registration process noted in 2019. In 2021, there was a noticeable shift with increased expenditure, particularly in Components 1 and 4, which both exceeded their budgets, demonstrating a ramp-up in project activities. However, Components 2 and 3 lagged behind with significantly lower execution rates. Despite this disparity, the year saw the project's overall execution rate climb to 53%, reflecting a phase of acceleration in project implementation. The year 2022 marked a period of high activity, with Components 1 and 2 substantially exceeding their budgets, possibly as a corrective measure to the slow initial spending. Although Component 3's spending remained modest, Component 4 slightly overshot its budget, contributing to an overall execution rate of 108% for the year. By 2023, the project's expenditure surged to $341,363 as of November, suggesting robust project progression and potentially signaling that full budget utilization might be achievable by the project's end. Overall, the project's expenditure stood at $698,945 at the point of the evaluation, against an allocated budget of $840,000, with an overall execution rate of 83%. Individually, Component 1 shows the highest spending efficacy, exceeding its budget, while Components 2 and 3 indicate more conservative spending, and Component 4 hovers close to its targeted budget.

This picture shows that the project has experienced substantial variability in budget execution across different years and components. This pattern is indicative of significant challenges in execution requiring strong control mechanisms to better align financial resources with project milestones and objectives.

Figure 5: Project Organizational Structure



Project Management and Timeliness

The project management structure shown below provides the delineation of roles and responsibilities. Day-to-day operations were led by the Project Manager (PM), who was selected competitively and contracted by UNDP. The PM has overseen all technical and

administrative aspects of the project, including the planning of activities, managing personnel, tracking risks, and reporting. In addition to the PM, the Project Management Unit (PMU) included an Administrative/ Financial Assistant (AFA). The project was supported by international and national experts.

The project faced several external challenges, including the geopolitical situation and COVID-19, impacting its implementation schedule and resource allocation. However, the project team prepared a delivery improvement plan to ensure the achievement of development and financial results, reflecting an adaptive approach to project management and timeliness. The main challenge the project has encountered is the delays that have characterized certain phases of its life, especially in the initial period. This was a project that was designed in 2017 and which really started its activities in 2021, with a significant four-year gap during which many transformational events for Belarus and the world occurred, including the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the regional conflict and the resulting sanctions on Belarus.

To say that these events had an impact on the project is an understatement. The project was designed for a different environment, and despite so adaptive measures taken by the project management, many challenges that were imposed on the project by the external environment were insurmountable.

As can be seen from the milestones below, the biggest lost opportunity for this project were the two years between the meeting of the Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC), which took place in December 2018, and the Inception Workshop, which occurred in December 2020. The main delay here was due to the registration process, which remains a challenge for all international technical assistance projects in Belarus. The control of the project or UNDP on this process has proved insignificant over the years and it is unlikely that this situation will change any time soon. This requires good planning, knowing that eventually the project will take at least one year to clear the registration hurdle. But more importantly, it requires a lot of flexibility and significant adaptive management from the side of the UNDP country office and the project management. These projects should be built with significant flexibility from day one to withstand the uncertainties that a long pause in the registration process entails.

- LPAC Meeting on 21 December 2018
- RA signed Project Document 19 July 2019
- Project Registration completed on 13 May 2020
- Actual project implementation started with hiring of Project Manager on 1 September 2020
- Inception Workshop held on 22 December 2020

The project faced a challenge in selecting a carbon registry for collaboration, with limited options including the GCC in Qatar, VERA in the USA, and Gold Standard in Europe. Due to existing sanctions, only the GCC in Qatar was willing to engage. This presented an obstacle for the project as GCC has a limited number of verifiers available, coupled with a substantial queue for their services. This condition led to further delays in the project's timeline. Several national experts interviewed for this evaluation mentioned that precious time was lost between

the moment when the MRV methodologies were developed and the selection of validators (almost one year delay without reasonable explanation).

Box 13: Main Challenges Faced by the Project

The project's implementation experienced delays that were caused primarily by external circumstances beyond the project's control. These external circumstances include:

- National process for registration of technical assistance projects - the project experienced significant delay caused by the national registration process by pushing back the project start date and timeline. In response to this, the project adjusted its timeline accordingly.
- COVID-19 pandemic - The project experienced delays as a result of the restrictions that emanated from COVID-19. The project responded to these challenges by extending deadlines for tenders and consultancy contracts to account for sicknesses and the shift to remote work.
- Sanctions imposed against Belarus - The sanctions against Belarus created challenges for collaborating with international carbon market entities as originally planned. In response, the project adapted by shifting two MRV pilot projects to a different carbon market framework (the Clean Development Mechanism).
- Delay in the adoption of the framework for land use projects by the GCC (Qatar) - There was also a delay in the adoption of the regulatory framework by the GCC. This cause additional delays for the activities of the project related to the registration of the MRV projects.

The overall picture of the project is one marked by operational challenges, with significant external barriers and administrative bottlenecks. Initiated in a rather different situation back in 2017, the project has been vulnerable to a series of unpredictable events, including but not limited to political tension, global pandemic, and economic sanctions. This was exacerbated by internal challenges, such as delays in recruitment, which decreased momentum and have diluted impact. The slower than anticipated progress in certain areas and the relatively low budget execution rate suggest room for improvement in the efficiency of resource utilization and project delivery.

Given the challenges and the delays described above, but also considering the contributions that have been provided by the project, the rating of the project's efficiency is "Moderately Satisfactory".

3.3.5. Sustainability

In this section, the assessment of the project's sustainability is done on the basis of the standard dimensions of Social Sustainability, Financial Sustainability, Institutional Sustainability, and Environmental Sustainability.

Social Sustainability

One aspect of this project's social sustainability is related to its effect on the redistribution of carbon-related costs and benefits in the society. The project's focus on reducing GHG emissions

contributes to a cleaner, healthier environment, benefiting the broader society, especially in urban areas where environmental degradation can have more pronounced effects. Also, the project's emphasis on environmental sustainability leads to long-term economic advantages, such as energy savings and revenue from carbon credit trading, which indirectly benefit the wider community. For local entities prioritizing short-term economic gains, the project's environmental focus might seem less immediately beneficial, potentially creating a perception of an imbalance between immediate costs (such as investment in new technologies) and long-term benefits. But in the long run the benefits overrun the costs.

The project's long-term sustainability is also intrinsically linked to how well the communities it affects are engaged with it. Ideally, community involvement should not just be in the form of information sharing, but also in decision-making processes. This project has had a primary focus on research and analytical work, with a more tangible impact at the policy level. The project's interactions with the local communities have - by the very nature of the project - been very limited. This interaction has primarily taken place in the context of the pilots (i.e., forestry, peatlands restoration, energy efficiency in urban areas, etc.), but even here that engagement has been limited because the project's focus and job has been almost exclusively linked to the calculations of emissions – a highly technical task that has very few implications for community engagement. While there was an opportunity for the project to engage community members in the discussions around MRV mechanisms, the project was not designed to do this at the stage of the preparation of the Project Document, and therefore no financial resources were allocated for this type of activity.

At the same time, the project has included the gender dimension in its climate-related agenda, developing recommendations for integrating gender-disaggregated statistics in national reporting and improving gender indicators for national MRV methodologies. This indicates an awareness of the enhanced benefits that could be achieved through modest investments in integrating gender equality and human rights.

Given the project's highly technical nature with limited interactions with the communities and overall long-term benefits for the society, this dimension of sustainability is rated as "Likely".

Financial Sustainability

The project's financial sustainability is a critical factor that underpins the realization of its objectives and the durability of its impact. The project was designed with several elements that were intended to contribute to its financial sustainability. The emphasis on cost-effectiveness, focus on market-based mechanisms, and potential for scalability and co-financing was intended to sustain the project's objectives in the long term. In particular, the project was designed to introduce market-based climate finance mechanisms. These mechanisms are intended to attract financial resources necessary for effective climate action. Indeed, the use of market-based mechanisms has the potential to catalyze private sector investment, thus augmenting public funds.

To this end, the project produced a report with recommendations and a roadmap to ensure Belarus' compliance with the requirements for participation in market-based cooperative

approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. This roadmap aims to improve Belarus's preparedness to create/issue/transfer/acquire/use the Internationally Transferrable Mitigation Outcomes (ITMOs) under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. The project established a partnership with the Global Carbon Council in Qatar, which allows the submission of project documents of projects for emission trading. This partnership addresses the challenge that Belarus faces in registering projects in key voluntary carbon market entities. The project has created an enabling environment for financing after the end of GEF assistance. This includes establishing partnerships with international entities, preparing legal frameworks, developing MRV systems, engaging stakeholders effectively, and integrating gender considerations.

However, market-based mechanism developed by the project remains at the conceptual level. It is not clear how this mechanism will eventually operate. The evaluation team was unable to find any evidence that suggested that there was a commitment and clear vision in place by the respective authorities for the establishment of this mechanism.

Another drawback that has constrained the financial sustainability of the results of the project has been the lack of direct involvement in project activities of key financial decision-making bodies at the national level, especially institutions like the Ministry of Finance. While the project has created a model of financial mechanisms for climate action, its impact from a financial perspective remains constrained due to the lack of involved of the above-mentioned financial institutions. This not only limits the sustainability of the project's outcomes, but also represents a missed opportunity to solidify national financial commitments to climate change mitigation efforts. For the project to truly transition from a well-designed initiative to a nationally owned and financially sustainable programme, the active participation and financial backing of national institutions like the Ministry of Finance is imperative. Furthermore, the project's sustainability would have been considerably stronger if it had either incorporated or led to specific budgetary commitments from the national government earmarked for climate change mitigation.

Evaluation interviewees stressed the continued importance of international funding for the climate change sector in Belarus, as local entities are not yet prepared to assume financial responsibility in the absence of a fully deployed model and associated legal and regulatory structures.

Given the above-mentioned, the likelihood of sustainability of the project’s outcomes from a financial perspective is rated as “Moderately Likely”.

Institutional Sustainability

Institutional sustainability is crucial for the long-term viability and impact of the project. The project displays both positive and negative factors of sustainability. As noted throughout this report, the project has navigated significant external challenges, from a regional crisis and global pandemic to a lack of national expertise in emissions trading and market-based climate finance mechanisms. However, for the most part, these challenges have been mitigated by the partnership between the project team, UNDP and MNREP.

The project has created policy frameworks that have the potential to enhance accountability and transparency for the long run. For example, the development of an economic and GHG emission model for Belarus is a crucial tool for planning and selecting climate change mitigation scenarios. This model provides a basis for establishing national and sectoral NDC targets and has been communicated to key stakeholders, ensuring transparency and knowledge transfer. The project supported the development of a draft law on climate change, which has the potential to enable the implementation of market-based GHG abatement mechanisms and emission trading compatible with Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. Also, the international partnerships that the project has promoted with entities like IRENA and the Global Carbon Council have the potential to promote the sustainability of outcomes.

