



Evaluation of the UNEP Subprogramme on Climate Action, 2014-2023



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List of acronyms

AF	Adaptation Fund
AGR	Adaptation Gap Report
BUR	Biennial Update Report
CBIT	Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency
CCC	Climate Change Commission
COP	Conference of the Parties
CPR	Committee of Permanent Representatives
CTCN	Climate Technology Centre and Network
DO	Direct Outcome
DPR	Directory of Permanent Representatives
DRI	Directly Responsible Individual
DTIE	Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, now Industry and Economy Division
EA	Expected Accomplishment
EF	Environment Fund
EGR	Emissions Gap Report
ETF	Enhanced Transparency Framework
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EWAD	Early Warning and Assessment Division
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEBA	Friends of EbA
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
IKI	International Climate Initiative
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPMR	Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund

MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PA	Paris Agreement
PCP	Programme Coordination Project
PoW	Programme of Work
PPD	Policy and Programme Division
PPR	Programme Performance Report
REDD+	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
RSPC	Regional Subprogramme Coordinator
SCAF	Seed Capital Assistance Facility
SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SP-CA	Subprogramme on Climate Action
TNC	Third National Communication
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Executive Summary

1. The evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Subprogramme on Climate Action (SP-CA) reviews UNEP work related to Climate Action from 1 January 2014 up to mid-2023.

2. The SP-CA is one of seven UNEP subprogrammes, and one of three thematic subprogrammes. The evaluation assessed the SP-CA against standard evaluation criteria including relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. Particular focus was placed on several strategic questions outlined in the Terms of Reference. They are grouped into four areas of focus: 1) strategic relevance of the Subprogramme, 2) subprogramme design and structure, 3) the overall subprogramme performance on project, theme (programme) and subprogramme level, and 4) factors that affect the subprogramme performance.

3. To gather and analyze data for the evaluation, the team employed a mixed-methods approach. Semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth conversations with key stakeholders. A desk-based review of relevant documents provided additional context. Document analysis included several levels of UNEP's reporting, project evaluations, project and programming documents as well as the evaluation database of the UNEP Evaluation Office. The team also analyzed indicator hierarchies for the Subprogramme and employed contribution and process analysis to assess the subprogramme's performance. The evaluation's scope encompassed all projects and programs under the Programme of Work.

4. The evaluation took place during the establishment of a new Climate Change Division. This process reorganizes a significant share of the teams and projects that are reporting into the Subprogramme into one organizational unit of UNEP. Overall, about 30% of the project volumes will remain in other Divisions.

5. The evaluation finds that the subprogramme is strategically highly relevant for UNEP and the global community. The subprogramme addresses decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience efforts in a comprehensive way and covers the adaptation as well as the mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement including the transparency framework. In fact, UNEP is much more important for the climate conversation in general and the evolution and implementation of the Paris Agreement in particular than its own narratives imply.

6. The performance of the subprogramme in the PoWs with respect to achieving its targets is very high. The subprogramme demonstrated strong performance in achieving its targets from 2014-2023: 86 % of targets were fully achieved, while an additional 11 % were partially achieved (60 % or above). It was not possible to validate these results independently for reasons of indicator definition and documentation. Adaptation-focused work consistently met all targets across the time period covered by the evaluation. However, mitigation efforts and REDD+ initiatives fell short of some targets during the period. Project-level performance is Satisfactory on average, with the lowest ratings being on likelihood of impact and sustainability of results where the average rating is Moderately Likely.

Responses to strategic questions of the evaluation

7. **Strategic question 1:** Do the institutional structures and management arrangements for delivery of climate action work lead to effective delivery of climate action outcomes? How could the new Climate Change Division improve delivery? During the evaluation period, the responsibility for implementing climate change activities and the managerial oversight over projects vested largely with the Industry and Ecosystems Divisions. The SP-CA coordination function was responsible for overarching reporting on Climate Action. This coordination function is primarily responsible for ensuring that work on climate action is directed toward achieving the outcomes outlined in the Medium-Term Strategies and Programmes of Work. The evaluation team found that the work of the SP-CA coordination function was effective at achieving the MTS and PoW outcomes. Yet, some interviewees saw room for further synergies across the work of the subprogramme (for example, across adaptation and mitigation); better identification gaps in UNEP's work on climate action and for bringing together existing work within UNEP to address these gaps. The new Climate Change Division is created along the lines of the subprogramme, integrating over the three areas of Decarbonization, Adaptation and Resilience and Climate Science and Transparency (each of which is managed in the form of a "Programme Coordination Project" or PCP). Bringing them together will allow a more complete support on climate action to the countries and support them in the achievement of their goals set in the context of the Paris Agreement. On the other hand, the evaluation highlighted that merging adaptation and mitigation into one climate section is against the common trend towards higher specialization. And it is surprising that only 70% of the SP-CA projects by volume will be subsumed in the new Climate Change Division. The other 30% will be spread across other Divisions so that the managerial "distance" from important areas of Climate Action like Early Warning, Finance and Science will not be reduced.

8. **Strategic question 2:** How are ownership arrangements and synergies between the SP-CA and other thematic, foundational, and enabling UNEP subprogrammes made tangible and effective in order to deliver interconnected and mutually beneficial results? UNEP utilises a matrix approach to organize work across its thematic, enabling and foundational subprogrammes. In line with this structure, the theories of change for the SP-CA indicate a direct relationship between the eight 'Direct Outcomes' under the SP-CA and specific enabling and foundational subprogrammes (a feature common across UNEP's thematic subprogrammes). While this seems to work with respect to reaching the outcomes promised, it does not prevent double counting. In classical management theory, matrix structures include a reporting to several (normally 2) managers – but in UNEP, this is not implemented. An example and an important vehicle for UNEP to showcase its work interconnectedly are its flagship reports, such as the Emission Gap Report series. The Emission Gap Report series is an example of work that sits across the SP-CA and the subprogramme on Science and Policy. A key commonality across interviewees was the view that the report provides vital high-level context for the global response to climate change.

9. **Strategic question 3:** To what extent are reporting requirements met in terms of project-level results and the expectation that projects are also contributing to broader objectives and long-term goals such as Rio Markers that are dependent on contributions from multiple interventions? Reporting requirements in terms of project-level results are generally well met. Due to the high share of vertical fund projects and associated monitoring and reporting requirements, the reporting and evaluation rates are quite high. However, a recurrent critique of UNEP's reporting practices centers on the perceived inadequacy in capturing the impact of its activities. For example, project evaluations fail to capture higher-level targets, and for donor nations, a lack of specificity in reporting impedes their ability to effectively report successes within their own governance structures, potentially diminishing UNEP's visibility. And on the other hand, subprogramme reporting for MTS and PoW was for at least two thirds

of the evaluation period, limited to reach indicators with little qualitative and environmental impact-related content, limiting their explanatory power and the demonstration of on-the-ground progress. UNEP has now set up an Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting (IPMR) platform to allow the linking of resources and results frameworks.

10. **Strategic question 4:** To what extent do the vertical funds contribute to UNEP's work on climate action and UNEP's work more broadly on MTS priorities? The SP-CA receives a significant proportion of its funding from vertical funds, meaning dedicated climate finance mechanisms, specifically the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF). Most of UNEP's climate action-related projects are funded from vertical funds, i.e., fees and project budgets, rather than the UNEP Core Budget or Environment Fund. MTS priorities would not be in reach without the vertical funds. In response, UNEP has introduced thematic funds, aiming to strike a balance between donor control over resource allocation and increased predictability with some flexibility for UNEP within specific thematic areas.

11. **Strategic question 5:** To what extent are the partnerships with the GEF and the GCF influencing UNEP's climate action strategy, subprogramme and effectiveness of delivery? And to what extent has UNEP influenced international climate and environment funds? UNEP maintains an intense dialogue with the Secretariats as well as the Board/Council members and countries of the vertical Funds. This dialogue influences the fundraising, funding and programming strategies of the Funds in different manners, and thus in turn affects how UNEP's projects are funded, and which themes are funded. The evaluation found that UNEP utilizes the Funds in line with its own strategy. The evidence collected indicated that UNEP's climate strategy is developed by internal processes, as well as its dialogue with countries, and it seeks financing from the funds to implement it. There was also some evidence that UNEP was able to influence international climate and environment funds by developing certain topics and approaches. For example, the work of the SP-CA on ecosystem-based adaptation and electric mobility has influenced funding areas of the GEF.

12. **Strategic question 6:** *Where has UNEP's work on climate action been most impactful?* The SP-CA's impact is primarily manifested through its influence on member countries, facilitated by the provision of accessible and relevant scientific data on climate change. This knowledge enables member countries by providing guidance on ways to advance and specifically to formulate informed strategies. Another dimension of impact is the influence on the debate. UNEP's flagship reports, including publications such as the Adaptation Gap Report, the Emission Gap Report, and the Global Environment Outlook series, serve as crucial instruments of influence in this dimension. These reports distill complex scientific information into comprehensible and actionable insights for member states, as well as other organizations working in similar areas, serving as a starting point for many discussions. Another identified impact has been how UNEP plays a pivotal role in convening diverse stakeholders – member countries, NGOs, civil society organizations, businesses, and academia – to collaborate on various aspects in the field of adaptation and mitigation, including on reporting and influencing the UNFCCC negotiations. Lastly, UNEP has managed to start global climate action around specific topics. The evaluation discusses this specifically using the example of Ecosystem-based Adaptation. In this field, UNEP, IUCN and other partners created at critical mass of projects and activities on implementation as well as policy level which led to a general recognition of the value of the approach and a continued funding flow, including through the financial mechanism of the UNFCCC.

13. **Strategic question 7:** How have the predictability and stability of core budget allocations impacted on the quality and quantity of delivery on climate action? The evaluation found that predictability and stability of core budget allocations is not fully given for the SP-

CA. The SP-CA is exceptionally good at attracting extrabudgetary resources, therefore its core budget allocations are low as UNEP's high-level management allocates more core funding to subprogrammes that are less able to attract extrabudgetary resources. There were various and often conflicting viewpoints regarding the impact of this allocation paradigm. On one hand, stakeholders argued that this process allows UNEP to cover a broad range of issues including in areas that are not able to attract extrabudgetary funding. On the other hand, it was argued that the SP-CA suffers from the uncertainty surrounding core funding, as it leads to problems regarding strategic planning and fosters a feeling of unfairness among staff. While the evaluation could not find evidence of negative performance impacts, there was a sentiment that focus on project-based work leads to a perpetuation of similar activities (i.e., projects are replications of existing projects because funding is available) and opportunities for innovation may be missed. However, the evaluation did not find evidence for that, and managers claimed that typically, funds (including extrabudgetary funds) can be found for innovative ideas.

Recommendations

14. **Recommendation 1: UNEP should continue to create and manage knowledge-cum-implementation partnerships around important climate solutions.** In climate action, speed is of the essence, and UNEP should enhance it by systematically leveraging the recipes and lessons from functioning partnerships and apply them to new initiatives. Partnerships have been part of the organization's strategy for a long time. For some of UNEP's flagship partnerships, people have forgotten that they started out as a partnership, for example, the IPCC, or the REN21. Programmes such as the Global Programmes of the GEF (Electric vehicles, Cities) model a role for UNEP as a knowledge broker and facilitator who links implementation experience between different countries. UNEP's specific trait is that it can link global advocacy and science-based knowledge management with action on the ground, in a sectoral, global-umbrella-with-country-pillars approach. By streamlining its priorities and leveraging its strengths as a knowledge-based and normative organization through strategic partnerships, UNEP can potentially enhance its overall effectiveness in tackling climate change and avoid being distracted into areas that do not play to its strengths. For example, UNEP and UNDP are increasingly leveraging each other's strengths through improved cooperation. Working with IUCN and UNDP, UNEP has promoted EbA to become a mainstream activity. Similar collaborations can and should arise with other organizations – and increasingly these might not be international networks, but more and more local organizations as environmental competence is built up around the globe.

15. **Recommendation 2: UNEP should develop more strategies to provide countries with readily applicable information on solutions for both mitigation and adaptation measures.** One way to enhance speed is to enhance efficiency. Already at the level of funding applications, "cookie cutter" projects are a standing practice (cf. PCP on Adaptation and Resilience and GCF NAP funding). But some in the organization doubt that it is UNEP's role to repeat successful approaches and that it should focus on innovation. On the other hand, for UNEP, understanding country action is important to remain relevant. While highlighting gaps in high-level science-based publications is important to provide a call for action, communicating and providing scalable solutions might be a more active contribution to overcoming the challenge. The organization should develop (digital) tools for available solutions based on evidence and provide active knowledge management on what works (and not only on what are the gaps) – and lobby for their implementation through its networks. If this can be linked with the scientific core and approach of the organisation, this can ensure that scientific knowledge is effectively translated into actionable information.

16. **Recommendation 3: Internally, UNEP should improve transparency and communication on resource allocation and should enhance clarity on where long-term resources are needed to ensure continuity versus where project-based initiatives are better suited.** The evaluation underscores the critical need for improved communication regarding resource allocation within UNEP, impacting both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, a lack of transparency in resource allocation processes leads to budgetary unpredictability for the subprogramme as well as a lack of clarity regarding the availability of staff resources. This not only hinders the development of strategic long-term plans but is also resulting in staff dissatisfaction. Externally, donor countries have also expressed discontent with the current system, citing difficulties in tracing the flow of their contributions. This lack of transparency hinders their ability to demonstrate the impact of their investments that may lead to a decrease in contributions to the Environment Fund and a shift towards earmarked funding. While the introduction of thematic funds represents a potential step forward, further strategic development is necessary to ensure their effectiveness. Decisions cannot be based on valid assumptions about the functioning and needed resources without a remapping of the existing staff positions to the subprogrammes.

17. **Recommendation 4: UNEP should fully implement its strategic paradigm and strive to utilize indicators that are tied to the Paris Agreement, suited for management and reporting and able to demonstrate UNEP’s contribution to filling the gap.** The Paris Agreement of 2015 gives a clear direction where climate action should go, in its Article 2.1 – a) holding temperature rise to well below 2 degrees, b) increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, and c) making financial flows consistent with this pathway. The subprogramme demonstrates a strong alignment of its objectives and activities with the Paris Agreement, e.g., with the objectives outlined in the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025. But UNEP could go even further. The EGR and AGR tell us exactly where to focus our attention on climate action. UNEP has formulated the strategic objective of “Climate stability” in its MTS 2022-2025, which is “where net zero greenhouse gas emissions and resilience in the face of climate change are achieved.” (UNEP, 2021, p. 20) The expected 2030 outcome of the subprogramme is that “...government and non-government development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement.” (UNEP, 2021b, p. 22) But where the outcome indicators need become more operational – coming down from this global target – they do not become sufficiently specific to guide action.

18. The operational indicators from the PoWs and MTS below that level are merely focused on accountability and mostly express reach. They count – for example - the number of policies, but do not take into account relevance, ambition levels or effectiveness of policies. “Investment leveraged” can be seen as measuring UNEP’s contribution to climate action but the levels that can be leveraged by UNEP will always pale in comparison to the gaps reported in UNEP’s own reports, and thus cannot be meaningfully related to the gaps, either. Generally, UNEP’s indicators do not measure the contribution of the organization towards “closing the gap”. This means that the PCPs and thematic Divisions cannot use these indicators for their internal strategic coordination or demonstrate that they cover the gaps in climate action as demonstrated by EGR and AGR. The PCPs still base their Theories of Change on the SP-CA building blocks, lacking a coherent or complete programme logic behind it – and thus, also no (or very few) SMART indicators. But as the current MTS already follows the Paris Agreement’s logic, closing the gaps on the lower-level indicators is possible with the next PoW.

19. Last but important, the indicator reporting seems transparent, but the spot check of the evaluation team was unable to reproduce the indicator counts or validate them with country level information. This can also be traced back to the nature of the indicators, which need improvement – and this is not the first evaluation to highlight this.

20. **Recommendation 5: Further clarify roles and responsibilities of SP-CA involved staff, including integration of the SP-CA coordination function in the new Climate Change Division.** Noting the establishment of the new Climate Change Division, if greater clarity is desired with respect to the roles of the SP-CA coordination function (Policy and Programme Division, global subprogramme coordinator, regional subprogramme coordinator, other staff), and UNEP's divisions and regional offices on climate action, then UNEP could consider supplementing the UNEP Delivery Model Policy 2022 with a high-level outline of the functions of the divisions, regions and subprogramme coordination function on climate action, including specifying a DRI for specific areas such as engagement with external partners. This could be implemented as a test run in 2024 – 2025, i.e., in the final phases of the current MTS.

21. **Recommendation 6: UNEP should increase practical relevance and internal utilization of flagship reports by improving coordination and communication across divisions.** UNEP employs the EGR and similar gap analyses and similar gap analyses to identify potential areas for intervention by contrasting scientific findings with the current state. By leveraging these analyses to inform its approach and projects on climate action, UNEP could achieve a more strategic direction. This would necessitate enhanced internal coordination and communication within the organization. These efforts could involve systematically evaluating which findings hold the most relevance for UNEP's collaborations with member countries and exploring how these insights can be translated into solution-oriented deliverables.

22. **Recommendation 7: UNEP should increase its leadership visibility in the global climate action arena.** If UNEP wants to be perceived as a champion and a trendsetter in climate action through its activities and products, the organization will need to make itself more visible at the major negotiations, such as the COP. UNEP apparently lacks a prominent public figure who embodies the organization's work on climate change. This makes it harder for stakeholders to recognize UNEP's contributions and hold UNEP accountable. The new Director will need to make an effort to become a prominent spokesperson for UNEP's climate efforts, raising public awareness and accountability. UNEP's senior leadership recognizes the need to enhance its performance on climate action. This is evident in the interim Director's consolidation plan for the new Climate Change Division, which resonates with several key recommendations of this evaluation, including strengthening partnerships, fostering internal cooperation within UNEP, and increasing engagement with UNFCCC and COP negotiations (UNEP, 2024b).

1 Introduction

23. The evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Subprogramme on Climate Action (SP-CA) reviews UNEP work related to climate change from 1 January 2014 up to mid-2023 (Programmes of Work (PoW) 2014/2015, 2016/17, 2018/19, 2020/2021, 2022/2023) against standard evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact) as specified in the Terms of Reference (ToR) (Annex IV). The mandate for the evaluation by the UNEP Evaluation Office covered all projects and programmes under the PoW. It did not extend to the work undertaken by UNEP Multilateral Environmental Agreement Secretariats. SP-CA work in support of multilateral environmental agreements falls within the evaluation scope.

24. The objectives of the evaluation of the SP-CA are to improve subprogramme design, coordination and delivery by providing information on strategic positioning, portfolio planning, management arrangements and programme implementation. The evaluation supports accountability by analyzing, at a meta level, the performance of all the subprogramme projects evaluated during the evaluation period. Secondly, it contributes to institutional learning by providing formative reflections based on further analysis of the subprogramme's effectiveness as a coherent and coordinated unit within UNEP's results framework, and by providing lessons that are relevant to its role in the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2022-2025.

25. The evaluation report was prepared during the last stages of the establishment of a new Climate Change Division, which reorganized the teams and projects that report into the subprogramme into one organizational unit of UNEP. The formulated objective of that reorganization is to bring greater coherence, impact and visibility to UNEP's work on climate change (UNEP, 2023c). The establishment of a new division was announced in early February 2024 (UNEP, 2024b). Lessons and recommendations from the work on climate action under the previous setup will be helpful for the new division. Additionally, the evaluation insights will provide guidance for the development of the next MTS.

26. The evaluation considers the extent to which, in the period under review, UNEP was able to meet its objective as stated in MTS 2014-2017: "to strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being" (UNEP, 2015, p. 27), and in MTS 2018-2021: as "countries increasingly transition to low-emission economic development and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change" (UNEP, 2016, p. 23), as well as progress made towards the objective in the MTS 2022-2025 "government and non-government development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement" (UNEP, 2021, p. 22).

27. The evaluation also responds to the strategic questions formulated in the ToR.

1.1 Evaluation audience

28. The immediate and primary users of the Evaluation are the members of the UNEP Senior Management Team, and specifically the incoming Director of the new Climate Change Division, subprogramme coordinators and all UNEP entities and staff involved in the SP-CA, the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA).

29. The evaluation is intended to provide insights not only into the past performance of the subprogramme, but to also provide insights into the establishment /early operational existence of the new Climate Change Division. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), composed of UNEP staff closely associated with the Subprogramme, was established to provide strategic direction and increase credibility and legitimacy of the evaluation process across the evaluation stakeholders.

30. Interest in the evaluation is likely to be shown by other stakeholders and partners, including: the UN Secretariat, UN entities or other international bodies working on climate action, commissions and committees, donors, non-government organization (NGOs) and civil society groups, research centers and academia, et cetera.

1.2 Approach and methods for the evaluation

31. The Terms of Reference of the evaluation delineated four areas of focus: 1) strategic relevance of the subprogramme, 2) subprogramme design and structure, 3) the overall Subprogramme performance and 4) factors that affect the Subprogramme performance. Furthermore, nine strategic questions were listed in the ToR, which were assigned to the areas of focus to better integrate them into the analysis (see chapter 4 of the Inception Report for details). The evaluation findings in this report are presented within this framework.

32. To gain a deeper understanding of specific evaluation aspects, the evaluation team conducted two in-depth analyses, or "deep dives," focusing on ecosystem-based adaptation and science-to-action. These themes allowed the team to explore both adaptation and mitigation strategies, analyze developments over time within these areas, and develop richer narratives around challenging evaluation questions. Findings specific to each deep dive were integrated into the relevant sections of the report. General information about the deep dives can be found in separate text boxes:

- Box 1. Deep dive - UNEP and ecosystem-based adaptation
- Box 3. Deep dive – science to policy

33. The evaluation questions derived from the areas of focus were operationalized in an evaluation matrix by the evaluation team. Due to the interrelatedness of the evaluation questions and the geographically distributed nature of the evaluation team across countries, the work on the evaluation team proved to be demanding.

34. The evaluation team applied semi-structured interviews, a desk-based review, reconstructed the Theories of Change, as well as contribution and process analysis to collect and analyze the findings (for details on the methods, see chapter 4.6 of the Inception Report and Annex V of this report). The evaluation team interviewed a total of 33 individuals, including UNEP staff, representatives from other UN organizations, NGOs, donor countries, and large funding mechanisms. In total, 60.4% of the interviewees were men, 39.6% women. (see Annex I.). Importantly, these included individuals involved in the subprogramme's planning, implementation, and strategic alignment.

35. The evaluation team analyzed and coded thematic and strategic documents to understand the subprogramme's position within sectoral and global contexts, as well as UNEP's efforts at national, regional, and global levels. This analysis included various UNEP reports (annual, programme performance, quarterly), flagship reports (Adaptation Gap Report

(AGR), Emission Gap Report (EGR)), and financial/budget reports. A complete list of reviewed documents is available in Annex II.

36. Due to resource limitations, data from the projects still under implementation were included to a limited extent. Project lists were available but hard to interpret and limited with respect to annual funding and deeper description of project contents. A more complete database was available for project evaluations. The portfolio of project evaluations under the SP-CA for the period 2014 until 2023 (March) comprised 64 Terminal Evaluations and 5 Mid-term Evaluations (see Table 1). The following analysis focused on the evaluated project portfolio. Standard evaluation criteria of the evaluation results were available for evaluations completed in this period. The average number of project evaluations conducted annually over the period was 6.4. However, there were some deviations from this average. Notably, the years 2017 and 2018 saw a significant increase in evaluations conducted, with 14 and 11 evaluations, respectively. Conversely, in 2019 and 2021, there was lower evaluation activity, with only 2 and 3 projects assessed in each of those years.

Table 1. Evaluations of projects in the Climate Action Subprogramme (2014-2023)

Type of evaluation	Number of evaluations
Terminal Evaluation	64
Mid-term Evaluation	5
Total	69

Source: List of evaluated projects from UNEP Evaluation Office

1.3 Limitations to this evaluation, including data challenges

37. The evaluation team faced a number of limitations. The information available on the projects, evaluated as well as current projects, of the SP-CA were fragmented and did not allow a fully systematic analysis. This issue was made more problematic as there was only limited access to a centralized project information system. The indicator frameworks and extent of performance data available were limited, so consolidated assessment of effectiveness across the portfolio was limited. Financial reporting of UNEP is also often not available at the level necessary for in-depth analysis.

38. The evaluation faced a challenge due to the complex landscape of climate change initiatives. Numerous organizations and institutions tackle this issue, often collaborating in partnerships and networks. This complexity presented two hurdles: Firstly, distinguishing the specific boundaries of the evaluation and pinpointing all relevant actors was challenging. There's a possibility the team might have inadvertently overlooked a stakeholder or missed crucial interconnections between them. And secondly, assigning the SP-CA's specific influence, particularly on global advancements and improvements, became difficult when so many parties strive towards similar goals. Specifically, it is unknown to the team whether there is significant work on climate change or towards climate action ongoing in UNEP that is not part of the SP-CA.

39. The implementation of the SP-CA is currently based on three Programme Coordination Projects (PCPs), or the "programmes". These cluster projects around a core theme. As the PCPs have been in place for less than 2 years, their performance cannot yet be assessed. Yet, the themes have a longer tradition within UNEP's SP-CA and the evaluation grouped the projects that had been evaluated around these themes into "Proxy-PCPs" to

assess if there were any systematic differences between them. The discussion on the performance of the “programmes” in section 2.4.2 is based on these Proxy-PCPs.

40. At this point, there is some degree of generational change as well as reorganization taking place within UNEP. Interviewees were often in a stage of transition to a new role or moving into retirement. Overall, the organizational setup was in a state of transition, and some transitions had already taken place (e.g., a reorganization of some of the subprogrammes), particularly in light of very long period from 2014 to 2023 covered by this evaluation. This might lead to a situation where some of the statements have limited long-term validity or are already outdated at the time of writing (where stakeholders referred to earlier periods). A more significant change is the creation of the new Climate Change Division which took place during the evaluation. It led to institutional changes and a focus of interviewees on current processes, rather than the long history of the subprogramme that is expected to be the focus of this report. In addition, it rendered some points moot.

2 Findings on the subprogramme on Climate Action

2.1 SP-CA background, strategic overview and portfolio

41. UNEP addresses the multifaceted environmental challenges of the contemporary era through seven Subprogrammes. These Subprogrammes function as the operational pillars of UNEP, each focusing on a distinct yet interconnected domain. The organization utilizes these Subprogrammes to coordinate and report on work across UNEP’s primary thematic areas of work. They are a planning and reporting structure that coordinates work across these primary thematic areas undertaken by UNEP’s Divisions and Regional Offices.

42. UNEP has identified the triple planetary crisis as its main call to action. This triple crisis arises from the confluence of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and it is the basis for its MTS 2022-2025 which is structured around three thematic subprogrammes. Climate Action is one of them. Nature Action and Chemicals and Pollution Action are the other two. These thematic subprogrammes align with UNEP’s pivot toward addressing the triple planetary crises and new strategic objectives of climate stability, living in harmony with nature, and towards a pollution-free planet. Ultimately, the subprogrammes, including the SP-CA, are designed to implement UNEP’s vision for planetary sustainability and human health and well-being (UNEP, 2021). In addition to these three thematic subprogrammes, there are foundational (Science-policy, Environmental Governance) and enabling subprogrammes (Finance and Economic Transformations, Digital Transformations).

43. Subprogrammes are the building blocks of the MTS which capture UNEP’s vision and direction for all activities over the coming four years. MTs are implemented through biennial Programmes of Work (PoW) and the corresponding budgets. Both frameworks contain relevant indicators for their respective period of validity. The PoW put the focus on the strategic objectives that are outlined for the three thematic Subprogrammes. It also includes a Theory of Change (ToC) for each of the three strategic objectives.

44. Work on climate mitigation and reporting to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has a long history in UNEP, as it was one of the first agencies that was able to access climate finance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), with the Restructured GEF in 1994. On a similar note, UNEP has been a Green Climate Fund (GCF) accredited entity since 2015. With the advent of climate finance for adaptation

purposes, first with the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)/ Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and then with the Adaptation Fund (AF), its role in adaptation to climate change has also grown stronger. As one of the biggest, at times the biggest, Subprogramme the climate change portfolio grew to more than 200 million USD per year for the 2022-2023 biennium (UNEP, 2022a).

45. This historic development has a significant consequence for the portfolio on Climate Action: The work on climate mitigation and enabling activities was led by the Industry and Economy Division, located in Paris, with strong support of the collaborating center in Denmark. The work on climate adaptation was led by the Ecosystems Division located at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi. In addition, the other substantive Divisions, Law Division and Early Warning and Assessment Division are also working on climate action: as climate change is one of the biggest threats to the environment and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is considered one of the best-known Multilateral Environmental Agreements, as well as one of the most significant financing arenas, specialists from all these areas within UNEP, which are now organized in (thematic, enabling and foundational) Subprogrammes are also doing work on climate change. The work is therefore distributed across many organizational units within the organization.

46. UNEP recently established three Programme Coordination Projects (PCPs) under the SP-CA. PCPs have been established under all of UNEP’s subprogrammes. The PCPs have a coordinating project manager who is the directly responsible individual (DRI) and manages work within the PCP. The manager is a senior staff member from the substantive Division in which the work primarily takes place. These PCPs are managed by the Divisions. The global subprogramme coordinator has oversight across all three PCPs. The objective of the PCPs is to provide greater coordination and coherence across UNEP’s projects and project pipeline within the subprogrammes including the SP-CA. Evidence collected by the evaluation team indicates that the PCPs will also help reporting and strategy development as they bring together all UNEP’s work on the three main thematic areas under one organizational structure. The PCPs were formally approved in mid-2023 and broadly correspond to the three outcomes on climate action under the MTS. The three PCPs are: Adaptation and Resilience; Decarbonization; and Climate Science and Transparency. The evaluation team understands that prior to the PCPs the SP-CA utilized less formal programmatic descriptions that fulfilled a similar function to the PCPs (but except for Adaptation without a budget) and that this concept is now standardized across UNEP via the PCPs.

47. In order to partially remedy the split of the operational climate work across Divisions, UNEP’s Executive Director announced the establishment of a new Climate Change Division on 1 February 2024, i.e., during the evaluation process. At the finalization of the evaluation, the division was being managed by an interim Division Director (UNEP, 2024b). However, only the climate action projects and staff that were organized in the Ecosystems Division and Industry and Economy Division moved into the new Climate Change Division, not those that are organized in other Divisions.

48. The subprogramme is funded through a number of different sources, as shown in Table 2. Contributions come from the Environment Fund, the regular budget, trust funds and other earmarked contributions as well as the global (‘vertical’) funds.

Table 2. Subprogramme Climate Action budget (in USD million)

Funding source	2014-2015	2016-2017	2018-2019	2020-2021	2022-2023*
Environment Fund	39.5	42.0	32.3	22.2	24.0

Funding source	2014-2015	2016-2017	2018-2019	2020-2021	2022-2023*
Regular Budget	3.1	4.1	3.8	5.5	4.5
Trust Funds & Earmarked Contributions	46.5	84.8	112.6	144.8	90.5
Global Funds	subsumed under Trust Funds	subsumed under Trust Funds	29.5	83.5	103.9
Total	89.1	130.9	178.2	256.0	227.4

Source: PPR 2014-2015, PPR 2016-2017, PPR 2018-2019, PPR 2020-2021, PoW 2022-2023

*For 2022-2023, the proposed financial resource requirements are shown.

49. Most of UNEP's projects are funded from so-called vertical funds, i.e., dedicated climate finance mechanisms, specifically the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Adaptation Fund (AF). Most UNEP project staff and other staff are therefore funded by project budgets and fees rather than the UN Regular Budget or UNEP's Environment Fund.

50. In 2022, aiming to enhance the flexibility of its funding model, UNEP established three novel thematic funds at the Special Session UNEP@50 at the fifth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA). These funds directly relate to the three planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, the key tenet of UNEP's MTS 2022-2025. Thematic funds are designed to facilitate more efficient and strategic programming, enable long-term planning horizons, and ultimately influence environmental policies through targeted resource allocation for both operational and normative activities (UNEP, n.d.a). Both donor representatives and UNEP staff interviewed have expressed support for the thematic funds and they anticipate enhanced transparency in fund allocation, improved donor visibility, and ultimately, a more agile UNEP empowered by this financial innovation. This initiative was too young to be considered in the evaluation and in parallel to this evaluation a review effort was ongoing. Similarly, as the PCPs were established only a bit more than a year ago, their actual impact on subprogramme performance cannot be assessed yet. Their budget is funded to a significant degree or fully from the thematic funds.

2.2 Subprogramme strategic relevance

2.2.1 Strategic relevance of the subprogramme

2.2.1.1 UNEP's mandate and global role in climate change

51. As the environmental arm of the United Nations, UNEP is perceived by both internal and external stakeholders to have a very important and highly relevant role to play in supporting its stakeholders when they are addressing climate change. UNEP is seen as playing several important roles on climate action: the global champion for the environment, convenor, advisor and information provider, capacity builder, and project implementer.

52. Internal and external interviewees emphasized UNEP's work on science-based insights, norms, and project-related work, with external stakeholders focusing on the value of the high-level context provided by reports such as the EGR, and internal stakeholders more focused on the role of UNEP's normative work. UNEP is one of two carrier organizations of the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). UNEP is an important supporter and “confidante” of many Southern countries, for example, through national communications and Biennial Update Reports (BURs) but also mitigation and adaptation projects, and they in-turn use UNEP as a sounding board for their negotiation position. While UNEP’s project-related work was also acknowledged, this was viewed as less important. Interviewees emphasized how UNEP’s climate action work fits within its broader mandate on the environment. But the limited scale and lack of in-country presence were identified as factors that were perceived to have the potential to hamper effectiveness and efficiency on that level.

53. The organization itself has formulated its overall role in slightly different ways over the decades. In the Programme Performance Report (PPR) 2016-2017 the self-description reads: “UN Environment Programme is the lead organization to coordinate environmental matters within the United Nations system.” (UNEP, 2018, p. v) The most recent MTS 2022-2025 reads: “UNEP was tasked with coordinating global responses to environmental challenges and related emerging issues, within and outside the United Nations, while keeping watch over the state of the world’s environment and linking science to policymaking.” (UNEP, 2021, p. 4) The difference in tone seems indicative of an enhanced level of ambition regarding the organization’s role and relevance that will be traced through the rest of these documents in the following.

54. As UNEP has defined climate change more recently as one of the three major planetary crises, it is logical that UNEP sees a strong mandate on climate action for itself (UNEP, 2021). Accordingly, climate stability” is one of the “three interlinked and mutually reinforcing strategic objectives” that sit at the core of MTS 2022-2025 (UNEP, 2021, p. 4). Here, climate stability is described as a situation “where net zero greenhouse gas emissions and resilience in the face of climate change are achieved.” (UNEP, 2021, p. 20) Previous MTS also saw climate change as an important field of action, but with significantly less intensity. MTS 2014-2017 and MTS 2018-2021 saw climate change as one of seven priority areas, with the expected outcome (in the latter) of “Transitioning to low-emission economic development, enhancing adaptation and building resilience to climate change” – a significantly softer language (UNEP, 2015, 2016, p. 22). Early MTS language seems to indicate that climate change is bad for nature which creates a role for UNEP while in the most recent statements, climate change is an environmental crisis threatening all life.

2.2.1.2 UNEP and the Paris Agreement

55. While all MTS explicitly discuss linkages to the multilateral environmental agreements, the relevance attached to the Paris Agreement of 2015 as a guiding light for UNEP’s action is notably stronger in the most recent MTS than in its predecessors. In the MTS 2018-2021, UNEP focused on its traditional areas of support for countries. These areas primarily involve government processes, such as the development of national plans and programs (including Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) and the development of low-Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission strategies by 2020). Energy efficiency, reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD+) and ecosystem-based adaptation are mentioned comparatively briefly. The main vehicle mentioned in the strategy is the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN) even though other projects make up the bulk of the work. None of these three fields are linked explicitly to the Paris Agreement, but they seem to be developed from the existing portfolios and the nature-related mandate of the organization.

56. In contrast, the MTS 2022-2025 highlights that “Keeping a clear focus on the Paris Agreement is essential for guiding climate action in line with sustainable development”, indicating a much broader understanding of the institutional mandate, with a considerably

more ambitious overarching objective and a clear focus on the Paris Agreement. In the MTS, it is stated that "The expected 2030 outcome of this UNEP subprogramme is that 'government and non-government development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement.'" (UNEP, 2021, p. 22) These changes are reflected in the establishment of a dedicated outcome under the MTS and PoW, which are focused on the Enhanced Transparency Framework (ETF) under the Paris Agreement. All 2025 Outcomes relate to the Paris Agreement. This was noted by interviewed stakeholders who perceived that UNEP has responded to changes in the international policy context and especially compared to the 2014-2017 and 2018-2021 MTS where the outcomes and indicators were kept more or less constant. Nonetheless, several interviewees perceived a degree of path dependency in UNEP's work on climate change as outlined within the MTS.

57. Table 3 provides a comparison between the tasks and mandates from the Paris Agreement and the response in UNEP's MTS.¹ The Paris Agreement formulates its overall goals in Article 2.1. The adaptation and mitigation goals are then specified further in other articles. Some of them have been aggregated in individual lines in the table. Others, like the Paris Agreement Implementation and Compliance Committee (PAICC) (Art. 15) and most of the following articles are purely UNFCCC internal and bear no role for UNEP. On the other hand, there are articles that specifically call on the United Nations specialized organizations and agencies, like paragraph 8 of Article 7. Notwithstanding the fact that UNEP is not a specialized organization or agency of the UN, but as a programme of the UN Secretariat, it is almost certain that the negotiators had UNEP (among others) in mind when drafting this paragraph. This can be interpreted such that UNEP wants to provide contributions to all areas of the Paris Agreement, unlike in earlier phases where issues were treated more selectively.

Table 3. UNEP Climate MTS statements mirrored against the Articles of the Paris Agreement

Mandate from Paris Agreement (Article)	MTS 2014-2017	MTS 2018-2021	MTS 2022-2025
Stabilizing temperature increase, domestic mitigation measures, Non-market approaches (Art 2.1a, 4, 6.8, 6.9)	Low Emission Approaches (energy efficiency, renewable energy)	REDD+, energy efficiency, low-GHG development plans, increase in investments in clean energy (PoW ind.)	Climate stability as an objective, EA 1.A
Voluntary cooperative approaches to transfer mitigation outcomes (Art 6)	"carbon assets" projects from past periods	(Projects)	(Projects)
Carbon sinks (Art 5.1), reducing emissions from forest stock (Art 5.2)	REDD+	REDD+ (EA), increase in countries that have secured financing for REDD	
Increasing the ability to adapt to climate change, Global Goal on Adaptation (Art 7, 2.1.b)	Ecosystem-based and supporting adaptation approaches	NAPs, EbA,	Climate stability as an objective, EA 1.A
International cooperation on adaptation efforts, Cancun Framework (Art 7.6 – 7-8)		(Projects)	(Projects)
Making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards these goals (Art 2.1.c)	(Projects)	(Projects)	Indicators under EA 1.C

¹ This comparison is by necessity a matter of judgement and the Paris Agreement often leaves open how intensely a task needs to be approached and does not always describe the expectations from the UN agencies. Specifically, the level of detail with which the mandates from the Paris Agreement need to be listed in such a table cannot be objectively defined and is not the same across all lines.

Mandate from Paris Agreement (Article)	MTS 2014-2017	MTS 2018-2021	MTS 2022-2025
Climate Finance (Art 9)	Access to finance mentioned	access to climate finance (is a PoW ind. in all three fields)	Indicators under EA 1.C
Loss and Damage, incl. Early Warning Systems, climate risks and emergencies, Warsaw Mechanism (Art 8)	(Projects)	(Projects)	(Projects)
Technology Mechanism (Art 10)	CTCN, (TNA)	CTCN, (TNA)	(CTCN) (TNA)
Capacity Building (Art 11)	Planning and legislative advice; overall objective ²	(Projects, CBIT)	EA 1.B, (CBIT)
Climate change education and awareness (Art 12)	Mentioned	Projects, other divisions/subprogrammes	Indicator iv under EA 1.B
Enhanced transparency framework, national communications, Global Stocktake (Art 13, 14)	(Enabling Activities)	(Enabling Activities, CBIT)	EA 1.C, (CBIT)
nationally determined contributions	promoting integration of better approaches in national development planning processes		EA 1.A
Observing and representing at the CMAs (Art 16.8)	x	x	x

Legend: Red: not mentioned and not implemented. Orange: not mentioned for the programming period but implemented.

58. Table 3 demonstrates how UNEP has clearly aligned its MTS and PoW with the Paris Agreement in the current period. The 2025 Outcomes and PoW indicators provide excellent coverage of the objectives and tasks spelled out in the Paris Agreement. The organization has fully adopted the mandate that in the implementation of the Paris Agreement is to care for the environment, and intentionally included keywords from the agreement in the MTS 2022-2025. In the previous MTS periods, the alignment was less clear. In fact, both MTSs were less aligned with the UNFCCC work than the project portfolio. For example, while so-called Enabling Activities (a full-cost funding modality of the GEF for reports of Non-Annex I countries to the UNFCCC) are a standard modality of UNEP and fully aligned with the climate agenda, it was not part of the EAs or PoW indicators in the earlier two MTSs. Similarly, the focus on redirecting financial flows has not been highlighted in the earlier two MTSs even though the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE), now Industry and Economy Division, was very active in this area with projects like SCAF and its partnership with the Frankfurt School. Many individual projects of the SP-CA serve mandates from the Paris Agreement without being mentioned in the MTS (yellow in Table 3).

59. Overall, the MTS, even in its current form, does not fully reflect the scope of UNEP's work and the relevance of it for the Paris Agreement. UNEP's important services for the Convention and the Paris Agreement are not completely and consistently mentioned in the MTS. For example, mechanisms that are highly relevant for many countries in fulfilling their obligations under the convention and that are specifically designed and funded to serve Articles 13 and 10, like CTCN or Enabling Activities or work on the ETF, are not mentioned in the MTS. It is noteworthy that these kinds of activities also can be expected to influence the negotiations and the international agreements, i.e., UNEP's work also has relevance for the

² "The objective of the climate change subprogramme is to strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being." (UNEP, 2015, p. 27)

climate regime. But there is no narrative that fully describes these roles that UNEP plays for the climate issue.

60. In addition, a few stakeholders noted that UNEP is not necessarily always pulling its weight in the global arena. Specifically, higher management is not always sufficiently present at the negotiation venues, and there is no "Climate-Face" of UNEP. This is expected to be one of the main tasks of the Director of the new Division on Climate Change (UNEP, 2024b).

2.2.1.3 The subprogramme’s coverage of UNEP’s mandate on climate change

61. The Climate Action subprogramme is explicitly referred to in the MTS as the vehicle for the transition to climate stability. The priorities of the SP-CA are identified in the various MTS and PoW documents and were determined as part of the development of UNEP’s MTS. The MTS is ultimately submitted to and agreed by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA). Throughout the three MTS periods covered by this evaluation, the SP-CA’s outcomes have covered a total of four primary outcomes: a) climate change mitigation, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, climate-resilient and low emission pathways; b) adaptation including an ecosystem-based approach; c) REDD+; and d) the ETF under the Paris Agreement. The ETF-related outcome was added as an outcome under the MTS 2022-2025 replacing REDD+ as one of the three outcomes (see Table 4).

Table 4. From Expected Accomplishments in 2014 to Outcomes in 2025

MTS 2014-2017	MTS 2018-2021	MTS 2022-2025
Climate Change	Climate Change	Climate Action
Objective: The objective of the climate change Subprogramme is to strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being.	Objective: Countries increasingly transition to low-emission economic development and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change	Objective: Climate Stability
EA 1. Climate resilience: Ecosystem-based and supporting adaptation approaches are implemented and integrated into key sectoral and national development strategies to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts.	EA1. Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation	Outcome 1: Decision-makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways
EA 2. Low emission growth: Energy efficiency is improved and the use of renewable energy is increased in partner countries to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants as part of their low emission development pathways.	EA 2. Countries increasingly adopt and/or implement low GHG development strategies and invest in clean energy	Outcome 2: Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement

<p>EA 3. REDD-plus: Transformative strategies for and finance approaches to the enhanced mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD-plus) are developed and implemented by developing countries that aim at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and bringing multiple benefits for biodiversity and livelihoods.</p>	<p>EA 3. Countries increasingly adopt and implement forest-friendly policies and measures that deliver quantifiable emission reductions and social and environmental benefits.</p>	<p>Outcome 3: State and non-state actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement</p>
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Source: UNEP, 2015, 2016, 2021b

62. As discussed in the section on Paris Alignment, beyond these three outcome areas there are many other activities within UNEP that deal with climate change. Several activities, including flagship reports are not reflected in these indicators. It is noteworthy that the indicators and outcome statements of the most recent MTS are part of a cross-SP system which is discussed in section 2.3.3.

2.2.1.4 Conclusion on the strategic relevance of the subprogramme for UNEP and the global community

63. Overall, the work of the subprogramme as described in these analyses is highly relevant to the global decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience efforts, covers the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement including the transparency framework.

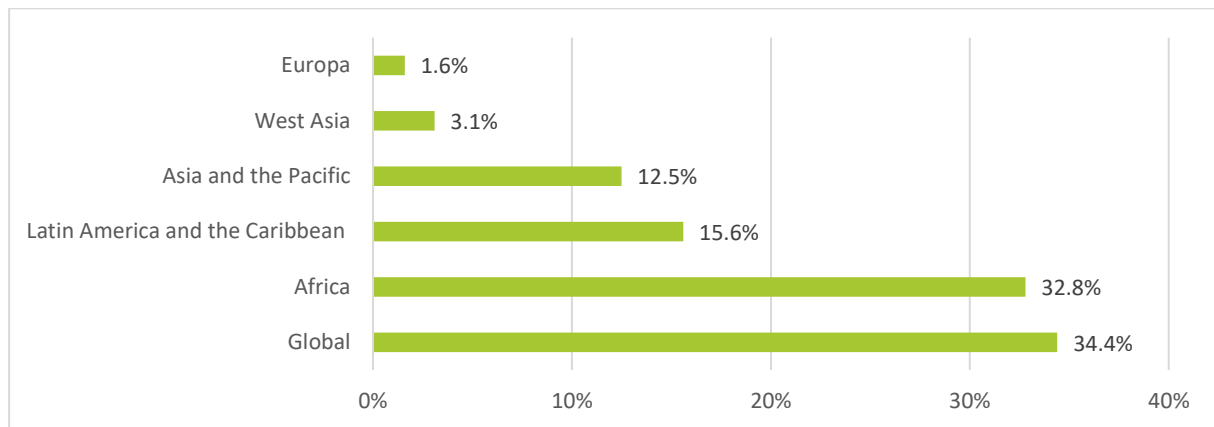
2.2.2 The geographic scope of the subprogramme and the relevance of the SP-CA and UNEP's work on climate action for countries

2.2.2.1 Geographic scope of the subprogramme and its adequacy with respect to global priorities

64. UNEP has an extensive project portfolio under the SP-CA. The evidence collected by the evaluation team from internal and external stakeholders suggested that many of the primary factors contributing to the country selection of these for projects under the SP-CA are outside of UNEP's direct control, being the needs and interests of countries themselves and responding to the requirements of bilateral and multilateral funding sources. For example, the GCF's policy requirement for funding Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) helps ensure geographic spread and a focus on countries most in need. At the same time, several interviewees from within UNEP's substantive Divisions working on climate change suggested that UNEP should be more strategic and focus more on areas where countries have the greatest need and where the organization can have the greatest impact. However, overall UNEP's project portfolio on climate action was broadly seen as having an appropriate geographical scope, including across LDCs and SIDS.

65. Figure 1 illustrates, the evaluated projects demonstrate a clear geographical focus on developing countries, with Africa receiving the largest share (32.8%, a total of 21 Projects). A similar proportion of projects were classified as "global", i.e., addressing multiple countries in more than one region. Fewer projects were implemented in Latin America and the Caribbean (15.6%, a total of 10 Projects) and Asia and the Pacific (12.5%, a total of eight Projects).

Figure 1. Geographic distribution of evaluated projects (2014-2023)



Source: List of evaluated projects from UNEP Evaluation Office

66. Looking at this in a more differentiated manner, through the lens of thematic portfolios (Table 5), the evaluated projects of the three thematic portfolios were geographically diverse, with 28 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 50 in Africa, 25 in Asia and the Pacific, five in West Asia and one in Europe, and a portion (19) implemented globally. The PCP Adaptation and Resilience programme focused on 66 projects, with a strong emphasis on Africa (33 projects). 14 projects were in the Asia and the Pacific region. While 11 were in Latin America and the Caribbean, five were implemented globally.

67. By comparison, Table 5 shows the geographic distribution of active projects by themes of the actual PCPs. With the PCP Climate Science and Transparency, a total of 32 projects are associated. In Africa and the Latin America and the Caribbean region, there are ten projects located each. Six projects are situated in the Asia and Pacific region, and only two in West Asia. Four projects are implemented globally. The PCP Climate Science and Transparency comprises a total of 32 projects. Of these, ten projects are located in Africa, as well as in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Six projects are implemented in the Asia-Pacific region, with only two in West Asia. Four projects are implemented globally.

68. The PCP Decarbonization focuses on 44 projects. The largest group among these are the ten projects implemented on a global scale. Additionally, seven projects each are in Africa and the Latin America and the Caribbean region. Five projects are in the Asia-Pacific region, while only one is in West Asia. For many projects in the PCP Decarbonization, the exact location is not yet known as they are still in the planning phase.

69. In the PCP Adaptation and Resilience, all projects under active implementation are listed. In the PCPs on Decarbonization and Climate Science and Transparency, new project ideas are also included alongside existing portfolios.

70. Compared to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) energy portfolio, the comparatively strong focus on Latin America is important as UNDP's portfolio there is the smallest of all regions (UNDP Evaluation Office, 2021). On the other hand, UNDP has a comparatively strong portfolio in Asia. The two agencies therefore complement each other to some extent in the area of mitigation, assuming that evaluated projects are indicative of the ongoing and future portfolios.

Table 5. Geographic distribution of active projects of PCPs*

PCP themes	Africa	Latin America & the Caribbean	Asia & the Pacific	West Asia	Europe	Global	n.a.	total
Adaptation and Resilience	33	11	14	2	1	5	0	66
Climate Science and Transparency	10	10	6	2	0	4	0	32
Decarbonization	7	7	5	1	0	10	14	44
total	50	28	25	5	1	19	14	

Source: UNEP, n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.e; *Projects implemented in multiple countries were assigned to multiple categories

71. This emphasis among developing countries aligns with adaptation and REDD+ initiatives; however, interviewed donor country representatives questioned the mitigation portfolio’s limited focus on high-emitting developed countries (see Table 6).³ The representatives argued that UNEP could provide some further assistance in supporting ambitious climate targets as well as promoting further international cooperation on, e.g., research, development, or deployment of low-carbon technologies.

Table 6. Active projects of the PCPs

PCP themes	LDC	SIDS	LLDC	High emission countries
Adaptation and Resilience	40	5	15	1
Climate Science and Transparency	10	4	6	1
Decarbonization ⁴	1	0	0	2

Source: UNEP, n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.e

72. However, it needs to be added that for some of these discussions the number of projects is not a very strong indicator because it aggregates over single-country projects and regional projects which might include countries from different regions, economic status and vulnerability levels.

2.2.2.2 Strategic relevance of evaluated projects for countries

73. The project evaluations assessed the strategic relevance of the projects. Projects are seen to be relevant when they are suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor (UNEP Evaluation Office, 2023). Evaluated projects were consistently assessed to be of very high relevance, with an average rating of 5.56 throughout the evaluation period. All projects received ratings in the Satisfactory range, between Moderately Satisfactory and Highly Satisfactory. The lowest average scores were shown 5.00 in 2016 and 5.20 in 2015 (see Figure 2).

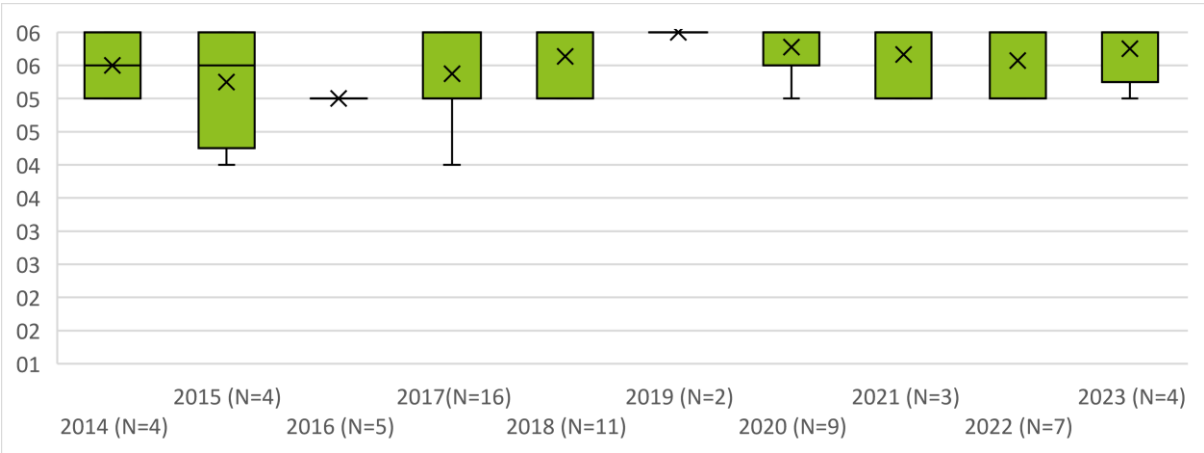
³ The number of projects is a weak descriptor as projects can be tailored differently.

⁴ The majority of Decarbonization projects is regional or global in nature so that it cannot be fully assessed to what degree their work takes place in these country groups. Also, the source is the original PCP document – more projects have been added since.

Table 7. Rating scale

Rating scale			
1	Highly Unsatisfactory	Highly Unfavorable	Highly Unlikely
2	Unsatisfactory	Unfavorable	Unlikely
3	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Moderately Unfavorable	Moderately Unlikely
4	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Favorable	Moderately Likely
5	Satisfactory	Favorable	Likely
6	Highly Satisfactory	Highly Favorable	Highly Likely

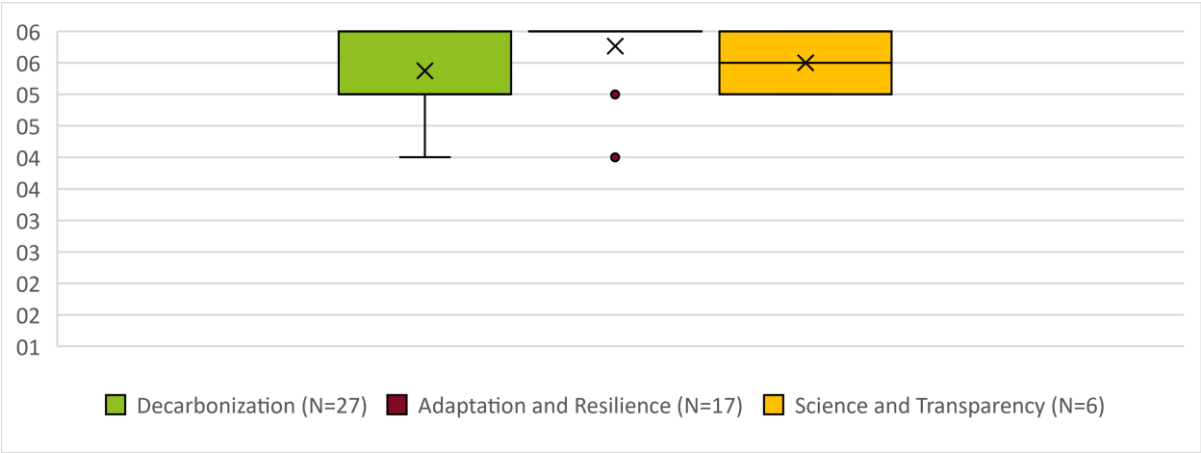
Figure 2. Strategic relevance rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

74. Across all the three thematic portfolios, projects were found to be relevant or highly relevant with very few exceptions. While the median for Decarbonization stands at five, it reaches 5.5 for Climate Science and Transparency, and even six for Adaptation and Resilience. The median score for strategic relevance in the thematic portfolio of Adaptation and Resilience slightly surpasses that of the other thematic portfolios but it is unclear if that is a true effect or an artefact. The majority of the outcomes fall within the range of Highly Satisfactory. Only two evaluated projects within this theme received ratings of Moderately Satisfactory and Satisfactory (see Figure 3). In the case of the project “Adapting water resource management in the Comoros to expected climate change”, the evaluator criticized that the project’s focus on climate change was reduced in the course of project modifications.

Figure 3. Strategic relevance rating of projects associated with thematic portfolios (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

2.2.2.3 Strategic relevance of UNEP for the UNFCCC

75. Given the urgency of achieving the Paris Agreement targets, novel and innovative approaches to climate mitigation and adaptation are crucial. UNEP positions itself as a key player in this regard, fostering the development, identification, and dissemination of pioneering ideas to advance the global response to the climate crisis. A successful example of this approach is EbA⁵ (see Box 1).

⁵ EbA refers to the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services as elements of a strategy to assist people in adapting to the detrimental effects of climate change (UNEP, UNDP and IUCN, n.d.).

Box 1. Deep dive - UNEP and ecosystem-based adaptation

UNEP's work on ecosystem-based adaptation serves as a noteworthy example of how UNEP was able to become a leader on a specific issue globally and how it has translated expertise into tangible impact. UNEP's work in this domain has demonstrably shaped its image and reputation. Interviews indicated that EbA is perceived as a core element of UNEP's climate action efforts, enhancing its relevance and making its name as a trendsetter, attracting increased donor interest. Interviewees conducted for the evaluation confirmed that UNEP is widely recognized as a thought leader and central player in ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA).

A significant pioneering project was the Ecosystem-based Adaptation in Mountain Ecosystems, implemented collaboratively by UNEP, Germany's Federal Ministry of Environment, UNDP, and IUCN, alongside the governments of Nepal, Peru, and Uganda. This project, which ran from 2010 to 2016, was one of the first large-scale efforts to demonstrate the economic viability of EbA and raise awareness of its potential within the field of adaptation.

While not the first to introduce the term ecosystem-based adaptation (initially used by IUCN and partners in 2008 at COP14), UNEP swiftly adopted the term in 2009, evidenced by numerous publications discussing EbA measures, e.g., in the UNEP Climate Change Strategy (UNEP 2010). Since then, the organization has implemented or is currently implementing 49 EbA projects. While similar approaches, such as ecosystem-based management, were discussed earlier in the climate change context, the concept of EbA in its strictest sense gained traction in the late 2000s. After UNEP began implementing EbA projects in 2010, initial uptake was slow, with only one to four projects being launched annually until 2015. Project implementation saw a significant increase between 2016 and 2019, with 2017 (eight projects), 2019 (seven projects), and 2016 (five projects) seeing the most project launches. Since 2020, the number of new EbA projects has noticeably declined, possibly due to the growing prominence of the term "Nature-based Solutions" in international discourse.

UNEP's EbA portfolio demonstrates a focus on multi-ecosystem projects (24 out of 49). Coastal zones (12 projects) and forests (six projects) are the next most targeted ecosystems. Funding for these initiatives primarily comes from the Least Developed Countries Fund (27 projects), the Adaptation Fund (six projects), and the Green Climate Fund (six projects).

While UNEP independently implements most EbA projects, UNEP leveraged existing partnerships with organizations such as IUCN and UNDP, to co-implement numerous EbA projects. This collaborative approach fostered knowledge exchange and enhanced project reach. Other collaborating organizations include IUCN, FAO, and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration.

76. In fact, looking at some of the large-scale science-based and capacity building efforts around the UNFCCC – e.g., IPCC or CTCN – that directly match with the needs and mandates of the convention, UNEP's practical influence on the negotiations should not be underestimated. In addition to providing thematic stimuli to the climate community (as in the case of EbA), UNEP puts a bit of its "DNA" (as a country-driven intergovernmental organization without a local office whose main counterparts are governments) into each of these efforts, and thereby shapes how climate action "is done". In addition, UNEP's influence on countries' ambition level on climate, as well as their negotiation stance should not be underestimated. None of these aspects are mentioned in the strategic documents before the MTS 2022-2025.

2.3 Subprogramme design and structure

77. The evaluation was asked to “assess the extent to which the overall performance of the SP-CA has been affected (in terms of effectiveness and efficiency) by the way it is designed, structured, and integrated with other Subprogrammes and management structures.” The evaluation has considered the internal coherence and logic between Expected Accomplishments (EA), Programme of Work (PoW) outputs and project outcomes. Particular attention was given to how well the results of the subprogramme were formulated and logically organized, including the appropriateness of performance indicators to measure progress towards planned achievements. With reference to the Theory of Change for the subprogramme the evaluation assessed the extent to which the intermediate states, drivers and assumptions underlying the Subprogramme change process have been well thought through and articulated. Overall, the evaluation considered whether a dedicated subprogramme in climate action has helped to better define and coordinate UNEP’s climate change activities.

2.3.1 Internal coherence of EAs, PoW outputs and project outcomes

78. Table 8 provides a comparison of the indicators that have been included in the PoWs since 2014. These and the EAs are the indicators that projects report towards regarding their contribution to the SP’s Results (see Table 8).

79. It is evident that the logic of these indicators has changed with the current MTS and the PoW 2022-2023. In earlier periods, the number of indicators was larger and split between adaptation / resilience, decarbonization and REDD+, in alignment with the three EAs. Now, the PoW indicators are aggregating over these areas and are measuring the results of the SP-CA rather than being an aggregate of the projects’ results. Specifically, the new indicators on public opinions might not be based on reporting by projects but rather measured through activities like (project-independent) opinion surveys or research products.⁶ This already provides larger coherence in the reporting of the SP.

80. Also, a persistent critique of the indicators in the earlier MTS was that they consisted of reach indicators only with insufficient outcome orientation (MOPAN, 2021). Table 8 provides a compilation of the PoW indicators and a colour coding by their outcome orientation. Most indicators of the PoWs 2014-2021 were related to the number of instances in which UNEP supported, for example, the “number of countries” that were changing policies or implementing approaches without a qualitative minimum standard⁷ or any follow-up on whether or not these policies ever became effective. Such indicators did not capture whether the instances of UNEP support were impactful for the global environment. A few indicators were more higher-level outcomes,⁸ including one indicator that was consistently used from the PoWs 2016 – 2021 measuring increased finance (it replaced the reach indicator “number of financial institutions” of PoW 2014). Other indicators,⁹ specifically in the adaptation field, related to a capability in the country (e.g., readiness for accessing climate finance, institutional arrangements for the coordination of National Adaptation Plan (NAPs)) and this measured

⁶ Stakeholders doubted that resources were available for qualitative research. The column in the indicator table on p. 16 in the PoW 2022-2023 mentions UNEP FI reports as well as reports by the UNEP Land Use Finance Programme as sources for information.

⁷ These are colored in white in the table.

⁸ Highlighted in green in the table.

⁹ Highlighted in blue in the table

readiness rather than action.¹⁰ The current indicator system is reducing the number of reach indicators to two. In addition, the indicator for climate action is now to some degree more measuring a paradigm shift.¹¹ Generally, thus, the current set of indicator marks a trend towards a larger share of higher-level indicators in the PoW.

81. Overall, thus, the trend to higher coherence in the current MTS is confirmed by the changes in PoW indicators. The main critique of the reach indicators in contrast to higher-level outcome indicators is of course that the effect of the project portfolio on the global environment is not captured and the indicators do not incentivize ambition in the projects – a weak policy counts exactly as much as a strong policy. On the other hand, it was comparatively easy for a project to report on these indicators and comparatively easy for the subprogramme to give an aggregated indicator measurement across all projects. To what degree the current indicator system is efficient in reporting and stronger in supporting results orientation is yet to be seen.

¹⁰ While that could be called a result of UNEP it is not a satisfactory success indicator as countries might be in a position to do these things but still not do it.

¹¹ It now refers to “actors” that “adopt climate change mitigation and/ or adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies and policies with UNEP support” rather than countries that have institutions in place or technical capacity to integrate or coordinate.

Table 8. Comparison of PoW indicators (2014-2023)

PoW 2014-2015	PoW 2016- 2017	PoW 2018-2019	PoW 2020-2021	PoW 2022-2023
Indicators	Indicators	Indicators	Indicators	Indicators
1. Increase in the number of countries implementing ecosystem-based and other supporting adaptation approaches as a result of UNEP support	1. Increased number and percentage of countries implementing concrete ecosystem-based and other supporting site-based adaptation initiatives, with the assistance of UNEP	1. Increase in the number of countries supported by UNEP with institutional arrangements in place to coordinate national adaptation plans	1. The number of countries supported by UNEP with institutional arrangements in place to coordinate national adaptation plans	Number of national, subnational and private sector actors that adopt climate change mitigation and/or adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies and policies with UNEP support
2. Increase in number of countries incorporating ecosystem-based and supporting adaptation approaches in key sectoral and development plans with the assistance of UNEP	2. Increased number and percentage of countries that have progressed in integrating ecosystem-based and other adaptation approaches into sectoral and national development strategies , with the assistance of UNEP	2. Increase in the number of countries that have technical capacity to integrate ecosystem-based management into national adaptation plans	2. The number of countries supported by UNEP that have technical capacity to integrate ecosystem-based management into their national adaptation plans	
		3. Increase in the number of countries that are ready to access or that have accessed climate change adaptation finance to implement adaptation plans.	3. The number of countries supported by UNEP that are ready to access or have accessed climate change adaptation finance to implement adaptation plans.	
	Increased percentage of renewable energy in the global energy mix (including breakdown by countries assisted by UNEP)			

	Increased percentage of countries meeting energy efficiency standards in specific sectors, with support from UNEP			
Increase in number of countries implementing new renewable energy and/or energy efficiency initiatives with the assistance of UNEP	Increased number of programmes and projects on the transfer of advanced technologies in the area of renewable energy or energy efficiency implemented by countries, with the assistance of UNEP			
	Increased number of policies implemented and actions taken by countries to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and other climate pollutants as a result of UNEP-led public-private partnership initiatives	Increase in the number of countries supported by UNEP that make progress in adopting and/or implementing low greenhouse gas emission development plans, strategies and/or policies.	The number of countries supported by UNEP that make progress in adopting and/or implementing low greenhouse gas emission development plans, strategies and/or policies.	
Increase in number of countries adopting and implementing REDD-plus strategies incorporating multiple benefits with the assistance of UNEP.	Increased number and percentage of countries that have progressed through both of the following steps in the development and implementation of REDD-plus strategies: step (i): national REDD-plus readiness plan approved; step (ii): national or subnational climate change strategies recognize investments based on REDD-plus as a means for transformation	Increase in the number of countries that have secured finance, including performance-based finance, for the implementation of REDD-plus policies and measures.	Countries securing finance, including performance-based finance, for the implementation of REDD-plus policies and measures	

<p>5. Increase in number of finance institutions demonstrating commitment of resources to clean technology investments as a result of UNEP's supports</p>	<p>Increased climate finance invested for clean energy as a result of UNEP engagement</p>	<p>Increase in climate finance invested by countries or institutions for clean energy, energy efficiency and/or amount of decarbonized assets</p>	<p>Climate finance invested by countries or institutions for clean energy, energy efficiency and/or amount of decarbonized assets, with UNEP support.</p>	<p>ii. Amounts provided and mobilized in \$ per year in relation to the continued existing collective mobilization goal of the \$100 billion commitment through to 2025 with UNEP support</p> <p>iii. Number of national, subnational and private sector actors reporting under the enhanced transparency arrangements of the Paris Agreement with UNEP support</p> <p>iv. Positive shift in public opinion, attitudes and actions in support of climate action as a result of UNEP action</p> <p>v. Positive shift among private sector actors in support of climate action as a result of UNEP engagement</p>
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2.3.2 Internal coherence of the Theories of Change of the programmes and the subprogramme

82. UNEP provides a ToC to show the causality of its work towards achieving results on climate action (and across its other six Subprogrammes). The ToC is currently set out in UNEP's biennial PoW and has been included in the new PCPs. While the 2014-2015 or the 2016-2017 PoWs documents do not specifically include a ToC, they describe the existence of a ToC and its role in designing outputs to support Expected Accomplishments (EAs). The 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 PoWs under the 2018-2021 MTS both include a ToC setting out Key Deliverables, EAs, Intermediate States, and 2030 Impacts with assumptions and drivers as external variables affecting the ToC. Each EA has three Key Deliverables associated with it, and each EA is linked to an Intermediate State and a 2030 Impact. The linkages between EAs, Intermediate States, etc. appear to be illustrated on the ToCs through separate columns rather than via the more standard notation of directional arrows. The 2022-2023 PoW includes a ToC for Climate Action. The basic structure of the ToCs from previous PoWs is retained but 'Key Deliverables' are replaced with eight 'Direct Outcomes.' The other thematic subprogrammes in the 2022-2025 MTS utilize a similar approach. The 2022-2023 PoW does not specify links between the Direct Outcomes and the 2025 Outcomes. The Direct Outcomes are included in a box outlined with a dotted line rather than with arrows indicating linkages. No arrows are drawn to illustrate the causal relationship between the Direct and 2025 Outcomes. The ToC in the 2022-23 PoW illustrates (via colored dots) that each Direct Outcome is related to certain foundational and enabling Subprogrammes (a feature common across the three thematic Subprogrammes).

83. Linkages can be seen between the Direct Outcomes and the 2025 Outcomes at the PCP level, as the ToCs for each PCP include a subset of the Direct Outcomes from the SP-CA. But the 2022-2023 PoW's ToC does not illustrate the relationship between specific Direct Outcomes and PCPs. The ToCs under each PCP add more specificity to the relationship between Direct Outcomes and 2025 Outcomes. But the ToCs for the PCPs do not often identify the causal links that are expected to be at work. Rather potential direct outcomes are placed in the middle of the diagram and long-term outcomes on top of the page.

84. In the framework established under the ToC, the responsibility for the achievement of the direct outcomes for SP-CA extends beyond the remit of the subprogramme (and its PCPs) to include UNEP's foundational and enabling subprogrammes. The evaluation team is not aware of any quantification within UNEP of the distribution of the responsibility to other subprogrammes for Direct Outcomes under the SP-CA. However, based on evidence collected from interviewees, the evaluation team understands this responsibility is substantive. Should this be the case, the evaluation team considers there is value in clarifying the logical links to the higher-level outcomes, and the institutional mechanisms/processes to guide work toward achieving the Direct and higher-level Outcomes.

2.3.3 The coherence of the SP-CA with foundational and enabling subprogrammes

85. The review of the Paris Agreement (see Table 3) has already highlighted that several mandates are covered not by the SP-CA but by other subprogrammes. Specifically, the Paris Agreement has a mandate on the following aspects where support for Climate Action from other subprogrammes is required:

- On climate observations, which is covered within UNEP by the Science-Policy foundational subprogramme.

- On making financial flows align with a climate-compatible world, which is covered within UNEP by the enabling subprogramme on Finance.
- And the support to governments on all areas of Climate Action including but not limited within the Enhanced Transparency Frameworks, is associated to a significant degree with environmental policy making.

UNEP's matrix structure clarifies that these Subprogrammes support the SP-CA with expertise, knowledge management and project as well as strategic support.

86. As Table 9 shows, the objectives and outcome statements have been aligned across the subprogrammes. The five direct outcome statements of the SP-CA can also be found in the reporting of the foundational and enabling subprogrammes, which in addition, have SP-specific indicators. A closer inspection demonstrates that the five indicators of PoW 2022-2023 have been formulated such that a clear contribution from the other subprogrammes is necessary and can be reflected in the SP-CA's indicators. This is a new development and has not been implemented in the earlier PoWs in a comparable manner. It enhances the coherence in a significant manner.

87. Yet, whether this has any consequences for the portfolio is hard to trace, given the long lead times of UNEP projects. The evaluation team did a spot check on the quarterly reports to the CPR Meeting. For example, in the Quarterly Report to the 162nd Meeting of the CPR (June 2023), there was one project in the financial subprogramme on aligning the Panamanian financial sector terminology with the Paris Agreement, and one project in the Science-policy subprogramme on Early Warning For All (UNEP, 2023d). But most activities in the foundational and enabling activities are implementing their agendas of the respective subprogrammes, for example, on the Global Environment Outlook 1 (Science) or with respect to the Montevideo Programme V (EG), and general environmental data or law capacity building. The project-level interlinkages between CA and the foundational and enabling subprogrammes seems of similar or less intensity as the interlinkages with the Biodiversity and Pollution subprogrammes, each of which has also one "cross-SP" project in this specific report.