Another positive factor of sustainability has been the fact that key experts and stakeholders were trained in order to continue their work related to market-based climate finance mechanisms, NDC preparation and implementation of a comprehensive MRV framework. Institutional capacity has been strengthened through various initiatives, including training packages on GHG emission modeling, development of MRV systems, and consultative workshops. These efforts have increased stakeholders' understanding of the key design elements and functioning of the MRV and Emission Trading systems, laying the groundwork for self-sufficiency post-project closure. The project relied on the national technical capacities of key ministries like MNREP, the Ministry of Economy, and others. Furthermore, the project placed emphasis on the development of technical and methodological skills across sectors through the training programmes that it deployed. This human capital investment is an asset that has the potential to pay dividends well into the future, especially if there are mechanisms for knowledge transfer and skills retention.

However, there are some institutional factors that present challenges for the sustainability of the project.

- ***Formal Acceptance and Adoption of Tools Developed under the Project***: An issue that deserves greater attention from the project team is the need for formal adoption of key instruments developed by the project. As noted previously in this report, while the project has successfully developed a several of analytical tools - ranging from the NDC model and market-based financing roadmap to MRV systems and draft legislation - the respective government entities have yet to formally adopt them. Key outcomes from the project are expected to be integrated into national policy frameworks. For example, the economic and GHG emission model and the report on "*Climate Change Mitigation Scenarios Costs Benefits and Impacts for the Republic of Belarus*" provide an analytical basis for updating the NDC target of Belarus for 2035 and establishing sectoral GHG emission/absorption targets. Such institutional buy-in is critical for ensuring that these analytical tools transcend theoretical exercises and become actionable policy instruments. Their formal integration into governmental frameworks is a prerequisite for achieving the country's environmental and climate objectives. Furthermore, the project's sustainability is also contingent on how its outputs, particularly any revisions to Belarus's NDC, are incorporated into broader national and sectoral policies. This remains an area of uncertainty, particularly in the absence of formal commitments from state agencies to adopt project-developed tools. To

strengthen the project's sustainability, UNDP and the project team could try to secure more concrete commitments from the relevant entities for the formal acceptance and adoption of these tools. This could potentially be accomplished through a well-articulated exit strategy that delineates the procedures for transferring project assets and deliverables to the appropriate governmental bodies. By formalizing these arrangements, the project will ensure that its contributions have a lasting impact.

- ***Challenge of Scaling***: Another issue related to the sustainability of the project is the uncertainty around the scalability of the pilots. The project's third component was designed as a practical application of the methodologies and policies formulated in the first two components, with the intention of scaling these pilots via existing State Sectoral Programmes. This would institutionalize the initiatives within public agencies, fostering a cycle of ongoing enhancement. However, the project needs a coherent vision or strategy for the financial mechanisms that would underpin such scaling. There is no clearly articulated expectation for investment from either the public or private sectors to enable this expansion. Similarly, there is limited clarity on stakeholder involvement, nor established specific timelines and milestones for scaling the pilots. This creates uncertainties that challenge the sustainability of this component of the project, as it hampers the long-term integration of its outputs into broader governmental and sectoral frameworks.

To address the challenges of institutionalization and scaling, the project team in cooperation with UNDP will need to develop an effective exit strategy that delineates the handover of project responsibilities to national state agencies and the mechanisms that could be put in place for the scaling of the pilot initiatives.

Given the outstanding risks mentioned above and the limited time available until the end of the project, this dimension of sustainability is rated as "Moderately Likely".

Environmental Sustainability

The project's focus on identifying sectors with the most substantial and cost-effective abatement potential and enabling market-based climate finance mechanisms lends itself to environmental sustainability. The project aligns with national policies on climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as international commitments like the Paris Agreement. This enhances the likelihood that the environmental benefits will be long-lasting, supported by policy continuity. Furthermore, by targeting multiple sectors like energy, forestry, agriculture, and housing, the project demonstrates a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability, ensuring that interventions are broad-based and integrated. Also, MRV systems are instrumental in establishing a data-driven approach to environmental sustainability. They provide a framework for ongoing, accurate assessment of the environmental impact, helping to ensure the project's goals meet the intended results.

As a result of economic sanctions, the project faced difficulties in registering projects (like renewable energy and energy efficiency) with key voluntary carbon market entities. This limitation has affected the scope and impact of the project's environmental benefits. The project

identified and explored a solution to this, eventually involving the registration of project with the Global Carbon Center in Qatar.

Overall, the project exhibits a well-structured and comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability. However, for all these design strengths, the main risks to sustainability from an environmental perspective remain related to the translation of the project activities and outputs into concrete results by the relevant state institutions. To a large extent, this remains dependent on the level of formal adoption of project results by these entities, which as of the time of this evaluation remains unknown.

Given the outstanding risks mentioned above, this dimension of sustainability is rated as "Likely".

Table 9: Sustainability Rating

Sustainability Dimension	Risk Assessment
Financial risk	ML
Social risk	L
Institutional risks	ML
Environmental risks	L

3.3.6. Gender Mainstreaming

First of all, it should be recognized that this a highly technical project focused on the calculation, modelling and measurement of sectoral carbon emissions. As such, the gender implications of this project are indirect and limited. Nevertheless, the project was developed on the basis of an analysis of the gender landscape in Belarus, as shown by the detailed gender analysis in the Project Document. This analysis helped identify specific gender issues related to climate change and the labor market in the country.

Several strategic decisions made by the project laid the groundwork for gender integration. The project's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment is corroborated by the formulation of a Gender Action Plan. This plan outlined specific gender-related results achieved by the project, highlighting the integration of gender considerations in its implementation. Developing guidance on collecting sex-disaggregated data was crucial to establish measurement baselines and enable monitoring of gender impacts. Mainstreaming gender into core documents like the NDC and long-term strategy helped anchor it as a priority across mitigation planning. The project took important steps on gender capacity building and integrating gender into the Emissions Trading System's regulatory framework for translating policy into action. They exemplified how gender can be mainstreamed into implementation processes of mitigation mechanisms.

Moreover, the formulation of MRV methodologies and indicators aligned with international best practices set the stage for systematic tracking of gender results. The project has contributed to gender equality and empowerment of women by integrating gender assessment in pilot MRV projects and developing gender-sensitive methodologies. The inclusion of women in project activities and the development of gender-focused reports and articles indicate a sustained focus on gender results. Despite data limitations, the project made efforts to assess the gender impact

of pilots. The practical application of these tools was demonstrated through pilots like the street lighting projects, where MRV procedures allowed gender-related data to be collected and impacts analyzed. This integration of gender indicators into sectoral MRV systems was an innovative approach. It created replicable models for monitoring gender in other mitigation actions. The street lighting projects' positive effects on women's safety highlight the social co-benefits of mitigation measures from a gender lens.

The all-female project team served as a good example of how to increase female participation in climate mitigation's male-dominated landscape. But the realization of the transformative potential requires expanding leadership opportunities for women across all levels, including in decision-making roles.

As noted previously in this report, the project primarily focused on engagement with formal institutions, which was beneficial, but incorporating more interactions with local communities in the pilot locations would have further enhanced its scope. Expanding to broad-based consultations would allow for valuable localized gender insights, enriching the understanding gained from institutional perspectives. Additionally, a thoughtful review of budgetary allocations through a gender lens would have been advantageous, providing an opportunity to adjust and potentially allocate funds towards targeted empowerment interventions where necessary.

Overall, the project, while highly technical with its focus on carbon emissions calculation and modeling, incorporated gender considerations, evident from the detailed gender analysis in the project document. This analysis led to strategic decisions like developing a Gender Action Plan and integrating gender into core documents and the Emissions Trading System's regulatory framework, demonstrating a commitment to gender equality. Despite its technical nature, the project made strides in gender integration by developing gender-sensitive methodologies, including women in activities, and mainstreaming gender in monitoring processes, although further engagement with local communities and a more focused gender lens in budget allocations could have enhanced its impact.

3.3.7. Cross-cutting Issues

***Contribution to a Human Rights-Based Approach*:** While the project's primary focus is not directly on vulnerable groups, its environmental impact and contributions to climate change mitigation have indirect benefits for these groups. The project has generally followed a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and has not caused any adverse impacts on the enjoyment of the human rights (civil, political, economic, environmental, social or cultural) of any key or potential stakeholders, communities involved or wide population. The project has been open to most stakeholders, despite the contextual restrictions and the design limitations that did not include a component for engagement with communities in the pilot locations. The project has supported meaningful the participation and inclusion of stakeholders, especially technical experts from and members of the research community, in the process. As noted previously in the report, more engagement of the communities in the pilot activities could have been

attempted. The project's emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment aligns with the human rights-based approach. By integrating gender considerations into climate action and decision-making, the project has supported the advancement of human rights, especially in terms of equal participation and benefiting from climate initiatives. Furthermore, the project's efforts in updating and supporting the NDCs and developing national MRV methodologies also has the potential to influence policy frameworks for resource allocation and distribution. Also, the project's focus on MRV methodologies in areas like forestry and wetland restoration has the potential to improves natural resource management in favour of a more equitable distribution of benefits. The project contributed to local capacity building, particularly in GHG accounting and MRV systems. As a secondary effect, this has improved the employment opportunities of the individuals who were involved, especially in technical and environmental sectors.

- ***Poverty-Environment Nexus*:** By focusing on environmental conservation activities like wetland restoration and afforestation, the project likely contributed to poverty reduction. These activities can sustain livelihoods by preserving ecosystems that local communities depend on for resources and economic activities.

- ***Contributions to Disaster Preparedness and Climate Change:*** The project contributed significantly to climate change mitigation, particularly through its support in revising NDCs, developing GHG emission models, and implementing MRV pilot projects. These efforts enhance the country's preparedness to cope with climate-related risks and disasters. Effective monitoring and reporting of emissions are crucial for understanding and mitigating the impacts of climate change, which is a key factor in disaster risk reduction.

- ***Benefits to Disadvantaged and Marginalized Groups, including Persons with Disabilities*:** While specific impacts on marginalized groups like the poor and persons with disabilities are not explicitly mentioned in the project documentation, the overall project's focus on environmental sustainability and capacity building has indirect benefits for these groups. By focusing on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting renewable energy, the project contributes to a cleaner, healthier environment. This particularly benefits persons with disabilities who are more vulnerable to environmental pollutants and poor air quality. The pilot on LED street lighting helps with better-lit and safer public spaces, which is beneficial for persons with disabilities, enhancing their mobility and accessibility in urban areas.

Overall, the project made significant strides in environmental conservation, capacity building, and policy development, positively impacting local populations, aligning with national and UNDP priorities, and contributing to climate change mitigation and adaptation. The focus on gender equality enhances its alignment with human rights principles, although a broader assessment of impacts on other disadvantaged groups would provide a more comprehensive view of its inclusivity.