Table 9. Objectives and climate-related outcome statements of the enabling and foundational subprogrammes in MTS 2022 - 2025

Subprogramme	Objective of subprogramme	Climate action related
Science-policy	The science-policy Subprogramme will empower Governments and other stakeholders to make evidence-based decisions through environmental assessments , identification of emerging issues and fostering of policy action towards the achievement of the outcomes for the climate action, nature action and chemicals and pollution action subprogrammes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation. - Transparency and accountability of government and non-government climate action, including from the private sector and finance community, is strengthened.
Environmental Governance	The environmental governance Subprogramme will support countries in developing and implementing the environmental rule of law and in identifying integrated legal and policy responses that promote participatory and effective environmental decision-making. UNEP will support institutional strengthening and the development and effective implementation of appropriate legal frameworks and policies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public support and political engagement for climate action are catalysed. - Carbon neutrality and resilience are integrated into climate planning and policy and regulatory frameworks at all levels. - Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation.
Finance	The finance and economic transformations Subprogramme will leverage business value chains, private finance and consumer behaviours and enhance economic policies to support the achievement of climate, nature, and chemicals and pollution outcomes. UNEP will support transformed economic policies, including trade policies, to accelerate the shift to more sustainable patterns of consumption, production, investment and equity. In addition, UNEP will support principles and standards that enable private finance and business and their value chains to improve environmental sustainability. UNEP information and knowledge-sharing work will inform more sustainable consumer behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private and public financial flows are aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement. - Transparency and accountability of government and non-government climate action, including from the private sector and finance community, is strengthened. - The private sector and financial markets apply sustainability and climate-friendly standards and norms is a core value of the economy. - Sectoral partnerships and access to technologies for decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience are enhanced. - Public support and political engagement for climate action are catalysed. - Societal choices have shifted towards lower carbon products and services and sustainable lifestyles.
Digital Transformation	The digital transformations Subprogramme will support digital guidelines, architecture and governance, as well as enhanced digital literacy, to encourage transformative use of environmental digital public goods and accelerate progress towards environmental sustainability. UNEP will work to integrate datasets, analysis and digital public goods associated with climate, nature and pollution into an inclusive digital ecosystem for people and the planet. It will push to bridge the digital divide by enhancing the environmental digital literacy of citizens and diverse stakeholders through inclusive digital capacity building, policy dialogue, education curricula, social collaboration, open innovation and new communities of practice. UNEP will leverage environmental digital public goods and assess the risk and benefits of digital technologies through partnerships,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation. - Transparency and accountability of government and non-government climate action, including from the private sector and finance community, is strengthened. - Private and public financial flows are aligned with the goals of the Paris Agreement. - The private sector and financial markets apply sustainability and climate-friendly standards and norms as a core value of the economy. - Societal choices have shifted towards lower carbon products and services and sustainable lifestyles. - Public support and political engagement for climate action are catalysed

Subprogramme	Objective of subprogramme	Climate action related
	platforms and UNEP will work to integrate datasets, analysis and digital public goods associated with climate, nature and pollution into an inclusive digital ecosystem for people and the planet. It will push to bridge the digital divide by enhancing the environmental digital literacy of citizens and diverse stakeholders through inclusive digital capacity building, policy dialogue, education curricula, social collaboration, open innovation and new communities of practice. UNEP will leverage environmental digital public goods and assess the risk and benefits of digital technologies through partnerships, platforms.	

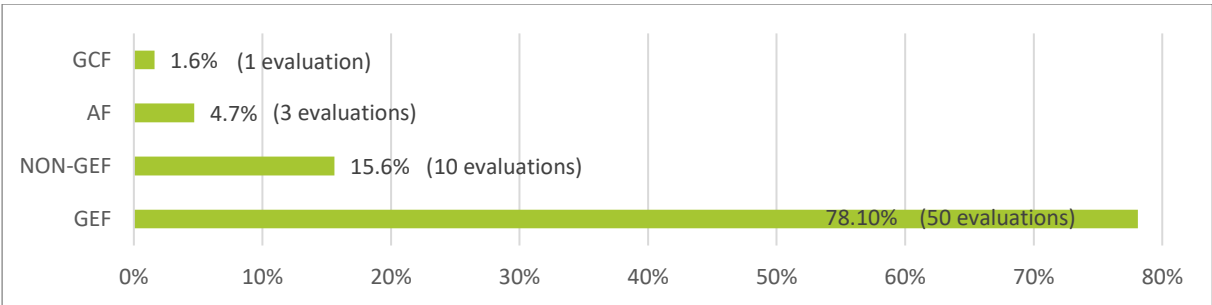
Source: UNEP, 2022a

2.4 Overall subprogramme performance

2.4.1 Project level-projects with terminal evaluations

88. Out of the 69 evaluated projects, there were 64 terminal evaluations. The majority (78.1%) of projects with a terminal evaluation were funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), while 15.6% of the projects were funded by non-GEF funding partners, including the German International Climate Initiative (IKI), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the European Commission and the Governments of Austria and Norway, another 6.3% of the projects were funded by the GCF and AF (see Figure 4).

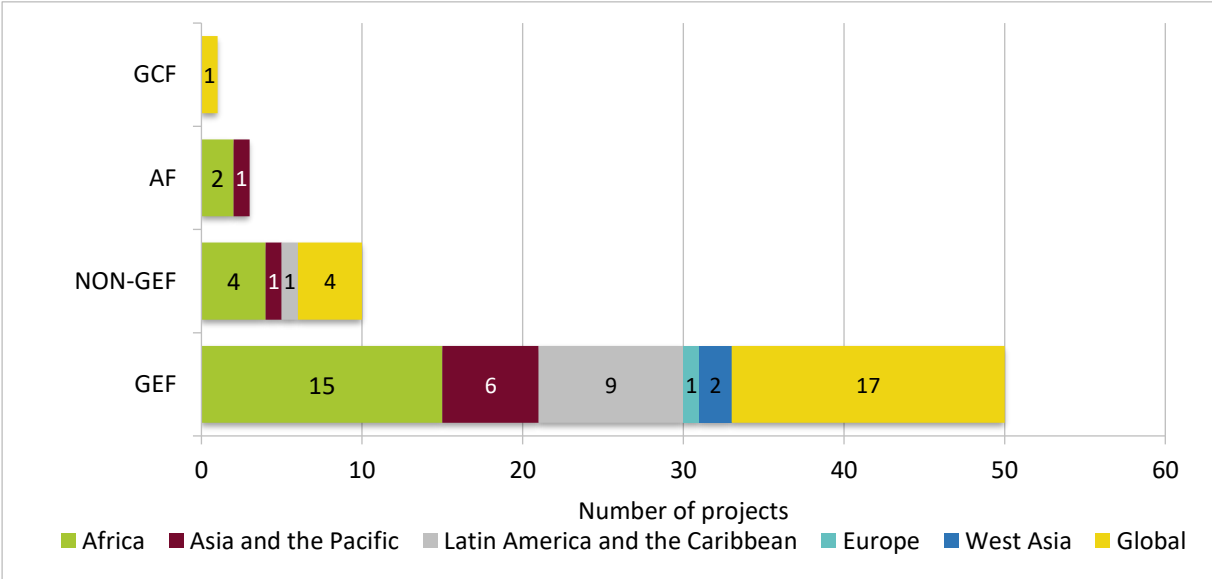
Figure 4. Distribution of terminal evaluations of climate change projects between funding partners, 2014-2023



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

89. The regional distribution is also reflected in the projects financed by GEF: GEF mainly financed projects in Africa and global projects. No regional clustering is evident among the other donors. This is also due to the fact that only a relatively small number of projects are included in the portfolio in each case (see Figure 5).

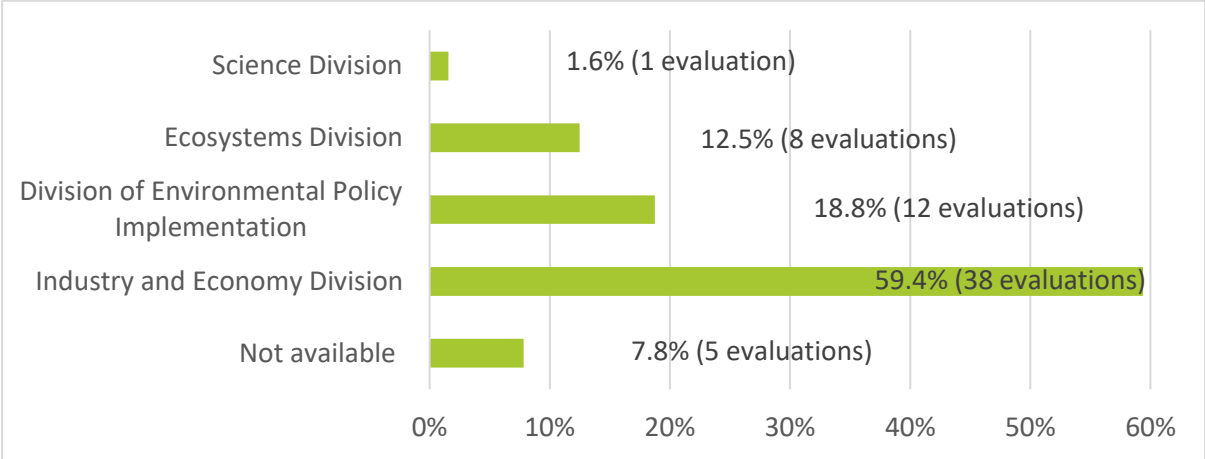
Figure 5. Distribution of terminal evaluations of climate change projects by donors and regions, 2014-2023



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

90. Most of the projects evaluated between 2014 and 2023 were managed by the Industry and Economy Division (59.4%), followed by the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation (DEPI) (18.8%), and the Ecosystems Division (12.5 %) (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Distribution of terminal evaluations of climate change projects between divisions, 2014-2023

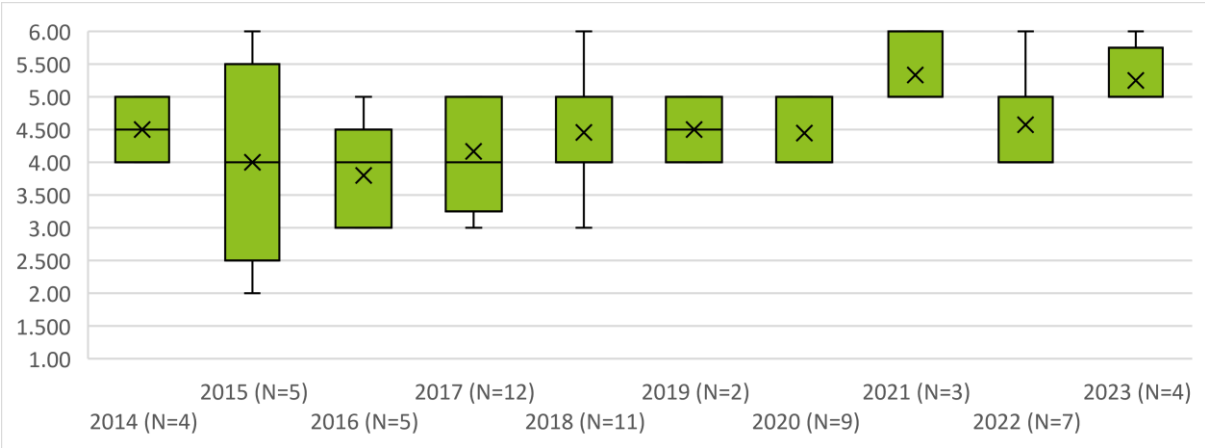


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database -Note some evaluated projects were designed under DEPI -which was later re-named Ecosystem Division.

2.4.1.1 Effectiveness

91. Project evaluations indicate a Moderately Satisfactory to Satisfactory ratings for effectiveness. Among the 62 evaluated projects with available effectiveness ratings, 9.0% were rated Highly Satisfactory, 38.9% Satisfactory, 37.3 % Moderately Satisfactory, while 11.9% were Moderately Unsatisfactory. Only 1.5% received ratings of Unsatisfactory or Highly Unsatisfactory. Over the time period considered by the evaluation, there seems to be a slight trend for higher effectiveness across the evaluated project portfolio (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Effectiveness rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)

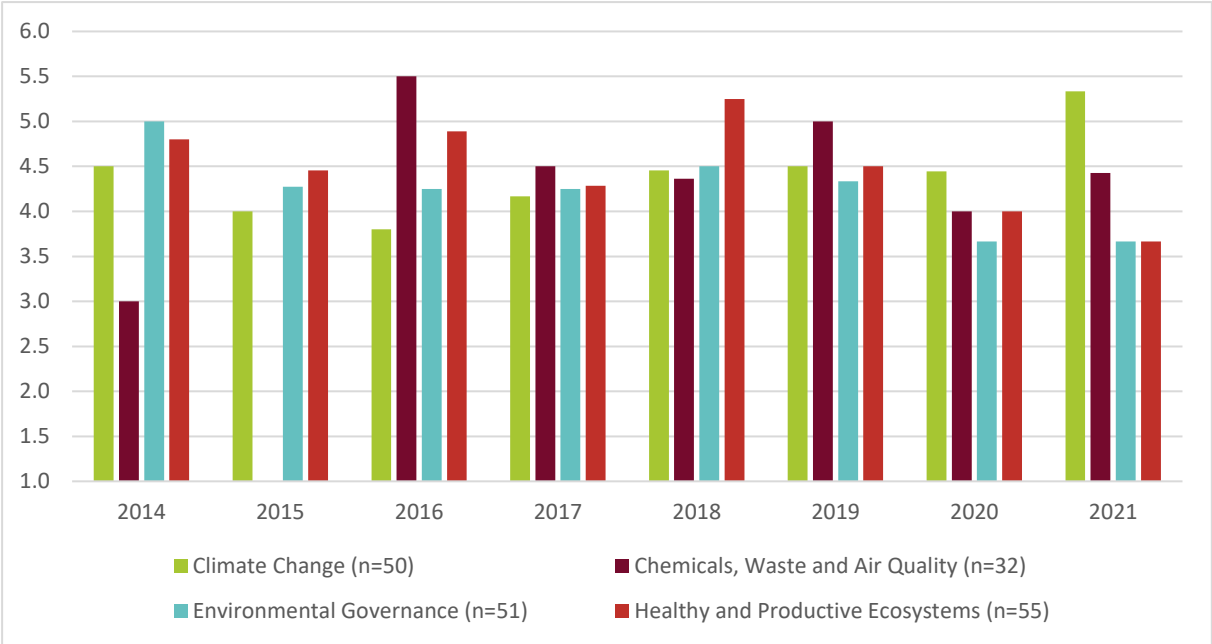


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

92. Overall, the evaluation criterion of ‘achievements of outputs’ has yielded a Satisfactory result in the portfolio of the SP-CA. 39% of the 64 evaluated projects were rated as Satisfactory. 7.8% of the projects even received the rating of Highly Satisfactory. While 39% were described as Moderately Satisfactory, 12.5% received the rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory. 1.6% were rated as Unsatisfactory. Looking across the years, consistent values are observed.

93. A comparison of the effectiveness ratings for evaluated projects within the SP-CA with projects evaluated from other subprogrammes reveals a trend of generally similar performance across the years. Projects from most of the subprogrammes attained a Moderately Satisfactory or Satisfactory level in the years between 2014 and 2021. However, there are occasional outliers, such as in 2016, 2018, and 2021, where projects evaluated different Subprogrammes would stand out from the other Subprogrammes with demonstrably higher ratings. Notably, the effectiveness of projects from SP-CA peaked in 2020 and 2021, exceeding the aggregate performance of projects from across all other subprogrammes during those years (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Average project ratings for "Effectiveness" per year of project Completion (2014-2021)

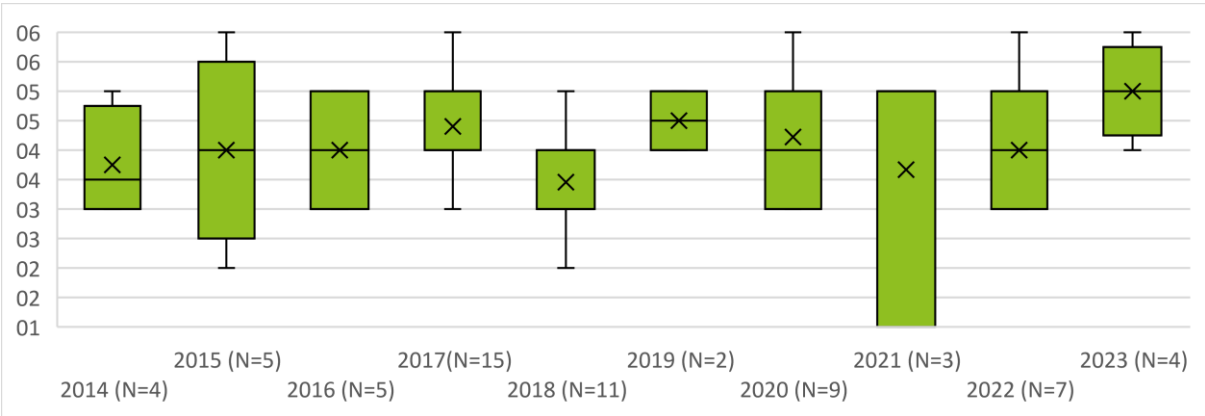


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

2.4.1.2 Efficiency

94. The efficiency of projects evaluated resulted in an overall Moderately Satisfactory rating. 34.4% of the 64 evaluated projects were rated as Satisfactory. 7.8% of the projects received a rating of Highly Satisfactory. While 23.4% were rated as Moderately Satisfactory, 28.1% were rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory. 6.3% were rated as Unsatisfactory or Highly Unsatisfactory. Projects evaluated in 2023 stand out with particularly high proportion attaining Satisfactory ratings (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Efficiency rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

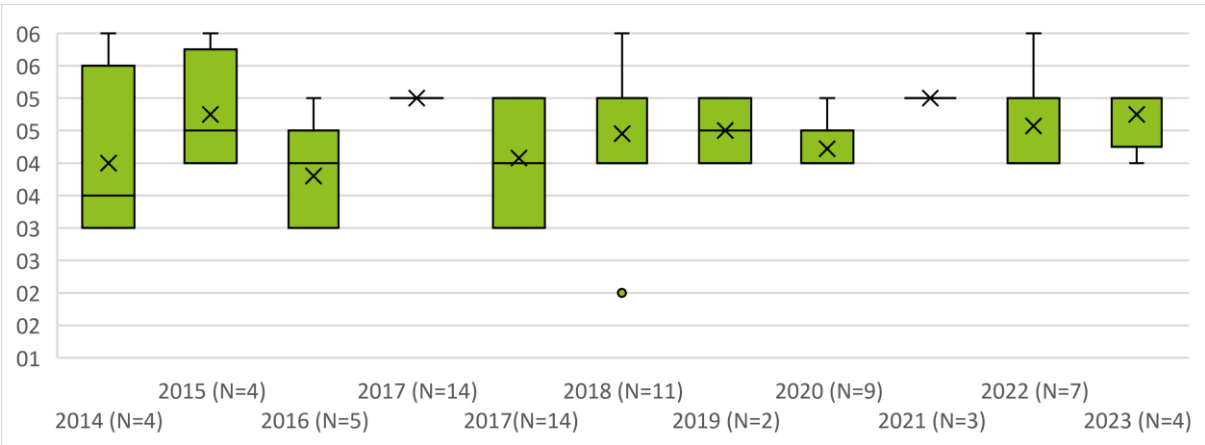
95. A cross-comparison of the evaluations of projects with Unsatisfactory ratings reveals that delays and complications primarily arose due to the organization of the project implementation by the organizations involved, e.g., the communication between them was assessed as insufficient. For example, the evaluation of the project “Generation and Delivery of Renewable Energy Based Modern Energy Services in Cuba: The Case of Isla de la Juventud (GEF ID 1361)” emphasizes that the complications primarily arose from the involvement of many institutions and several UN agencies.

96. Regarding time efficiency, the majority of projects ran significantly longer than the planned duration. The 20 projects with an efficiency rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory or lower were delayed by an average of 25 months. On average, only about 14% of all evaluated projects were completed within the planned time period. Global projects, especially, were most often not completed within their planned implementation period.

2.4.1.3 Likelihood of impact

97. The ratings of the evaluated projects regarding the criteria ‘likelihood of impact’ shows that most projects were rated as Moderately Likely (44%), followed by Likely (22%) and Moderately Unlikely (8%) ratings. The best results were achieved in the year 2021, followed by 2015, and 2023. (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Likelihood of impact rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

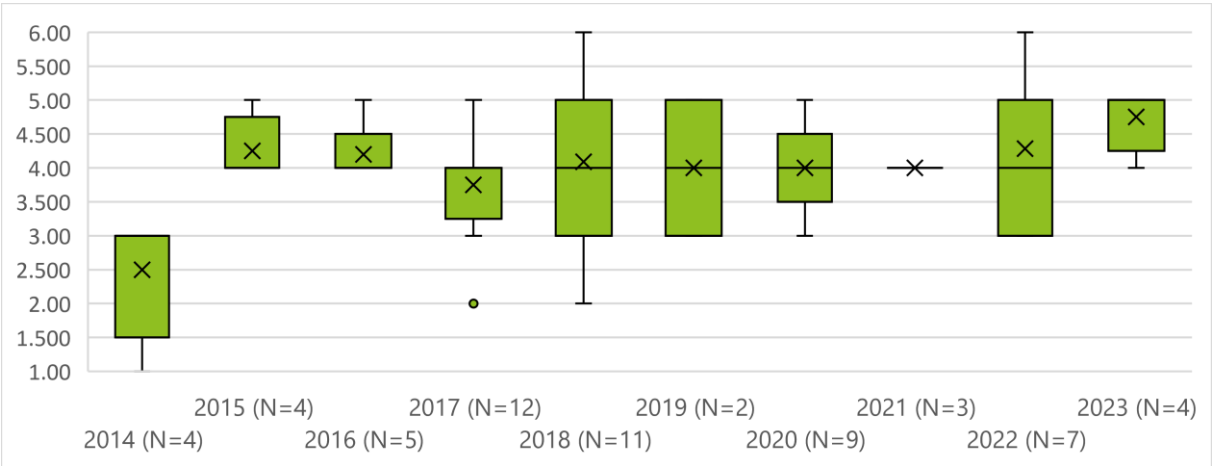
98. Analysis of project-level initiatives revealed that intensive engagement with local stakeholders significantly increased the likelihood of impact. This finding underscores the critical role of close collaboration with local stakeholders in climate action interventions. Projects that were assessed as having a Highly Likely chance of having an impact demonstrated increased awareness and improved systemic capacities to address climate change challenges effectively. For example, the “Scaling up the Sustainable Energy for All Building Efficiency Accelerator (GEF ID 9947)” project established a robust partner network and garnered strong support from local stakeholders. Similarly, the “Vulnerability to Climate Change by Establishing Early Warning Disaster Preparedness Systems and Support for Integrated Watershed Management in Flood-Prone Areas project in Rwanda, (Project ID 3838)” exhibited a high degree of ownership by national and local partners, contributing to its impact.

2.4.1.4 Sustainability of results

99. The evaluated projects show that, overall, the sustainability of results was Moderately Likely, with an overall rating of 4.1. Sustainability was overall rated more highly in 2023 than in 2022, but it is unclear whether this improvement will persist (see Figure 11). Only two projects achieved Highly Likely rating for sustainability of results. Several projects demonstrated notable outcomes due to specific factors. The “Scaling up the Sustainable Energy for All Building Efficiency Accelerator, (GEF ID 9947)” project exhibited strong governmental commitment and leveraged additional GEF support. Similarly, the “Enabling South Africa to Prepare its Third National Communication (TNC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR-2) to the UNFCCC2 (GEF ID 5237)” project benefited from robust ownership by and commitment among stakeholders, particularly governmental actors.

100. On the other side of the spectrum, four projects received “Unlikely” ratings for the sustainability of results, primarily due to poor performance in achieving financial and institutional sustainability. A lack of financial sustainability was for example indicated in the GEF-project “Implementing NAPA priority interventions to build resilience in the most vulnerable coastal zones in Djibouti”, which faced criticism for lacking a financial perspective at the end of the project. The evaluator noted that the project was not able to assure the finances to support the outputs, outcomes, as well as the impact.

Figure 11. Sustainability rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

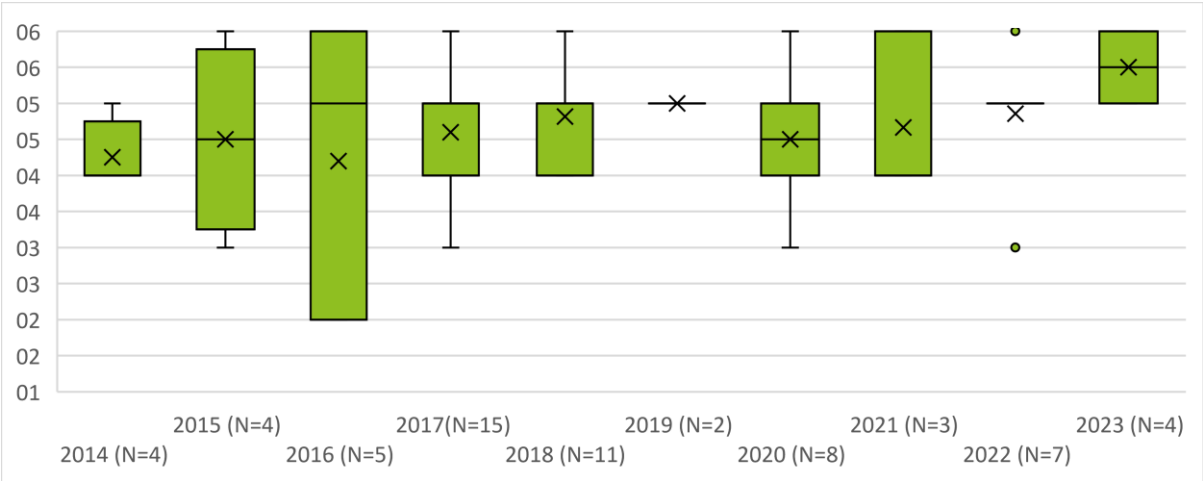
2.4.1.5 Factors affecting performance

101. Project evaluations also rate a number of factors that typically affect performance, for example, financial management, monitoring and reporting, stakeholder participation, and country ownership.

Financial Management

102. The analysis of the financial management ratings of the evaluated projects reveals a predominantly positive pattern in overall ratings. Over 60% (40.6% and 20.3% respectively) of the 64 projects achieved either a Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory rating. This is further bolstered by the fact that only a small percentage (3.1%) fell into the Unsatisfactory range. Projects from the year 2023 stand out with particularly high ratings (see Figure 12). (see part 2.5.6).

Figure 12. Financial management rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)

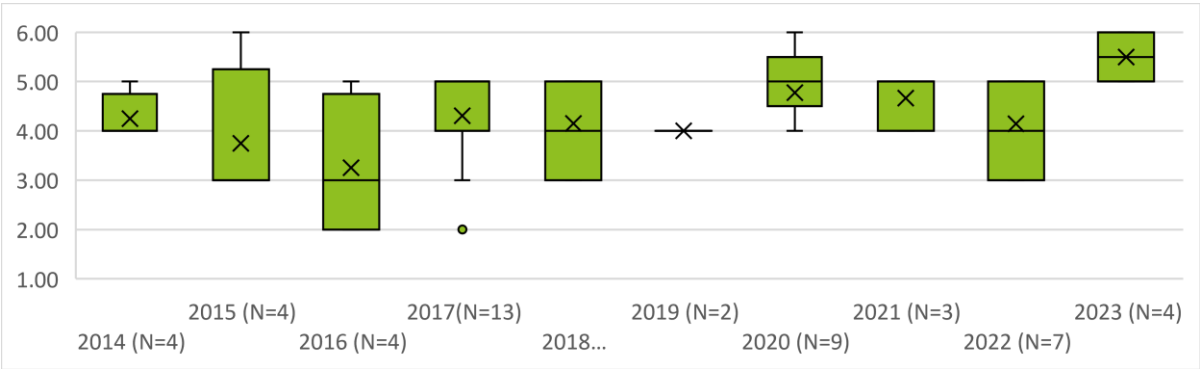


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

Monitoring and Reporting

103. The assessment of the monitoring and reporting practices for the 63 projects with terminal evaluations shows that nearly half (42.9%) of the projects achieved a Satisfactory rating and 7.9% received a Highly Satisfactory rating. While some projects (27%) were assessed as Moderately Satisfactory" for monitoring and reporting, only a small portion (15.9%) received a Moderately Unsatisfactory rating, and 6.4% were rated as Unsatisfactory. Projects of 2023 stand out with a significant improvement in monitoring and reporting practices (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Monitoring and reporting rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)

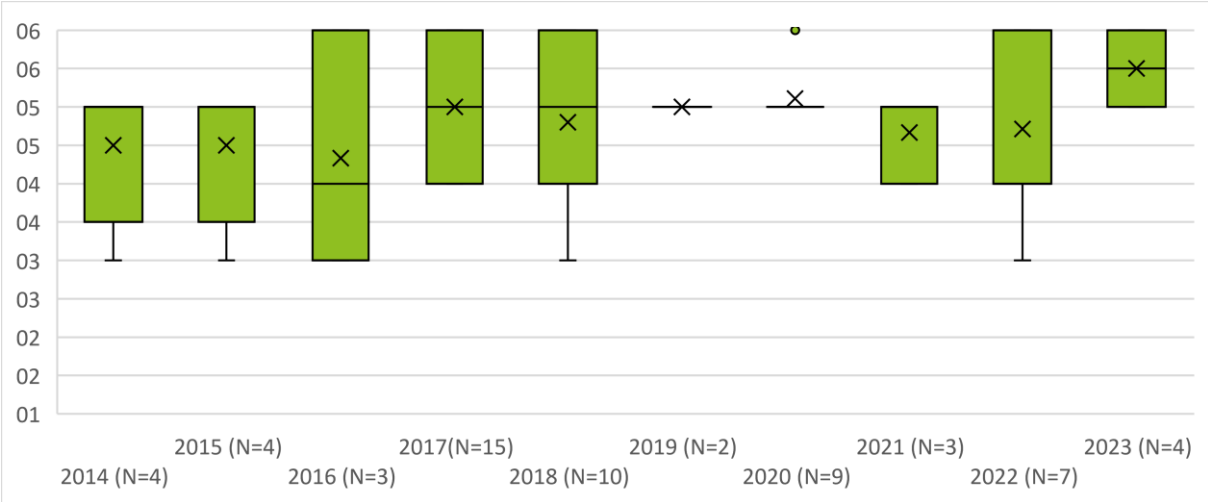


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

Stakeholder participation

104. Overall, for the success factor of stakeholder participation a large proportion (73%) of the 63 evaluated projects attained a rating of Satisfactory or better. 47.6% were rated as Satisfactory and 25.4% of the projects were rated as Highly Satisfactory. While 19.5% were rated as Moderately Satisfactory, only 7.9% received a rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory. None of the projects were assessed as being Unsatisfactory or Highly Unsatisfactory against this criterion. Over the years, a consistently high level is evident (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Stakeholder participation rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)

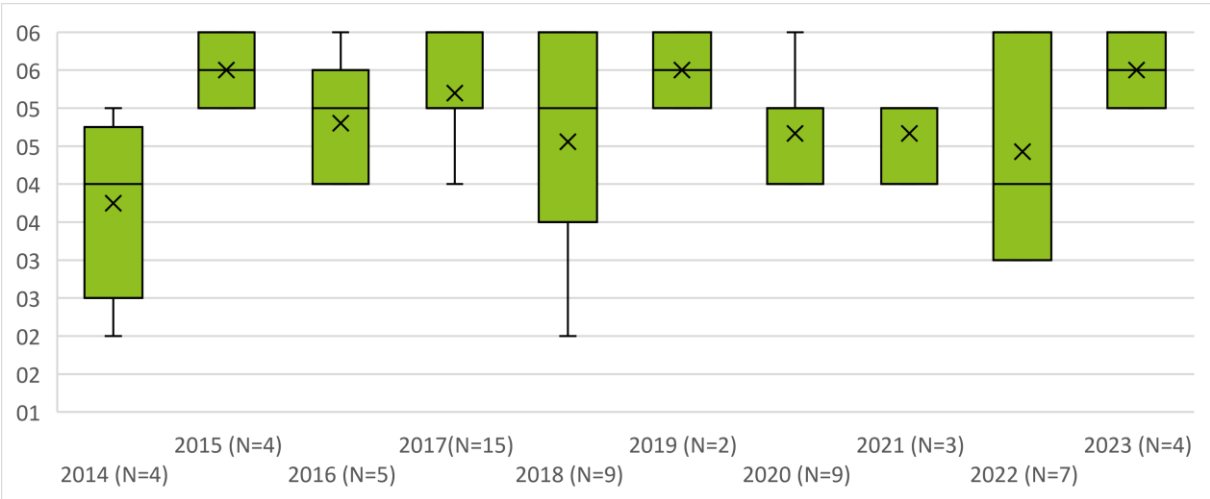


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

Country ownership and drivenness

105. Overall, country ownership and drivenness has received positive performance ratings in project evaluations. For this criterion, 39.7% of the 63 evaluated projects were rated as Satisfactory, while 28.6% of the projects were assessed as being Highly Satisfactory. While 23.8% were assessed as Moderately Satisfactory, only 4.8% received a rating of Moderately Unsatisfactory and only 3.2% were classified as Unsatisfactory or Highly Unsatisfactory. (see Figure 15). It is striking that the average project rating in the year 2014 is notably lower compared to the other years with an average of 3.8.

Figure 15. Country ownership and drivenness rating of evaluated projects (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

2.4.2 Programme level evaluated projects by themes (“Proxy-PCPs”)

106. Given the recent establishment of the Programme Coordination Projects (PCPs), a proxy data approach was adopted to examine performance patterns across completed projects by analyzing information from evaluations with respect to the new PCP themes.¹² This involved assigning the evaluated projects to the themes of the PCPs (Decarbonization, Adaptation and Resilience, Climate Science and Transparency) based on their thematic alignment. This approach allowed the evaluation team to assess the historic performance of the thematic portfolios as per the themes of the current PCPs (see Annex III). A total of 50 evaluated projects were clustered by the three themes of the PCPs. The Decarbonization thematic portfolio had the largest share, encompassing 27 projects, followed by Adaptation and Resilience with 17 projects, and Climate Science and Transparency with six projects. For the geographic distribution of the evaluated projects, see Table 5. In the following, the evaluation ratings are displayed, but no comparison is drawn as the nature of the portfolios is structurally different and not comparable, and the differences are very small.

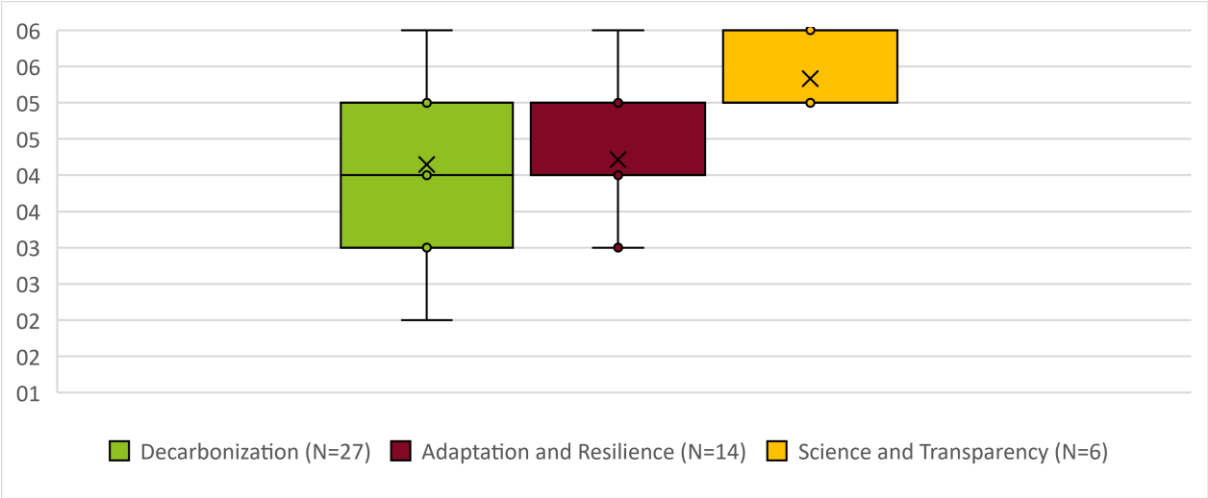
2.4.2.1 Effectiveness

107. If completed evaluations are grouped in the three themes corresponding to the new PCPs, then analysis of evaluation performance ratings reveals clear differences in project effectiveness across the thematic portfolios. While evaluated projects in the thematic portfolios of Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience each would have a median rating of 4, the median for Climate Science and Transparency would be 5.3. The Adaptation and Resilience portfolio would exhibit a wider range of ratings, with some projects achieving “highly effective” status and others falling short, refitting the evaluated projects in thematic portfolios, the Climate Science and Transparency portfolio would show a remarkably consistent performance. All projects within this portfolio were rated as Satisfactory or Highly Satisfactory” (see).

108. Figure 16).

¹² Cf section 1.3

Figure 16. Effectiveness rating of projects evaluated associated with CA thematic portfolios (2014-2023)



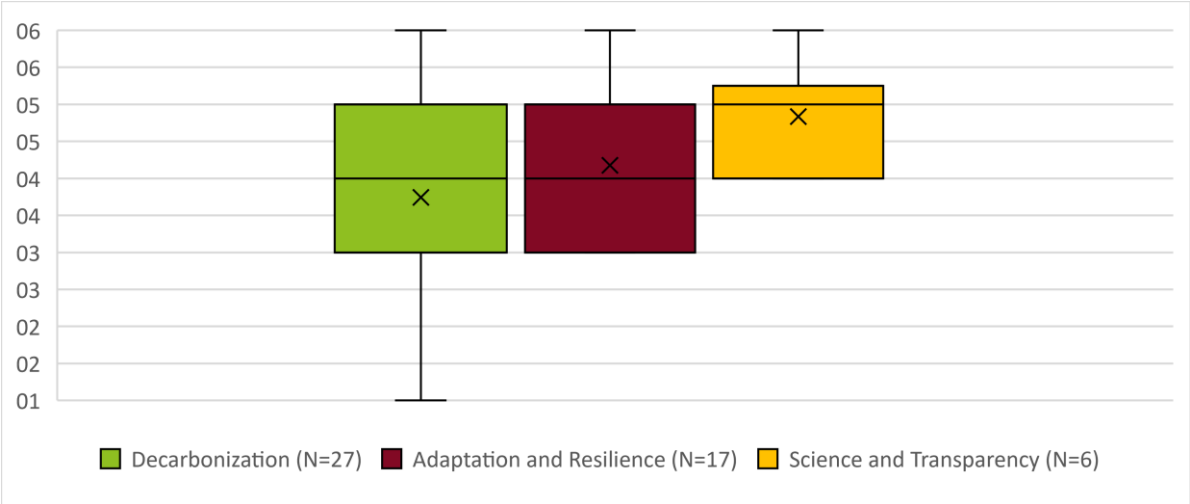
Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

2.4.2.2 Efficiency

109. A comparison of the three portfolios of the actual PCPs shows that the PCP Decarbonization has the largest budget, totaling USD5,570,000.00, followed by the PCP Adaptation & Resilience with USD4,570,000.00 and the PCP Climate Science and Transparency with USD3,440,000.00. Examining average project budgets offers further insights. Existing projects in portfolio of the actual PCP on Decarbonization projects as of January 1, 2023 have the highest average budget at USD10,260,000. PCP Climate Science and Transparency follows with an average of USD7,380,000 (existing projects in the portfolio as of January 1, 2022), and PCP Adaptation and Resilience comes in last with an average of USD5,150,000 when considering the projects under active implementation as of January 1, 2022.

110. With respect to efficiency of evaluated projects, the thematic Climate Science and Transparency portfolio would outperform the others (see Figure 17). While the median for Climate Science and Transparency on the rating scale is 4.8, it is 4 for the other portfolios. Notably, the Decarbonization thematic portfolio would be the only one with projects receiving particularly low ratings. Several factors may have contributed to this disparity. The Decarbonization thematic portfolio faced delays in some projects, including "Market Transformation for Energy Efficient Lighting in Morocco, (EvalID 674)" "Promoting Energy Efficiency in Buildings in East Africa (EEBA), (GEF ID 3788)" and "Phasing out incandescent lamps through lighting market transformation in Vietnam, (Project ID GFL/2328-2720-4B65 (3755))" Both projects deviated significantly from their original implementation plans, partly caused by the project design as well as due to interdependencies with project partners. These delays hampered their overall efficiency.

Figure 17. Efficiency rating of projects evaluated associated with CA thematic portfolios (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

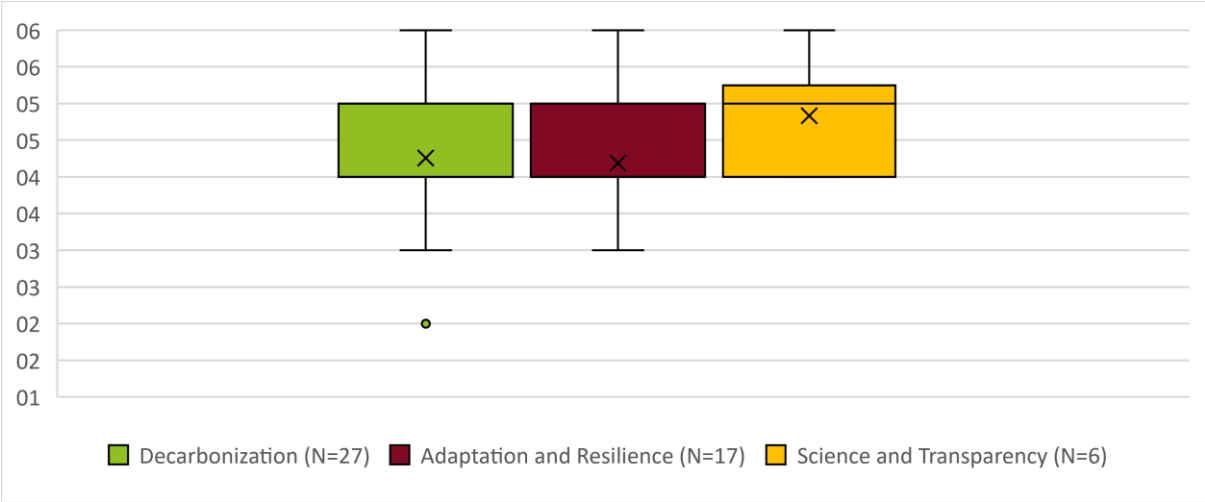
2.4.2.3 Likelihood of impact

111. In the criterion of likelihood of impact, only minor differences were evident in the evaluated projects between the thematic portfolios. The assessment revealed a pattern similar to effectiveness, with Climate Science and Transparency projects demonstrating slightly better results in efficiency compared to Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience. The median of the thematic portfolio of Climate Science and Transparency, at 4.8, would be only 0.8 points higher than the mean of Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience, which both would have a mean of 4 (see Figure 18).

112. Within the Climate Science and Transparency thematic portfolio, a rating of Moderately Likely (4) represented the lower boundary, whereas in the other two thematic portfolios of Adaptation and Resilience and Decarbonization, several projects were also rated as Moderately Unlikely. In the Decarbonization portfolio, one project even received an Unlikely rating.

113. The findings on likelihood of impact mirrored those observed for the effectiveness criterion. Projects evaluated under Climate Science and Transparency theme may inherently lend themselves to more streamlined processes due to their focus on capacity building and knowledge sharing.

Figure 18. Likelihood of impact rating of projects evaluated associated with CA thematic portfolios (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

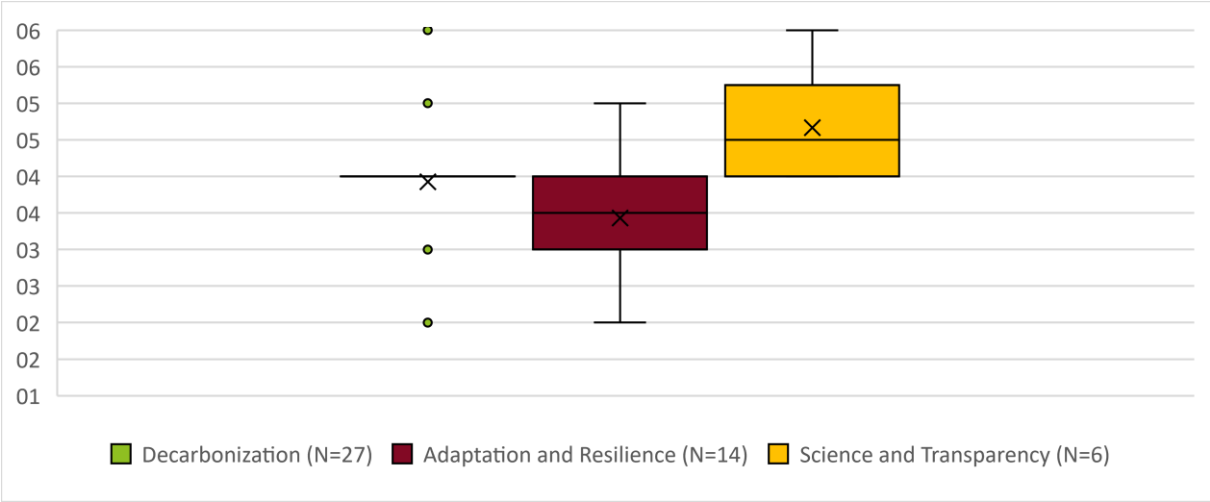
2.4.2.4 Sustainability of results

114. The evaluated projects in the thematic Climate Science and Transparency portfolio would stand out for stronger performance against the sustainability criterion. The median score for this thematic portfolio would be 4.5, exceeding the medians of 4 for Decarbonization and 3 for Adaptation and Resilience (see Figure 19).

115. The thematic portfolios on Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience were rated similarly regarding this criterion: The majority of projects were rated as Moderately Likely. Only a few projects fell outside this rating, ranging from Highly Likely to Unlikely. In contrast, the projects associated with Climate Science and Transparency theme appeared to score higher. The middle 50 % of project ratings ranged from 4 to 5.2.

116. Financial sustainability appeared to be a particular challenge for evaluated projects in the thematic portfolio on Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience. This was exemplified by the "Promoting Energy Efficiency in Buildings in East Africa (EEBA), (GEF ID 3788)" project under Decarbonization and the "Implementing NAPA priority interventions to build resilience in the most vulnerable coastal zones in Djibouti, (Project ID 3408)" project under Adaptation and Resilience. Both received particularly low ratings for sustainability. In the EEBA project, the lack of funding for ongoing capacity building and stakeholder engagement was identified as a key factor hindering long-term sustainability. Similarly, the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) project was criticized for the absence of a post-project funding strategy, which raised concerns about its ability to maintain benefits after the project concluded.

Figure 19. Sustainability rating of projects evaluated associated with CA thematic portfolios (2014-2023)



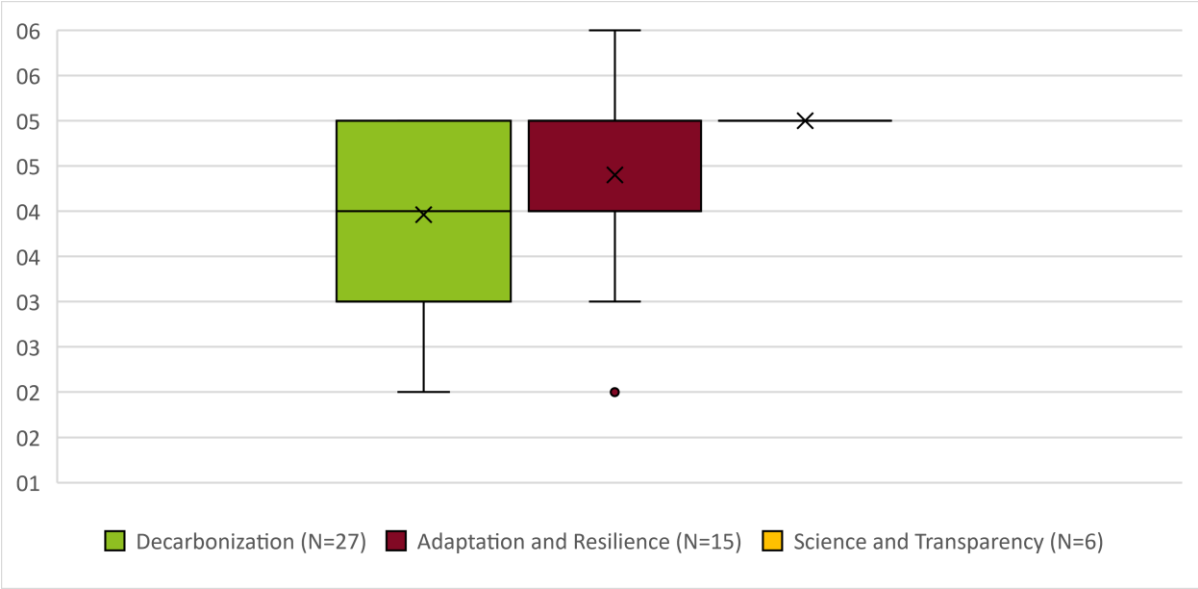
Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

2.4.2.5 Factors affecting performance

Monitoring and reporting

117. Evaluated projects within the Climate Science and Transparency thematic portfolio achieved a median rating of 5 (Satisfactory), a full point higher than ratings for Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience (both at 4 Moderately Satisfactory). While the Climate Science and Transparency portfolio delivered consistent performance, the other two portfolios showed wider variations. Ratings for the thematic Decarbonization portfolio ranged from 2 (Unsatisfactory) to 5 (Satisfactory), with the middle 50% clustered between 3 (moderately satisfactory) and 5. A few projects fell short in monitoring and reporting. The ratings for the thematic Adaptation and Resilience portfolio varied from 2 (Unsatisfactory) to 6 (Highly Satisfactory). The project “Reducing Vulnerability to Climate Change by Establishing Early warning and disaster preparedness systems and support for integrated watershed management in flood prone areas (Rwanda LDCF), (Project ID 3838)” was rated Highly Satisfactory as the dedicated monitoring and reporting team, a Chief Technical Advisor and technical support from the UNDP Country Office enabled highly effective monitoring, reporting on progress, as well as documentation of best practices and lessons learned. In addition, an in-depth mid-term review informed corrective actions, which was praised by the project’s evaluators (UNEP Evaluation Office, 2015). The median landed at 4, but half the projects scored between 4 and 5. Only one project received an unsatisfactory rating (see Figure 20).

Figure 20. Monitoring and reporting rating of projects associated with CA thematic portfolios (2014-2023)



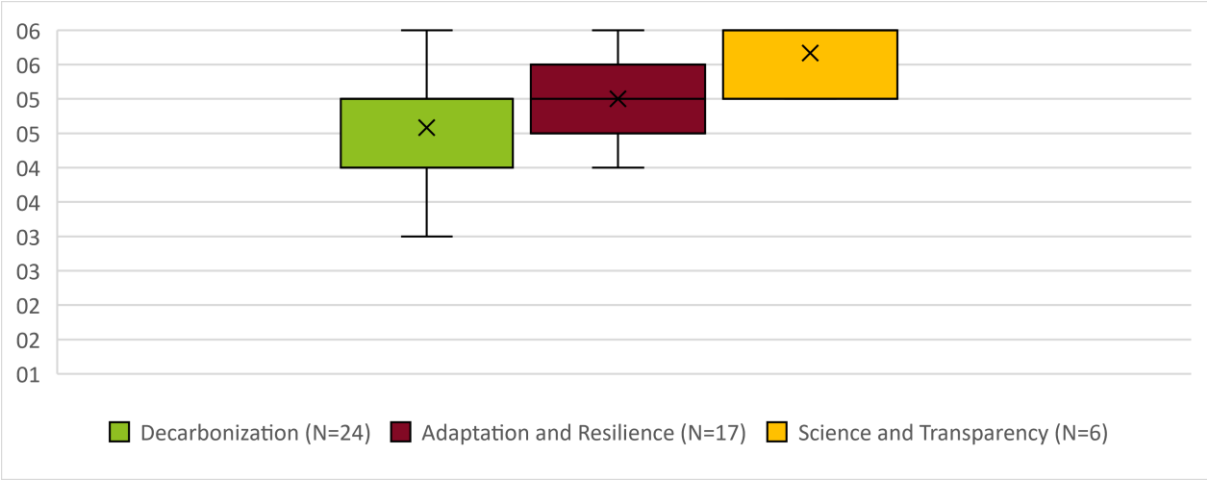
Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

Stakeholder participation

118. Ratings for the Stakeholder Participation criterion, again, evaluated projects in the thematic Climate Science and Transparency portfolio were higher than those in the other two thematic portfolios. The median here would be 5.7, while the median for the other portfolios would be 5.

119. The range of results across all portfolios was quite narrow. In the thematic Decarbonization portfolio, project ratings ranged from Highly Satisfactory to Moderately Unsatisfactory, the middle 50% of ratings would fall between 4 and 5. In the Adaptation and Resilience portfolio, project ratings were slightly higher by comparison. Here, the middle 50% of ratings would fall between 5 and 6, with the lowest ratings being Moderately Unsatisfactory (4). For the thematic Climate Science and Transparency portfolio, all ratings were between 5 and 6. There were no particularly poor ratings in any of the portfolios. However, all the projects rated as Moderately Unsatisfactory for stakeholder participation were in the proxy Decarbonization portfolio. One example was the Energy for Sustainable Development in Caribbean Buildings project, in which the COVID-19 pandemic was cited as the reason for limited stakeholder participation and engagement (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Stakeholder participation rating of Projects evaluated associated with thematic portfolio (2014-2023)

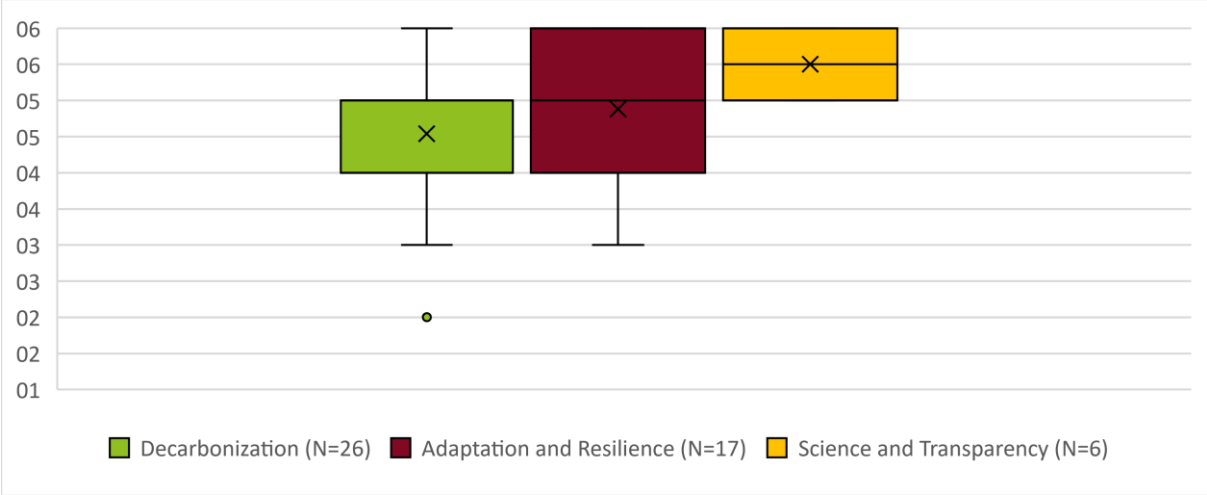


Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

Country Ownership and Drivenness

120. Regarding the criterion of Country Ownership and Drivenness, evaluated projects within the thematic portfolio on Climate Science and Transparency would receive higher ratings compared to those in the other portfolios. Projects within Climate Science and Transparency demonstrated a higher median score compared to Decarbonization and Adaptation and Resilience. This could suggest a higher level of national engagement and leadership within Climate Science and Transparency initiatives (see Figure 22).

Figure 22. Country ownership and drivenness rating of projects evaluated associated with thematic portfolio (2014-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

Overall performance

121. An analysis of project performance across the three thematic portfolios showed that projects evaluated within the Climate Science and Transparency thematic portfolio received higher average scores (5.5) compared to the other two themes, although the low number of projects in this category would necessitate caution when interpreting the results.

122. Conversely, evaluated projects within the thematic Decarbonization portfolio demonstrated slightly lower overall performance (average score: 4.3), and more likely for projects implemented in the Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean regions based on a comparison with the average scores of 4.5 and 5.5 for Adaptation and Resilience and Climate Science and Transparency, respectively.

123. Noteworthy, the 17 projects evaluated from the African region would appear to exhibit on average a strong performance across all thematic portfolios. These projects achieved high average scores in both overall project performance and strategic relevance (average score: 5.4).

2.4.3 Subprogramme level

124. The following analysis focuses on the performance of the subprogramme as a vehicle for the delivery of UNEP higher level results, as expressed in the PPRs and related to the PoWs and MTS.

2.4.3.1 Effectiveness

125. The effectiveness of the SP-CA has been assessed using its performance reporting in attaining the expected accomplishments/2025 outcomes and the associated targeted indicators in the Programme Performance Reports (PPR) and direct outcomes as defined in the Theory of Change. The evaluation furthermore assessed the SP-CA's contribution via a qualitative approach.

126. The subprogramme demonstrated strong performance in achieving its targets from 2014-2023: 86% of targets were fully achieved, while an additional 11% were partially achieved (60% or above). Adaptation-focused work consistently met all targets across the time period covered by the evaluation. However, mitigation efforts and REDD+ initiatives fell short of some targets during the period.

127. The SP-CA significantly exceeded all six measured targets during the 2014-2015 biennium. In 2016-2017, the subprogramme achieved six of its eight targets, partially achieving the remaining two. Under the low emission growth focus, two targets saw near-achievement at approximately 95%: (b)i) Increased percentage of renewable energy in the global energy mix (including breakdowns by countries assisted by UNEP) as well as b(v) Increased climate finance invested for clean energy as a result of UNEP engagement (see Figure 23).

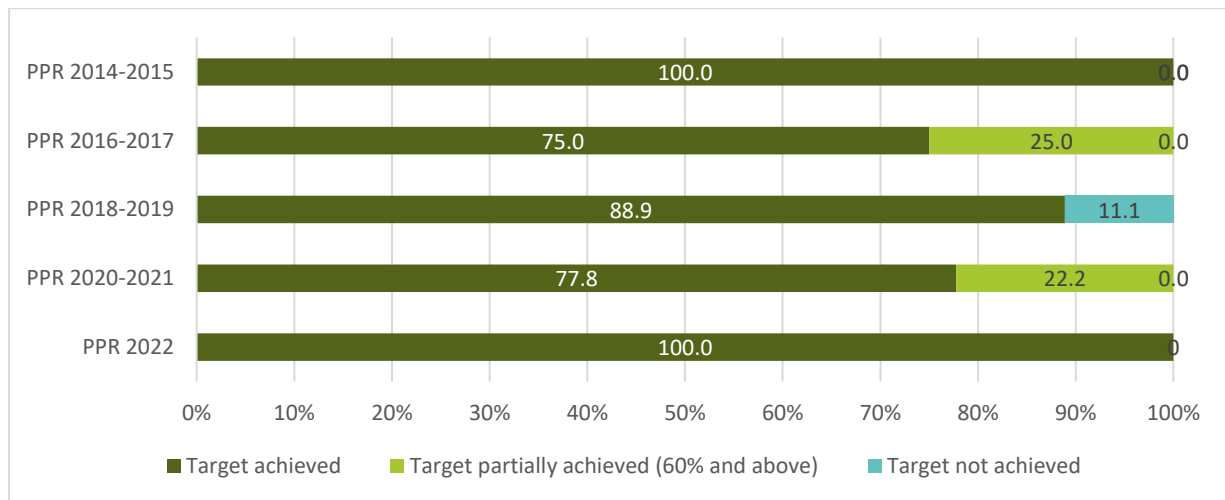
128. In 2018-2019, the subprogramme achieved eight out of nine targets, falling short on one, namely increasing the number of countries demonstrating social and environmental benefits from implemented policies (c)ii). The subprogramme achieved only 21 of the targeted 45 countries.

129. In 2020-2021, the SP-CA achieved six of its eight targets, with partial achievement of indicator targets in climate resilience and REDD+ efforts. Specifically, the SP-CA did not achieve the following indicators: (a)i) Supporting countries in establishing institutional arrangements for national adaptation plans (95 % achievement) and (c)ii) Facilitating climate finance for clean energy and decarbonized assets (96 % achievement). Additionally, the SP-CA demonstrated exceptional performance in 2022, exceeding all four of its targets.

130. Compared to achievements of other Subprogrammes over the period 2014-2021, the SP-CA had the third highest achievement rate with 86 %, with only the subprogrammes on

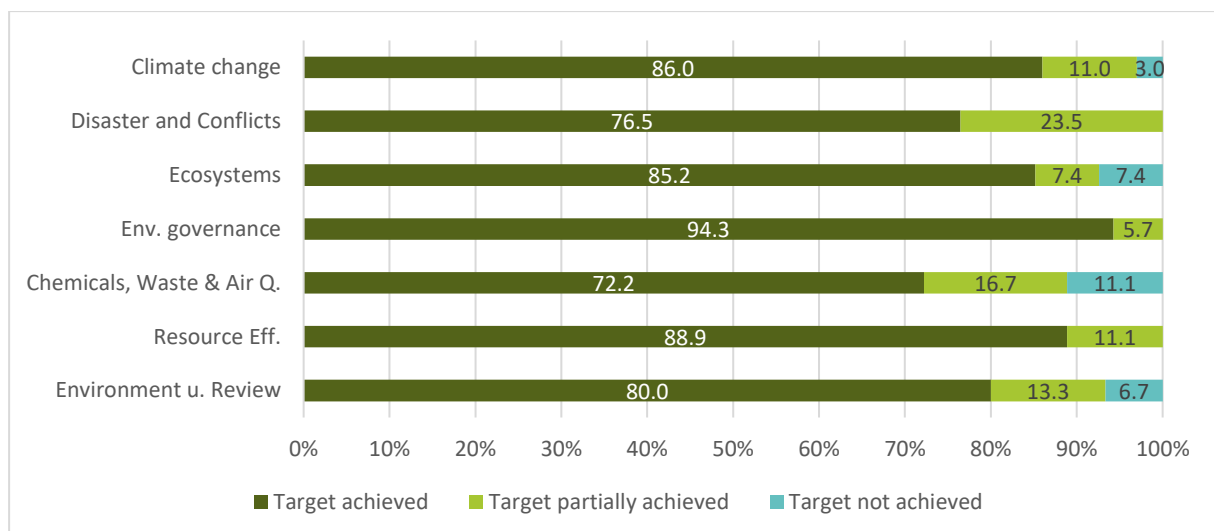
Environmental Governance (94.3 %) and Resource Efficiency (88.9 %) (see Figure 24) reporting higher percentages.

Figure 23. Indicators of achievement of the SP-CA reported in the PPR (2014-2022)



Source: UNEP PPR 2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021, 2022

Figure 24. Indicators of achievement of the subprogrammes (2014-2021)



Source: UNEP PPR 2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021

131. The SP-CA’s adaptation work emphasizes ecosystem-based adaptation and the development of national adaptation plans. Ecosystem-based adaptation initiatives have been particularly well-received by developing countries and consistently evaluated favorably. This demonstrates SP-CA’s success in promoting the concept internationally and implementing effective on-the-ground projects. UNEP’s mitigation efforts prioritize capacity-building for low-emission development strategies and policies, as well as facilitating access to climate finance for energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives. These efforts are bolstered by UNEP’s strategic partnerships within the mitigation sector. The organization’s REDD+ work centers on acquiring funding for and promoting sustainable land management, aiming to maximize the benefits of REDD+ programs across member nations. While progress was made, certain REDD+ targets remained unmet within the evaluated period due to lack of interest from member countries (UNEP, 2020, p. 34).

132. On the other hand, a spot check of these self-reported figures has pointed to some challenges regarding the use of indicators. Comparing the annual PPRs over the four years of

the MTS 2018 – 2021, it was not possible to reconstruct the indicator values on the basis of the information provided in the PPRs. Indicator wording has shifted. And it was not clear if countries and initiatives are double counted with respect to contributing to the same or different indicators more than once. It was also not always possible to find the causal claims that UNEP has supported governments reflected in the governments' own documents. This highlights that the indicators used for demonstrating the results of UNEP's work are fundamentally flawed as they are insufficiently defined and therefore not simple, relevant or time bound.

2.4.3.2 *Efficiency*

133. For lack of a comparable portfolio and quantitative benefits measurement traditional efficiency assessments based on financial data and benchmarks are not feasible. To address this limitation, the evaluation focuses on qualitative findings from stakeholder interviews alongside the timeliness of target delivery reported in PPRs. This approach ensures a comprehensive assessment, albeit relying primarily on qualitative evidence due to the limitations of available financial data.

134. The subprogramme achieved most of its targets (86.0 %) as reported in the PPRs, indicating a realistic approach to planning and implementation (see Effectiveness section for details). However, it lagged behind the Environmental Governance (94.3 %) and Resource Efficiency (88.9 %) subprogrammes in achievement rate between 2014 and 2021 (see Figure 24).

135. The growing project portfolio of the SP-CA has presented challenges in maintaining oversight and strategic direction for its diverse projects and activities (cf. Table 2). The coordination within and across subprogrammes has often resulted from personal and informal links between individuals. While this has generally worked well, there is a need to better institutionalize the coordination to guarantee future efficiency. PCPs were established as a means to address this issue, but the PCPs have not been implemented for sufficient time to allow for an assessment of whether they will be successful. It can, however, be stated that staff involved with the PCPs are optimistic regarding their functions.

2.4.3.3 *Likelihood of impact*

136. UNEP's impact strategy for climate action centers on the development of innovative mitigation and adaptation strategies informed by scientific findings. Therefore, it is possible to identify UNEP's success in this regard when analyzing whether UNEP was able to influence the global discourse on addressing the climate crisis and its associated impacts.

137. Identifying the impact of UNEP's interventions presents a challenge due to frequent collaborative implementation with partners and the broad landscape of larger, implementation-focused organizations engaging in similar work. Despite improvements in results monitoring and an increase in evaluations since the previous SP-CA evaluation, pinpointing UNEP's specific impact remains difficult. Consequently, the assessment of impacts relied on qualitative evidence gathered through interviews and the analysis of project evaluations and related documentation.

138. The SP-CA's impact is primarily manifested through its influence on member countries, facilitated by the provision of accessible and relevant scientific data on climate change. This knowledge enables member countries, provides guidance on ways to advance and specifically to formulate informed strategies. UNEP's flagship reports, including the Adaptation Gap Report, the Emission Gap Report, and the Global Environment Outlook series,

serve as crucial instruments of influence. These reports distill complex scientific information into comprehensible and actionable insights for member states, as well as other organizations working in similar areas. Another identified impact has been how UNEP plays a pivotal role in convening diverse stakeholders – member states, NGOs, civil society organizations, businesses, and academia – to collaborate on various aspects in the field of adaptation and mitigation. The practical impact of these high-level reports with a focus on gaps is, however, often limited, due to their nature. But studies and reports are a staple of UNEP’s work, and other reports that provide an assessment of challenges and pathways to solution, such as the Global Methane Assessment of the CCAC can not only provide action-oriented guidance but also rally political will around global pledges such as (in this case) the Global Methane Pledge.

139. There is some evidence of possible impact by the subprogramme associated with its three thematic foci. The work on adaptation of the subprogramme has been widely formed by the focus on ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA). UNEP’s reputation as one of the central stakeholders on climate change globally has been influenced by its concentration on this approach. UNEP’s swift adoption of EbA and launch of high-profile projects like Mountain EbA in 2010 demonstrated its commitment and leadership in the field (see Box 1). These early successes further solidified their image as a proactive leader in the domain. UNEP has implemented numerous projects on EbA with focus on different ecosystems in the time of the evaluation period, including work in the context of coastal areas in Cambodia¹³ or mountainous areas in countries in Africa, South America, and Asia¹⁴. Not only has the Subprogramme been able to elevate UNEP’s reputation through projects, but UNEP has also taken advantage of its name and relationships by establishing the Global Fund for Ecosystem-based Adaptation in 2021, which it co-implements with one of its central partners in its work on EbA, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (IUCN, 2021). The Fund is financed through the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Environment Ministry of Germany and aims to support the upscaling of EbA. The organization established the EbA Community of Practice, a platform facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders, further propelling their visibility in the field. Additionally, UNEP co-implements the Global EbA Fund, supporting numerous smaller EbA initiatives. Another potential sign for UNEP’s success on the approach is that major funding mechanisms like GEF and GCF are supporting EbA interventions, and thereby leading to further dissemination/uptake of the approach.

140. Its work on increasing the use of renewable energy and improving energy efficiency has been seen to be most impactful in projects that focus on innovative areas, which are not addressed in detail in this otherwise highly crowded field. In this context, the work on providing sustainable energy for displaced people in Tanzania and Uganda is relevant. Other areas that were provided as examples are energy efficiency, buildings, and electric vehicles. UNEP is able to leave its footprint and demonstrate its strengths in this regard: To bring stakeholders from different backgrounds together, environmentalists and humanitarian organizations, and to develop private sector partnerships.

141. The SP-CA’s work on REDD+ has contributed to forest conservation, emissions reduction, and capacity building in participating countries. However, significant challenges remain in ensuring its widespread and effective implementation, requiring sustained commitment, increased funding, and a continued focus on addressing social and

¹³ Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Project for Climate Change in the Coastal Zone of Cambodia Considering Livelihood Improvement and Ecosystems (VAAP).

¹⁴ Enhancing capacity, knowledge and technology support to build climate resilience of vulnerable developing countries.

environmental safeguards. Therefore, it is more accurate to say that REDD+ has shown promise and achieved some successes, but it still faces significant hurdles to maximize its potential in tackling global deforestation and climate change (Parrota et al., 2022).

2.4.3.4 Sustainability of results

142. Capacity building, coupled with the piloting and demonstration of innovative concepts, are essential elements of UNEP's Subprogramme to ensure sustainable results. In the three MTS periods covered by the evaluation, the Subprogramme has included work related to dissemination of advice on policy, planning, and legislative aspects, knowledge-sharing as well as pilot interventions. To illustrate, under Outcome 2 of the SP-CA in the MTS 2022-2025, UNEP states its focus on increasing the capacity of countries as well as stakeholders that allow them to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement (UNEP, 2021). UNEP prioritizes fostering ownership among member countries, encouraging them to replicate the subprogramme's successful initiatives (UNEP, 2015). The likelihood of the sustainability of results of the SP-CA is further reinforced by the prominence of climate change issues on the agendas of many member countries, increasing interest and financial support for the Subprogramme's activities.

143. The subprogramme's focus is on building technical and institutional capacity to enable member countries, develop sound policies, guiding them toward low-carbon technologies, investments, and practices. With focus on the adaptation activities, this includes the activities to include ecosystem-based adaptation in National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In the mitigation context, this includes supporting the development of NDCs and the adoption of clean, renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies. In this context, the UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre (UNEP CCC) has built a global reputation for providing relevant technical information, especially to developing countries as well as by developing assessments to inform climate-related policymaking and action. A major output of this work is the annual Emissions Gap Report. In the context of the work on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), UNEP has focused on supporting countries to implement REDD+-strategies, working on securing finance for REDD+ as well as scaling up the benefits from REDD+ efforts from the participating countries. By supporting countries on how to include forest and land use activities in their Nationally Determined Contributions, UNEP is able to support the countries to deliver emission reductions from avoided deforestation and forest degradation in the long-term.

144. Another approach to providing for sustainability of its results has been to upscale efforts by leveraging funding mechanisms. Under the adaptation efforts, this includes direct participation in the Global EbA Fund and collaboration with the Adaptation Fund to secure resources. Additionally, UNEP's leadership in EbA has likely influenced the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and GCF to start funding EbA projects. This strategic engagement with major funding sources allows UNEP to secure additional resources for approaches it has identified as promising and expand its reach.

145. A third approach facilitated by UNEP's position as one of the central actors in the global climate change arena, is built on its ability to create partnerships and networks and thereby foster collaboration. In its climate change work, the Subprogramme has built strong networks with governments, businesses, NGOs, and international organizations to amplify collective action. In the field of climate change mitigation, a noteworthy initiative is the Cool Coalition. This coalition aims to foster collaboration among its over 130 members to elevate the importance of energy efficiency in cooling solutions. The Cool Coalition emerged as a key outcome and "Transformation Initiative" from the UN Climate Action Summit in September

2019, spearheaded by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The initiative's significance was underscored at COP28. There, the COP28 UAE Presidency, in collaboration with the Cool Coalition, launched the Global Cooling Pledge. This pledge garnered significant international support, with nearly 70 national governments signing on and committing to reduce cooling-related emissions. Another prominent initiative that illustrates UNEP's partnership approach to work on climate change issues in the mitigation field was the "The Climate and Clean Air Coalition", which is a multi-stakeholder partnership focusing on advancing on responding to short-lived climate pollutants. With respect to adaptation, UNEP established the EbA Community of Practice in 2014 to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration among stakeholders globally. This platform continues to serve as another upscaling tool, enabling the organization to disseminate best practices, build capacity, and encourage broader adoption of EbA solutions. The global EbA Community of Practice has also led to the establishment of national communities, increasing ownership on the local level.