3.3.8. GEF Additionality

The project has demonstrated a clear link between GEF's contribution and the incremental benefits achieved, particularly in terms of environmental outcomes and capacity building. The project's outcomes align well with GEF's objectives, indicating that the project's achievements can be attributed to the GEF contribution. Project documents provide evidence of the causality between the rationale for GEF involvement and the incremental environmental and other benefits. The GEF's support is directly linked to the capacity building in MRV systems, policy frameworks for climate action, and investment in pilot projects for emission reduction. As noted previously in this report, there is some evidence suggesting that some project outcomes, both environmental and otherwise, are likely to be sustained beyond the project's end. This is evident in the establishment of institutional frameworks, capacity building, and the development of policy and legislative tools. While broader impacts such as significant policy shifts or widespread adoption of MRV practices are long-term objectives, the project has laid a foundation for these developments. The actions taken, such as stakeholder engagement, gender mainstreaming, and development of methodologies, indicate a move towards this goal.

3.3.9. Catalytic/Replication Effect

There is evidence suggesting that certain outcomes of the project, such as the establishment of institutional frameworks, capacity building, and policy and legislative tools development, are likely to be sustained beyond its completion. The project has produced various knowledge products, including reports on gender-disaggregated statistics and climate change mitigation scenarios, which will be valuable for future initiatives and policy formation. Moreover, the project has effectively captured and disseminated best practices and lessons through its Knowledge Management and Communications activities, including reports, training, and workshops, thereby contributing to national capacity building in GHG accounting and MRV systems.

However, formal adoption or commitment from government institutions for some project deliverables, like the economic and GHG emission model, is still pending. These deliverables are crucial for updating Belarus's NDC target for 2035 and establishing sectoral GHG emission/absorption targets. While the project has laid a solid foundation for significant policy changes and widespread adoption of MRV practices, broader impacts are still long-term goals.

A key challenge for the project is scaling up pilot initiatives for broader impact. Currently, there is a lack of specific plans for scaling, including unclear financial resources and stakeholder partnerships needed for expansion. This absence of strategic direction for scaling poses risks to the sustainability of these pilots.

Looking ahead, key priorities include:

- Formal adoption of key instruments developed under the project, such as the NDC model, market-based financing roadmap, and MRV systems, by respective government entities to ensure they are more than academic exercises and become practical tools for policy action.
- Organized transfer of key project deliverables to national stakeholders to facilitate their incorporation into future planning.

- Establishment of clear scaling plans with defined funding mechanisms, partnerships, timelines, and metrics for expanding pilot methodologies into broader sectoral and governmental frameworks.
- Development of a coherent exit strategy, including specific measures for scaling, to institutionalize the project's outputs.
- Addressing the lack of local expertise in emissions trading and market-based climate finance mechanisms through more coherent capacity building.

3.3.10. Progress to Impact

First of all, a rigorous and detailed assessment of the project's impact is not possible with the resources and timeline allocated for this evaluation. The assessment of impact is an exercise of altogether different nature that requires a different approach and budget. Furthermore, the real impact of the project is a continuous and long-term process that will take time to fully materialize. Changing the dynamics and mechanisms of government systems and procedures in the area of climate change mitigation involves addressing deep-rooted structures, processes, and norms. These changes do not happen overnight. Furthermore, it takes time to train staff and members, implement new systems, and embed new skills, knowledge and customs. It takes even longer for these new abilities to lead to improved performance and then result in observable outcomes.

Despite these challenges, for the purpose of this evaluation, it is possible to outline in broad brushes the contributions of the project to Belarus's institutional and policy infrastructure for climate change mitigation. This project is underpinned by clear causal links between its activities and outcomes. Key mechanisms include capacity building in GHG accounting and MRV systems, updating national MRV methodologies, and implementing pilot projects in areas such as LED street lighting and wind power. The following is a brief summary of the project's outcomes and the mechanisms of their achievement.

First of all, most of the contributions of the project have been analytical in nature – focused on research and training. Through its analytical work, the project has contributed Belarus's capabilities and systems put in place by the authorities to meet the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement and advance its climate action agenda. One of the project's major contributions has been the development of an economic and GHG emission model which is expected to guide future national and sectoral NDC target setting for Belarus. The modelling and assessment of mitigation scenarios and costs across key sectors was one of the project's major activities. This model is a significant contribution to Belarus's policy development and access to carbon trading markets. It provides policymakers with critical insights and data to set ambitious, yet feasible, economy-wide reduction targets in the next NDC update. The development of such an evidence-based model to assess mitigation scenarios has provided a robust analytical foundation to guide Belarus's updated NDC. The availability of this analytical tool and trained personnel has the potential to ensure ambitious yet realistic target setting in future NDC updates.

The project produced valuable knowledge products and reports, enhancing stakeholders' understanding and participation in market-based climate finance mechanisms under the Paris

Agreement. Further, the project has raised awareness and improved understanding of market mechanisms through assessments and capacity building. Market feasibility studies and recommendations have improved the officials' understanding of climate policy instruments like emissions trading systems. Guidance developed on Article 6 participation also helps government officials engage with international mechanisms. Also, by facilitating participation in UNFCCC activities, the project enabled national specialists to actively engage with and prepare for the evolving Article 6 landscape. The project also developed recommendations on collecting gender-disaggregated data to support gender impact assessments of mitigation actions.

Another analytical contribution has been the strengthening of Belarus's institutional and technical capabilities for greenhouse gas accounting and MRV systems. The project supported enhancements across the inventory framework, MRV infrastructure, and human capacities. Protocols and methodologies for emissions data collection, analysis and reporting were established, modernizing the MRV system with a focus on modularity and automation. Extensive capacity building through tailored training programs equipped stakeholders with required skills. The design and piloting of enhanced MRV methodologies across priority sectors has generated practical implementation experience for national consultants and experts. These specialists from academic and research institutions have obtained hands-on skills to operate and refine MRV systems tailored to Belarus's needs. This has enriched the country's human capital equipped to manage MRV activities.

The project sought to promote the validation and refinement of MRV best practices via demonstration projects in priority sectors like energy, transport and land use. These pilots have provided empirical validation of developed MRV methodologies, while also generating insights to iteratively adapt the MRV system. The demonstration pilots have increased the awareness and understanding of carbon market opportunities among enterprise owners where pilots were implemented. Targeted capacity building has further improved the country's human capital with professionals adept in MRV techniques.

For all the contributions noted above, the project's impact has been limited for several key reasons:

- Firstly, while legislation and regulations have been drafted by the project, the adoption of formal mechanisms and regulations remains pending. This lack of policy formalization constrains the translation of project outputs into tangible outcomes. The development of enabling legal frameworks is a crucial first step, but their official approval and integration into the national climate governance architecture is indispensable for impact.
- Secondly, engagement with line ministries could have been more consistent, with some exhibiting greater motivation than others. Achieving multi-sectoral impacts requires coordinated commitment from all relevant governmental bodies. Fragmented ownership risks creating imbalances, gaps and implementation bottlenecks.
- Thirdly, the pilots have operated at the level of awareness-raising, but they have not generated in the country a momentum for a wider use of MRV systems for the registration of carbon credit projects. It seems unlikely that the demonstration pilots will significantly

expand the pipeline of activities eligible for results-based climate finance. The enthusiasm of local-level administrators of the relevant entities is still limited for these kinds of activities – the project was not able to ignite a significant level of enthusiasm at this level.

- Fourthly, understanding of core concepts like NDC and MRV remains relatively low among Belarusian economic actors. While the project has undertaken awareness activities, the scope has been insufficient for the fundamental knowledge transfer needed across industries. Bridging these knowledge gaps requires extensive, targeted outreach based on a stakeholder analysis.

The project also has the potential to contribute to broader development outcomes, which are harder to quantify due to the lack of data and also the fact that many of the instruments created by the project will have to be operationalized first. The NDC/emissions model has the potential to be instrumental in estimating sustainable development co-benefits. The MRV framework – once it is operational – has the potential to enhance the management of climate-related resources, and even improve income generation opportunities, especially in sectors directly affected by climate change initiatives. The pilot projects, particularly in energy efficiency and peatland restoration, could provide direct and indirect economic benefits, thereby supporting livelihoods. There are also benefits to good governance emanating from the project. The NDC model and the comprehensive MRV system will improve data quality and availability, essential for informed decision-making and policy formulation.

Overall, the project’s multi-dimensional approach, including analytical, technical and policy dimensions has contributed to an improvement of Belarus's core capacities in the area of climate change mitigation. The project has improved national capacities and frameworks in target setting, MRV systems, market mechanisms and climate policy to advance its Paris Agreement goals. It has provided respective government institutions with an analytical basis for updating NDC targets, which is a crucial element for evidence-based policy formulation and allows for more accurate and targeted interventions in the area of climate action. Addressing the limitations by securing policy adoption and expanding outreach will be useful to expand the project's contributions.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

The following are a set of lessons drawn from the experience of the “Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus” project.

Lesson 1: Need for Flexible and Responsive Management Strategies

The lesson on the need for flexible and responsive management strategies, as exemplified by the project, emphasizes the importance of adaptability in project management. This approach is characterized by an ability to modify strategies, operations, and plans in real-time to address unexpected changes or challenges, ensuring the project's viability and effectiveness even in dynamic environments.

Flexible and responsive management is crucial for several reasons. It allows for adaptation to external changes such as political climates, economic conditions, and natural disasters, ensuring the project remains on track. This approach is integral to risk mitigation, as proactive adjustments in response to emerging risks can minimize potential negative impacts. Additionally, it leads to resource optimization, allowing for more efficient use of resources and avoiding waste.

Implementing flexible and responsive strategies involves several key practices. Regular monitoring and evaluation are essential to identify changes and trends that may impact the project. Dynamic risk management requires continual updates to the risk register and adjustments to mitigation strategies. Engaging regularly with stakeholders to incorporate their feedback enhances the project's relevance and effectiveness. Adaptive planning with built-in contingencies accommodates different scenarios, and empowering team members to make decisions fosters a culture of agility.

In the case of the Belarus project, the team's ability to adapt to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical issues was a testament to their flexible approach. By adjusting to limitations in international travel and cooperation, and seeking local expertise and alternative partnerships, the project successfully navigated external pressures and remained aligned with its objectives.

This lesson from this project underlines the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in project management across various sectors. It demonstrates that in a constantly changing world, the ability to adapt is not just beneficial but essential for the success of any project.

Lesson 2: Need for Built-in Flexibility and Adaptive Management

The project's delays highlight the imperative of embedding flexibility and adaptive strategies into initial project design. In contexts with lengthy registration processes, building in agility is essential to navigate bureaucratic hurdles and macro-level changes that alter the operating landscape. The extended timelines exposed the project to unforeseen events like COVID-19,

political shifts and sanctions, which fundamentally changed the environment it was designed for. While adaptive measures were taken, their magnitude overwhelmed the project.

Incorporating flexibility serves multiple purposes - it allows the project to adjust to regulatory bottlenecks and adapt to external changes, thereby preserving relevance and efficacy. Additionally, it enables optimized resource allocation and real-time course corrections through monitoring mechanisms.