146. A potential challenge to the long-term sustainability of the SP-CA's results is its limited on-the-ground presence in most countries according to interviewees. While the reports and other data offer valuable guidance to member countries, and are incorporated into their climate response strategies, demonstrating the sustained impact of these activities remains a challenge. The limited in-country presence also reduces the visibility of the organization making it difficult for UNEP staff that work on the ground to reach out to potential partners, as these are unaware of UNEP's interventions.

2.5 Factors affecting subprogramme performance

147. While the SP-CA generally reached its targets, the ToRs for this evaluation still required the discussion of a number of factors that have been hypothesized to potentially affect subprogramme performance.

2.5.1 Subprogramme organization and management in the New Delivery Model

148. The evaluation team was tasked to consider whether '...the institutional structures and management arrangements for delivery of climate action work lead to effective delivery of climate action outcomes'. According to UNEP's Delivery Model Policy 2022 (UNEP, 2022b). The SP-CA operates within UNEP's matrix-based organizational structure. The responsibility for oversight, management and reporting on the subprogramme is divided in accordance with the matrix structure. The global subprogramme coordinator (and team) reports on the achievement of the subprogramme and is located within the Policy and Programme Division (PPD). While the global coordinator is located within the PPD, he works closely with the substantive divisions undertaking work on climate action and the effectiveness of the SP-CA is linked to the operation of these divisions. The evidence collected during the evaluation indicated that the achievement of climate action outcomes is directly associated with the work of UNEP's Divisions and Regional Offices implementing projects rather than the subprogramme on climate action itself, which is not a delivery structure.

The subprogramme coordination function

149. The global subprogramme coordination function is in the Policy and Programme Division, which has important implications for the operation of the SP-CA. The Delivery Model envisages that the Directly Responsible Individual (DRI) is the Head of a technical Division. The DRI is "responsible for providing the Deputy Executive Director (DED) with accurate information and recommendations (...) to ensure programmatic coordination and results-based

management across the subprogrammes.” (UNEP, 2022b, p. 8) The role of the DRI for the SP-CA was first taken on by the Director of the Industry and Economy Division, and then moved to the Director of the Ecosystems Division. This means that the DRIs for Climate Action were always also responsible for either Healthy Ecosystems or Pollution so that the three Subprogrammes were never on even footing – the other two subprogrammes had a dedicated Director, while CA was an add-on. Stakeholders noted that specifically that prior to the creation of the Climate Change Division, the DRI was treating Climate Action as secondary to Nature Action. That DRI was unavailable for an interview in the context of this evaluation. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility for delivering on the results rests with the Technical Divisions.

150. As detailed above, the SP-CA has regional subprogramme coordinators located in UNEP’s Regional Offices. The regional subprogrammes coordinators (RSPCs) are responsible for dialogue with countries on action under the subprogramme. They are also responsible for coordinating the coherence of the subprogramme across their region, including, among other things, for dialogue with countries and coordination across the region (UNEP, 2022b). Coordination takes place via monthly team calls with held in 2023. The evaluation team was advised that two of the regional subprogramme coordinator roles have been vacant for more than one year.

151. The regional coordinators are the main avenue for engaging with the regions and are responsible for coordinating work under the SP-CA across UNEP’s Regional Offices. This involves engagement with colleagues in the Regional Office but also directly with countries. Regional coordinators also play an important role in providing advice that informs budget allocations within the SP-CA regarding the mobilization of resources for UNEP projects in the regions (UNEP, 2022b). However, only one RSPC was available for an interview in this evaluation, and she was in an atypical setup (OECD country). Therefore, it remains unclear to what degree the regional subprogramme coordinators are in a position to take an active role in coordination and country dialogue. The evaluation team assumes that it is likely that most of the coordination of the portfolio and most of the country dialogue is not done by the regional subprogramme coordinators but by the PCP and project staff. The evaluation team understands that the regional coordinator positions in the Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean regions have been vacant for over a year. It seems likely that the regional subprogramme coordinators are not in a position to play the important role that they are supposed to be playing. Even from a paper perspective, given that the areas of climate mitigation and climate adaptation are very different with respect to stakeholders and project approaches, a substantive (regional) country dialogue – which implies a significant technical component – seems to require more than one person in most regions. This aspect of the Delivery Model therefore remains unclear, potentially borderline unimplemented for the SP-CA.

Box 2. Global subprogramme coordinators roles and responsibilities from New Delivery Model Policy (2022)

- **Portfolio Coordination:** Coordinate the coherence of the subprogramme internally (i.e., across the interventions within the subprogramme), across Divisions and Regional Offices, and across other subprogrammes (to ensure common delivery of the strategic objectives on climate, nature, and pollution) including the alignment of subprogrammes with the emerging strategic directions from MEAs processes.
- **Thought Leadership:** Advise, inform, and communicate to senior management and project teams about key emerging issues and strategic partnerships in the relevant subprogramme; oversee the subprogramme knowledge management, communication, and outreach.
- **Strategic Planning:** Lead strategic planning processes that result in the MTS, PoW and Programme Budget Fascicles, and ensure they shape the development of interventions and programmatic interventions at all levels.
- **Reporting and analyzing results:** Be accountable for the synthesis and reporting of regular corporate results related to their subprogramme, such as Annual Reports and the Programme Performance. The structure and approach to the Division and Regional Office workplan will be reviewed after adoption of the Delivery Model. Reports, on the delivery of the MTS and PoW to the CPR, the United Nations Environment Assembly and other I as needed.
- **Resource allocation and mobilization:** Recommend ways that available resources (both financial and human) can be allocated for the best impact, that an appropriate extra-budgetary strategy is implemented, and that resourcing gaps are identified and addressed; monitor subprogramme resource mobilization and financial management.
- **Innovative approaches:** Foster the development of a culture of results-based management across UNEP; advise the CAG and PRC, where relevant to the subprogramme, to ensure high-quality project design and the overall coherence of interventions.

152. The role of the global subprogramme coordinator for the SP-CA (along with the five other global coordinators) is defined under UNEP's Delivery Model Policy 2022 (see Box 2).

The role of the subprogramme on climate action in defining UNEP's climate change activities

153. The strategic planning process for the MTS and PoW are managed by the Policy and Programme Division. The MTS development is a comprehensive process drawing on inputs from a wide range of sources. The MTS is ultimately agreed by UNEA. Within this framework, the global coordinator of the SP-CA is expected to "lead strategic planning processes that result in the MTS and PoW".

154. From the evidence collected by the evaluation team, the SP-CA could be seen to play a central role in defining UNEP's work on climate action under the MTS. For example, as detailed above, the evaluation team was advised that the transition in the 2021-2025 MTS away from a REDD+ outcome to a new outcome on the Enhanced Transparency Framework originated from within the SP-CA coordination function. The evaluation team was advised that the process of developing the MTS involved collaboration with the technical divisions working on climate action. That said, several interviewees indicated that they found that the SP-CA

coordination function was not sufficiently consultative of the Divisions in developing the MTS. That said, several interviewees suggested that greater coordination with the Divisions by the SP-CA coordination function would enhance the development of UNEP's strategy on climate action under the MTS and more broadly.

155. The evaluation team has not directly assessed the issue of the location of strategy development outside of the substantive divisions responsible for climate action. This approach is common across all subprogrammes. However, there are trade-offs between the potential objectivity achieved through locating the strategy function outside of the substantive Divisions and gaining insights from all global coordinators working collaboratively within PPD versus the potential disadvantage of misalignment between strategy and practical implementation-based knowledge and insight.

156. Development of the strategy for climate action work at UNEP extends beyond the centralized planning functions within the PPD, global coordinator and regional coordinator functions. Interviewees emphasized that the substantive Divisions have an important role to play in defining UNEP's strategy on climate action. However, several interviewees highlighted the funding structure for climate action as impinging on the ability of staff working on climate action to focus on strategic issues, as staff are fully allocated to implementing projects.

157. Beyond the high-level strategic planning of the MTS and PoW processes, the global coordinator of the SP-CA is expected to "shape the development of interventions and programmatic interventions at all levels". Summarizing, regarding the SP-CA's role in coordinating UNEP's climate change activities, the evaluation found evidence of effective coordination of reporting under SP-CA. From 2023 onwards, technical coordination is done through PCPs.

158. On the other hand, this already indicates that the subprogramme coordinator has limited managerial influence on the activities of climate action projects, even though they report their successes against the SP-CA results framework to UNEP's governance system, and progress of the SP-CA is attested on the basis of their success in reaching the indicators from the PoW. Specifically, according to the annexes of the Delivery Model Policy, the subprogramme coordinator does not have any responsibilities in project selection, development or approval (UNEP, 2022b, pp. 14–15). Judging from the narrative, on the other hand, "Global Subprogramme Coordinators (SPCs) and Regional Subprogramme Coordinators (RSPCs), working through their respective Regional Directors, provide guidance to ensure that the concept aligns with thematic priorities and regional/national priorities, respectively." (UNEP, 2022b, p. 12) In practice, subprogramme coordinators have to review and approve the strategic direction of all projects before they go to the Concept Approval group or Project Review Group. As the relevance of the projects was rated very high, it seems that the alignment of the projects is not a problem in the SP-CA even though this formulation is not clear.

159. Regarding the task of the global subprogramme coordinator to coordinate the project activities of the subprogramme across divisions and regional offices, evidence collected from interviews indicated that efforts are being made to coordinate across UNEP's divisions and regional offices, but it was found to be useful to have additional coordination on a thematic level, through the PCPs. This complements the subprogramme and fills the MTS/PoW documents with "contents".

Summary on the role of the subprogramme on coordinating UNEP's climate change activities

160. The institutional split between strategy formulation / reporting (with Policy and Programme Division) and achievement of results (with Technical and Regional Divisions) implies a strong need for institutionalized coordination and communication. Such linkages are important to ensure that the outcome statements and indicators developed within the SP-CA (for and under the MTS) reflect the capacities of the Divisions, their practical experience and their access to funding. The responsibility for implementing climate change activities rests with the divisions. However, the SP-CA coordination function has an important role to play in ensuring that work on climate action is directed toward achieving the outcomes outlined in the MTS and PoW. The evaluation team found that the work of the SP-CA coordination function was aimed at achieving this. However, it is noted that some interviewees indicated the need for more effort be dedicated toward building synergies across the work of the subprogramme (e.g., across adaptation and mitigation) to fully cover the challenges of transformation to a climate-compatible world; identifying gaps in UNEP's work on climate action and bringing together existing work within UNEP to address these gaps; and identifying new funding and partnership opportunities to address gaps.

2.5.2 Cross-subprogramme coordination

161. A number of interviewees identified a lack of coordination between the subprogrammes as an issue. There is evidence of well-established formal relationships between the global coordinators of UNEP's subprogrammes who are peers sitting in the same unit within the Policy and Programme Division in Nairobi. While all interviewees as well as the members of the ERG have confirmed the importance of interpersonal relations, and some saying that the primary mode of work is through personal connections.

162. This raises the question "Why?" as to the ability to achieve Direct Outcomes under the SP-CA where responsibility for those DOs is shared with other subprogrammes, such as Direct Outcome (DO) 1.1 or DO 1.3. The value of strengthening institutionalized connections across subprogrammes (and probably also the Technical Divisions working on them) was identified by various interviewees who indicated a preference for a more systematic and consistent approach to work undertaken across the subprogrammes. For example, connections could be strengthened between work under the Science Policy SP and within the SP-CA under the PCP on Climate Science and Transparency.¹⁵

163. UNEP utilises a matrix approach to organise work across its thematic, enabling and foundational subprogrammes. In line with this structure, the theories of change for the SP-CA indicate a direct relationship between the eight 'Direct Outcomes' under the SP-CA and specific enabling and foundational subprogrammes (a feature common across UNEP's thematic subprogrammes). For example, the theory of change for the SP-CA indicates a relationship between its Direct Outcomes 1.1. and 1.3 and the Science-Policy subprogramme—a foundational subprogramme, which reports progress against these outcomes.

164. The EGR is an example of work that sits across the SP-CA and the Science-Policy subprogramme (see Box 3). The project is implemented by the Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD) and UNEP's Copenhagen Climate Centre. The substantive chapters of the

¹⁵ Outcome 1.1 of theory of change for climate stability in current PoW: "Policymaking and decision-making for climate action are informed by the latest science-based analysis and data generation.", Outcome 1.3: "Transparency and accountability of government and non-government climate action, including from the private sector and finance community, is strengthened."

report are written by external experts. The primary reporting on the EGR is under the SP-CA. Meanwhile, funding for the EGR, external engagement and representation of the EGR are undertaken by the SP-CA. The location of aspects of the EGR across various subprogrammes may not be optimal, especially if the results of the EGR are also to be used to drive internal effort (see Box 3). However, the location of work and responsibilities across several subprogrammes is not inconsistent with UNEP's matrix approach.

Box 3. Deep dive – science to policy

UNEP's vision is to link science and policy to benefit the environment. To this end, UNEP publishes flagship science-based reports, including the Emissions Gap Report (EGR) series. The EGR brings together chapters independently authored by academics and experts under the administration of UNEP. It focuses on the ambition gap in climate mitigation i.e., the gap between the pledges provided by countries and the needed commitments to reach climate stability, but with an emphasis that "tackling climate change is still manageable, if leadership is shown." (UNEP, 2024c)

The EGR was first produced in 2010 and has since developed into a flagship product for UNEP (UNEP, 2010, 2024c). It also has supported the broadening of the scope of such reports. In the latest MTS, the Foundational Subprogramme "Science-policy" mentions about eight such report series (UNEP, 2021). The EGR is central to UNEP's work on climate action under the Subprogramme on Climate Action. Due to its location across UNEP's Divisions and two subprogrammes, it provides a valuable microcosm of UNEP and a useful case study.

The EGR is prepared by UNEP's Copenhagen Climate Centre (UNEP-CCC) under the formal supervision of the Early Warning and Assessment Division (EWAD). UNEP-CCC serves as the report editor, providing guidance on the content and editing of all chapters, including quality control. EWAD coordinates country vetting and provides a scientific review of the chapters.

The report includes different topics each year, reflecting the trends in the climate mitigation field. For example, the 2023 report included chapters on the global energy transformation, energy transitions for low-carbon development in low and middle-income countries, and the role of carbon dioxide removal (UNEP, 2023b). Stakeholders pointed the evaluation team towards the Emissions Gap Report 2017, which analyzed – among other things- the sectoral emission reduction potentials, the phase-out of coal, and the role of short-lived climate pollutants (UNEP, 2017).

The evidence collected indicated that EGR provides a valuable high-level stocktake of progress in reducing global greenhouse gas emissions that supports many discussions on mitigation as the information is well presented and accessible. A key commonality across interviewees' views was that the EGR provides vital high-level context for the global response to climate change. Interviewees emphasised the importance of the fact that the EGR as a UN report and the credibility that this provides. Several interviewees highlighted the role of the EGR in the UNFCCC COP process, where it has been cited in COP decisions and serves as a general reference.

While its contents are similar to some of the IPCC's reports, the EGR's focus on the emissions gap and its annual periodicity seems to make it a more suited communication tool for

policymakers and stakeholders in climate negotiations. Interviewees consistently highlighted the EGR's value in illustrating the need for action. At the same time, many emphasized that UNEP could add significant value by also considering solutions, suggesting that a 'solutions report' would be a useful supplement. Other interviewees took a different view highlighting the importance of the 2017 EGR report in quantifying global emission reduction possibilities at the sub-sectoral level. While extending beyond high-level emission gaps, others noted that information such as that provided in the 2017 EGR would need to be more regionally specific to effectively inform national actions and strategies.

The evaluation team also considered the role of the EGR within UNEP. Interviewees advised that UNEP does not assess the extent to which the findings of the EGR are utilized internally. Evidence collected for the Evaluation indicated the potential value of strengthening internal dialogue on the report's findings as input into UNEP's strategy and planning purposes. While an annual debrief is held within UNEP after the release of each report, the evaluation team did not find evidence of any internal mechanisms or processes to directly connect the EGR results with UNEP's existing or future work. Additionally, several interviewees emphasized the value of strengthening linkages between the EGR and UNEP's project development processes. The evaluation team did not identify any direct linkages between the EGR series and UNEP's project portfolio on climate action.

While the EGR was conceived to identify the ambition gap in climate mitigation and was not intended to provide solutions or drive internal action, these additional functions identified by interviewees could add value to UNEP's broader work on climate action and its goal of linking science to policy.

165. As it 'sits' between subprogrammes it would be a good example for how to bring science into policy, including by providing evidence for what works, but also merely by shedding light on needs for action, from the perspective of science. But the evaluation team did not identify any direct linkages between the EGR flagship series – one of the most noted products of the organization - and UNEP's project portfolio on climate action. The focus of the EGR on the global level and in identifying gaps rather than solutions may help to explain these results, but the science-base for the advice to countries stops short at the point of the gap identification.

166. The roles and responsibilities of the global coordinators of UNEP's subprogrammes are common across the subprogrammes. However, the evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated that the global subprogramme coordinator function, including the SP-CA, across UNEP's subprogrammes, is not always implemented in the exact same manner. Various interviewees indicated that in their view the approach taken by global coordinators was individually determined rather than commonly assigned and implemented. This might also affect cross-subprogramme coordination, but no specific evidence was found to the effect (e.g., which subprogrammes collaborate more effectively and why).

167. According to management theory, a matrix structure – as implemented by UNEP through its split between enabling/foundational and thematic subprogrammes – is useful for providing specialized services for complex products, including (interdisciplinary) advisory services (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1990). It is implemented by business consultancies like

McKinsey and large intergovernmental organizations like the World Bank. The current MTS implies this structure in its narrative and by the cube figure on page 16. The idea of that structure is, that specialists (in the case of UNEP, the foundational and enabling subprogrammes) provide their input to the needs of the “product” (in the case of UNEP, the thematic subprogrammes). An important aspect of a matrix structure would be that staff working in the non-green cells of the matrix (cf. Table 10) report to two managers – the thematic manager (climate, nature, pollution) and the technical manager (foundational and enabling subprogrammes/divisions or regional offices). In the matrix structure of a fully delivery-oriented organization the staff and projects in the thematic subprogrammes would be supporting projects in the regions. Yet, UNEP as a normative organization could still maintain a significant share of its portfolio in less implementation-oriented areas of work, which could cater to a global audience.

Table 10. Classic application of matrix structure with imagined division of responsibilities

	Climate Action	Nature	Pollution
	Representation, coordination and CA-specific knowledge management	...*	...
Early Warning and Assessment	Scientific input to projects ¹⁶	...	
Law	Governance processes, enabling activities, climate action coordination		
Finance	Transforming financial flows (2.1c), support to projects on financial aspects		
Digitization	Leveraging efficiency and enhancing speed through digital applications and innovation		
Regional Offices	Support to countries on climate mitigation and adaptation		
*			

2.5.3 UNEP and the vertical funds

168. As described above, the SP-CA receives a significant proportion of its funding from vertical funds. The evaluation team was asked to consider ‘to what extent are the partnerships with the GEF and the GCF influencing UNEP’s climate action strategy, subprogramme and effectiveness of delivery? And to what extent has UNEP influenced international climate and environment funds?’¹⁷ In these partnerships, UNEP maintains a dialogue with the Secretariats as well as the Board / Council members and countries. That dialogue influences the fundraising, funding and programming strategies in different ways, and thus in turn affects how UNEP’s projects are funded.

169. Consistent with the proportion of finance from the vertical funds, the evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated that the GEF and GCF are influencing the projects that UNEP is implementing under the SP-CA. This relates for example to the areas under which

¹⁶ The evaluation did not look in detail at the work programmes of the foundational and enabling subprogrammes. The contents suggested in the cells are guided by the names of these subprogrammes and abstracting from the current activities.

¹⁷ These partnerships are of course of a very different nature compared to the partnerships that have been discussed in the section on “Cooperation and Partnerships”.

UNEP implements projects and the countries in which UNEP implements as well as the sheer volume of projects that UNEP is able to finance and implement. This finding is unsurprising nor is it necessarily indicative of a problem – as long as it does not prevent UNEP from addressing the priorities in-line with its mission, e.g., by “crowding out” important initiatives. In fact, given the high percentage of UNEP’s work under the SP-CA funded via these two sources, the dominance of the vertical funds might suggest that UNEP may have less capacity to independently pursue work that it identifies as strategically important and/or support countries it identifies as most in need of support. In response, UNEP has introduced thematic funds, aiming to strike a balance between donor control over resource allocation and increased predictability with some flexibility for UNEP within specific thematic areas. These allow to allocate money for various initiatives including management and coordination of the PCPs.

170. UNEP has established teams and staff dedicated to liaising with the GEF and the GCF. At least for the GEF, these are mainly paid by the GEF’s Agency fees. But this allows UNEP’s partnership with the GEF to build on a long tradition and close partnership. Within the GEF, UNEP’s role was defined with specific comparative advantages, including it being a knowledge-based / science-oriented organization. UNEP is also the host of the GEF’s Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel STAP which reports directly to the GEF Council. Therefore, UNEP is in a comparatively strong position to influence the GEF. The evaluation team found mixed evidence for the influence that UNEP has on the GEF in Climate Action. Some evidence suggests that UNEP has influenced some specific areas of the GEF e.g., in relation to ecosystem-based adaptation. Another example of where we see a bidirectional influence is in electric mobility. When GEF pivoted from sustainable transport to electric mobility, UNEP played a central role in advancing that work under the GEF by bringing together a multi-country global programme with regional investment and support centers, thematic working groups, financial institutions, additional partners, etc. In addition, GEF has funded larger scale efforts, for example through UNEP-led Global Programmes, including on electric vehicles, cities and Capacity Building (e.g., through CBIT) which resulted in significant project activity for UNEP. But on the other hand, it is also not obvious that UNEP used its full influence as a science-driven and normative institution to the greatest degree for shaping the GEF in a major way (GCF, n.d.). Echoing findings from previous evaluations (UNEP Evaluation Office, 2022), this evaluation highlights a recurring challenge: donor countries prioritizing their own agendas while lacking a comprehensive understanding of UNEP’s operational modalities. In response, UNEP has introduced thematic funds, aiming to strike a balance between donor control over resource allocation and increased predictability with some flexibility for UNEP within specific thematic areas. While a definitive assessment of the thematic funds’ effectiveness awaits further implementation (launched in 2022), donor interviewees expressed a positive initial reaction. However, some interviewees also indicated a desire for more communication regarding the implementation and operationalization of these funds (Woerlen et al., 2021). Thus, influence of UNEP as an organization and through a partnership dialogue on GCF fundraising and programming, is not obvious or easy to detect. However, the narrative on Ecosystem-based Adaptation, which is now funded by the GCF and the GEF, has illustrated that it is possible to make concepts fundable through a persistent advocacy cum-piloting effort on a global (convention) level as well as a national implementation and demonstration level.

172. In summary, the narrative that UNEP shapes (directly and indirectly) and utilizes the Funds in line with its own strategy finds stronger evidence than the counter narrative that the GEF or GCF are influencing UNEP’s climate action strategy. This is also in-line with the internal sentiment at UNEP. The evidence collected indicated that UNEP’s climate strategy is developed by internal processes, as well as its dialogue with countries, and it seeks financing from the vertical or other funds to implement it.

2.5.4 Subprogramme human and financial resources administration and efficiency

173. Official funding allocation documentation presents the SP-CA as the recipient of the largest budgetary share among all subprogrammes (UNEP, 2022a). This share has demonstrably increased over time. Specifically, the SP-CA's share grew from 25.2 % (2018-2019) to 31.1 % (2020-2021) (see Table 11). This trend continued into the 2022-2023 biennium (MOPAN, 2021). The primary driver of this increase appears to be the significant amount of earmarked funding directed towards the subprogramme. Interviewees attributed this trend to the heightened global focus on the climate crisis, which has made climate action a pressing issue and an attractive area for donor investment.

Table 11. Estimated budget allocations by Subprogramme, 2018-2019 and 2020-2021

Subprogramme	2018-2019		2020-2021	
	USD million	Share (%)	USD million	Share (%)
Climate Change	181.3	25.2	261.4	31.1
Resilience to Disasters & Conflicts	51.1	7.1	39.4	4.7
Healthy & Productive Ecosystems	169.7	23.6	189.4	22.5
Environmental Governance	78.8	10.9	78.5	9.3
Chemicals, Waste & Air Quality	100.4	13.9	136.5	16.2
Resource Efficiency	86.3	12.0	95.9	11.4
Environment under Review	52.2	7.3	40.0	4.8
Total for all subprogrammes	719.9	100.0	841.2	100.0
Total for entire PoW	788.6		917.1	
Subprogrammes/total for PoW		93.0		93.6

Source: MOPAN, 2021

2.5.4.1 Financial resource adequacy

174. The SP-CA relies on a combination of extrabudgetary funding and the Environment Fund for its core activities. This funding structure presents key challenges for UNEP: First, the Environment Fund, which serves as UNEP's primary source of flexible funding, is constrained in its size, limiting the organization's ability to effectively implement its programs. This limitation has been further exacerbated by recent decreases in Environment Fund contributions, attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and other international threats to peace and security. While earmarked funds compensate for these shortfalls, their project-specific nature restricts their utility for broader resource allocation strategies.

175. On a similar note, the evaluation identified financial constraints as a primary factor hindering the SP-CA's efficiency. While it seems efficient if the SP-CA achieves more with less, project-based work provides lower levels of continuity, leading to long ramp-up phases for projects and weaker knowledge management.

176. Second, the organization's dependence on earmarked funding presents another challenge. While these funds provide essential support for specific projects, they restrict resource flexibility and hinder efficient allocation across the subprogramme's activities. The SP-CA is the subprogramme that received the highest amount of extrabudgetary funding, mainly from vertical funding partners, of all subprogrammes during the period of evaluation and proportionally the least amount of core budget. Interviewees indicated that the SP-CA receives a lower allocation from the Environment Fund due to its high volume of earmarked funding, as Environment Fund allocation prioritizes subprogrammes with limited access to

earmarked resources. The high dependency of extrabudgetary funds was criticized by some interviewees in that it does not allow SP-CA staff to focus on strategic questions but keeps them busy with project work. Furthermore, donors hold the reasonable expectation that project staff will dedicate the majority of their time to the associated projects, with the project budget allocated solely to activities directly related to those projects. This focus on project-specific activities can create limitations for project staff, who may find it challenging to utilize project funds for endeavors beyond core project work. These endeavors, such as participation in meetings that are non-essential for the projects, may nonetheless be of high importance for UNEP staff in achieving broader organizational goals (e.g., enhanced coordination, teambuilding, identification of synergies).

177. Furthermore, the evaluation found that competition for funding both within UNEP and with other organizations has exacerbated the financial constraints. This competitive landscape makes it challenging for UNEP to establish a modus operandi that optimizes the efficiency of its activities.

178. Stakeholders highlighted that a lack of allocation from the EF is perceived as a significant barrier to achieving optimal operational efficiency and also impact within the subprogramme. A lack of predictability in resource allocation is a significant barrier to strategic planning of the subprogramme. This constraint hinders the SP-CA from adopting a strategic approach. While the divisions contributing to the Subprogramme hold responsibility for management decisions and actions, the SP-CA coordinator lacks authority over resource allocation within the Subprogramme. This decentralized structure and project-driven approach create challenges in developing a unified and strategic climate action strategy.

179. Echoing findings from previous evaluations (UNEP Evaluation Office, 2022), this evaluation highlights a recurring challenge: donor countries prioritizing their own agendas while lacking a comprehensive understanding of UNEP's operational modalities. In response, UNEP has introduced thematic funds, aiming to strike a balance between donor control over resource allocation and increased predictability with some flexibility for UNEP within specific thematic areas. While a definitive assessment of the thematic funds' effectiveness awaits further implementation (launched in 2022), donor interviewees expressed a positive initial reaction. However, some interviewees also indicated a desire for enhanced communication regarding the implementation and operationalization of these funds.

2.5.4.2 Financial management and administration

180. As described above, the subprogramme has generally little to no managerial oversight over project budgets due to the large share of vertical funds. As the core budgets and non-earmarked funds are also limited, the SP-CA has proportionally less funding available for this task than other subprogrammes. The managerial and operational influence of the subprogramme coordinator is therefore limited.

Transparency

181. The utilization specifically of the Environment Fund resources seems to be comparatively opaque. The evaluation team was given a list of 53 staff positions who were paid from the Environment Fund budget allocated to the SP-CA. The subprogramme coordinator identified 19 of these who were actually working on climate issues, with many positions also unfilled and the remainder working on other issues. The reaction of other UNEP staff when presented with this statement gives support to the assumption that this was a very

unexpected (and therefore not well-communicated) situation. A “re-mapping” of these Environment Fund positions would be useful.

Volatility of core budget allocations

182. Specifically, the question was raised how the predictability and stability of core budget allocations have impacted on the quality and quantity of delivery on climate action (see Table 2). A key factor hindering core budget predictability is its uneven distribution across subprogrammes. UNEP's high-level management allocates more core funding to subprogrammes struggling to attract extrabudgetary resources, ensuring they can deliver their projects and activities. This approach, however, creates uncertainty for subprogrammes with high levels of external funding. Asking whether this likely impacts subprogramme performance within UNEP revealed a spectrum of diverse and often conflicting viewpoints among stakeholders.

183. One group of interviewees expressed support for this rationale for the allocation of core funds between subprogrammes according to organizational priorities, highlighting that sometimes the organizational mission requires prioritization of subprogrammes with limited access to extrabudgetary resources. They argued that flexibility in budget allocation ensures thematically justified distribution among competing priorities, particularly within a resource-constrained organization such as UNEP. They further argued that as the climate crisis is momentarily a top priority for many countries, it is easier for the subprogramme to raise more extrabudgetary funds than the other Subprogrammes, for example the one on pollution.

184. On the other hand, numerous interviewees were of the view that the lack of stability core fund allocations negatively impacts subprogramme performance. They expressed concerns about the uncertainty surrounding core funding, hindering strategic planning and fostering feelings of unfairness. Moreover, they argued that the reliance on extrabudgetary funds for the SP-CA compromises programmatic focus, as donor priorities may dictate programme approaches and topics. While it was not doubted that projects and programmes are aligned with the PoW and other strategies, the interviewees felt that this reliance on funded projects makes the SP-CA donor driven. This funding model, they argued, hinders the subprogramme's ability to respond swiftly to emerging opportunities that fall outside the scope of available donor funding. Despite the evaluation's inability to identify definite conclusive evidence supporting claims of negative performance impacts, statements from key staff members strongly suggest potential drawbacks for the subprogramme's long-term strategic planning. The constant concern about securing new funding and the reliance on projects with two to five years implementation time creates a disruptive environment. Team members are forced to divert their focus from ongoing projects and strategic planning to concentrate on grant proposals and fundraising efforts. This disrupts the workflow and hinders long-term planning. The perceived insecurity also fosters instability among staff as it is detrimental to team morale and can lead to higher staff turnover. Unnecessarily long project ramp-up and ramp-down phases as well as extended project implementation¹⁸ periods can be partially explained by these funding uncertainties and staff fluctuation. Organizations are hesitant to commit resources to a new project until funding is secured, delaying the critical initial stages. Conversely, the fear of being unable to secure continued funding can lead to projects being closed down rather than being extended to a second phase to enhance, replication or scaled-up, potentially wasting valuable resources already invested. Lastly, project-based funding often creates silos between projects. With a focus on securing funding

¹⁸ Cf. Efficiency discussion

for the next initiative, organizations may struggle to capture and share knowledge gained from previous projects. This makes it difficult to leverage synergies - similarities and potential connections - between projects with similar structures or objectives. The inability to build upon past experiences reduces efficiency and hinders overall organizational learning.

2.5.5 The role of cooperation and partnerships

185. In order to support the goals of the Paris Agreement, UNEP works in projects, with governments on climate-specific frameworks and plans (including but not limited to national communications and national climate governance, readiness work, Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) and transparency systems, needs assessments etc.) and on the implementation of climate mitigation and adaptation projects. The latter is often financed through UNEP's access to the climate funds of the UNFCCC and donors. In the PPR 2016-2017, the tools of UNEP are described as follows: "We produce environmental assessments and analyses, norms, guidelines and methods for use by stakeholders looking for guidance on how to effectively manage the environment for their sustainable development and economic growth." (UNEP, 2018, p. v) In the MTS 2022-2025, UNEP states: "While the importance of linking science to policy- and decision making remains stronger than ever, science alone is not enough. (...) Science can and must inform and drive financial, economic and behavioural shifts towards sustainable consumption and production patterns to enable transformation at the pace and scale required" (UNEP, 2021, p. 4), implying much more of a call to action across larger stakeholder groups beyond governments, called "transformative multi-stakeholder actions that target the root causes and drivers of the crises, delivering deeper and broader impact that can underpin positive social and economic outcomes, while reducing vulnerabilities in support of sustainable development." (UNEP, 2021, p. 5)

186. A core tenet of UNEP's impact and sustainability strategy is based on the formation of synergistic partnerships. The evaluation team considered mechanisms for information sharing, cooperation, and/or collaboration outside of UNEP. The role of the global Subprogramme coordinator with respect to partnerships, as defined under the Delivery Model Policy 2022 is limited to advising, informing and communicating on strategic partnership. The role of implementing and managing partnerships falls to UNEP's divisions and regional offices. This is expressed by the fact that partnerships are an important component of the SP's theory of change. And the PCPs, as being the active link between the divisions and the Subprogramme, are important loci of partnerships. For example, the PCP on Adaptation and Resilience has "Partnerships" as its first component. The PCP on Decarbonization has "Sectoral Partnerships" as the second component and mentions 10 examples for important partnerships. More information can be found on the website which lists 13 partnerships, networks and centers constituting an incomplete list (UNEP, 2023a). The partners in these partnerships often are members of the following groups: UNEP Collaborating Centers, other Intergovernmental Organizations, philanthropies, Civil Society Organizations and NGOs like IUCN, as well as bilateral agencies. Often, these partnerships gain an institutional character and establish their own brand and profile. An example for that is the "Friends of EbA" or FEBA. Several such partnerships are establishing themselves as global advocacy organizations or competence centers. This is one of the ways through which UNEP can ensure its comparatively broad and deep coverage of climate-relevant topics, and a continuity in dealing with individual topics even though its activities are project-based and rely on funding for three to five years.

187. Various interviewees to the evaluation have reported that there is close cooperation with other UN organizations. UNEP collaborates with various UN organizations in order to achieve joint targets: This cooperation spans from working together with UN entities on implementing projects (e.g., CTCN with United Nations Industrial Development Organization

(UNIDO)), working on important reports collaboratively (e.g., Scaling up Investment in Climate Technologies with CTCN and UNFCCC Secretariat), to implementing projects together. UNDP is the most frequent project implementing partner not only of UNEP's EbA project portfolio. Cooperations with other UN organizations are highly relevant for UNEP, because the organization does not have a strong regional and country presence compared to other UN organizations, for example UNDP and FAO. These two organizations, specifically, are also much larger regarding their staff size and institutional history and structure. Therefore, the organizations are able to complement each other with UNEP concentrating on the science and acting as the organization bringing others together and the other UN organizations working on the implementation on the ground of projects. UNDP and UNEP acknowledge each other's comparative advantages and often leverage it in joint efforts, including within the ETF or mitigation areas, e.g., through GEF Global Programmes. However, the relationship between UNEP and UNDP is cooperative but it is at times also competitive. One representative of a donor country remarked that it is sometimes problematic when two UN organizations compete for projects, which they should rather approach in unison and work together. It was reported that the competition between the two organizations can lead to inefficiencies. Interviews with representatives from the UNDP HQ specifically indicated that the comparative strengths are recognized and partnership opportunities are sought but other interviews indicate that at the local level collaboration is not without its challenges. On the other hand, UNEP staffers point to a growing network of local organizations in the countries that collaborate with UNEP more and more.

188. While most partnerships are a matter of project and implementation strategy, the SP-CA coordinator directly and actively engages with the UNFCCC Secretariat. An example of this engagement is the annual regional series of Climate Weeks is one area in which UNEP coordinates with the UNFCCC (along with UNDP and the World Bank). A Letter of Agreement has been signed between UNEP and the UNFCCC. The evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated good connections between the UNFCCC and technical staff within UNEP.

2.5.6 Reporting, monitoring, and evaluation

189. The SP-CA reports on progress in a number of reports, including the Quarterly Report of the Executive Director with a focus on the activity level, as well as the annual PPR that focuses on the progress on indicators. Information on progress of GEF projects is included in the annual Project Implementation Report, which the GEF then utilizes to consolidate an analysis and uses to prepare a small report for the GEF Council.

190. A recurrent critique of UNEP's reporting practices centers on their perceived inadequacy in capturing the impact of its activities. This was also stated in regard to how project evaluations capture higher-level targets, thereby limiting their explanatory power and hindering the development of programmatic strategies. This insufficient grasp of project impact and delivery especially extends to reporting for donor countries. For donor nations, a lack of specificity in reporting impedes their ability to effectively report successes within their own governance structures, potentially diminishing UNEP's visibility.

191. Representatives of member countries have also expressed a desire for more comprehensive reporting data, particularly regarding the allocation of funds. These representatives indicate difficulty in accurately tracking the specific interventions and activities supported by their contributions, making it more difficult to report on the impact of their contributions. This concern aligns with findings suggesting that UNEP distributes funds internally based on emergent needs. It also resonates with the high proportion of extrabudgetary funding to SP-CA as these funds are clearly earmarked and thus attributable. The current plan to support the strategic work within the thematic subprogrammes with

thematic trust funds will focus the potential use of resources and provide assurance of member countries of the thematic focus of the use of their funds and will allow attribution to specific activities.

192. UNEP has been working on improving its reporting through a results-based management methodology to allow the linking of resources and results frameworks: There has been a restructuring of reporting through the introduction of the Integrated Planning, Management and Reporting (IPMR) system to improve reporting mechanisms. On the budget reporting, UNEP has started to use the SAP Business Planning and Consolidation software, which is supposed to allow further progress towards results-based budgeting. The latter is supposed to support UNEP as well as its Subprogramme to be better able to understand the flows of the finances, including the allocation of extrabudgetary funds, within the organization.

193. Interviewees appreciated that the subprogramme coordinator would make himself available as needed for discussions with donors on the subprogramme activities to inform and discuss current and future activities.

194. Due to the high share of vertical fund projects, evaluation rate is comparatively high. Evaluation quality is overseen by the UNEP Evaluation Office. All PCPs comment on how they plan to utilize the evaluative evidence and recommendations, although it is difficult to find examples of evaluation findings feeding into higher programming as most evaluations are done at the project level.

2.5.7 Human rights, gender, and disability inclusion

195. While human rights, gender, and disability inclusion haven't always received the prominence they deserve, a positive trend is emerging. These crucial aspects were largely sidelined in the first two MTS phases. The MTS 2014-2017 lacked any discussion on these issues within the climate action context. MTS 2018-2021 marked a shift by mentioning that UNEP applies a "gender lens" for improved outcomes (p. 23). This trend toward greater inclusion continues in the MTS 2022-2025. For example, one of the principles guiding the SP-CA emphasizes UNEP's commitment to integrating aspects of human health, gender responsiveness, environmental security, and poverty eradication into its support for adaptation action (p. 23). This signifies a growing focus on ensuring that gender equity, human rights, and disability inclusion are adequately considered in UNEP's work.

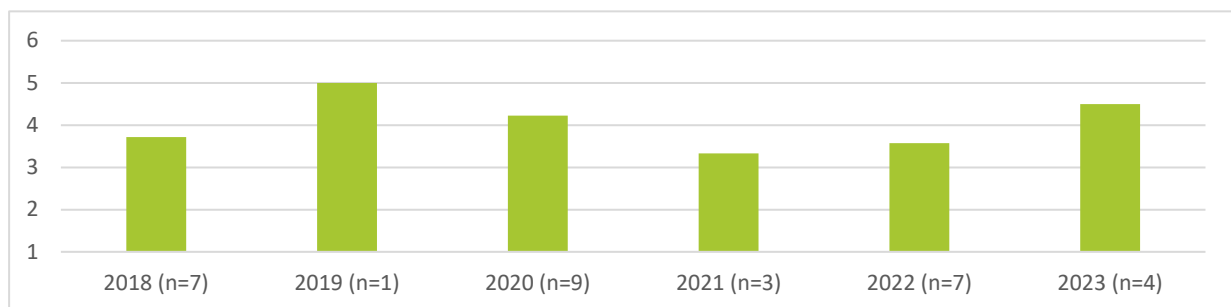
196. The increasing emphasis on human rights, gender, and disability inclusion is well illustrated by trends in project evaluations. From 2014 to 2023, there has been a rise in the number of climate project evaluations that consider these aspects. Notably, the first projects with ratings for "Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity" emerged in 2018 and for "Environmental & Social Safeguards" emerged in 2020. While there are 31 evaluations available with ratings on "Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity", there are only 12 with ratings for "Environmental & Social Safeguards". It is noteworthy that even before formal ratings were available, evaluations conducted prior to 2018 were encouraged to assess how projects aligned with UNEP's gender policies and strategies. Additionally, the ToRs for evaluations of GEF-funded projects require a "brief narrative" on both "gender balance" and the project's consideration of the "human rights-based approach and (HRBA) and inclusion of indigenous peoples' issues, needs and concerns."

197. One evaluation as early as 2016 highlights the need for a stronger focus on gender aspects. In a specific recommendation, the evaluators advised: "Recommendation 6: Gender should be better integrated into the project. Gender disaggregated indicators can be used to assess results relative to gender, and a gender analysis could be integrated in the Theory of

Change. Regional technical workshops can focus some programming on climate resilience and how it intersects with gender. Gender targets can be established for female participation.” (UNEP Evaluation Office, 2016, p. 13). Human rights or disability inclusion did not receive such attention.

198. Despite an increase in the availability of evaluation data on human rights, gender, and disability inclusion, robust performance analysis remains challenging due to previously mentioned data limitations. This shift is positive as ToRs for evaluations now place greater emphasis on "Responsiveness to Human Rights and Gender Equity" and "Environmental and Social Safeguards." The following section describes evaluations that incorporate analysis of these elements and share insights from best practices.

Figure 25. Average rating for responsiveness to human rights and gender equity in evaluated projects (2018-2023)



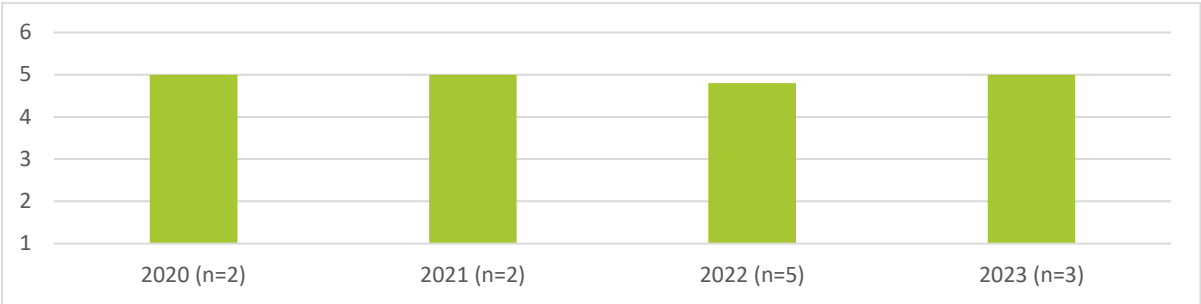
Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database

199. An analysis of project ratings from 2018 to 2023 reveals that the average scores typically are in the 'moderately satisfactory' range. The 'satisfactory' rating in 2019 is technically an average, but the limited sample size for that year (n=1) necessitates cautious interpretation of this finding (see Figure 25).

200. No projects achieved the highest rating for responsiveness to human rights and gender equality. However, ten projects received a Satisfactory rating. These projects shared a common strength: their design considered the specific needs of women. Capacity building efforts also focused on empowering women. Examples include the UNEP/GEF Project African Rift Geothermal Development Facility (ARGeo) and the project on Low Carbon-Energy Islands in Tuvalu, Niue, and Nauru. Conversely, the Market Transformation for Energy Efficient Lighting in Morocco was the only project rated Highly Unsatisfactory in this area. The evaluation identified a complete lack of consideration for gender equality. The project failed to address the unique environmental risks faced by women and children, nor did it acknowledge the role women play in managing energy use within their communities.

201. Evaluations conducted between 2020 and 2023 indicate a Satisfactory average rating for environmental and social safeguards. Notably, the project titled "Building Capacity for LDCs to participate effectively in intergovernmental climate change processes" achieved the highest rating of Highly Satisfactory. This project was distinguished by its inclusion of diverse groups in meetings, which likely contributed to its success (see Figure 26).

Figure 26. Average rating for environmental and social safeguards in evaluated projects (2020-2023)



Source: own analysis based on UNEP Evaluation Office database, N=12

202. The trend in attention paid to Gender issues correlates to the trend in the project design requirements of the major funders (for example the GEF¹⁹ but also bilateral donors). UNEP’s own gender strategy was most recently revised in 2015, almost nine years ago. Its website proposes a significant number of gender mainstreaming tools whose application seems to be voluntary so that it is up to the donors to enforce it (UNEP, 2024a). An evaluation of UNEP’s Gender Policy and Strategy in 2022 highlighted the significant challenges that UNEP is still facing with its formulation, implementation and effectiveness.

2.5.8 Communication

203. Two of the primary coordination functions performed by the subprogramme are strategy development and reporting. The Delivery Model Policy also mentions as one of the subtasks of the Global SP Coordinator outreach and communication on the SP.²⁰ The evaluation team considered the effectiveness of this communication across four areas – within the SP-CA (PPD), with the technical units responsible for the implementation of the Subprogramme in other divisions, with senior management, and with relevant external partners and stakeholders. Interview evidence indicated good communication between the SP-CA and UNEP’s senior management including the Executive Director. Communication within UNEP, within the subprogramme and with external stakeholder communication regarding activities and projects was reported as effective, transparent, and constructive. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities facilitated external stakeholders’ ability to identify appropriate SP-CA contacts for addressing specific issues. These robust communication practices appear to be a fundamental factor in the positive working relationships between UNEP and its implementing and funding partners—relationships that have yielded new projects and the identification of synergies.

204. A key role of the SP-CA coordination function is coordination with the Technical Divisions and Regional Offices working on climate action. The role of the global SP coordinator includes overseeing the subprogramme knowledge management, communication, and outreach. The evaluation team did not find evidence of these roles being performed by the SP-CA coordination function nor would it find this to be appropriate in the case of CA, where most knowledge management is specific to adaptation vs mitigation and better done with the technical experts in the Divisions. As it is, knowledge management is a function of the PCPs, and the evaluation team considers this appropriate (UNEP, n.d.b). The evaluation team

¹⁹https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/202401/EN_GEF.C.66.Inf._07_Progress%20Report%20on%20Advancing%20Gender%20Equality_.pdf

²⁰ “Thought Leadership: Advise, inform, and communicate to senior management and project teams about key emerging issues and strategic partnerships in the relevant subprogramme; oversee the subprogramme knowledge management, communication, and outreach.”

understands that the global coordinator participates in senior management meetings of the substantive divisions working on climate action. In addition, the evaluation team understands that the global SP-CA coordinator is in regular communication with the divisions. Interviewees from UNEP's Divisions working on climate change indicated contrasting views on how the global SP-CA coordination function coordinated across the divisions, with some Senior Managers indicating that more engagement with management was required and technical staff indicating that they needed to be more engaged in the planning work under the SP-CA.

205. On communicating substantive issues, the main area highlighted by interviewees in UNEP Divisions working on climate change was in relation to progress within the UNFCCC COP and where UNEP engages in the associated processes. The SP-CA communication with technical staff in divisions included information sharing sessions on the via webinars described as 'Climate Action Dialogues' and informal virtual 'brown bag' briefings. Despite these efforts, the evaluation team notes that a number of internal and external interviewees indicated a lack of a clear narrative on UNEP's work on climate action. Stakeholders suggested that more could be done on communicating results of studies or new initiatives internally, for example in the form of brown bags and internal webinars.

206. At the same time, some staff from UNEP's substantive Divisions indicated a desire to avail of a clear, unified narrative that describes UNEP's work on climate action and its role for the global community comprehensively, with a historic and forward-looking eye. Evidence collected from interviews also indicated that the role of the global subprogramme coordinator is not sufficiently focused on the coordination of a clear, unified narrative that joins UNEP's work on climate action despite this being perceived as a key function of that role. Interviewees focused on the need for greater synergies across the work of the subprogramme and for more coherence in UNEP's narrative on climate action. Interviewees suggested this function would sit below the broader strategy outlined in the MTS making connections across UNEP's main areas of work. The evaluation team notes that UNEP's Delivery Model Policy 2022 indicates a modest role to the subprogramme coordinator in this respect, focused instead on coordination of the coherence of the subprogramme internally to ensure common delivery of the strategic objectives, including the alignment of subprogramme with the emerging strategic directions from MEAs processes. Evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated that the global subprogramme coordinator was working toward this goal, especially with respect to the UNFCCC. Bringing together UNEP's work on adaptation and mitigation under the new Climate Change Division could help to address the concerns expressed regarding opportunities to link together UNEP's work on climate change. Supplementary to this, the development of a narrative that guides UNEP's internal work could be part of the agenda of the new division, if that is not already planned.

207. The evaluation team also considered mechanisms for information sharing, cooperation, and/or collaboration with countries through UNEP's Committee of Permanent Representatives. The evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated that countries, through their Permanent Representatives, were briefed on UNEA and associated events. There was also evidence of informal information sharing between staff in UNEP's technical divisions working on climate action and the Permanent Representatives. The evaluation team did not find evidence of mechanisms for information sharing, cooperation, and/or collaboration between the Permanent Representatives and the SP-CA coordination functions specifically. However, it is not clear to what extent this is expected. More broadly, interviewees indicated a need for greater transparency on work under the SP-CA, including how the various streams of work fit together (the narrative and strategy), how UNEP is working under the SP, what projects are being undertaken within regions, opportunities for future work, etc. It is not clear to the evaluation team whether addressing this issue is a role for the global SP-CA coordination

function or it applies more broadly to UNEP's work on climate action within the substantive divisions.

208. Another aspect that the evaluation team considered was communication of SP-CA work with external partners and stakeholders. Specifically, whether this communication has been contributing to the effective implementation of the subprogramme, establishment of synergies and reducing duplication of effort. The evidence collected by the evaluation team on this question can be grouped into two main areas – communication by UNEP staff working on climate action under the SP-CA and communication by the global SP-CA coordinator and his team. The evaluation team understood that the SP-CA coordination function is only directly responsible for one partnership – that with the UNFCCC. That said, this is consistent with the roles and responsibilities of the global SP coordinator. That role does not include responsibility for managing relationships with external partners.

209. More broadly, across the SP-CA, the evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated good communication between UNEP's technical areas and key partners and donors such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), GEF and the UNFCCC Secretariat, and with UNEP's Permanent Representatives. The evaluation team understands that UNEP has formal agreements with the UNFCCC, FAO and other partners. Outside of these arrangements, the evidence collected suggested informal connections between UNEP and external stakeholders are primarily based on personal relationships rather than institutionalized mechanisms or processes. The global SP-CA coordinator is not and cannot be part of this communication which are part of project implementation. The evaluation team also considered whether the global SP-CA coordinator efforts to communicate with external audiences could be seen as part of an outreach strategy in order to exert influence and support advocacy efforts in the relevant sectors. The evidence collected by the evaluation team indicated that the global SP-CA coordinator effectively engages with external audiences associated with the UNFCCC's annual COP. This was a strength highlighted by most interviewees. However, the evaluation team did not find evidence of the SP-CA coordination function having or implementing an outreach strategy that exerted influence and supported advocacy efforts in relevant sectors, which was a specific question in the TORs for this evaluation.

210. That said, this role was not specifically included in the roles and responsibilities of the global coordinator position, as per the Delivery Model Policy 2022. This policy is not mentioning an important aspect of communication that was highlighted in the interviews: the DRI of the subprogramme is also expected to be the external "face" of the theme for the external world. Interviewees voiced concern that this role was not appropriately filled in recent years which implies a risk to UNEP's profile in the Climate Change Community. In fact, when external stakeholders were asked who they see representing Climate Action (and not mitigation or adaptation), they did not name anybody. At the time of the research for this discussion, even on UNEP's website, when searching for Climate Change or climate action, no specific mission statement or description of UNEP's approach to Climate Action could be found. At the bottom of UNEP's landing page, key documents and advocacy products were listed, and while some of them are specific to biodiversity or specific pollution aspects, none of them was specific to climate change. It goes beyond the scope of this evaluation to provide an analysis of the balance in outreach between the themes and their justification, but they might not be on even footing. However, during the final edits to the evaluation, a new UNEP Climate Portal came online that might mitigate some of these concerns.

211. Summarizing, thus, the SP-CA coordination function is fulfilling the internal communication needs to the degree possible and useful, although stakeholders would appreciate an expansion of that work beyond its current roles. Specifically, they are missing

an external outreach strategy that would represent UNEP's global advocacy role on Climate Action.

3 Conclusions

3.1 Climate action as one of UNEP's biggest fields of activity

212. The subprogramme on climate action is one of the largest subprogrammes in UNEP, both in number of projects as well as in funding volume. It plays a prominent role in these respects. However, this is not how it looks externally. Looking at UNEP's website, climate does not seem to feature as a fundamental or defining part for UNEP's mandate. Looking at the list of major and minor events that were part of the recent UNEA-6, climate constituted an undercurrent in most topics – just like it would be in most other intergovernmental meetings, but not a prominent headline and, possibly less prominent than biodiversity or pollution, although this evaluation has not taken quantitative measures of that (UNEP, 2023e). Until very recently, there was no climate portal on the website, success stories are rarely told and thus the narrative remains underdeveloped, and innovation is relegated to the PCPs.

213. Stakeholders have noted that they are missing an “external face of Climate Action” at UNEP, a high-level spokesperson that represents the organization and its work on Climate Action to the Climate community. The DRI for the SP-CA was not seen as such a person, most likely because she has been more closely associated with her respective ‘home’ Division, previously either Industry / Economy (and thus mainly Climate Mitigation) or Environment (and thus predominantly Climate Adaptation). On this basis, the lack of a “Climate Face” can be traced back to the divergence between the managerial responsibilities on climate projects (which are split between the Ecosystems Division and the Industry and Economy Division) and the reporting responsibilities (which sit with the PPD) of the subprogramme.

214. UNEP also has difficulties describing its full importance for the UNFCCC. From the very start, UNEP has shaped the Convention and its community. UNEP has not only triggered many initiatives and projects, but through its work with governments on national communications and transparency frameworks as well as its science-based reports and its capacity building initiatives, has contributed to the current level of ambition of the Paris Agreement. However, this story is hardly ever told – the full narrative is not given in the outreach or planning documents reviewed by this evaluation. One reason might be that within the organization, its full relevance is not recognized, as work on climate is fragmented across many players and units and the interest in putting the story together is not strong enough. The indicators in the MTSs and PoWs, – specifically the older MTS –do not cover some of the areas where UNEP has been able to exert influence on the global negotiation arena. In addition, the matrix structure has not facilitated the tying together of all work from the technical divisions / regional offices and the enabling/foundational subprogrammes at the project level closer together, to provide a fully coherent narrative. The latest MTS and PoW have significantly changed the orientation of UNEP's organizational goals towards implementing the PA and they are also providing a better narrative around climate action. But still, not all activities that support the PA are integrated into the CA storyline. There are workstreams within UNEP – such as the Early Warning work – that certainly supports PA implementation but are not mentioned there. While the numerous networks and partnerships are mentioned in a footnote of the current MTS, the role that UNEP played and plays as a founding member or operating significant elements of the UNFCCC and PA implementation infrastructure –

including the IPCC, the CTCN and the CBIT – is under illuminated. All of this is too often taken for granted instead of integrated into the Climate Action picture at UNEP.

3.2 The role of the SP-CA coordination function

215. The SP-CA is a purely administrative construct that seeks to bring together reporting and a narrative on the work previously done in the Energy and Climate Branch of the Industry and Economy Division and the Nature for Climate Branch of the Ecosystems Division (both now housed in the Climate Change Division) and other climate action work managed and implemented from other divisions, centers and offices. The SP-CA coordination function also has a clear role with respect to strategy formulation. In line with the split between operational function and describing the strategy, the evaluation team identified a clear role that the SP-CA coordination function has in aligning the MTS 2014-2017 and 2018-2021 and the corresponding PoWs such that they reflected their work under the SP-CA. As that work on climate action is implemented within the Divisions, the SP-CA coordination function is primarily limited to an advisory role rather than an active management delivery role. Actual coordination of the work under the SP-CA is done by the divisions implementing that work rather than the SP-CA coordination function. The line between operational responsibility (which sits with the divisional teams) and the responsibility for aggregating, reporting and describing at an institutional level (which sits with the Policy and Programme Division team) is quite clear. To expect a more substantive role on results management or substantive coordination would be overloading the PPD coordination function and therefore be unrealistic as well as exceeding the management authority of staff within the Policy and Programme Division.

216. There is a clearly defined role for the SP-CA coordinating function in reporting on Climate Action. This function is performed by the institutional arrangement of the SP-CA coordination function in PPD and separate from the implementation function in the Divisions and Regions. An important aspect in this description are the indicators. EA indicators and outcomes statements need to be comparable across all subprogrammes on one hand, but EA indicators for Climate Action should be substantive and directionally aligned with the Paris Agreement. This inherent contradiction was very evident in MTS 2014 – 2017 and 2018 – 2021 and the corresponding PoWs. It led to a situation where projects were reporting on reach indicators (“number of policies”) and not on qualitative achievement (“Paris alignment”).

217. Evidence collected by the evaluation team suggested that greater integration between that function and the role of the divisions could potentially enhance coordination and efficiency. While no duplication of work was identified, and interviewees lauded the efficient handling of reporting and the overall collaboration of the SP-CA there is still a disconnect between the two units in the sense that the programming divisions are orientated towards country implementation and use implementation and impact-related indicators, and the Policy and Programme Division is more leaning towards output-oriented indicators that can be more easily aggregate for the purpose of reporting to the CPR/UNEA at an organizational level. Integrating the functions that the SP is implementing into the new Climate Change Division could potentially better ensure the anchoring of MTS and PoW development and reporting in UNEP’s practical experience and capabilities. For understanding and managing the work of the divisions, indicators with stronger content orientation and less formal orientation might be more helpful (e.g., “NDC ambition level raised by x %”) than indicators that are designed for aggregability across countries (like “number of countries that have policies”).

218. The SP-CA has also a role in communicating on climate action, if not in outreach, then at least in describing the climate action work and formulating strategy documents, as well as linking to the UNFCCC. This role could be enhanced by the SP-CA coordination function not only communicating materials produced within the SP-CA coordination function, but also acting as a focal point for coordinating and communicating key messages originating from the Divisions and Regions. This could help ensure the internal narrative on climate action is clear, consistent, and comprehensive. Finally, it is not clear to what extent the SP-CA coordination function can manage UNEP's diverse set of partnerships on climate action. The Evaluation team considers that partnerships are best managed by the Divisions with the SP-CA function coordination limited to reporting on these partnerships.

3.3 Subprogramme performance and indicators

219. Looking at the subprogramme's performance indicators, the performance of the subprogramme in the PoWs with respect to achieving its targets, is very high, specifically when looking at the more recent data. On the other hand, the project and PCP level performance is aligned with the institutional performance (e.g., as discussed in MOPAN, 2021): while relevance is high, efficiency, effectiveness and impact show room for improvement. This discrepancy aligns with other factors that have partially also been highlighted by the MOPAN review:

- The indicators at the SP level for earlier MTSs measure UNEPs reach in terms of numbers of countries and did not reflect the ambition of the indicators at the project level which measure physical changes 'on the ground'.
- As a normative and knowledge-based agency, delivery of 'on the ground' results is not UNEP's comparative advantage.
- Project-based efforts with significant funding uncertainty and limited local presence are a structural limitation to efficient and effective delivery.

220. Some of these limitations are systemic. They also point to a break between the "official" logic of the organization which emphasizes that UNEP implements pilot projects only, and the ambition of donors and the programme staff who would like to have impact at scale.

221. In addition, in a spot check, the evaluation was unable to reconstruct the indicator count of the selected indicator. Its wording in the annual PPR reports changed between years, double counting could not be excluded, and it was impossible to validate the causal claims without significant additional research. These difficulties further weaken the credibility and utility of these indicators.

222. Comparing the performance of different fields of activity (decarbonization vs. adaptation vs. enhanced transparency), limited differences surface. But consistently the projects around the enabling activities and transparency frameworks (ETF) score higher than those of the other two PCPs. They might be explained by a "cookie-cutter approach" that can be employed in the enhanced transparency arena while in implementing climate action in decarbonization and adaptation approaches need to be more tailored. An additional reason for the difference is that with the ETFs, UNEP works directly together with the implementors of these projects - the target group is "government" - whereas in the decarbonization and adaptation field, the actual implementors - local communities and businesses - are one step further removed from UNEP.

3.4 Funding for climate action at UNEP

223. As mentioned, in terms of funding, Climate Action is UNEP's biggest subprogramme. It benefits from several specific trust funds plus the largest allocation from the vertical funds. On the other hand, its core budget allocation is slim and the staff positions that are funded from the Environment Fund are often not utilized for climate action work but either unstaffed or deployed elsewhere. Due to the funding from the vertical funds, this is manageable, and it does not impact the achievement of EAs and Outcome Indicators. Specifically, the GEF projects and associated fees are a big support which cross-finances planning and transactional costs. The thematic fund is important to take on this role with respect to other donors - including the GCF. Interviewed stakeholders found that it is possible to find the resources for ideas that staffers find important for innovation. The evaluation points to the need for a structural answer to bridge the science-to-policy (and implementation) gap, and the thematic funds might also be an answer to that. However, the specific funding situation seems to impact the ability of UNEP to demonstrate its leadership in the climate area.

224. The dependence on project-based funding for staff might also contribute to the lack of (time) efficiency within UNEP. There are inherent incentives for project staff to extend the implementation periods of projects in order to stay in a job. In addition, in a project-based organization project setup and wind-down phases take longer than when staff is readily available. A larger proportion of longer-term Environment Fund-funded staff could incur similar costs to the current staffing structure but reduce these two factors that contribute to inefficiencies. It is therefore preferable to fund more staff from EF budgets and trust funds and fewer staff from projects.

3.5 Gaps

225. While this system works, it has also gaps. One gap that was already mentioned was the joint high-level representation of the messaging of UNEP on climate change as part of the triple planetary crisis.

226. Overall, the staff contingent working on SP-CA is to some degree incomplete. Important positions from the Delivery model – specifically the regional subprogramme coordinators and the DRI were unavailable for this evaluation, partially because they were not staffed. For example, it is currently unclear if and how the coordination at the regional level - which is responsible for the country dialogue, among other things - is operating, with a third of the regional coordination functions unfilled. In addition, almost two thirds of the EF-funded staffing positions are not working on climate action but on other issues.

227. Other gaps that the evaluation team have identified lie in the strategic planning approach applied defined by how the organization identifies and fills its niche towards the Paris Agreement in the global concert of intergovernmental organizations. As described, UNEP is a science-based champion for the environment and able to identify its potential fields of action by a “gap analysis” comparing scientific results with reality. However, most of the time, project portfolios as well as MTS are developed by incremental adjustments. This is justified – among other things – by the long funding cycles, and the decades it takes for climate action ideas to “trickle” through the system. However, in the current PCP logic, innovation can only

take place within the PCPs, and themes that are not easily aligned with the existing PCPs might not receive due attention.²¹

228. Relatedly, stakeholders interviewed found that more could be done on internal knowledge exchange and knowledge management, specifically with respect to the question of “what works” but also on the question of “what to do” when it comes to the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Here, internal stakeholders found, is an opportunity to reflect on the thematic and action gaps, for example, identified in the Gap Reports, in order to identify innovative project approaches and thematic areas.

3.6 A new division – opportunities and risks

229. The new Climate Change Division has been created along the lines of the Subprogramme, integrating over the three PCPs of Decarbonization, Nature and Climate and Climate Science and Transparency. Putting these three together highlights the potential gaps in pursuing the implementation of the Paris Agreement more strongly than before which will allow the new division to provide a more complete support on climate action to the countries. Bringing climate action within a single division structure should facilitate the establishment of a stronger narrative across UNEP’s diverse set of climate actions. As described above, this narrative should not only describe UNEP’s niche in the global climate action community – as a global champion for the environment, as a source of science-based advice on climate action, and as a knowledge-based normative organisation. It can also provide better and more concrete indicators that help measure and monitor UNEP’s (and countries’) successes towards implementing the Paris Agreement. Moreover, locating climate action within the divisional management structure should provide a clearer leadership and management structure that drives action toward achieving UNEP’s agreed objectives. And for the development of the portfolio, bringing adaptation and mitigation within one Division also enables new opportunities to identify unified approaches that synergistically address adaptation and mitigation needs.

230. On the other hand, bringing adaptation and mitigation together under one organizational structure is a somewhat unusual development. The trend in the climate community is towards higher intensity, which implies greater specializations and more mainstreaming of climate mitigation and adaptation thoughts into all sectors including industry, infrastructure, social sectors, research and lifestyle. Typically, it should be expected that being closer to these sectors would be more beneficial for the work - industry and finance, for example, are being addressed in the Industry and Economy Division. On the other hand, for the PCP Climate Science and Transparency, moving closer to adaptation-related fields might be beneficial. But bringing the nature and adaptation group into the climate group might erode the ties to the Ecosystems group and runs the risk of limiting the opportunities to leverage some synergies, whilst opening others. This trade-off is obvious and will need to be managed. Internally, these risks are seen as minor, particularly given that even with the new Climate Change Division, 30% of work that reports into the SP-CA is still not managed/implemented from within the Climate Change Division.

231. Given that climate is one of the mega planetary crises as identified by UNEP and given its “cube structure” (in lieu of a matrix structure) it is necessary that other Subprogrammes of UNEP also conduct climate work. Therefore, by its very setup, it cannot be expected that all

²¹ Strictly speaking, important mitigation fields like energy efficiency or Carbon Capture and Utilization (CCU) are not part of decarbonization and thus (semantically) do not fall into climate action anymore.

climate work reports into the SP-CA. However, there are very important other initiatives, such as the Earth Observation work or the work of the UNEP Finance Initiative that have very direct links to the objectives of the Paris Agreement but no formal relation to the SP-CA, the Climate Change Division or each other within UNEP.

232. The Paris Agreement's Article 2.1 sets goals for: 1) limiting warming, 2) adapting to climate impacts, and 3) aligning financial flows with these goals. The Subprogramme demonstrates a strong alignment between its objectives and activities with the Paris Agreement, e.g., within the objectives outlined in the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025. UNEP's climate work aligns with the Paris Agreement through its focus on two key areas: (1) providing resources and expertise to countries to develop and implement policies that are congruent with their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and (2) supporting countries in developing methodologies and data collection for monitoring and evaluating these efforts. On the other hand, comparing this with the Paris Agreement's grand and all-encompassing goals, the focus of the SP-CA seems comparatively limited and selective. There is significant work done in other Divisions in UNEP that also contribute to the objectives of the Paris Agreement, including but not limited to the Industry and Economy Division, and this will remain even after the creation of the new Climate Change Division, implying that the needs for active (knowledge and portfolio) management become bigger and not smaller.

4 Recommendations

233. As UNEP's Gap Reports series show: time is running out. As the "UN Climate Chief" (i.e., Head of the UNFCCC Secretariat) Stiell points out in a press statement: "Humanity has only two years left to save the world, by making dramatic changes in the way it spews heat-trapping emissions." **The evaluation underscores the need for UNEP to clearly and proactively define and communicate what can be done and shape its niche around doing that effectively within the climate action landscape.** This could entail a strategic decision: should UNEP prioritize its role as a provider of authoritative scientific information or focus more on direct project implementation? The evaluation's findings suggest a potential benefit from UNEP strengthening its scientific core and linking it better to actionable advice for implementation of effective climate action. It should use its knowledge to understand where action is needed and how to facilitate it in the most rapid fashion. This expertise could then form the foundation for strategic partnerships with organizations possessing stronger implementation capacity. Clearly defined roles within these partnerships would be crucial for maximizing impact. The interim Climate Change Division director and several interviewees even within UNEP have argued along these lines (UNEP, 2024b). Potential drawbacks are that countries who choose UNEP as an implementation partner for whatever internal reasons might not have access to such support then. Another potential drawback that has been mentioned is a potentially ensuing lack of implementation experience within UNEP.

Recommendations

234. **Recommendation 1: UNEP should continue to create and manage knowledge-cum-implementation partnerships around important climate solutions.** In climate action, speed is of the essence, and UNEP should enhance it by systematically leveraging the recipes and lessons from functioning partnerships and apply them to new initiatives. Partnerships have been part of the organization's strategy for a long time. For some of UNEP's flagship partnerships, people have forgotten that they started out as a partnership, for example the IPCC, or the REN21. Programmes like the Global Programmes of the GEF (Electric vehicles, Cities) model a role for UNEP as a knowledge broker and facilitator who links implementation

experience between different countries. UNEP's specific trait is that it can link global advocacy and science-based knowledge management with action on the ground, in a sectoral, global-umbrella-with-country-pillars approach. By streamlining its priorities and leveraging its strengths as a knowledge-based and normative organization through strategic partnerships, UNEP can potentially enhance its overall effectiveness in tackling climate change and avoid being distracted into areas that do not play to its strengths. For example, UNEP and UNDP are increasingly leveraging each other's strengths through improved cooperation. Working with IUCN and UNDP, UNEP has promoted EbA to become a mainstream activity. Similar collaborations can and should arise with other organizations – and increasingly these might not be international networks but more and more local organizations as environmental competence is built up around the globe.

235. **Recommendation 2: UNEP should develop more strategies to provide countries with readily applicable information on solutions for both mitigation and adaptation measures.** One way to enhance speed is to enhance efficiency. Already at the level of funding applications, “cookie cutter” projects are a standing practice (cf. PCP on Adaptation and Resilience and GCF NAP funding). But some in the organization doubt that it is UNEP's role to repeat successful approaches and that it should focus on innovation. On the other hand, for UNEP, understanding country action is important to remain relevant. While highlighting gaps in high-level science-based publications is important to provide a call for action, communicating and providing scalable solutions might be a more active contribution to overcoming the challenge. The organization should develop (digital) tools for available solutions based on evidence and provide active knowledge management on what works (and not only on what are the gaps) – and lobby for their implementation through its networks. If this can be linked with the scientific core and approach of the organisation, this can ensure that scientific knowledge is effectively translated into actionable information.

236. **Recommendation 3: Internally, UNEP should improve transparency and communication on resource allocation and should enhance clarity on where long-term resources are needed to ensure continuity versus where project-based initiatives are better suited.** The evaluation underscores the critical need for improved communication regarding resource allocation within UNEP, impacting both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, a lack of transparency in resource allocation processes leads to budgetary unpredictability for the subprogramme as well as a lack of clarity regarding the availability of staff resources. This not only hinders the development of strategic long-term plans but is also resulting in staff dissatisfaction. Externally, donor countries have also expressed discontent with the current system, citing difficulties in tracing the flow of their contributions. This lack of transparency hinders their ability to demonstrate the impact of their investments and may lead to a decrease in contributions to the Environment Fund and a shift towards earmarked funding. While the introduction of thematic funds represents a potential step forward, further strategic development is necessary to ensure their effectiveness. Decisions cannot be based on valid assumptions about the functioning and needed resources without a remapping of the existing staff positions to the subprogrammes.

237. **Recommendation 4: UNEP should fully implement its strategic paradigm and strive to utilize indicators that are tied to the Paris Agreement, suited for management and reporting and able to demonstrate UNEP's contribution to filling the gap.** The Paris Agreement of 2015 gives a clear direction where climate action should go, in its Article 2.1 – a) holding temperature rise to well below 2 degrees, b) increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, and c) making financial flows consistent with this pathway. The subprogramme demonstrates a strong alignment of its objectives and activities with the Paris Agreement, e.g., with the objectives outlined in the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2025. But UNEP could go even further. The EGR and AGR tell us exactly where to focus our attention on

climate action. UNEP has formulated the strategic objective of “Climate stability” in its MTS 2022-2025, which is “where net zero greenhouse gas emissions and resilience in the face of climate change are achieved.” (UNEP, 2021, p. 20) The expected 2030 outcome of the subprogramme is that “government and non-government development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement.” (UNEP, 2021b, p. 22) But where the outcome indicators need become more operational – coming down from this global target – they do not become sufficiently specific to guide action.

238. The operational indicators from the PoWs and MTS below that level are merely focused on accountability and mostly express reach. They count – for example - the number of policies, but do not take into account relevance, ambition levels or effectiveness of policies. “Investment leveraged” can be seen as measuring UNEPs contribution to climate action but the levels that can be leveraged by UNEP will always pale in comparison to the gaps reported in UNEP’s own reports, and thus cannot be meaningfully related to the gaps, either. Generally, UNEP’s indicators do not measure the contribution of the organization towards “closing the gap”. This means that the PCPs and thematic divisions cannot use these indicators for their internal strategic coordination or demonstrate that they cover the gaps in climate action as demonstrated by EGR and AGR. The PCPs still base their Theories of Change on the SP-CA building blocks, lacking a coherent or complete programme logic behind it – and thus, also no (or very few) SMART indicators. But as the current MTS already follows the PA logic, closing the gaps on the lower-level indicators is possible with the next PoW.