The experience provides critical insights - flexibility and adaptive management should inform corrective actions for this project and serve as a template for future initiatives in complex settings. Strategically, a phased approach should be considered, with built-in evaluation metrics to assess whether to move forward, pivot or scale based on results and changing conditions. The goal is a robust yet agile framework that can meet core objectives despite uncertainties.

This underscores the need to plan for uncertainty upfront through adaptive design. The ability to dynamically evolve is indispensable for project resilience and effectiveness.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following are some key conclusions from the evaluation of the "*Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus*" project.

Project Design

- The project's design took a multi-pronged approach to improving Belarus's climate policy formulation and enhancing technical capacity in NDC modelling and MRV systems. The design lacked sufficient details on certain aspects, such as sustaining the technical capacity built, scaling up the pilots, and incorporating lessons learned from other projects.
- The project's results framework was reasonably adequate, with relevant indicators aligned to project components. It could have had more adequate gender disaggregation of indicators, means of data collection, and a capacity building output indicator.
- Identified risks were valid, but externalities like COVID-19 and regional instability had significant unforeseen impacts. The project's adaptive management approach proved crucial in coping with these major challenges.
- Stakeholder participation was planned for a wide range of entities, but the challenging environment for civil society and private sector in Belarus constrained full engagement.
- The project document integrated gender through a gender analysis and requiring a gender action plan during implementation.
- The environmental and social safeguards assessment was adequately conducted, identifying key risks like biodiversity impact through the piloting activities.
- Linkages with other interventions were not identified in the Project Document, missing an opportunity to incorporate lessons learned and synergies with other projects.

Project Implementation

- The project underwent significant delays due to external factors like the national registration process, COVID-19, and the regional instability. This required extensive adaptive management to adjust timelines and partnerships.
- Partnerships with government entities were crucial for the development of the emissions model and the MRV systems. But the engagement of civil society and private sector engagement was limited by the restrictive environment.
- Budget execution was inconsistent across components and years, reflecting implementation challenges. But most funds seem likely to be utilized by project closure.
- The M&E plan aligned with UNDP/GEF requirements, but its implementation displayed weaknesses in data collection, reporting quality, and budget tracking. UNDP provided

adequate oversight support, but could have addressed delays more actively and enforced higher reporting standards. The executing partner MNREP offered sustained support, but could have advocated more vigorously for adoption of project deliverables by the respective entities.

- Risk management was reasonably effective, but the initial underestimation of registration timeline had significant impacts. Adaptive measures addressed emerging risks. The safeguard management measures were properly implemented for identified environmental risks like biodiversity impacts.

Project Results

- The project has contributed to Belarus's capacities for climate change mitigation, especially in target setting, MRV systems, and market mechanisms. This is done for the first time in Belarus. Key results include the development of an emissions model to guide NDC updates, strengthened GHG accounting and MRV frameworks, and pilot demonstrations of MRV methodologies. Capacity building efforts have provided expertise in technical areas like modeling, MRV and carbon trading. The sustained engagement of these professionals will enable continuity. The activities and outputs under each component are within the established targets.

- The formal adoption of some of the project outputs into national policy frameworks is still pending. Also, the pilots have not catalyzed yet a pipeline of new activities eligible for results-based climate finance. A factor of this is that knowledge gaps on concepts like NDCs and MRV persist among economic actors. Further targeted outreach is needed for more knowledge transfer. Consolidated efforts on policy adoption, commitment to the pilots, and expanded outreach will be useful in the remainder of the project's lifetime.

- The project has experienced budget underutilization in certain year and components, which reflects the fact that the project faced extensive delays, especially during the initial years, primarily due to external factors like the national registration process and COVID-19. This has significantly affected the pace of implementation. The project demonstrated adaptability through initiatives like delivery improvement plans and shifting pilots to alternative carbon market frameworks. But the effects of external factors were unavoidable.

- The project's focus on gender mainstreaming, evidenced by various gender-specific reports and assessments, showcases its commitment to inclusive development. While commendable gender mainstreaming efforts were made, a systematic approach incorporating gender considerations across all aspects would have yielded greater results.

Overall Project Performance Rating

Monitoring and Evaluation	
Overall quality of M&E	MS
M&E design at project start up	MS
M&E Plan Implementation	MS
IA & EA Execution	
Overall Quality of Project Implementation/Execution	MS
Implementing Agency Execution	MS
Executing Agency Execution	MS
Outcomes	
Overall Quality of Project Outcomes	S
Relevance	R
Effectiveness	MS
Efficiency	MS
Sustainability	
Overall likelihood of Sustainability:	ML
Financial resources	ML
Socio-economic	L
Institutional framework and governance	ML
Environmental	L
Overall Project Results	

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation also identified the following key recommendations for project stakeholders. Given that the project is at its closing stage, many of these recommendations are forward-looking in nature and relate to measures that could be taken to promote the project's objectives and carry the agenda forward.

Recommendation	Responsible Party	Timeframe
Recommendations on Project Design These recommendations apply to the future design of similar projects by UNDP and MNREP and as such they have a forward-looking nature. ***Skills and Capacity Development:*** UNDP and MNREP should consider measures that not only create capacity, but also sustain it beyond the project's timeframe. This could include the embedding of capacity building activities within local institutions or the creation of permanent roles dedicated to climate change mitigation. In similar projects in the future, UNDP and MNREP could partner with universities or training institutions to create stable training courses on relevant topics like GHG inventories, climate policy, etc., and provide certification for them. Ideally, future project could include a human resource development plan that includes training, mentorship, and succession planning to ensure continuity of expertise. ***Scalability and Replication:*** During the design of similar projects, UNDP and MNREP should pay greater attention to the process of scaling up, including project document considerations of mechanisms for replication, engagement approaches at the national and local level, and clear benchmarks for success. ***Synergies with Other Interventions:*** During project design, UNDP and MNREP should identify potential linkages with related initiatives in the sector/country and explore opportunities for coordination and joint activities. They should also actively seek insights and lessons learned from other UNDP projects and similar international initiatives to enhance project design and implementation strategies.	UNDP and MNREP	Continuous and Long-term
Recommendations on Project Implementation <u>Short-term Recommendations</u> • The Project Team should conduct a financial review to concentrate resources on critical unfinished activities and determine how much of the project budget it will be able to spend until the end of the project, as well as and how that spending can be carried out in the most effective way. • Regular project reviews and frequent check-ins between UNDP and the Project Team should take place in this period to expedite the completion of outstanding activities.	Project Team, UNDP and MNREP	Short Term

Long-Term Recommendations These recommendations apply to the future design of similar projects by UNDP and MNREP and as such they have a forward-looking nature. ***Enhance Reporting Quality:*** UNDP should seek to enhance the quality of data collection and reporting by its project teams. Key project data should be collected and be readily available. The CO M&E officer should ensure that this information has been collected and is readily available. Project staff will need training on this from the CO. UNDP should also improve the quality of annual reports to be more informative, transparent, and reflective of actual project achievements and challenges. ***Engagement with Local Communities:*** Where possible, UNDP should strengthen engagement with local communities in pilot locations to ensure their perspectives and impacts are taken into consideration and local ownership is stimulated. This will also contribute to a disaggregated perspective, including a gender perspective. ***Tracking Training Results:*** UNDP should seek to establish methods for tracking training and workshop outcomes, including feedback mechanisms to assess their effectiveness. ***Demonstration of Additionality:*** For projects related to carbon credit markets, UNDP should establish clear criteria and methodologies to demonstrate additionality in its projects, identifying more clearly emissions reductions attributable to its projects.	UNDP and MNREP	Long-Term
Recommendations on Project Results Short-term Recommendations • As a priority until the end of the project's timeframe, the project should seek to promote the adoption and approval of the deliverables it has created. Ideally, the project should develop a clear action plan and tracking methods for securing formal adoption of outputs like the NDC model, MRV systems, and legislative frameworks into national climate policy, etc. • The project team should develop a sustainability (or exit) plan, outlining handover procedures, capacity building, and requirements for sustaining project initiatives. As part of this plan, the project team should document its deliverables and share lessons learned, good practices, and model methodologies to catalyze replication across sectors and locations. • The project team should develop localized outreach events in the pilot regions to catalyze enthusiasm for the adoption of MRV systems among local administrations and enterprises. • In the remainder of the project's lifetime, the Project Team has the opportunity to communicate more widely and actively the benefits of the pilots, both in terms of environmental impact and potential	Project Team	Short Term

economic gains, to entities and stakeholders across the country. This will require a more active outreach campaign and awareness raising engagement by the project. <u>Long-Term Recommendations</u> ***Leverage MNREP's Role:*** The parties should leverage MNREP's role in government to more proactively facilitate the formal adoption of the project's deliverables (models, frameworks, guidelines, etc.). ***Community Involvement:*** In projects that involve local pilots, UNDP should seek to involve local communities to ensure that their needs and perspectives are considered. ***Engagement of National Financial Entities:*** In future projects, UNDP should seek to engage national financial entities, such as the Ministry of Finance, as their involvement is crucial for ensuring the sustainability of market-based climate finance mechanisms.	UNDP and MNREP	Long-Term

ANNEX I: EVALUATION'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with UNDP and GEF M&E policies and procedures, all full- and medium-sized UNDP-supported GEF-financed projects are required to undergo a Terminal Evaluation (TE) at the end of the project. This Terms of Reference (ToR) sets out the expectations for the TE of the full-sized project titled *"Capacity building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus" (PIMS #6161)* implemented through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Belarus (Ministry of Environment). The project was officially signed on 19 July 2019 and is in its fourth year of implementation. The TE process must follow the guidance outlined in the document 'Guidance For Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-Supported, GEF-Financed Projects' http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The project is aimed at assisting the Government of the Republic of Belarus to implement its greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction commitments under the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC in the context of national sustainable development goals. Specifically, project objective is to build Belarus' capacities to design and implement market-based climate finance mechanisms, to improve and continuously update its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), as well as to set-up a robust Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system for GHG emissions in the priority sectors. The project consists of three inter-linked components. The first component addresses capacity and knowledge constraints related to preparation and update of national and sectoral NDC targets, as well as limited awareness about market-based climate finance mechanisms in Belarus. Under the second component the project will set-up and strengthen MRV system, specifically for the priority sectors identified in NDC. The third component in partnerships with local and international organizations and initiatives will support the development and implementation of MRV pilots in selected sectors to gain practical experience and facilitate interactions and learning-by-doing for all stakeholders involved in the MRV system. The total budget of the Project is 840,000 USD.

3. TE PURPOSE

The TE report will assess the achievement of project results against what was expected to be achieved, and draw lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project, and aid in the overall enhancement of UNDP programming. The TE report promotes accountability and transparency, and assesses the extent of project accomplishments.

The **purpose** of the evaluation is to provide an independent external view of the progress of the project at its completion, and to provide feedback and recommendations to UNDP and project stakeholders.

The **objectives** of the Terminal Evaluation are to:

- Identify potential project design issues;
- Assess progress toward achievement of expected project objective and outcomes;
- Identify and document lessons that can both improve the sustainability of benefits from this project and aid in overall enhancement of UNDP and GEF programming in the region;
- Make recommendations necessary to help consolidate and support sustainability of the project results.

The Terminal Evaluation should also provide recommendations for follow-up activities, which require a management response prepared by the project team, which should be uploaded to PIMS and to the UNDP Evaluation Office Evaluation Resource Center (ERC).

COVID-19 and social-political crises impacted the projects' outputs. Due to COVID-19 several activities within the Project have been delayed (difficulties with approval of permission documents caused by isolation period in some organizations issuing permits for works; illness of personal; restriction rules for resources supplying organization)

4. TE APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The TE must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful.

The consultant will review all relevant sources of information including documents prepared during the preparation phase (i.e. PIF, UNDP Initiation Plan, UNDP Environmental & Social Safeguard Policy, the Project Document, project reports including Annual Project Review/PIRs, project budget revisions, lesson learned reports, national strategic and legal documents, and any other materials that the team considers useful for this evidence-based review). The IC will review the baseline GEF focal area Tracking Tool submitted to the GEF at CEO endorsement.
The IC is expected to follow a collaborative and participatory approach ensuring close engagement with the Project Team, government counterparts (the GEF Operational Focal Point), the UNDP Country Office, UNDP-GEF Regional Technical Advisers, and other key stakeholders.

This TE is initiated by UNDP CO in Belarus as the Implementing Agency of the Project. For the effectiveness of common TE and in accordance with the project document requirements, the UNDP CO in Belarus is hiring a National Consultant for Terminal Evaluation. He/she will assist the team leader of TE in the performance of TE in the country.

Engagement of stakeholders is vital to a successful TE. Stakeholder involvement should include interviews with stakeholders who have project responsibilities, including but not limited to; senior officials and task team/component leaders, key experts and consultants in the subject area, Project Board, project beneficiaries, academia, local government and CSOs, etc. Additionally, the national consultant is expected to conduct field missions to any 3 out of 6 project sites (Grichino-Starobinskoye, Logoisk, Nesvizh, Bereza, Novogrudok, Polotsk).

The specific design and methodology for the TE should emerge from consultations between the TE team and the above-mentioned parties regarding what is appropriate and feasible for meeting the TE purpose and objectives and answering the evaluation questions, given limitations of budget, time and data. The TE team must, however, use gender-responsive methodologies and tools and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as other cross-cutting issues and SDGs are incorporated into the TE report.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits and data to be used in the evaluation must be clearly outlined in the TE Inception Report and be fully discussed and agreed between UNDP, stakeholders and the TE team.

The final report must describe the full TE approach taken and the rationale for the approach making explicit the underlying assumptions, challenges, strengths and weaknesses about the methods and approach of the evaluation.

5. DETAILED SCOPE OF THE TE

The TE will assess project performance against expectations set out in the project's Logical Framework/Results Framework (see ToR Annex A). The TE will assess results according to the criteria outlined in the Guidance for TEs of UNDP-supported GEF-financed Projects http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/documents/GEF/TE_GuidanceforUNDP-supportedGEF-financedProjects.pdf. The Findings section of the TE report will cover the topics listed below.

A full outline of the TE report's content is provided in ToR Annex C.

The asterisk "(*)" indicates criteria for which a rating is required.

Findings

i. Project Design/Formulation

- National priorities and country driven-ness
- Theory of Change
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Social and Environmental Safeguards
- Analysis of Results Framework: project logic and strategy, indicators
- Assumptions and Risks
- Lessons from other relevant projects (e.g. same focal area) incorporated into project design
- Planned stakeholder participation
- Linkages between project and other interventions within the sector
- Management arrangements

ii. Project Implementation

- Adaptive management (changes to the project design and project outputs during implementation)
- Actual stakeholder participation and partnership arrangements
- Project Finance and Co-finance
- Monitoring & Evaluation: design at entry (*), implementation (*), and overall assessment of M&E (*)
- Implementing Agency (UNDP) (*) and Executing Agency (*), overall project oversight/implementation and execution (*)
- Risk Management, including Social and Environmental Standards

iii. Project Results

- Assess the achievement of outcomes against indicators by reporting on the level of progress for each objective and outcome indicator at the time of the TE and noting final achievements
- Relevance (*), Effectiveness (*), Efficiency (*) and overall project outcome (*)
- Sustainability: financial (*) , socio-political (*), institutional framework and governance (*), environmental (*), overall likelihood of sustainability (*)
- Country ownership
- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Cross-cutting issues (poverty alleviation, improved governance, climate change mitigation and adaptation, disaster prevention and recovery, human rights, capacity development, South-South cooperation, knowledge management, volunteerism, etc., as relevant)
- GEF Additionality
- Catalytic Role / Replication Effect
- Progress to impact

Main Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

- The TE team leader will prepare a summary of the main findings of the TE report. Findings should be presented as statements of fact that are based on analysis of the data.

- The section on conclusions will be written in light of the findings. Conclusions should be comprehensive and balanced statements that are well substantiated by evidence and logically connected to the TE findings. They should highlight the strengths, weaknesses and results of the project, respond to key evaluation questions and provide insights into the identification of and/or solutions to important problems or issues pertinent to project beneficiaries, UNDP and the GEF, including issues in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Recommendations should provide concrete, practical, feasible and targeted recommendations directed to the intended users of the evaluation about what actions to take and decisions to make. The recommendations should be specifically supported by the evidence and linked to the findings and conclusions around key questions addressed by the evaluation. It is advised to keep the number of recommendations up to six.
- The TE report should also include lessons that can be taken from the evaluation, including best and worst practices in addressing issues relating to relevance, performance and success that can provide knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (programmatic and evaluation methods used, partnerships, financial leveraging, etc.) that are applicable to other GEF and UNDP interventions. When possible, the TE team should include examples of good practices in project design and implementation. Lessons learned section may be combined with conclusions.
- It is important for the conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned of the TE report to include results related to gender equality and empowerment of women. The TE report will include an Evaluation Ratings Table, as shown below.

Evaluation Ratings Table for the project *"Capacity building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus" (PIMS #6161)*

Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	Rating13
M&E design at entry	
M&E Plan Implementation	
Overall Quality of M&E	
Implementation & Execution	Rating
Quality of UNDP Implementation/Oversight	
Quality of Implementing Partner Execution	
Overall quality of Implementation/Execution	
Assessment of Outcomes	Rating
Relevance	
Effectiveness	
Efficiency	
Overall Project Outcome Rating	
Sustainability	Rating
Financial resources	
Socio-political/economic	
Institutional framework and governance	
Environmental	
Overall Likelihood of Sustainability	

6. TIMEFRAME

The total duration of the TE will be 22 days over a time period of 11 weeks as soon as assignment starts. The tentative TE timeframe is as follows:

[13] Outcomes, Effectiveness, Efficiency, M&E, I&E Execution, Relevance are rated on a 6-point rating scale: 6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS), 5 = Satisfactory (S), 4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS), 3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU), 2 = Unsatisfactory (U), 1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability is rated on a 4-point scale: 4 = Likely (L), 3 = Moderately Likely (ML), 2 = Moderately Unlikely (MU), 1 = Unlikely (U)

Timeframe	Activity
By 04 August 2023	Application and selection of TE team
07 August 2023	Team leader contract start date
17 August 2023	Preparation period for TE team (handover of documentation)
25 August 2023	Document review and preparation of TE Inception Report
By 31 August 2023	Finalization and Validation of TE Inception Report; latest start of TE mission
01 September - 10 September 2023	Stakeholder meetings, interviews, etc. (virtually, as the project pilot areas included only sites for performing calculations)
20 September 2023	Mission wrap-up meeting & presentation of initial findings
By 5 October 2023	Preparation of draft TE report
By 12 October 2023	Circulation of draft TE report for comments and their incorporation
19 October 2023	Preparation and Issuance of Management Response and TE completion

7. TE DELIVERABLES

#	Deliverable	Description	Timing	Responsibilities
1	**TE Inception Report (Deliverable 1)**	Team leader clarifies objectives, methodology and timing of the TE	No later than 2 weeks before the interviews with stakeholders	Team leader submits Inception Report to UNDP Belarus CO and project management
2	**Presentation (Deliverable 2)**	Initial Findings	End of interviews: 20 September 2023	Team leader submits Inception Report to UNDP Belarus CO and project management
3	**Draft TE Report (Deliverable 3)**	Full report (*using guidelines on content outlined in ToR Annex C*) with annexes	Within 2 weeks at the end of interviews: 5 October 2023	Team Leader submitsto UNDP Belarus CO; reviewed by RTA, Project Coordinating Unit, GEF OFP
4	**Final TE Report* +Audit Trail (Deliverable 4)**	Revised final report and TE Audit trail in which the TE details how all received comments have (and have not) been addressed in the final TE report (*see template in ToR Annex H)*	Within 1 week of receiving comments on draft report: 19 October 2023	Team Leader submits both documents to the UNDP Belarus Country Office. Documents must be cleared by the Program officer and M&E Officer.

*All final TE reports will be quality assessed by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO). Details of the IEO's quality assessment of decentralized evaluations can be found in Section 6 of the UNDP Evaluation Guidelines[14].

8. TE ARRANGEMENTS

The principal responsibility for managing the TE resides with the Commissioning Unit. The Commissioning Unit for this project's TE is UNDP Country Office in Belarus. The Commissioning Unit will hire a team for conducting TE. The team will consist of Team Leader (internationally hired)

[14] Access at: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guideline/section-6.shtml

and National Evaluator (locally hired). The Commissioning Unit will contract the evaluators and ensure the timely provision of per diems and travel arrangements within the country for the TE team. The Project Team will be responsible for liaising with the TE team to provide all relevant documents, set up stakeholder interviews, and arrange field visits.

9. TE TEAM COMPOSITION

A team of two independent evaluators will conduct the TE - one team leader (with experience and exposure to projects and evaluations in other regions globally, International Evaluator) and one team expert from Belarus (National Evaluator). The terminal evaluation is planned remotely with three missions to pilot project areas only by the national evaluator. The International Evaluator is designated as the team leader and will be responsible for preparation of the entire TE review and respective TE deliverables mentioned above in line with this ToR, with inputs from the project. The National Evaluator will provide assistance to the International Evaluator in line with a separate ToR focusing on collection of the baseline data, organizing and participation in the interviews, survey, review of data etc., providing relevant information about Belarus (economic, social, environmental, legal, etc.), data collection and summarizing of the main points from the project's reports, interviews and monitoring data of the implemented pilots, originally existing in Russian. The evaluator(s) cannot have participated in the project preparation, formulation and/or implementation (including the writing of the project documents), must not have conducted this project's Mid-Term Review and should not have a conflict of interest with the project's related activities. The selection of consultants will be aimed at maximizing the overall "team" qualities.

ANNEX II: EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS

The following are the evaluation criteria identified in the evaluation's Terms of Reference.

Evaluation criteria	Key questions suggested
Relevance and Coherence	• How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities a the local, regional and national level?
Effectiveness	• To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?
Efficiency	• Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?
Sustainability	• To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?
Impact	• Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?
Gender Sensitivity and Empowerment of Women	• How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?