239. Last but not least, the indicator reporting seems to be transparent, but the spot check of the evaluation team was unable to reproduce the indicator counts, or validate them with country level information. This can also be traced back to the nature of the indicators, which need improvement – and this is not the first evaluation to highlight this.

240. **Recommendation 5: Further clarify roles and responsibilities of SP-CA involved staff, including integration of the SP-CA coordination function in the new Climate Change Division.** Noting the establishment of the new Climate Change Division, if greater clarity is desired with respect to the roles of the SP-CA coordination function (Policy and Programme Division, global subprogramme coordinator, regional subprogramme coordinator, other staff), and UNEP’s divisions and regional offices on climate action, then UNEP could consider supplementing the UNEP Delivery Model Policy 2022 with a high-level outline of the functions of the divisions, regions and subprogramme coordination function on climate action, including specifying a DRI for specific areas such as engagement with external partners. This could be implemented as a test run in 2024 – 2025, i.e., in the final phases of the current MTS.

241. **Recommendation 6: UNEP should increase practical relevance and internal utilization of flagship reports by improving coordination and communication across divisions.** UNEP employs the EGR and similar gap analyses and similar gap analyses to identify potential areas for intervention by contrasting scientific findings with the current state. By leveraging these analyses to inform its approach and projects on climate action, UNEP could achieve a more strategic direction. This would necessitate enhanced internal coordination and communication within the organization. These efforts could involve systematically evaluating which findings hold the most relevance for UNEP’s collaborations with member countries and exploring how these insights can be translated into solution-oriented deliverables.

242. **Recommendation 7: UNEP should increase its leadership visibility in the global climate action arena. If UNEP wants to be perceived as a champion and a trendsetter in climate action through its activities and products, the organization will need to make itself more visible at the major negotiations, such as the COP.** UNEP apparently lacks a prominent public figure who embodies the organization’s work on climate change. This makes it harder

for stakeholders to recognize UNEP's contributions and hold UNEP accountable. The new Director will need to make an effort to become a prominent spokesperson for UNEP's climate efforts, raising public awareness and accountability. UNEP's senior leadership recognizes the need to enhance its performance on climate action. This is evident in the interim Director's consolidation plan for the new Climate Change Division, which resonates with several key recommendations of this evaluation, including strengthening partnerships, fostering internal cooperation within UNEP, and increasing engagement with UNFCCC and COP negotiations (UNEP, 2024b).

Annex I. List of interviewees

Organization	Stakeholder classification	Division	Branches	Position
Bilateral donor	External - bilateral donors & CPRs	Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of Belgium	Environment and Climate	Deputy Director
DPR	External - bilateral donors & CPRs	Committee of Permanent Representatives	Indonesia	DPR Indonesian Embassy in Nairobi
DPR	External - bilateral donors & CPRs	Committee of Permanent Representatives	France	DPR French Embassy Nairobi,
FAO	Other relevant intergovernmental organizations			Deputy Director, Climate Change
GCF	External - other UN org.	GCF Secretariat		GCF Task Manager
GEF	External - other UN org.	GEF Secretariat		Lead, climate Mitigation Team
IUCN	NGOs			Head, Climate Change, Centre for Economy and Finance, North America Office, Washington DC, US
Norad	External - bilat. donors & CPRs			Senior Adviser, Department. Department for Climate and Environment. Section for Nature and Climate.
UNDP	Other relevant intergovernmental organizations			Global Director of Climate Change
UNDP	Other relevant intergovernmental organizations			Energy Director
UNEP	Corporate Service Division	Corporate Service Division	Programme and Budget Unit	Finance and Budget Officer
UNEP	Secretariat and External Organizations	Economy Division	Energy and Climate Branch	Head - Climate and Clean Air Coalition Secretariat

UNEP	Other Subprogrammes	Policy and Programme Division	Subprogramme Coordination Unit	Subprogramme Coordinator - Nature Action
UNEP	Subprogramme Climate Action	Policy and Programme Division	Subprogramme Coordination Unit	Programme Administrator - Climate Action
UNEP	Secretariat and External Organizations	Copenhagen Climate Centre		Director
UNEP	Corporate Service Division	Corporate Service Division		Deputy Director
UNEP	Industry and Economy Division	Industry and Economy Division		Director
UNEP	Policy and Programme Division	Policy and Programme Division	Director's Office	Deputy Director
UNEP	Regional Office	New York Office		Director
UNEP	PCPs	Industry and Economy Division		Coordination Project Manager - PCP – Climate Science and Transparency
UNEP	Ecosystems Division	Ecosystems Division	Director's Office	Deputy Director
UNEP	Policy and Programme Division	Policy and Programme Division	Director's Office	Director
UNEP	Regional Office	West Asia		Director
UNEP	Regional Office	Asia and the Pacific Office		Director, Interim Director of Climate Change Division
UNEP	Early Warning and Assessment Division	Early Warning and Assessment Division	Scientific Assessment Branch (SAB), Thematic Assessment Unit	Officer-in-Charge, and Head
UNEP	Other Subprogrammes	Policy and Programme Division	Subprogramme Coordination Unit	Subprogramme Coordinator - Science Policy
UNEP	Ecosystems Division	Ecosystems Division	Nature for Climate Branch	Head
UNEP	Regional SP-CA Coordinators	Regional Offices	North America Office	Subprogramme Regional Coordinator North America
UNEP	Subprogramme Climate Action	Policy and Programme Division	Subprogramme Coordination Unit	Subprogramme Coordinator - Climate Action
UNEP	Early Warning and Assessment Division	Early Warning and Assessment Division		Director

UNEP	Industry and Economy Division	Industry and Economy Division	Climate Change Mitigation Unit	Officer in Charge
UNEP	Corporate Services Division	GEF Coordination Office		Portfolio coordinator

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Annex III. Projects associated with PCPs

PCP	Project Title	Year
Adaptation and Resilience	Terminal Evaluation of the Project “Adapting to Climate Change Induced Water Stress in the Nile River Basin”	2014
	Vulnerability to Climate Change by Establishing Early Warning Disaster Preparedness Systems and Support for Integrated Watershed Management in Flood Prone Areas (Rwanda LDCF)	2015
	Strengthening of The Gambia's Climate Change Early Warning Systems	2015
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment Project Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Mountain Ecosystems (Uganda)	2017
	Implementing NAPA priority interventions to build resilience in the most vulnerable coastal zones in Djibouti	2017
	Adapting water resource management in the Comoros to expected climate change	2017
	Implementation of Concrete Adaptation Measures to Reduce Vulnerability of Livelihoods and Economy of Coastal Communities of Tanzania - AFB (2G48)	2020
	Developing Core Capacity to Address Adaptation to Climate Change in Productive Coastal Zones of Tanzania LDL (4C44)	2020
	Promoting Climate Resilience in the Rice Sector Through Pilot Investments in Alaotra-Mangoro Region (Adaptation Fund)	2020
	Climate Change in Action in Developing Countries with Fragile Mountainous Ecosystems from a Sub-Regional Perspective	2020
	Project for Climate Change in the Coastal Zone of Cambodia Considering Livelihood Improvement and Ecosystems (VAAP)	2017
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment Project Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Mountain Ecosystems (Nepal)	2017
	Enhancing Climate Change Resilience of Rural Communities Living in Protected Areas of Cambodia	2022
	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project “Mainstreaming Agrobiodiversity Conservation and Use in Sri Lankan AgroEcosystems for Livelihoods and Adaptation to Climate Change” - GEF ID Number 4150	2022
	“Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Mountain Ecosystems (Nepal, Peru and Uganda)”	2017
Building Capacity for Coastal Ecosystem-based Adaptation in Small Island Developing States	2017	
Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment Project Ecosystem Based Adaptation for Mountain Ecosystems (Peru)	2017	
Climate Science and Transparency	Technical Need Assessment (TNA) Phase I	2016
	Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) Global Coordination Platform	2021
	Sustainable Land Management and Climate Change Mitigation Co-Benefits” (SLM-CC)	2021

	Building Capacity for LDCs to participate effectively in intergovernmental climate change processes.” GEF ID 1215	2022
	Enhancing Capacity, Knowledge and Technology Support to Build Climate Resilience of Vulnerable Developing Countries / Ecosystem-based Adaptation through South-South Cooperation (EbA South) GEF 4934	2022
	Enabling South Africa to Prepare its Third National Communication (TNC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR-2) to the UNFCCC Enabling South Africa to Prepare its Third National Communication (TNC) and Biennial Update Report (BUR-2) to the UNFCCC GEF 5237	2022
Decarbonization	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP project CPL/5070-3640-1111 “African Rural Energy Enterprise Development Phase II”	2014
	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project “Renewable Energy Based Electricity Generation for Isolated Mini-Grids In Zambia ID No. 1358	2015
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment Project Promoting Energy Efficiency in Buildings in East Africa (EEBA) GEF PROJECT ID: 3788, GFL/2328-2720-4C12	2018
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment-GEF Project “Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions with Bus Rapid Transit and Non-Motorized Transport”	2018
	Market Transformation For Energy Efficient Lighting in Morocco,	2021
	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF Project “Promotion of Energy Efficiency in Public Lighting in Côte d’Ivoire” (GEF ID 3876) (2013-2020)	2023
	Terminal Evaluation of project GFL/232802720-4960 Bus Rapid Transit and Pedestrian Improvements in Jakarta GEF ID No. 2954	2014
	Terminal Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility/UN Environment Project Low Carbon-Energy Islands: Accelerating the Use of Energy Efficient and Renewable Energy Technologies in Tuvalu, Niue and Nauru	2018
	Terminal Evaluation of the Global Environment Facility - UN Environment Project “Phasing out incandescent lamps through lighting market transformation in Vietnam”	2018
	Interim Evaluation of the Country Programme of Albania under the Global Solar Water Heating Market Transformation and Strengthening Initiative	2017
	Project 12/3-P1 – Support for Integrated Analysis and Development of Framework Policies for Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	2016
	Project 12/3-P2 – Support for the Deployment of Renewable Energy and Energy-efficient Technologies in Developing Countries	2016
	The Global Fuel Economy Initiative Phase I and the Global Automotive Fuel Economy Campaign of the Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV) managing vehicle growth in eight transitional countries	2017
	Terminal Evaluation of the Project: “Global Solar Water Heating Market Transformation and Strengthening Initiative” (GEF ID 2939)	2017
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment/Global Environment Facility Project “Global Market Transformation for Efficient Lighting” (en.lighten initiative)	2017
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment/GEF Project “Scaling up the Sustainable Energy for All Building Efficiency Accelerator” (2016–2017), GEF ID 9329	2018
	Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment-GEF Project “Promoting Sustainable Transport Solutions for East African Cities”	2019
	Terminal Evaluation of the UNEP/GEF project GFL/2328-2721-4837 “Generation and Delivery of Renewable Energy Based Modern Energy Services; the Case of Isla de la Juventud” Gef Id No. 1361	2015
	Terminal Evaluation of the Country Programme of Mexico under the Global Solar Water Heating Market Transformation and Strengthening Initiative	2017
	Terminal Evaluation of the Country Programme of Chile under the Global Solar Water Heating Market Transformation and Strengthening Initiative	2017
Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment / GEF Project: Mitigation Options of GHG Emissions in Key Sectors in Brazil	2018	
Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment / GEF project Lighting Market Transformation in Peru	2018	
Terminal Evaluation of the UN Environment / GEF Project: Integrated Responses to Short-Lived Climate Forcers Promoting Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency	2019	

	Delivering the Transition to Energy Efficient Lighting in Chile	2020
	LGGE Promoting Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy in Buildings in Jamaica, GEF ID: 4167	2022
	Energy for Sustainable Development in Caribbean Buildings GEF ID 4171	2022
	Terminal Evaluation of the Country Programme of Lebanon under the Global Solar Water Heating Market Transformation and Strengthening Initiative	2017

Annex IV. Terms of Reference of the evaluation

Evaluation of the UNEP Subprogramme on Climate Action, 2014-2023

1 Background

1.1 Climate Action

1. Climate change could have immediate and unprecedented implications for human populations in such matters as where they can settle, grow food, maintain built infrastructure or rely on functioning ecosystems. Emissions continue to rise and pledges of future action within the process launched by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change currently fall short of the minimum level which, scientists maintain, is necessary to keep the increase in temperature below 2° C. The potential disruption and displacement and the need to adapt to phenomena such as sea-level rise or extreme weather events represent a profound challenge to sustainable development and can reverse hard-won development gains, including those from poverty eradication measures.²²
2. The UNEP Adaptation Gap Report 2014 stated that even if global greenhouse gas emissions are cut to the level required to keep the rise of global temperature below 2°C in the twenty-first century, the cost of adapting to climate change in developing countries is likely to reach two to three times the previous estimates of \$70 billion - \$100 billion per year by 2050.²³
3. According to data set out in the fifth edition of the UNEP Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5) and the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, climate change is putting significant pressure on ecosystems. Climatic variations and extreme weather events can also lead to large social and economic costs.
4. Climate change is expected to have major and unprecedented social and economic implications on where people can settle, grow food, build cities, and rely on functioning ecosystems for the services they provide. The effects are likely to hit women harder than men, particularly in developing countries, given that women represent the majority of the world's poor and are often more socially excluded.
5. Since 2000, natural disasters have killed more than 1.1 million people and affected another 2.7 billion, with floods, droughts and windstorms the most frequent events.²⁴ Climate change could sharply increase the number of people forced from their homes as a result of land degradation and extreme weather events, which in turn can increase environmental pressures in the areas they flee to.

²² Foresight process of panel with 400 scientists, MTS 2014-17

²³ Situation Analysis, Climate Change, MTS 2018-2021, p.5

²⁴ Situation Analysis, Climate Change, MTS 2018-2021, p.5

6. The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, adopted in December 2015, was a historic milestone in the world's efforts to avert dangerous impact on the world's climate system.
7. The 26th Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 26) delivered important milestones, such as the agreement on the Paris Agreement rulebook and a roadmap for updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Article 6 on transferrable mitigation outcomes, and Article 13 on transparency which provides further guidance for UNEP's technical support to countries are yet to be concluded. Developed countries agreed to at least double funding for adaptation by 2025, which would amount to at least USD40 billion. Countries also agreed to a process to develop a new, larger climate finance goal to come into effect after 2025 and the Glasgow-Sharm el-Sheikh work programme for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was adopted to help improve assessment of progress toward the adaptation goal and enable its implementation.
8. COP 27 in Egypt provided countries an opportunity to revisit and strengthen their 2030 targets and in meeting the targets of the Paris Agreement. On adaptation, it was decided to establish new funding arrangements to help developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change and include a focus on loss and damage.
9. Overall, however, "the trajectory of global environmental change is out of line with international goals and objectives. The global community is failing to meet internationally agreed environmental goals. The Earth's mean surface temperature has already warmed by about 1°C above pre-industrial levels. At the current rate of greenhouse gas emissions, warming is likely to reach 1.5°C in the early 2030s. With current pledges, the world is on a path to warming of 3°C to 4°C or even more, and even keeping warming to that level requires that current pledges be met (IPCC, 2018). A changing climate means stresses on land and freshwater resources, adding to existing risks to livelihoods, biodiversity, human and ecosystem health, infrastructure and food systems (IPCC, 2019). Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred. Human-caused climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. This has led to widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people (high confidence). Vulnerable communities who have historically contributed the least to current climate change are disproportionately affected (high confidence) (IPCC, 2023). One million of the world's estimated eight million species of plants and animals, including insects, are threatened with extinction (IPBES, 2019)."²⁵

1.2 The UNEP Climate Action Subprogramme

1. Strategic Overview

10. Within the United Nations approach to climate change, UNEP aims to catalyse efforts by the United Nations and other partners – including the private sector – to build the resilience of countries to climate change through ecosystem-based and other supporting adaptation approaches; promote the transfer and use of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies; support the development and implementation of national low-emission strategies; and support the planning and implementation of initiatives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation to enable countries to move to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.
11. UNEP intends to achieve this through scientific assessments; providing policy, planning and legislative advice; facilitating access to finance; pilot interventions; promoting integration of better approaches in national development planning processes; fostering climate change education, outreach and awareness raising; knowledge-sharing; and supporting the Framework

²⁵ Situation Analysis, MTS 2022-2025, UNEP/EA.5/3Rev.1, paragraph 11.

Convention on Climate Change process and implementation of commitments to complement other processes.²⁶

12. The UNEP situational analysis indicates that the world is facing three major environmental crises: climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution. These are all largely driven by human activity and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. Tackling these crises is critical to improving the health of the environment, as well as social and economic health, as the COVID-19 crisis has shown. A healthy environment, healthy people and healthy economies are the foundation for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.²⁷
13. Keeping a clear focus on the Paris Agreement is essential for guiding collective climate action in line with sustainable development. Achieving long-term climate stability will depend on countries making balanced progress towards their mitigation and adaptation commitments under the Paris Agreement, including “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C” and “increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emissions development” (UNFCCC, 2016). A transition towards climate stability in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement recognizes that, by 2025: a. countries and legal entities are increasingly adopting decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways; b. countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement; and c. state and non-state actors have adopted the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.²⁸
14. The vision and direction for UNEP’s programmes and projects is provided by four-year Medium-Term Strategies (MTS), implemented through two-year Programmes of Work (PoW).
15. Since the Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2010-2013, UNEP’s climate change-related activities have been coordinated under the Climate Change, now Climate Action Sub-programme (SP-CA). Over the period from 2014 to 2023 there has been a consistent focus on building capacity to address climate change with few adjustments.
16. Between 2020 and 2021, COVID-19 presented opportunities to regroup, reshape, and reposition the climate change programme, particularly in light of increasing pressure for accountability in reporting under the Transparency Framework, both under the Paris Agreement and within UNEP’s programmatic outcomes.
17. The demand for UNEP’s technical capacity to support countries is expected to grow as a result of the upcoming Global Stocktake and commitments under the Global Adaptation Goals and low emissions development efforts.

MTS 2014-2017

18. During the MTS 2014-2017 period, the objective of the climate change subprogramme was to strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being.
19. The strategy of the SP-CA aimed at—within the United Nations approach to climate change—to catalyse efforts by the United Nations and other partners—including the private sector—to build

²⁶ MTS 2014-2017

²⁷ MTS 2022-2025

²⁸ MTS 2022-2025

the resilience of countries to climate change through ecosystem-based and other supporting adaptation approaches; promote the transfer and use of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies; support the development and implementation of national low-emission strategies; and support the planning and implementation of initiatives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation to enable countries to move to a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

20. In MTS 2014-2017, UNEP's work on climate change focussed on three areas:

- Climate resilience: support to countries in using ecosystem-based and other approaches to adapt and build resilience to climate change.
- Low emission growth: support to countries in adopting energy efficiency measures, access clean energy finance, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions along with other pollutants by transitioning to low carbon solutions.
- Reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+): to enable countries to capitalize on investment opportunities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation with adequate social and environmental safeguards. (UNEP performance report 2020-2021, same throughout period)

MTS 2018-2021

21. The MTS 2018-2021 presented a shift towards aligning UNEP work to Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and explicit emphasis on United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) resolutions as well as stronger integration of gender at sub-programme level. The vision statement formulated for climate change, which was aligned to Agenda 2030, aimed for "...countries... [to be] more resilient to the adverse impacts of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are significantly reduced, including emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. To realize this 2030 vision, national adaptation plans must be institutionalized and progressively implemented. At the same time, Governments will need to adopt strategies to reduce their emissions and increase their investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Forest loss and forest degradation will need to be reduced, and forest conservation and restoration will need to be enhanced."
22. To achieve its 2030 vision, UNEP would help countries to implement the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda by partnering with relevant institutions, including United Nations entities, multilateral environmental agreements and other international processes, and by promoting integrated approaches to sustainable development.
23. The work of UNEP towards this vision was organized around three results streams similar to those in the previous MTS: Climate change adaptation and resilience; mitigation and clean energy; and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

MTS 2022-2025

24. The MTS 2022-2025, UNEP set out to tackle three planetary crises through three thematic subprogrammes, on climate action, nature action, and chemicals and pollution action. Because these areas are deeply interconnected, the UNEP programme of work for 2022-2023 (UNEP/EA.5/3/Add.1) outlines the organization's approach, which is aimed at ensuring the delivery of multiple benefits and mutual outcomes that contribute to UNEP's vision for planetary sustainability and human health and well-being.
25. The Climate Action SP in the new MTS 2022-2025, proposes a continuation from previous MTS with focus on three areas; namely support decision-makers to adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways; countries and stakeholder capacity building to delivery

on adaptation and mitigation goals; and state and non-state actors to adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.

Table 1. Overview of CA SP MTS and POW Objectives and Outcomes, 2014-2023

POW 2014-2015	POW 2016-2017	POW 2018-2019	POW 2020-2021 Added SDGs	POW 2022-2023 Three planetary crisis, thematic sub-programmes
<p>Objective: To strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being.</p> <p>a) Ecosystem-based and supporting adaptation approaches implemented and integrated into key sectoral and national development strategies to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts.</p> <p>b) Energy efficiency improved and the use of renewable energy increased in partner countries to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants as part of their low-emission development pathways.</p> <p>c) Transformative REDD-plus strategies and finance approaches developed and implemented by developing countries with the aim of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and bringing multiple benefits for</p>	<p>Objective of the organization: To strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission strategies for sustainable development and human well-being.</p> <p>a) Adaptation approaches, including an ecosystem-based approach, are implemented and integrated into key sectoral and national development strategies to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts</p> <p>b) Energy efficiency is improved and the use of renewable energy is increased in partner countries to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants as part of their low-emission development</p> <p>c) Transformative strategies and finance approaches for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD-plus) are developed and implemented by developing countries with the</p>	<p>Objective of the organization: countries increasingly make the transition to low-emission economic development, and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change.</p> <p>a) Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation</p> <p>b) Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation</p> <p>c) Countries increasingly adopt and implement forest-friendly policies and measures that deliver quantifiable emissions reductions as well as social and environmental benefits</p>	<p>Objective of the organization: Countries increasingly transition to low-emission economic development pathways and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change</p> <p>a) Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans, which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation.</p> <p>b) Countries increasingly adopt and/or implement low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and invest in clean technologies</p> <p>c) Countries increasingly adopt and implement forest-friendly policies and measures that deliver quantifiable emissions reductions, as well as social and environmental benefits.</p>	<p>Outcome 1: Decision-makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways</p> <p>Outcome 2: Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals</p> <p>Outcome 3: State and non-state actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement</p>

biodiversity and livelihood.	aim of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and bringing multiple benefits for biodiversity and livelihoods.			
MTS 2014-2017		MTS 2018-2021		MTS 2022-2025
<p>Objective: To strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being.</p> <p>EA1: Climate resilience: Ecosystem-based and supporting adaptation approaches are implemented and integrated into key sectoral and national development strategies to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience to climate change impacts;</p> <p>EA 2: Low emission growth: Energy efficiency is improved and the use of renewable energy is increased in partner countries to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants as part of their low emission development pathways;</p> <p>EA 3: REDD-plus: Transformative strategies for and finance approaches to the enhanced mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD-plus) are developed and implemented by developing countries that aim at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and bringing multiple benefits for biodiversity and livelihoods</p>		<p>Objective: Countries increasingly transition to low-emission economic development and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change.</p> <p>EA1: Countries increasingly advance their national adaptation plans, which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation</p> <p>EA2: Countries increasingly adopt and/or implement low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and invest in clean technologies.</p> <p>EA 3: Countries increasingly adopt and implement forest -friendly policies and measures that deliver quantifiable emissions reductions and social and environmental benefits.</p>		<p>The expected 2030 outcome of the SP-CA is that “government and nongovernment development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement.”</p> <p>Outcome 1: Decision makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways.</p> <p>Outcome 2: Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals.</p> <p>Outcome 3: State and non-state actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement</p>

26. Programme Performance Reports (PPR) provide a biennial overview of achievement of indicator targets for each expected accomplishment / outcome of the sub-programme and summarised in Table 2. For the SP-CA, performance is reported in each of its three focus areas.

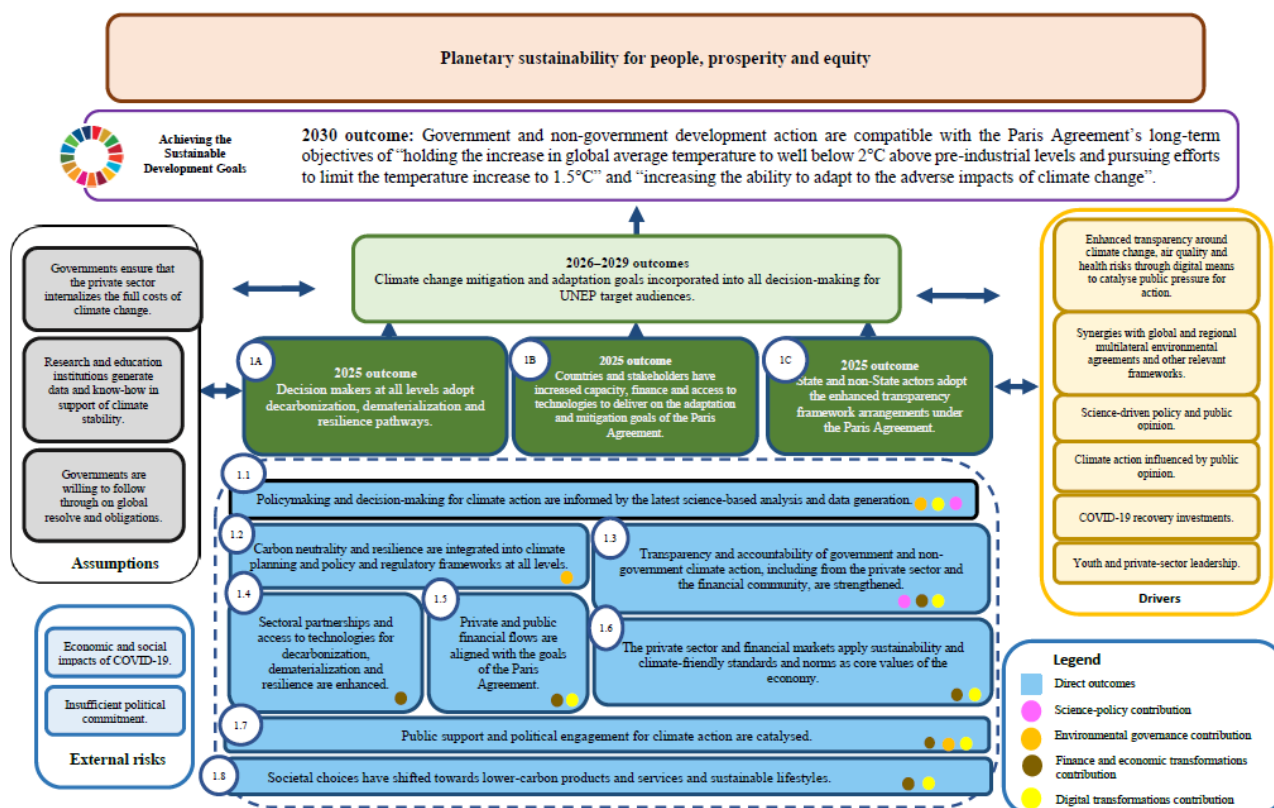
27. Programme performance monitoring show over the period in terms of meeting indicator targets for expected accomplishments. In 2020-21, SP-CA met 78% of its expected accomplishments indicators. Table 2 shows indicator target achievement over the period 2014 to 2021. Some indicators were delivered over and above the targets set. The result in the table is based on a summary of all indicators in the focus area.

Table 2. Summary of climate change sub-programme expected accomplishment indicator target performance (2014-2022)

	2014-15	2016-17	2018-19	2020-21
Climate resilience	Achieved	Attained	Attained	Partially attained
Low-emission growth	Achieved	Partially attained	Attained	Achieved
REDD+	Achieved	Attained	Not attained	Partially attained

28. The theory of change for the sub-programme is presented in a figure based on the strategic objective of climate stability in POW2022-2023.

Figure 1. Theory of Change for Climate Stability



29. The theory of change identifies key causal pathways for achieving the overall overcomes in 2025 and 2026-2029 including key assumptions and drivers.

1.3 Project Portfolio

30. According to the Programme Delivery Report generated by the Programme Information and Management System (PIMS) (March 2023) there are 89 active projects in the Climate Action sub-programme implemented by UNEP.²⁹ A list of these projects is presented in Annex 3. The projects are managed by various branches:

- Ecosystems Division, Adaptation Unit - 18 projects
- Ecosystems Division, Crisis Management – 4 projects
- Ecosystems Division, Nature for Climate – 4 projects
- Ecosystems Division, Biodiversity and Land – 3 projects
- Industry and Economy Division, Climate Action – 15 projects
- Ecosystems Division, Resilience to disasters and conflicts – 1 project

²⁹ The PIMS includes Ozone Action projects under SP-CA. This is questioned and they should be located under Environmental Governance (MEA structures) and are not included in count of 89 active climate projects. There are 344 active Ozone Projects as of March 2023.

- Industry and Economy Division, Energy and Climate – 22 projects
- Industry and Economy Division, Global Climate Action Unit – 1 project
- Africa Office, Africa – 5 projects
- Asia and the Pacific Office, Asia Pacific – 4 projects
- Latin America and the Caribbean Office, Latin America – 10 projects
- West Asia Office, West Asia – 1 project
- Europe Office, Europe – 1 project

31. The majority of projects are managed by the Industry and Economy Division (38 projects (43%), and the Ecosystems Division (30 projects (34%)). In the current active project portfolio, 46 projects (52%) are funded by the Global Environment Fund (GEF).

1.4 Subprogramme Financing

32. Table 3 presents an overview of the budget forecasts for the SP-CA and Table 4 presents an overview of actual spent for the SP-CA. Over the period, the Sub-Programme budget has increased from USD 122 million to 262 million.

33. For 2022-2023, the planned Environment Fund budget was USD 24 million, slightly increased from the previous POW of USD 22.2 million, but reflecting an overall downwards trend whereby UNEP received a smaller amount of Environment Fund contributions, peaking at USD 42 million received for POW 2016-2017.

34. Earmarked and Trust Funds with Global Funds surpassed by far for the Environment Fund shortfall, the latter continuously increasing since 2014. The subprogramme received USD 144.8 million and 83.5 million (POW 2020-2021). Global Funds include such sources as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund and Die Internationale Klimaschutzinitiative (IKI).

35. Overall forecast for the 2022-2023 biennium, stands at USD 227.4 million.

Table 3. Budget forecast/ ,000USD

POW	Environment Fund	Trust Fund and earmarked	Global Funds	Project Support Costs	Regular Budget	Total
2014-2015	39,510	46,527	31,892 (GEF trust funds)	-	4,035	121,964
2016-2017	46,057	48,620	32,895	1,323	4,556	133,451
2018-2019	32,300	112,600	29,500	3,200	3,200	180,800
2020-2021	22,200	144,800	83,500	7,200	3,722	261,422
2022-2023	24,000	90,500	103,900	4,500	4,536	227,436

Source: POW 2014-2015, 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021 and 2022-2023/

Table 4. Actual spent/ ,000USD

POW	Environment Fund	Trust Fund and earmarked	Global Funds	Project Support Costs	Regular Budget	Total
2014-2015	39,510	46,527	31,892	1,628	3,105	122,662
2016-2017	42,000	52,677	32,154	1,323	3,200	131,354

2018-2019	32,300	112,600	29,500	3,200	3,722	181,322
2020-2021	22,200	144,800	83,500	7,200	4,536	262,236

Source: POW 2016-2017, 2018-2019, 2020-2021 and 2022-2023.

1.5 UNEP Institutional Arrangements

36. The Climate Action work is carried out primarily by two UNEP Divisions (formerly DEPI, now Ecosystems Division and formerly DTIE, now Industry and Economy Division) and to a lesser extent by the Early Warning and Assessment Division and Regional Offices for the delivery of Programme of Work Outputs for the three Expected Accomplishments in the POW 2018-2019 as shown in table 5 and 6.³⁰

Table 5. Institutional delivery arrangements by outputs planned for the biennium 2018-2019 in pursuit of expected accomplishments (a): Countries increasingly advance their near-term and long-term national adaptation plans, which integrate ecosystem-based adaptation

Programme of Work Output	Division Accountable	Contributing Division(s) and Regional offices
Technical support provided to countries to develop tools, methods, scientific evidence, knowledge networks and promote South-South cooperation to advance near-term and long-term national adaptation plans that integrate ecosystem-based adaptation	Ecosystems Division	Early Warning and Assessment Division, ROs
Technical support provided to countries to implement ecosystem-based adaptation demonstrations and integrate them into national development plans	Ecosystems Division	ROs
Support provided to countries to access adaptation finance and strengthen readiness for deploying adaptation finance	Ecosystems Division	Industry and Economy Division, ROs
Technical support provided to countries to address Framework Convention on Climate Change commitments, implementation, negotiations and reporting	Ecosystems Division	Law Division, ROs
Outreach and communication for adaptation	Communication Division	ROs

Source: PoW 2018-19. Note: Table updated with current Division names.

Table 6. Institutional delivery arrangements by outputs planned for the biennium 2018-2019 in pursuit of expected accomplishments (b): Countries increasingly adopt and/or implement low greenhouse gas emission development strategies and invest in clean technologies

Programme of Work Output	Division Accountable	Contributing Division(s) and Regional offices
Support provided to a coalition of countries and partners to foster increased awareness, knowledge and mitigation actions on short-lived climate pollutants	Industry and Economy Division	ROs
Scientific knowledge generated on emerging issues relevant to low-emission development decision-making and policy (Emissions Gap Report, non-State actors report)	Early Warning and Assessment Division	ROs

³⁰ Similar institutional overview is not included in the POW2022-2023.

Technical support provided to countries to develop tools, plans and policies for low-emission development	Industry and Economy Division	ROs
Technical support provided to countries to implement and scale up renewable energy and energy efficiency projects	Industry and Economy Division	ROs
Readiness of countries and institutions to access or mobilize climate finance strengthened through support to make projects bankable and replicable	Industry and Economy Division	Ecosystems Division, ROs
Technical support provided to countries to address Framework Convention on Climate Change commitments, monitoring, reporting requirements and mainstreaming results into national development planning	Industry and Economy Division	ROs
Technical support provided to countries through the Climate Technology Centre and Network established under the Framework Convention on Climate Change	Industry and Economy Division	Ecosystems Division, ROs
Partnerships and multi-stakeholder networks facilitate knowledge exchange and South-South cooperation	Industry and Economy Division	ROs
Outreach and communication for mitigation	Communication Division	ROs

Source: PoW 2018-19. Note: Table updated with current Division names.

Table 7. Institutional delivery arrangements by outputs planned for the biennium 2018-2019 in pursuit of expected accomplishments (c): Countries increasingly adopt and implement forest-friendly policies and measures that deliver quantifiable emissions reductions as well as social and environmental benefits

Programme of Work Output	Division Accountable	Contributing Division(s) and Regional offices
Technical support to countries to meet the Warsaw pillars for accessing results-based payments: (a) develop and implement REDD-plus national strategies or action plans; (b) operationalize safeguard information systems, estimate forest reference emission levels; (c) build national forest monitoring systems	Ecosystems Division	ROs
Strategic support for transformative land management approach	Ecosystems Division	ROs
Outreach and communication on the benefits of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation	Communication Division	ROs

Source: PoW 2018-19. Note: Table updated with current Division names.

37. Overview of human resources, 217 posts allocated to Climate Action (includes Ozone Action), however, it is not clear how many of the positions are staff time dedicated to the delivery of SP-CA outcomes and outputs, other sub-programmes, corporate functions and extent to which staff allocation is on full-time or part-time basis.³¹

New Delivery Model

38. The MTS 2022-25 and PoW 2022-23 brought about changes in the way that UNEP operates.³² These included:

- A revised subprogramme structure with three thematic subprogrammes (Nature Action, Climate Action, and Chemical and Pollution Action), two foundational subprogrammes

³¹ PIMS Programme Delivery Report, Climate Action, March 2023.

³² New Delivery Model - One UNEP Delivery for better collaboration and country support, Final Draft Delivery Model 24 August 2022.