ANNEX III: EVALUATION MATRIX

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators/Success Standard	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Tools
Relevance and Coherence	How does the project relate to the main objectives of the GEF Focal area, and to the environment and development priorities at the local, regional and national level?	1. How aligned is the project with the GEF Focal area's strategic objectives? 2. Is the project in sync with the country's environmental and development goals? 3. Does the project fit into broader regional and national objectives?	1. Degree of alignment with GEF strategic documents. 2. Concordance with local policy documents and development plans. 3. Existence of endorsements or agreements from regional/national entities.	1. GEF strategic documents 2. Local policy papers 3. Regional and national planning documents	1. Documentary Review 2. Interviews with local stakeholders 3. Documentary Review
Effectiveness	To what extent have the expected outcomes and objectives of the project been achieved?	1. What percentage of the planned outcomes and outputs were realized? 2. Were any unintended but beneficial outcomes achieved?	1. Achievement rate of project outcomes against initial plans. 2. Incidence of positive unplanned outcomes.	1. Project reports 2. Beneficiary testimonials	1. Documentary Review 2. Interviews with local stakeholders 3. Documentary Review
Efficiency	Was the project implemented efficiently, in line with international and national norms and standards?	1. Were resources utilized optimally to achieve outcomes? 2. Did the project adhere to international best practices?	1. Expenditure variance and budget execution. 2. Alignment with international practices and standards.	1. Financial reports 2. Project reports	1. Documentary Review 2. Documentary Review
Sustainability	To what extent are there financial, institutional, socio-political, and/or environmental risks to sustaining long-term project results?	1. Is there a robust financial plan for post-project sustainability? 2. Are institutional arrangements in place for long-term project viability?	1. Existence of post-project financial sustainability plan. 2. Stability of institutional frameworks.	1. Project sustainability plans 2. Project reporting	1. Documentary Review 2. Interviews with institutional stakeholders
Impact	Are there indications that the project has contributed to, or enabled progress toward reduced environmental stress and/or improved ecological status?	1. Have environmental indicators improved as a result of the project? 2. Is there community feedback supporting ecological improvements?	1. Improvements in specified environmental indicators. 2. Community perception of ecological status.	1. Project reports 2. Stakeholder feedback	1. Documentary Review 2. Interviews with project stakeholders

Evaluation Criteria	Key Questions	Sub-Questions	Indicators/Success Standard	Data Sources	Data Collection Methods/Tools
Gender Sensitivity and Empowerment of Women	How did the project contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?	1. Were gender considerations integrated into project planning and implementation? 2. What has been the tangible impact on women's status as a result of the project?	1. Presence of gender-sensitive strategies in project documents. 2. Measured improvement in women's status indicators.	1. Project planning documents 2. Project assessments 3. Project reporting	1. Documentary Review 2. Interviews with project stakeholders

ANNEX IV: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Organization	Representative	Method of Engagement
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	Aksana Melnikovich, Deputy Head of Directorate of Regulation of Impacts on Air, Climate Change and Expertise Tatiana Kononchuk, Head of the Main Directorate of Environmental Policy, International Cooperation and Science	Online Interview
Republican Research Unitary Enterprise "Bel Research Center "Ecology"	Dmitry Melekh, Deputy Head of the Department of International Scientific Cooperation and Climate	Interview
Department of Energy Efficiency	Vladimir Shevchenok, Deputy Head of the Department for Scientific and Technical Policy and Foreign Economic Relations Tatiana Malievskaya, Deputy Head of the Department of Economy and Finances	Interview
Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange	Vitaly Tikhonov, Head of the Department for Prospective Development of the Analytics and Prospective Development Department.	Interview
National Consultants	Alesia Shatravko, National Consultant MRV Forestry, Logoisk Forestry Vladimir Bahach, National Consultant, MRV Wind power, Institute of Energy of NASB, Head of the Laboratory of Renewable Energy Sergei Aleksandrovich, National Consultant MRV Street lighting, Institute of Energy of NASB, Researcher at the Energy Security Laboratory Vadzim Nosnikau, National Consultant MRV Forestry, Belarusian State Technological University, Head of the Department Zinaida Nichiporovich, National Consultant MRV Wetlands, NASB Scientific and Practical Center for Biological Resources, Head of the Laboratory of Instrumental Diagnostics of Natural Systems and Objects	Online and Offline Interviews
Mission Plan for Field Work (by the national evaluator)	Three of the six project sites: Grichino-Starobinskoye Logoisk Nesvizh	Observation and Interviews
UNDP	CO Project Management: Viktoria Novikova, Project Manager Alena Anisimovich, Administrative and Finance Assistant Yuliya Brovko, Project Associate	Online and Offline Interviews

Organization	Representative	Method of Engagement
	CO Management Armen Martirosyan, Country Office Deputy Resident Representative Volha Chabrouskaya, Country Office Programme Analyst Katerina Kulik, Country Office RBM and M&E Analyst	Inception meeting
UNDP IRH	Jana Koperniech, Regional Technical Advisor Yeliz Oymen, Programme Associate	Online Interview

ANNEX V: DOCUMENTATION REVIEWED

Evaluation tools	Sources of information	
Documentation review	General documentation	• UNDP Strategic Plan 2021-2022 • UNDP Belarus Country Programme Document • UNDAF for Belarus • UN Belarus Annual Reports • UNDP Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures • UNDP Handbook for Monitoring and Evaluating for Results
	Project documentation	• Inception Workshop Report; • Project Identification Form (PIF); • Project Document; • Minutes of Project Board meetings; • Annual Workplans; • Quality Assurance reports; • Project Implementation Reports (PIRs); • Progress reports (quarterly, semi-annual or annual, with associated workplans and financial reports) • Oversight mission reports • Minutes of Project Board Meetings and of other meetings (i.e., Project Appraisal Committee meetings) • GEF Tracking Tools (from CEO Endorsement, midterm and terminal stages) • GEF/LDCF/SCCF Core Indicators (from PIF, CEO Endorsement, midterm and terminal stages); for GEF-6 and GEF-7 projects only • Financial data, including actual expenditures by project outcome, including management costs, and including documentation of any significant budget revisions • Co-financing data; • Reports prepared by project experts; • GEF Tracking Tools; • Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix.
	Third-party reports	• Including those of research institutes, NGOs, international organizations, etc.

ANNEX VI: PROJECT'S RESULTS FRAMEWORK

This project will contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goal (s): Primary impact: *SDG 13, Secondary impacts: SDGs 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15*				
This project will contribute to the following country outcome included in the UNDAF/Country Programme Document: UNDP Belarus Country Programme 2016-2020 (Output 3.1: Solutions developed at national and subnational levels for the sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste) and UNDAF for Belarus for 2016-2020 (Outcome 3.1: By 2020, policies will have been improved and measures will have been effectively implemented to increase energy efficiency and the production of renewable energy, to protect landscape and biological diversity, and to reduce the anthropogenic burden on the environment).				
This project will be linked to the following output of the UNDP Strategic Plan (UNDP SP): *OUTPUT 2.4.1 Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions strengthened, and solutions adopted, to address conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing of natural resources, in line with international conventions and national legislation* *OUTPUT 2.5.1 Solutions developed, financed and applied at scale for transformation to clean energy and zero-carbon development*				
	Objective and Outcome Indicators **(no more than a total of 15 -16 indicators)**	**Baseline[15]**	**End of Project Target**	**Data Collection Methods and Risks/Assumptions[16]**
Project Objective: to build Belarus' capacities to design and implement market-based climate finance mechanisms, to improve and continuously update NDCs, and to set-up a	Mandatory Indicator 1 (from UNDP SP): Existence of targets for low emission and climate-resilient development in: a) Development plans and strategies b) Budgets c) Private sector business plans and strategies	*INDC adopted in 2015 with national target until 2030 excluding LULUCF/AFOLU*	*NDC updated to include LULUCF/AFOLU sector and sectoral GHG emission reduction/absorption targets*	*Risk:* Consensus regarding the scope and level of ambitions of sectoral NDCs is not reached and updated NDCs are not adopted by 2020 *Assumption:* The project is endorsed and approved for implementation timely

[15] Baseline, mid-term and end of project target levels must be expressed in the same neutral unit of analysis as the corresponding indicator. Baseline is the current/original status or condition and need to be quantified. The baseline must be established before the project document is submitted to the GEF for final approval. The baseline values will be used to measure the success of the project through implementation monitoring and evaluation.
[16] Data collection methods should outline specific tools used to collect data and additional information as necessary to support monitoring. The PIR cannot be used as a source of verification.

robust MRV in the priority sectors	<u>Mandatory indicator 2 (GEF CCM Core Indicator):</u> Volume of investment mobilized and leveraged by the project for zero-carbon development, of which: - public (mln US$) - private (mln US$) [UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2023, Output 2.5.1] "Amount of resources brokered by UNDP for investment in renewable energy and zero-carbon development"	*N/a*	*2,2 mln US$ (public)*	Risks: Co-financing partners may lack resources to finance pilot MRV projects Assumptions: The level of funding under State Sector Program remains as foreseen at their time of their approval
	<u>Mandatory Indicator 3 (GEF CCM Core Indicator):</u> Direct GHG emission reductions over the investment life-time	*N/a*	*40,500 tCO2e*	Risks: Coordination issues and delay in activities may arise due to the need to synchronize decision-making for funding allocation for pilot projects between different agencies involved Assumptions: Funds allocated to finance pilot MRV projects
Component/Outcome [17] 1: Capacity building for improved NDCs and market-based climate	*Indicator 4:* Status and sectoral coverage of NDCs	*INDC adopted in 2015 with national target until 2030 excluding LULUCF/AFOLU*	*NDC updated to include LULUCF/AFOLU sector and sectoral GHG emission reduction/absorption targets (at least 2 sectors)*	*Risks:* The risk that a consensus regarding the scope and level of ambitions of sectoral NDCs is not reached and updated NDCs are not adopted by 2020 Assumptions: Sustained public policy support for Paris Agreement

[17]Outcomes are short to medium term results that the project makes a contribution towards, and that are designed to help achieve the longer term objective. Achievement of outcomes will be influenced both by project outputs and additional factors that may be outside the direct control of the project.

finance mechanisms to support NDCs implementation	*Indicator 5: Status of domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms*	*No domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms in place*	*Appropriate climate-finance mechanisms identified and roadmap for their implementation prepared and approved*	Risks: Lack of practical experience with climate finance mechanisms and lack of clarity regarding international framework for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement may jeopardize the process of introduction of appropriate climate finance mechanisms in Belarus. Assumptions: High level of national technical staff capability maintained
Component/ Outcome 2 Strengthened GHG accounting capacity and enhanced system of MRV	*Indicator 6 (based on GEF CCM Core Indicator and MRV rating system):* Quality of MRV System	*2: Measurement system is in place, but quality is different for different sectors. In particularly for AFOLU: data is of poor quality and methodologies are not sufficiently robust. Reporting is done only on request and there is no verification.*	*6: Measurement systems are strong and cover a greater percentage of activities/sectors, such as LULUCF. Reporting is regular (annual) and institutionalized. Verification is done through standard and internally accepted methodologies and protocols.*	Risks: The risk that a consensus regarding the scope of MRV coverage is not reached and required regulatory documents are not adopted Assumptions: Sustained public policy support for Paris Agreement
	Indicator 7: *Status of legal and regulatory framework for MRV*	*No regulatory provisions for MRV exist*	*Draft MRV Laws and a package of by-laws developed and proposed for adoption*	Risks: The risk that a consensus regarding the scope of MRV coverage is not reached and required regulatory documents are not adopted Assumptions: Sustained public policy support for Paris Agreement
Component/ Outcome 3	*Indicator 8: Scale of building sector MRV system (heated area covered by MRV) in line with international best practices and requirements*	*0*	*33,000 m2*	Risks: Coordination issues and delay in activities may arise due to the need to synchronize decision-making for funding allocation for pilot projects between different agencies involved

Demonstration Projects using MRV best practice				
				Assumptions: Funds allocated to finance pilot MRV projects
	Indicator 9: Scale of lighting sector MRV system (number of lighting fixtures covered by MRV) in line with international best practices and requirements	*0*	*4,300 m2*	
	Indicator 10: number of hectares (ha) of natural resources (forests, peatlands, etc) covered by MRV in line with international best practices and requirements	*0*	*230 ha*	Risks: Coordination issues and delay in activities may arise due to the need to synchronize decision-making for funding allocation for pilot projects between different agencies involved
				Assumptions: Funds allocated to finance pilot MRV projects
	Indicator 11: number of users and beneficiaries of pilot MRV systems, including female	*0*	*To be established at the inception phase when pilot MRV projects are identified*	Risks: Beneficiaries/data owners may not be willing to share the data
				Assumptions: MRV system for pilot project also cover socio-economic and gender impacts

ANNEX VII: ANALYSIS OF PROJECT'S RESULTS

This project will contribute to the following Sustainable Development Goal (s): Primary impact: *SDG 13, Secondary impacts: SDGs 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 15*				
This project will contribute to the following country outcome included in the UNDAF/Country Programme Document: UNDP Belarus Country Programme 2016-2020 (Output 3.1: Solutions developed at national and subnational levels for the sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste) and UNDAF for Belarus for 2016-2020 (Outcome 3.1: By 2020, policies will have been improved and measures will have been effectively implemented to increase energy efficiency and the production of renewable energy, to protect landscape and biological diversity, and to reduce the anthropogenic burden on the environment).				
This project will be linked to the following output of the UNDP Strategic Plan (UNDP SP): *OUTPUT 2.4.1 Legal and regulatory frameworks, policies and institutions strengthened, and solutions adopted, to address conservation, sustainable use and equitable benefit sharing of natural resources, in line with international conventions and national legislation* *OUTPUT 2.5.1 Solutions developed, financed and applied at scale for transformation to clean energy and zero-carbon development*				
	Objective and Outcome	**Baseline**	**End of Project Target**	**Status at the TE**
Project Objective: to build Belarus' capacities to design and implement market-based climate finance mechanisms, to improve and continuously update NDCs, and to set-up a robust MRV in the priority sectors	Mandatory Indicator 1 (from UNDP SP): Existence of targets for low emission and climate-resilient development in: a) Development plans and strategies b) Budgets c) Private sector business plans and strategies	*INDC adopted in 2015 with national target until 2030 excluding LULUCF/AFOLU*	*NDC updated to include LULUCF/AFOLU sector and sectoral GHG emission reduction/absorption targets*	The NDC of Belarus has been recently updated and communicated to the UNFCCC secretariat on 08 October 2021. The new update of the NDC of Belarus shall be communicated to the UNFCCC secretariat in the year 2025 and include the updated target for the year 2035, as required by Decision 6/CMA.3.

				To provide an analytical basis for the update of the NDC target of Belarus for the year 2035 and establish sectoral GHG emission/absorption targets, including the GHG emission reduction/absorption target for the AFOLU/LULUCF sector, (1) the detailed economic and GHG emission model until 2050 that covers all key economic sectors in Belarus (agriculture, forestry and other land use sector, the energy supply and demand sectors, passenger and freight transport, waste management and the industrial processes and product use sector). (2) The report "Climate Change Mitigation Scenarios, Costs, Benefits and Impacts for the Republic of Belarus until 2050" that presents the results of the economic and GHG emission modeling of all GHG emitting sectors of Belarus, including the LULUCF/AFOLU sector and provides GHG emission scenarios for each sector until the year 2050, estimates of costs of GHG reductions and sustainable development impacts, including gender, that has been used for establishing sectoral GHG emission reduction/absorption targets and updating the national NDC target of Belarus for the year 2035.

				The updated NDC target for the year 2035 has been agreed to be -37% below the 1990 levels and will be communicated by the government of Belarus to the UNFCCC in the year 2025, as required by Decision 6/CMA.3. The updated NDC target of Belarus for 2035 is an economy-wide emission reduction target that covers all sectors of the Belarusian economy, including LULUCF/AFOLU sector and contains sectoral GHG emission reduction/absorption targets. Recommendations on allocation of budgets for implementation of sectoral NDC targets and mitigation measures included in the scope of state sectoral programmes of each economic sector of Belarus to implement the updated NDC target for 2035 and advice on including appropriate allocation from the state budget has been provided and will be taken into account by the government of Belarus during the adoption of state sectoral programmes in 2025. In addition, the Long-term Low-GHG Emission Development Strategy of Belarus until 2050 has been developed to inform future work on the update of NDC of Belarus beyond the year 2035.

	Mandatory indicator 2 (GEF CCM Core Indicator): Volume of investment mobilized and leveraged by the project for zero-carbon development, of which: - public (mln US$) - private (mln US$) [UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2023, Output 2.5.1] "Amount of resources brokered by UNDP for investment in renewable energy and zero-carbon development"	*N/a*	*2,2 mln US$ (public)*	The total volume of investment mobilized for the implementation of MRV pilot projects constitutes USD 3,469,000, of which: -public USD 3,001,000 -private USD 468,000
	Mandatory Indicator 3 (GEF CCM Core Indicator): Direct GHG emission reductions over the investment life-time	*N/a*	*40,500 tCO2e*	41,140.5 tCO2e
Component/Outcome 1: Capacity building for improved NDCs and market-based climate finance mechanisms to	*Indicator 4:* Status and sectoral coverage of NDCs	*INDC adopted in 2015 with national target until 2030 excluding LULUCF/AFOLU*	*NDC updated to include LULUCF/AFOLU sector and sectoral GHG emission reduction/absorption targets (at least 2 sectors)*	The updated NDC target includes sectoral targets for the two major GHG emission/absorption sectors, the energy and LULUCF sectors, of which the energy sector is the major source of GHG emissions in Belarus responsible for over 63% of total national GHG emissions and the LULUCF sector is the

support NDCs implementation				major absorption sector responsible for absorption of 47% of total national GHG emissions of Belarus.
	Indicator 5: Status of domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms	*No domestic market-based climate finance mechanisms in place*	*Appropriate climate-finance mechanisms identified and roadmap for their implementation prepared and approved*	Appropriate climate finance mechanisms have been identified and the roadmap for their implementation has been prepared and approved. The identified climate finance mechanisms include the emissions trading system as well as sectoral mechanisms in the agriculture, forestry and other land use sector and municipal sector that includes the waste management, transport, energy, buildings as well as city-wide climate finance mechanisms. The roadmap of activities to ensure Belarus' compliance with requirements for participation in the market-based cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement has been developed. As an additional result, the legal and regulatory documents regulating the authorization of transfer of ITMOs under climate finance mechanisms (cooperative approaches) under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement towards third parties' NDC and the use of ITMOs from the third parties towards the NDC of Belarus has been developed.

Component/ Outcome 2 Strengthened GHG accounting capacity and enhanced system of MRV	*Indicator 6 (based on GEF CCM Core Indicator and MRV rating system):* Quality of MRV System	*2: Measurement system is in place, but quality is different for different sectors. In particularly for AFOLU: data is of poor quality and methodologies are not sufficiently robust. Reporting is done only on request and there is no verification.*	*6: Measurement systems are strong and cover a greater percentage of activities/sectors, such as LULUCF. Reporting is regular (annual) and institutionalized. Verification is done through standard and internally accepted methodologies and protocols.*	The MRV systems are strong and cover all sectors, including LULUCF. For the energy and industrial sectors where the facility-based MRV system is established, detailed recommendations and the roadmap for introducing the facility-level MRV system in the energy and industrial sectors of Belarus has been developed cover such elements as monitoring and reporting requirements, GHG monitoring/measurement and calculation procedures, reporting procedures and schedules, reporting platforms, quality assurance/quality control and data disclosure provisions. Recommendations and the roadmap for the establishment of the facility-based MRV system in the energy and industry sectors as well as the national legal and technical regulatory legal acts have been developed and agreed in order to enable and require the mandatory implementation of facility-based and project-based MRV systems in Belarus. The study tour to Kazakhstan has been organized for 11 Belarusian specialists that resulted in the increase of their knowledge and understanding of key design elements and the functioning of

				the facility-based MRV system in the energy and industrial processes sectors. For the AFOLU/LULUCF and urban/municipal sectors, four MRV methodologies and four MRV plans have been developed that cover: • mitigation activities in restoration of degraded peatlands by rewetting, • afforestation/reforestation activities, • energy efficiency in public street lighting • wind energy. The MRV methodologies and MRV plans have been pilot-testing in the six MRV pilot projects. Legal acts that mandate the implementation of MRV methodologies have been developed and agreed. In order to enhance the impact and sustainability of project results, an additional result that includes the development of 40 national MRV methodologies and step-by-step guidelines for the measurement, reporting and verification of the actual

				volumes of fuel and energy savings resulting from the implementation of 40 typical energy saving measures has been developed based on international best practice, internationally-recognized MRV standards, approaches and methodologies for the measurement, reporting and verification. As another additional result, an IT tool has been developed that enables the measurement, reporting and verification of the actual volumes of fuel and energy savings resulting from the implementation of 40 typical energy saving measures.
	Indicator 7: *Status of legal and regulatory framework for MRV*	*No regulatory provisions for MRV exist*	*Draft MRV Laws and a package of by-laws developed and proposed for adoption*	Draft MRV laws and a package of by-laws developed and proposed for adoption. A draft Law of the Republic of Belarus on climate change has been prepared in accordance with the requirements for the legislation of the Republic of Belarus, as well as the rationale for its adoption for the Council of Ministers and the architecture of by-laws and regulatory acts. The draft law on climate change has been currently incorporated by the Ministry of Environment in the Ecological Code Concept that has been

				currently developed by Ministry of Environment. A draft submission of the updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) of Belarus related to the achievement of climate targets under the Paris Agreement along with the draft package of documents for the Council of Ministers of Belarus for their approval of the updated NDC of Belarus have been developed in order to provide an overarching legally-binding policy framework for legislation on the measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of climate actions to achieve this overarching economy-wide climate target of Belarus. The Long-term Low-GHG Emission Development Strategy of Belarus until 2050 along with the package of documents for the Council of Ministers of Belarus for their approval of the Long-term Low-GHG Emission Development Strategy of Belarus until 2050 have been developed in order to inform future work on the update of NDC of Belarus beyond the year 2035 and, this way, to provide a long-term policy framework for legislation on

				measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of climate actions to achieve these overarching, strategic, economy-wide climate targets enshrined in NDCs of Belarus. The national legal and technical regulatory legal acts have been developed in order to enable and require the mandatory implementation of facility-based and project-based MRV systems in Belarus and include the requirements to systematically integrate MRV in the scope of the state sectoral programmes, design and MRV requirements of the facility-based MRV system to mandate the reporting of major industrial enterprises that represent key GHG emission sources, MRV methodologies for offset projects in AFOLU and municipal/urban sector, procedures for accreditation of verifiers of GHG emission monitoring reports, procedures for state control and enforcement of mandatory MRV requirements in the sectors covered by the NDC of Belarus.

Component/ Outcome 3 Demonstration Projects using MRV best practice	*Indicator 8: Scale of building sector MRV system (heated area covered by MRV) in line with international best practices and requirements*	*0*	*33,000 m2*	0 m2 1.8MW Wind turbine An alternative MRV project, Nesvizhsky 1.8MW Wind Power Project that deals with the installation of 1.8 MW wind turbine generator (WTG) for the captive use has been selected and approved by the Project Board. The reason for selecting the alternative MRV pilot project is that a similar MRV project and MRV methodology in the field of energy efficiency in buildings and heat supply systems supposed to be developed in Belarus by another technical assistance project funded by the World Bank. Funding allocated for these activities under the World Bank project includes funding for the development of the MRV methodology and funding for the implementation of the pilot project along with the establishment of the MRV system there, which is significantly higher than the funding allocated for these activities under this project, which covers the financial cost of developing the MRV methodology and costs of the MRV system, but does not include funding for the pilot project itself. Since the two technical assistance projects, the World

				Bank project and this project, include very similar objectives and activities it was decided to substitute the initially envisaged pilot project in energy efficiency in buildings with the above-mentioned Nesvizhsky wind power pilot.
	Indicator 9: Scale of lighting sector MRV system (number of lighting fixtures covered by MRV) in line with international best practices and requirements	*0*	*4,300 m2*	4,989 lighting fixtures the number of lighting fixtures is an absolute number, it cannot be expressed in m2, it was a mistake in ProDoc expressing the number of lighting fixtures in m2 instead of as an absolute number.
	Indicator 10: number of hectares (ha) of natural resources (forests, peatlands, etc) covered by MRV in line with international best practices and requirements	*0*	*230 ha*	485.6 ha
	Indicator 11: number of users and beneficiaries of pilot MRV systems, including female	*0*	*To be established at the inception phase when pilot MRV projects are identified*	**Women** 43 **Men** 55 **Total** 98

ANNEX VIII: TE RATING SCALES

The table below shows the scale used to rate the various dimensions of this evaluation. This is the standard scale used in GEF-funded projects.

Scale Rating	Description
6 = Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution exceeded expectations
5 = Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution met expectations.
4 = Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution more or less met expectations.
3 = Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution was somewhat lower than expected
2 = Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings; quality of implementation/execution was substantially lower than expected
1 = Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in the quality of implementation/execution
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation and execution

The table below shows the scale used to rate the various dimensions of the project's sustainability. This, as well, is the standard scale used in GEF-funded projects.

Ratings	Description
4	Likely (L) There are little or no risks to sustainability
3	Moderately Likely (ML) There are moderate risks to sustainability
2	Moderately Unlikely (MU) There are significant risks to sustainability
1	Unlikely (U) There are severe risks to sustainability
Unable to Assess	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability

ANNEX IX: SIGNED UNEG CODE

UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators[1]

Independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence or pressure by any party (including the hiring unit) and providing evaluators with free access to information on the evaluation subject. Independence provides legitimacy to and ensures an objective perspective on evaluations. An independent evaluation reduces the potential for conflicts of interest which might arise with self-reported ratings by those involved in the management of the project being evaluated. Independence is one of ten general principles for evaluations (together with internationally agreed principles, goals and targets: utility, credibility, impartiality, ethics, transparency, human rights and gender equality, national evaluation capacities, and professionalism).

Evaluators/Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.
8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained, and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.
9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Evaluator: **Uladzislau Vialichka**

Name of Consultancy Organization (where relevant): _____

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed at **Minsk** on **November 14, 2023**

Signature:

[1] Source: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100

UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluators[1]

Independence entails the ability to evaluate without undue influence or pressure by any party (including the hiring unit) and providing evaluators with free access to information on the evaluation subject. Independence provides legitimacy to and ensures an objective perspective on evaluations. An independent evaluation reduces the potential for conflicts of interest which might arise with self-reported ratings by those involved in the management of the project being evaluated. Independence is one of ten general principles for evaluations (together with internationally agreed principles, goals and targets: utility, credibility, impartiality, ethics, transparency, human rights and gender equality, national evaluation capacities, and professionalism).

Evaluators/Consultants:

1. Must present information that is complete and fair in its assessment of strengths and weaknesses so that decisions or actions taken are well founded.
2. Must disclose the full set of evaluation findings along with information on their limitations and have this accessible to all affected by the evaluation with expressed legal rights to receive results.
3. Should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual informants. They should provide maximum notice, minimize demands on time, and respect people's right not to engage. Evaluators must respect people's right to provide information in confidence, and must ensure that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source. Evaluators are not expected to evaluate individuals, and must balance an evaluation of management functions with this general principle.
4. Sometimes uncover evidence of wrongdoing while conducting evaluations. Such cases must be reported discreetly to the appropriate investigative body. Evaluators should consult with other relevant oversight entities when there is any doubt about if and how issues should be reported.
5. Should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty in their relations with all stakeholders. In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, evaluators must be sensitive to and address issues of discrimination and gender equality. They should avoid offending the dignity and self-respect of those persons with whom they come in contact in the course of the evaluation. Knowing that evaluation might negatively affect the interests of some stakeholders, evaluators should conduct the evaluation and communicate its purpose and results in a way that clearly respects the stakeholders' dignity and self-worth.
6. Are responsible for their performance and their product(s). They are responsible for the clear, accurate and fair written and/or oral presentation of study imitations, findings and recommendations.
7. Should reflect sound accounting procedures and be prudent in using the resources of the evaluation.
8. Must ensure that independence of judgement is maintained, and that evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.
9. Must confirm that they have not been involved in designing, executing or advising on the project being evaluated and did not carry out the project's Mid-Term Review.

Evaluation Consultant Agreement Form

Agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System:

Name of Evaluator: Elinor Bajraktari

I confirm that I have received and understood and will abide by the United Nations Code of Conduct for Evaluation.

Signed on 19 Nov 2023

Elinor Bajraktari

Signature: _____

[1] Source: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100

ANNEX X: SIGNED TE REPORT CLEARANCE FORM

Terminal Evaluation Report for the project *Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus* *(PIMS 6161, GEF ID 9895)*

Reviewed and Cleared By:

Commissioning Unit (M&E Focal Point)

Name: Katerina Kulik

Signature: DocuSigned by: Katerina Kulik E10D372E7131407... Date: 22-Nov-2023

Regional Technical Advisor (Nature, Climate and Energy)

Name: Jana Koperniech

Signature: DocuSigned by: Jana Koperniech ED5C241FBA2C457... Date: 22-Nov-2023

ANNEX XI: UNDP-GEF TE AUDIT TRAIL

To the comments received on (November 3, 2023) from the Terminal Evaluation of the project "Capacity Building for Emission Trading and Strengthened of Measurement, Reporting and Verification in the Republic of Belarus" (UNDP Project PIMS #6161)

The following comments were provided to the draft TE report; they are referenced by institution/organization (do not include the commentator's name) and track change comment number ("#" column):

Institution/ Organization	#	Para No./ comment location	Comment/Feedback on the draft TE report	TE team response and actions taken
UNDP RTA	1.	Executive Summary	Following the GEF TE Guidance is requested: Missing sections: • a concise summary of findings and conclusions • synthesis of the key lessons learned (bullet points; one-page maximum);	Addressed A paragraph on the lessons learned is added
UNDP CO	2.	Executive Summary	Correction of one of the ratings is needed	Addressed
UNDP CO	3.	Executive Summary	POCOMAS as a system for the collection of docs is established, UNDP Audit noted that usage of POCOMAS system by Belarusian CO is the best practice. More training on the proper usage is needed. The reports reflect project achievements, but may also reflect challenges	Not accepted. This project has incomplete data and reporting when it comes to the progress reports. It is important to ensure that the data is collected and readily available and also that the reporting is readable, clear and consistent.
UNDP CO	4.	Executive Summary / Long-Term Recommendations on Project Implementation	Lack of clearness regarding criteria and methodologies to demonstrate additionality	Addressed: statement regarding Demonstration of Additionality is clarified as "For projects related to carbon credit markets"
UNDP CO	5.	Executive Summary	The action plan cannot guarantee or secure adoption of the docs. Alternative - to prepare the list of docs needed to be adopted and to present at the final Project Board meeting	Not accepted, as the project's Results Framework has "approval" written throughout it.

UNDP RTA	6.	Introduction	Ethics sub-section is missing in the section.	Ethics sub-section is present down this section.
UNDP RTA	7.	3.2.3	Request to check and adjust the project years and annual budgets accordingly.	Checked but no mistake is found. It is confirmed by UNDP and project manager that there was no expenditure in 2019.
UNDP RTA	8.	3.2.3 Table 5	According to PIMs first year needs to be 2019 which is ProDoc signature date and expenditure is 0.	Addressed: added in a footnote
UNDP RTA	9.	3.3.3 Co-financing	Request to use the table Table 11. Co-Financing Table at TE Stage coming from TE Guide.	Not accepted: Project Manager hasn't provided Table 11 in proper format despite numerous requests.
UNDP CO	10.	5.Conclusions / Project results	Request to add mentioning in conclusions that MRV is done/ piloted for the first time in the country.	Addressed
	11.	5.Conclusions / Overall Project Performance Rating	Correction of one of the ratings is needed	Addressed
UNDP CO	12.	6.Recommendations	Request to reduce a total number of recommendations and make them as precise as possible. Short-term recommendations are not seen as realistic, since it has only 1,5 months of implementation left.	Not accepted, lacks specificity.
UNDP CO	13.	Annex IX	Please include 2 signed Code of Conducts here	Annexed in separate files

ANNEX XII: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE (Annexed in a separate file)

ANNEX XIII: CO-FINANCING TABLES (Annexed in a separate file)