(Environmental Governance, Science-Policy) and two enabling subprogrammes (Digital Transformations, Finance and Economic Transformations) and accompanied by three thematic funds on Climate, Nature and Pollution;

- A recognition that these seven subprogrammes are individually critical, inter-reliant and inter-linked components that work together to deliver UNEP's three strategic objectives of 'Climate stability', 'Living in Harmony with Nature' and 'Towards a pollution-free planet';
 - A new programmatic approach, whereby results are delivered through the vehicle of 13 programmes that cut across UNEP teams and subprogrammes. Three Climate Action programmes coordination projects (PCP) have been created to deliver on the MTS strategic objective of climate stability, namely i) Science & Transparency in climate, ii) Adaptation, and iii) Decarbonisation;
 - A focus on establishing a clear 'line of sight' between leadership and the delivery of results on the ground; and,
 - A new 'Delivery Model' – modifying and clarifying the roles and responsibilities for Divisions and Regional Offices for POW implementation.
39. Operationalizing UNEP's 'Delivery Model' requires: i) a reorientation of roles and responsibilities guiding how Regional Offices and Divisions collaborate to deliver results; ii) a typology of interventions; and iii) revised workflows that guide project design and delivery. This prescribes institutional shifts, in particular to the role and responsibilities of Regional Offices, and introduction of Regional Subprogramme Coordinators and Directly Responsible Persons (DRIs) for each sub-programme. The DRI is responsible for providing the Deputy Executive Director (DED) with accurate information and recommendations to enable the DED (with overall accountability for results) to ensure programmatic coordination and results-based management across subprogrammes.³³
40. The Executive Director of UNEP has further announced that a Climate Change Division will be established.³⁴

1.6 Main UNEP Partners

41. To achieve far-reaching changes, UNEP engages in partnerships that leverage climate finance and scale up the methods, tools, assessments and pilots of UNEP.
42. UNEP works with several partners to deliver on its CA sub-programme:
- The 1 Gigaton Coalition: Launched 2014, enables countries to measure and report emission savings resulting from renewable energy and energy efficiency, comprises of 25 countries and 40 organisations.
 - Portfolio Decarbonization Coalition: Launched 2014, aims to decarbonize portfolios of investors, has 17 members.
 - The Climate and Clean Air Coalition: several initiatives to reduce black carbon and methane and other short-lived climate pollutant, has 112 partners, including 51 governments.
 - The Climate Technology Centre and Network: established based on 2010 COP decision to create a Technical Mechanism, provides technical assistance to countries on their climate technology challenges.

³⁴ UNEP Global Town Hall, 23 May 2023.

- National Determined Contributions (NDC) Partnership: Launched 2016, helps countries achieve their national climate commitment and facilitate access to financial and technical assistance
 - Copenhagen Centre on Energy Efficiency: Contributor to global energy efficiency implementation and technical support to the District Energy in Cities Initiative in UNEP.
 - UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre founded as the UNEP Risoe centre by UNEP, The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Danish Technical University in 1990. From 2014 to February 2022, the centre was called UNEP DTU Partnership, until it became the UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre in 2022: The Collaborating Centre provides technical and scientific support on clean energy and climate policy to developing countries and supports climate capacity building initiatives of UNEP.
43. Multi-stakeholder partnerships such as the Climate Technology Centre and Network (CTCN), hosted by UNEP with UNIDO, are key vehicles for bringing such change. Such partnerships are able to deliver customized assistance to many more countries than UNEP could handle on its own.
44. The Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) is another key vehicle for leveraging change at an ambitious scale. Under the CCAC initiatives are implemented in the agriculture, brick production, cooking, heating, diesel vehicles, oil and gas production and municipal solid waste sectors. While helping to curb greenhouse gas emissions, CCAC's work will also reduce the health impacts of air pollution. With outdoor air pollution responsible for half these death and global data coverage limited, UNEP established a low-cost air quality unit for measuring major air pollutants in August 2015.
45. Partnerships are used to deliver on sectoral solutions, for example on Buildings & Construction (cities) with the Global Alliance on Buildings & Construction, and forestry/NBS with UN-REDD and the Global Peatlands Initiative.³⁵
46. Other partners to mention are IUCN and other NGOs. Partnerships with FAO, UNDP, UNIDO, WHO, and WMO are also important.

1.7 Evaluation Evidence

47. The Climate Action Sub-programme has been well reflected in evaluations of UNEP projects. The Climate Action sub-programme is often indicated as the main sub-programme or a secondary sub-programme in the projects evaluated. This is primarily due to the relatively high number of projects operating under the Sub-programme compared to those under other sub-programmes (e.g. Environmental Governance).
48. Over the period 2014-2021, a total 59 climate action related evaluations were conducted by the Evaluation Office of UNEP. The list of evaluations is presented in Annex 2. This evaluation will, as far as possible, build on available evidence.

³⁵ Partners delivering on sectoral solutions: Climate Science & transparency: IPCC, World Adaptation Science Programme (used to be Provia); Energy: REN21, International Methane Emissions Observatory, ESCO Network; Industry: Cool Coalition, 3% Energy Efficiency Club, CCAC thematic groups; Transport: Share the Road, Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon transport (SLOCAT); Agriculture: The Transformative Partnership Platform (TPP) on agroecological; Forestry/NBS: UN-REDD, Global Peatlands Initiative; Buildings & Construction (cities): Global Alliance on Buildings & Construction; UNEP Fi, Net Zero Asset Owners/Banking/Insurance Alliance(s), in addition to a number of more broader partnerships e.g., Climate & Clean Air Coalition, Global Adaptation Network and its regional networks.

Table 8. Number of completed evaluations by Sub-Programme and MTS/POW

	Climate Change	Resilience to Disasters & Conflicts	Healthy and Productive Ecosystems	Environmental Governance	Chemicals, Waste & Air Quality	Resource Efficiency	Environment Under Review	Cross-cutting	TOTALS
PoW 2020-2021	12	0	8	6	12	1	1	3	42
MTS 2018- 2021	28	1	19	19	27	2	2	0	98
MTS 2014-2017	30	4	41	35	7	9	1	2	129
MTS 2010-2013	40	0	40	14	6	5	0	3	108
2010-2021	98	5	100	68	40	16	3	5	335

Source: Biennial Evaluation Synthesis Report 2020-2021, p.11.

49. The Climate Action Sub-programme has been well reflected in evaluations of UNEP projects.
50. Over the period from 2014 to 2021, Table 8 indicates there were 58 evaluations completed under climate change, and detailed information on evaluation recommendation compliance is also available.
51. Other evaluations, important to the SP-CA, is the ongoing evaluation of the Climate Technology Centre and Network.
52. The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) in 2021 reviewed in a series of how multilateral organisations were “Pulling together: the multilateral response to climate change”. The report on UNEP aimed to address: 1) How was UNEP responding to climate change?; 2) How UNEP organisational strategies, operational activities, and resource plans incorporated climate change?; and 3) What UNEP lessons can inform the multilateral system approach to the climate crisis? A key finding of the report was “that whilst all the selected multilateral organisations reviewed, and UNEP in particular, have made good progress in responding to the climate change challenge, the collective response is not at the scale needed to deliver on the Paris and SDG13 goals. The report therefore proposed a set of lessons and opportunities to further enhance the multilateral response.” The findings from the report will feed into the SP-CA evaluation.³⁶

2 The Evaluation

2.1 Evaluation Audience

53. The Evaluation is expected to help UNEP identify key lessons on strategic positioning, portfolio planning, management arrangements and programme implementation that will provide a useful basis for improved sub-programme design, coordination and delivery.
54. The immediate and priority users of the Evaluation are UNEP senior management (including Division and Regional Directors), sub-programme coordinators and all UNEP units and staff involved in the SP-CA, the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives and UNEA.

³⁶ Letter to the Executive Director of UNEP, MOPAN, MOPAN/SZ/2021.17

55. Interest in the Evaluation is likely to be shown by other stakeholders and partners, including: the UN Secretariat, UN or other international bodies working in the area of Climate Action, commissions and committees, donors, NGOs and civil society groups, research centres and academia, et cetera.

2.2 Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

56. The Evaluation will review UNEP work related to Climate Action from 1 January 2014 up to mid-2023 (PoW 2014/2015, 2016/17, 2018/19, 2020/2021, 2022/2023) against standard evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact). The mandate for evaluation by the UNEP Evaluation Office covers all projects and programmes under the Programme of Work. It does not extend to the work undertaken by UNEP MEA Secretariats. SP-CA work in support of MEAs, however, does fall within the evaluation scope.³⁷ The evaluation will fulfil two main purposes:
- a) Supporting accountability by analysing, at a meta level, the performance of all the sub-programme projects evaluated during the evaluation period, and
 - b) Contributing to institutional learning by providing formative reflections based on further analysis of the sub-programme's effectiveness as a coherent and coordinated unit within UNEP's results framework, and considering lessons that are relevant to its role in the MTS 2022-2025.
57. The Evaluation will consider the extent to which, in the period under review, UNEP was able to meet its objective as stated in MTS 2014-2017: *"to strengthen the ability of countries to move towards climate-resilient and low emission pathways for sustainable development and human well-being"*, and in MTS 2018-2021: as *"Countries increasingly transition to low-emission economic development and enhance their adaptation and resilience to climate change"*, as well as progress made towards the objective in the MTS 2022-2025 *"government and nongovernment development actions are compatible with the long-term mitigation and resilience goals of the Paris Agreement."*
58. While the evaluation of SP-CA will assess performance over the period 2014-2023 towards UNEP's stated objective and achievement of results, the evaluation will also be forward looking with emphasis on the latter part of the period in order to inform the implementation of the current MTS and next iteration of MTS.
59. Broadly, the evaluation will follow three lines of inquiry to provide a holistic review combining both 'bottom-up' (i.e., aggregating project-level findings) and 'top-down' perspectives (e.g., analysing the evidence informing results reporting in the Programme Performance Report) (see also Section D. Evaluation Approach and Methods):
- 1) **Project level performance:** a desk-based, systematic review of the findings from completed project-level evaluation exercises undertaken between 2014 and June 2023. The analysis will provide aggregated findings against standard evaluation criteria and identify and discuss trends in the factors contributing to particularly high or low performance. It will include an assessment of the sample of project evaluations in terms of how well they represent the sub-programme as a whole.
 - 2) **Exploration of key Theories of Change:** Theories of Change will be reconstructed around the main results areas to explore how projects were expected to have a collective or aggregated effect at the level of Programme of Work results (Expected Accomplishments). Projects that are recognised as important contributors to the main causal pathways will be identified and, where possible, used to provide case studies. The implementation and performance of SP-CA work will be evaluated in the

³⁷ The evaluation will assess projects and programmes implemented by the SP-CA, including on-going work such as support for COP-preparations, trainings for negotiators, etc.

context of the ToCs and the analysis will focus heavily on the effectiveness and sustainability of the sub-programme efforts.

3) **Contribution to higher level results and global change processes:** drawing on the reconstructed Theories of Change, but also considering high-profile projects and key areas of investment, an analysis will be undertaken to establish the extent and nature of UNEP's contribution to changes at sectoral and global levels. The methods used to aggregate project level achievements and compile results presented in Programme Performance Reports will be explored. This analysis aims to also identify areas of work that would be suited to deeper impact studies in the longer term.

2.3 Evaluation Areas of Focus

60. The areas of focus for the evaluation are set out below. In evaluating these areas, the following key strategic questions will be addressed:

- Where has UNEP's work on climate action been most impactful?
- Do the institutional structures and management arrangements for delivery of climate action work lead to effective delivery of climate action outcomes? How could the new Climate Change Division improve delivery?
- How are ownership arrangements and synergies between the SP-CA and other thematic, foundational, and enabling UNEP subprogrammes made tangible and effective in order to deliver interconnected and mutually beneficial results?
- To what extent are reporting requirements met in terms of project-level results and the expectation that projects are also contributing to broader objectives and long-term goals such as Rio Markers that are dependent on contributions from multiple interventions?
- How have the predictability and stability of core budget allocations impacted on the quality and quantity of delivery on climate action?
- To what extent do the vertical funds contribute to UNEP's work on climate action and UNEP's work more broadly on MTS priorities?
- To what extent are the partnerships with the GEF and the GCF influencing UNEP's climate action strategy, subprogramme and effectiveness of delivery? And to what extent has UNEP influenced international climate and environment funds?
- To what extent has the SP-CA contributed to the UN Reform process and how can its role be enhanced in the future, in particular in working with the other UNDS entities in elaborating and implementing the periodic UNSDCF, formerly UNDAFs?

a. Strategic Relevance of the Subprogramme

61. The Evaluation will assess the relevance of the sub-programme objectives and strategy. The analysis will address the main question of whether the sub-programme objectives and strategy are relevant to, and aligned with: a) global decarbonisation, dematerialization and resilience efforts; b) delivery on the adaptation and mitigation goals of the Paris Agreement, and c) enhanced transparency framework agreements under the Paris Agreement (MTS/ POW 2025 CA Outcomes, d) country needs, and e) UNEP's mandate and areas of expertise in this area.
62. The evaluation will also consider the adequacy and appropriateness of the geographical scope of the sub-programme, including of LDC and SIDS, and the strategy behind country selection. The

analysis will consider the question of relevance and alignment from the perspectives of the three focus areas: (i) Climate resilience; (ii) Low -emission growth; and (iii) REDD+.³⁸

b. Subprogramme Design and Structure

63. The evaluation will assess the extent to which the overall performance of the SP-CA has been affected (in terms of effectiveness and efficiency) by the way it is designed, structured, and integrated with other sub-programmes and management structures. The Evaluation will consider the internal coherence and logic between Expected Accomplishments, Programme of Work outputs and project outcomes³⁹. Particular attention will be paid to how well the sub-programme's results are formulated and logically organized, including the appropriateness of performance indicators to measure progress towards planned achievements. With reference to the Theory of Change for the sub-programme the evaluation will assess the extent to which the intermediate states, drivers and assumptions underlying the sub-programme change process have been well thought through and articulated.
64. Overall, the evaluation will consider whether a dedicated sub-programme on climate action has helped to better define and coordinate UNEP's climate change activities.

c. Overall Subprogramme Performance

65. The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness, likelihood of impact, sustainability of results, efficiency, and potential for large-scale effects of the Climate Action sub-programme during the evaluation period. Three perspectives will be explored:
- a) Project-level: Based on the findings of the project-level evaluations undertaken during the evaluation period, and information gathered from other sources, including Programme Performance Reports, conclusions will be drawn about the performance of the Climate Action Sub-Programme project portfolio against each of UNEP's standard evaluation criteria: strategic relevance; achievement of outputs; effectiveness (achievement of project objectives and results); sustainability and replication; efficiency and factors affecting performance (preparation and readiness; project implementation and management; stakeholder participation; communications and public awareness; country ownership; financial management; UNEP supervision and technical guidance and monitoring and evaluation).
 - b) Programme level: To the extent possible the evaluation will look at performance through the lens of the newly created thematic programmes and their overarching Programme Coordination Projects.
 - c) Sub-programme level: At the level of the sub-programme itself (i.e., as a vehicle for the delivery of UNEP higher level results) the evaluation will assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the sub-programme's efforts against Theories of Change reconstructed at the level of Expected Accomplishments and with respect to the results reported in the Programme Performance Reports.
66. Given the global nature of UNEP's mandate and the challenges it aims to address, particular attention will be given, at all levels, to the approach taken within this sub-programme to replication, scaling-up and the achievement of catalytic effects. All of these relate to the maximisation of effectiveness (i.e., instances of positive results being multiplied).

³⁸ MTS 2020-2025 SP-CA refers to focus along the outcomes: Outcome 1: Decision makers at all levels adopt decarbonization, dematerialization and resilience pathways. Outcome 2: Countries and stakeholders have increased capacity, finance and access to technologies to deliver on the adaptation and mitigation goals. Outcome 3: State and non-state actors adopt the enhanced transparency framework arrangements under the Paris Agreement.

³⁹ For example, the evaluation will assess whether the results from GEF-funded projects are adequately captured in the SP-CA results framework.

67. The evaluation will assess the likelihood that results achieved by the sub-programme either have, or will in the future, contribute to long-term impact on environmental benefits and sustainable development.

d. Factors Affecting Subprogramme Performance

Subprogramme Organization and Management

68. The Evaluation will look at the efficiency and effectiveness of the sub-programme organization, coordination and management arrangements. The evaluation will consider the interplay of roles between the different organisational units that are implementing Climate Action work and consider the effectiveness of SP Coordination arrangements between divisions and regional offices and in view of the new delivery model. The Evaluation will also consider whether internal lessons can be derived from the experiences of different functional units within the sub-programme.

Subprogramme Human and Financial Resources Administration and Efficiency

69. The Evaluation will consider the adequacy of human and financial resources available for the planning and implementation of sub-programme activities. The Evaluation will assess, among other things:

- *Human Resources:* the adequacy in terms of number and competencies of staff managing SP activities; personnel turn-over rates and the balance between continuity and new staff and non-staff (e.g. consultants) under the SP; the ability of managers to plan, coordinate and delegate work, communicate effectively, motivate and reward staff; factors influencing the morale of staff and the degree of satisfaction in the management of their daily activities and working in teams with colleagues from other functional units, at Headquarters and regionally in UNEP and with partners;
- *Financial Resources:* the distribution of funding according to funding source and the adequacy and stability of the funding base for the achievement of subprogramme objectives; the success of the different areas of intervention and functional units in securing funds for subprogramme activities; allocation of funds and expenditure rate by each type of intervention and by the different functional units in UNEP⁴⁰;
- *Financial Management and Administration:* the quality, transparency and effectiveness of the systems and processes used for financial management of HQ, regional and any country level operations; the link between financial and programme management and the degree of financial responsibility that subprogramme staff have and any other administrative processes facilitating or inhibiting the fluid execution of subprogramme activities, including the use of extensions and the promotion of synergies among subprogramme components.

Cooperation and Partnerships

70. The Evaluation will assess the effectiveness of mechanisms for information sharing and cooperation with other UNEP sub-programmes, UNFCCC and relevant UNEP-administered MEAs, external stakeholders and partners. The Evaluation will explore cooperation and collaboration at several levels, between a) different functional units involved in the sub-programme; different sub-programmes within UNEP; Headquarters and regional or out-posted offices; UNEP and other UN agencies as well as with inter-governmental organisations, regional bodies, the private sector and technical/scientific institutions etc. Areas of consideration will include whether key stakeholders

⁴⁰ Three thematic funds on Climate, Nature and Pollution were launched in 2022 with the objective to help implementing the MTS and shift balance away from rigidly earmarked funding towards improved distribution and resource allocation for bigger impact.

and partners are regularly involved at critical stages of the sub-programme's planning, decision-making, implementation and reporting processes. The evaluation will also assess whether mechanisms are in place and in use to ensure that complementarities are sought, synergies optimized and duplications avoided at all levels of the sub-programme's planning and delivery. Positive examples of collaboration and the resulting benefits will be recorded where possible.

Monitoring and Reporting

71. The Evaluation will assess how well sub-programme activities and achievements have been monitored, reported and evaluated. This will include a review of whether there is a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and information-sharing as well as adequate resources to support these functions.
- *Monitoring:* The evaluation will consider whether an effective monitoring system is in place that ensures that monitoring data are captured at appropriate levels and used to enhance sub-programme performance through established and widely-known processes.
 - *Reporting:* The arrangements for reporting in ways that support the accurate and reliable reporting of sub-programme results will be reviewed. With regard to projects within the sub-programme, the evaluation will consider how well results that contribute to sub-programme outputs are captured and aggregated. The quality, comprehensiveness and regularity of reporting on sub-programme outputs, outcomes and impact will be assessed as well as whether quality assurance processes are in place to ensure the reliability and accuracy of reporting at the higher results levels.
 - *Evaluation:* The extent to which sub-programme activities are structured in a way that facilitates evaluation and have been independently evaluated will be examined. The evaluation will also assess whether adequate resources are routinely allocated to this purpose and secured until the end of the evaluation process.

Human Rights, Gender, and Disability Inclusion

72. The evaluation will ascertain to what extent the sub-programme has applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Within this human rights context the evaluation will assess to what extent the sub-programme adheres to UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment and environmental, social and economic safeguards. The report should present the extent to which the sub-programme, following an adequate gender analysis at design stage, has implemented the identified actions and/or applied adaptive management to ensure that Gender Equity, Human Rights and disability inclusion are adequately taken into account, and the extent to which gender-related issues were incorporated into the design and delivery of sub-programme outputs.

Communication

73. The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of communication between the units responsible for the implementation of the sub-programme and the coordinator, senior management and relevant UNEP divisions and departments. It will also assess the extent to which clear communication was established with partners and donors, with a view to assessing the extent to which communication has been contributing to the effective implementation of the sub-programme, establishment of synergies and limitation of duplication of efforts. For example, the evaluation may consider whether sub-programme activities related to communication and knowledge management are planned and whether adequate effort has been given to follow-up and dissemination of information, concepts, approaches and tools generated by the sub-programme. The evaluation will also consider SP-CA efforts to communicate with external audiences as part

of an outreach strategy in order to exert influence and support advocacy efforts in the relevant sectors.

2.4 Evaluation Approach and Methods

74. The Evaluation will be conducted under the overall responsibility of the UNEP Evaluation Office (EO). It will be an in-depth study using a participatory approach whereby the Sub-Programme Coordinator, Division Directors, Regional Directors, Project Managers, Head of the Policy and Programme Division and other relevant staff are kept informed and regularly consulted throughout the process.
75. The Evaluation will remain an independent exercise. The evaluation team will benefit from the leadership and contributions of two independent consultants, supported by Evaluation Office staff, who will liaise with the EO on any logistic and/or methodological issue to properly conduct the assessment in as independent way as possible, given the circumstances and resources provided.
76. Evaluation findings and judgments will be based on sound evidence and analysis, clearly documented in the evaluation report. Information will be triangulated (i.e., verified from different sources) to the greatest extent possible⁴¹. Analysis leading to evaluative judgments will be clearly spelled out.
77. The Evaluation will use different methods and tools to assess the sub-programme, including: desk-based review of UNEP strategic documents; meta-analysis of the ratings of previously evaluated projects; trend analysis of evaluation findings and interviews in the reconstruction and exploration of Theories of Change and in analysis the contributions of the sub-programme to higher level results. Survey(s) may be considered if appropriate. A list of evaluation methods to be used are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Evaluation Methods

Type of Activity	Description
Desk Based Review	Reading of thematic and strategic documents to situate the Sub-Programme evaluation within global and sectoral contexts and to articulate UNEP's position and efforts within the global regional and national contexts.
Interviews/Survey	Exploration and analysis of the factors affecting sub-programme performance.
Systematic Review of Findings Project Evaluations	<p>Aggregation and analysis of the findings and ratings across Climate Action project evaluations.</p> <p>Analysis of trends in the evaluation findings against the standard evaluation criteria used by the Evaluation Office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Relevance • Achievement of Outputs • Effectiveness (Achievement of Project Objectives and Results) • Sustainability and Replication • Efficiency • Factors Affecting Performance <p>In-depth exploration of key criteria including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Designs⁴² (under Preparation and Readiness) • Gender, Human Rights and safeguards (under Strategic Relevance)

⁴¹ Individuals will not be mentioned by name if anonymity needs to be preserved.

⁴² Using the EO template for the Assessment of the Quality of Project Design, which is prepared during all project evaluations.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Management (under Factors Affecting Performance) • Monitoring and Evaluation (under Factors Affecting Performance) • Compliance with evaluation recommendations
Reconstructed Theories of Change	<p>Reconstruction of Theories of Change⁴³, one per sub-programme results area.</p> <p>Analysis of the coherence between the reconstructed Theories of Change and the TOCs of critical projects within the sub-programme.</p>
Contributions to Higher Level Results	<p>Analysis of the ‘contribution’ made by the Sub-Programme to high level sectoral or global change (using TOCs and stakeholder analysis).</p> <p>Exploration of the way in which sub-programme results are compiled and reported.</p>
Regional Delivery of the Sub-Programme	<p>Exploration of how the sub-programme is articulated and delivered at regional level.</p>

78. The desk review will include:

- Relevant background documentation on the scientific and socio-economic dimensions of Climate Action, and on current policies, strategies, multilateral agreements, approaches used in Climate Action;
- Background documentation on UNEP’s strategy and engagement in Climate Action, including: PoW documents (from 2014 onwards); Programme Framework documents; the UNEP MTS 2014-2017, 2018-2021 and 2022-2025 and project design documents;
- Background documentation on UNEP partnerships with key actors in the area of Climate Action; and
- Sub-programme reports and monitoring data including: Sub-programme performance reports, project progress and final reports, financial reports, entries into PIMS, etc.

79. The systematic review of previous evaluations of projects related to Climate Action will draw on the evaluation ratings scoring and analysis contained within existing project evaluation reports. Evaluations by the Evaluation Office but also any independent evaluation functions of UNEP partners (UN and non-UN) and donors will be considered.

80. Interviews are expected to be held with UNEP management and other staff involved in the planning and implementation of the sub-programme, including: the Executive Director, Division Directors, Regional Directors, the Sub-programme Coordinator, project managers and divisional staff, staff from the Strategic Programme and Planning Division and staff of UNEP regional offices and the secretariats of UNEP-hosted MEAs and others as relevant. In addition, interviews and, if appropriate, surveys will be conducted with key partners and stakeholders, including selected representatives of UN and e.g., UNFCCC, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other external partners; other UN agencies active in promoting climate action and funding mechanisms; Ministries of Environment; Bilateral donors; civil society and major groups such as NGOs, local authorities, academia as well as the private sector.

2.5 Evaluation Deliverables

81. An **Inception Report** will be prepared by the evaluation team before it engages in external interviews, surveys and regional office or project visits. The Inception Report will include: (i) most of the background desk review; (ii) draft theories of change at the level of the sub-programme’s Expected Accomplishments (iii) a detailed description of the methods and analytical tools that

⁴³ These TOCs may or may not reflect either the overall TOC for the sub-programme or TOC(s) from key projects.

the Evaluation will use; (iv) an annotated table of contents for the evaluation report; and (v) distribution of roles and responsibilities related to data collection and analysis and reporting among the evaluation team members. The Inception Report will be shared first with the Evaluation Office for review. It will then be shared by the Evaluation Office with the Sub-programme Coordinator, senior management and heads of functional units for comments.

82. Following field visits and preparation of the draft report, **Preliminary Findings** will be prepared in PowerPoint and presented to the Evaluation Reference Group through Teams or Skype.
83. The **Main Evaluation Report** will present synthesised findings from the evaluation. Detailed material arising from any case or country studies will be annexed. It will be relatively brief (no longer than 50 pages – excluding the executive summary and annexes), to the point and written in plain English. It must explain the purpose of the Evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used (with their limitations). The report will present evidence-based and balanced findings covering all the evaluation criteria, consequent conclusions, lessons and recommendations, which will be cross-referenced to each other. The report should be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible.
84. The draft report shall be submitted to the Director of the Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office will review the report for clarity and comprehensiveness. When found acceptable, the Director of Evaluation will share the report with the subprogramme coordinator and Lead Director, who will review the report and provide feedback on any factual errors. Once these have been addressed, the report will be circulated to Division and Regional Directors, the Policy and Programme and Division, the Corporate Services Division, senior managers, and key external stakeholders for review and consultation. They may provide feedback on any errors of fact and highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. The Evaluation Office will then collate all review comments and provide them to the evaluation team for consideration in preparing the final version of the report. The Team will draft a response to any comments that contradict its own findings and could therefore not be accommodated in the final report. This response will be shared by the Evaluation Office with the interested stakeholders to ensure full transparency.

85. The final report shall be submitted by email to:

Michael Spilsbury, Director

UNEP Evaluation Office

Email: michael.spilsbury@un.org

86. The final evaluation report will be published on the Evaluation Office web-site <https://www.unep.org/evaluation-office>, and the Evaluation Office LinkedIn account. It may also be printed in hard copy. Consistent with standard Quality Assurance processes, the Evaluation Office will prepare quality assessments of the draft and final reports, which are tools for providing structured feedback to the evaluation consultants. The quality of the draft evaluation report will be assessed by the Evaluation Office and rated against UNEP criteria.
87. The Sub-programme Coordinator, assisted by the Evaluation Office, will facilitate the preparation of a **Recommendations Implementation Plan** in consultation with the relevant offices and functional units in UNEP. The plan should specify the level of priority of the recommendations and actions to be undertaken to implement them. It should also indicate who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations and the schedule for their implementation. The Sub-programme Coordinator will then be responsible for reporting through the Evaluation Office to the Executive Office on the status of implementations of evaluation recommendations on a six-monthly basis, until the latest deadline in the implementation schedule has been reached.

88. After the Recommendations Implementation Plan has been agreed upon, the final evaluation report will be widely shared with partners and stakeholders. Innovative ways of disseminating evaluation findings and recommendations (e.g., the organization of a workshop where the Team illustrates the content of its analysis to UNEP target audience) will be sought to reach as wide a range of stakeholders as possible. The management response will be published on the Evaluation Office web-site <https://www.unep.org/evaluation-office>

2.6 Management Arrangements of the Evaluation

89. The Evaluation will be managed by the Evaluation Office of UNEP. The Evaluation Manager will provide guidance on the overall evaluation approach and quality assure the evaluation deliverables. (S)he will ensure coordination and liaison with all concerned units and other key agencies and stakeholders. The Evaluation Office will be ultimately responsible for the final evaluation report and for its formal presentation to the UNEP audience.
90. The core evaluation team will consist of two external Evaluation Consultants (Team Leader and Evaluation Specialist, respectively) supported by two Evaluation Office staff members, (one of whom will be the Evaluation Manager). The evaluation team will be responsible for the development, research, drafting and finalization of the Evaluation, in close consultation with the Evaluation Manager. Detailed roles and responsibilities related to data collection and analysis and reporting will be agreed upon within the Team and specified in the Inception Report and will draw on the list of roles below.

Specific Responsibilities for Team Leader:

91. The Team Leader will be responsible, in close consultation with the Evaluation Manager, for overall management of the evaluation and timely delivery of its outputs, described above in Section E. Evaluation Deliverables. Roles will include:
- Inception phase of the evaluation, including:
 - preliminary desk review and introductory interviews with project staff;
 - draft the reconstructed Theory of Change of the SP-CA;
 - prepare the evaluation framework;
 - develop the desk review and interview protocols;
 - draft the survey protocols (if relevant);
 - develop and present criteria for selection of Climate Action initiatives for in-depth study;
 - plan the evaluation schedule;
 - prepare the Inception Report, incorporating comments until approved by the Evaluation Manager
 - Data collection and analysis phase of the evaluation, including:
 - conduct further desk review and in-depth interviews with project implementing and executing agencies, project partners and project stakeholders;
 - regularly report back to the Evaluation Manager on progress and inform of any possible problems or issues encountered and;
 - keep the Evaluation Manager informed of the evaluation progress and engage the Subprogramme Coordinator of Climate Action in discussions on emerging findings throughout the evaluation process.

- Reporting phase, including:
 - draft the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that the evaluation report is complete, coherent and consistent with the Evaluation Manager guidelines both in substance and style;
 - liaise with the Evaluation Manager on comments received and finalize the Main Evaluation Report, ensuring that comments are taken into account until approved by the Evaluation Manager;
 - prepare a Response to Comments annex for the main report, listing those comments not accepted by the Evaluation Consultant(s) and indicating the reason for the rejection.
- Managing relations, including:
 - maintain a positive relationship with evaluation stakeholders, ensuring that the evaluation process is as participatory as possible but at the same time maintains its independence;
 - communicate in a timely manner with the Evaluation Manager on any issues requiring its attention and intervention.

Specific Responsibilities for the Evaluation Specialist:

92. The Evaluation Specialist will carry out the Systematic Review of existing project evaluations from the sub-programme. The Evaluation Specialist will contribute to the overall preparation of the evaluation report. A more detailed allocation of responsibilities between the Team Leader and the Evaluation Specialist will be specified in the inception report.

Other Roles and Responsibilities:

93. The Evaluation Office staff members assigned to the evaluation team will bring additional substantive expertise. (S)he may also be tasked with carrying out interviews and drafting selected sections of the main report in agreement with the two Evaluation Consultants and the Evaluation Manager.
94. An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established. The ERG members will provide strategic direction to the evaluation - based on their own experiences and contextual knowledge - and boost buy-in to, and the credibility and legitimacy of, the evaluation process across the range of evaluation stakeholders. The ERG will be composed of: two senior managers from the Industry and Economy Division and the Ecosystems Division (Directors or Deputies), the Subprogramme Coordinator, a senior representative from the Policy and Programme Division, a selection of Branch/Unit Heads and up to three representatives from relevant technical institutions, coordination mechanisms (e.g. EMG) and MEA Secretariats.
95. The Evaluation Consultants will have an in-depth understanding of, and familiarity with, evaluation methods and techniques and documented experience in conducting high-level evaluations of large environment-related organizations and programmes. They will possess excellent writing skills in English.
96. In addition to broad understanding of science related to climate change, they will combine advanced knowledge on:
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation and technology support;
 - Multilateral Climate Agreements, regional and national policy processes
 - UN policy work and country support;

- The UN system, in particular UNEP and partner agencies of the SP-CA;
 - Programme and project management;
 - Partnerships development, and knowledge management.
97. The evaluation will be conducted during the period July 2023 – August 2024. The Evaluation Office will present a first draft evaluation report tentatively by the end of January 2024 to the Sub-Programme Coordinator. In May 2024 (tentative date) a completion workshop will be held to discuss evaluation findings and recommendations with key stakeholders. Publication of the final evaluation report is expected by August 2024. The report will be discussed with UNEP’s Senior Management Team. The tentative schedule for the Evaluation is presented below. Consultants will be hired within the period 1 July 2023 to 31 August 2024.
98. All consultant contracts will be individual Special Service Agreements (SSA) on a fee-only basis. Air tickets will be purchased by UNEP and 75% of the Daily Subsistence Allowance for each authorised travel mission will be paid up front. Local in-country travel will only be reimbursed where agreed in advance with the Evaluation Office and on the production of acceptable receipts. Terminal expenses and residual DSA entitlements (25%) will be paid after mission completion. By signing the service contract with UNEP/UNON, the consultant(s) certify that they have not been associated with the design and implementation of the project in any way which may jeopardize their independence and impartiality towards project achievements and project partner performance. In addition, they will not have any future interests (within six months after completion of the contract) with the project’s executing or implementing units. All consultants are required to sign the Code of Conduct Agreement Form.
99. **Payment schedule:** The Evaluation Consultants will receive 30% of their agreed fee upon completion of the Inception Report; and 40% upon delivery of a draft main report that is deemed complete and of acceptable quality to the EO. The remaining 30% will be paid upon satisfactory completion of the work.
100. In case the consultants are not able to provide the deliverables in accordance with these TORs, in line with the expected quality standards by the UNEP Evaluation Office, payment may be withheld at the discretion of the Director of the Evaluation Office until the consultants have improved the deliverables to meet UNEP’s quality standards. The Team Leader will advise the Evaluation Office whether the Evaluation Specialist has provided satisfactory inputs in the evaluation.
101. If the consultants fail to submit satisfactory products in a timely manner, the Evaluation Office reserves the right to employ additional human resources to finalize their products on schedule, and to reduce the consultants’ fees by an amount equal to the additional costs borne by the Evaluation Office to bring the report up to standard.
102. Tentative schedule for the evaluation in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Tentative schedule

Phase	Milestone/deliverable	Timeframe
Inception	ToRs	May 2023
	Consultant contracts	June-July 2023
	Inception Report	31 August 2023
Data collection & analysis	Further Desk Review	31 August 2023
	Telephone Interviews	31 October 2023
	HQ visit (tentative)	31 October 2023

	Surveys	15 November 2023
	Working papers/case studies	15 November 2023
Reporting Phase	Preliminary findings presentation	15 November 2023
	Draft report to Evaluation Office	31 January 2024
	Draft report shared with ERG	29 February 2024
	Draft Report for comment by partners	31 March 2024
	Comments by partners	30 April 2024
	Completion Workshop (Nairobi)	May 2024
	Final Report to Evaluation Office	15 June 2024
	Circulate Final Report	31 July 2024
	Issue Recommendation Implementation Plan	31 August 2024

Annex V. Data collection and analysis methods

The following section is an excerpt from the Inception Report of the evaluation and provides an overview of the methods that were applied during the evaluation.

Structured Interviews

Several groups of stakeholders will be interviewed for the evaluation. Most importantly, people that were involved in the planning, implementation, and strategic alignment of the sub-programme will be interviewed (see chapter 2.1 and Annex I).

To ensure that as many stakeholders as possible can participate in meetings during the evaluation process, an initial list of potential interviewees for the evaluation mission were discussed with the members of the ERG during the inception phase (cf. 2.5.2). In some cases, multiple potential representatives of organizations or more organizations have been identified, but not all individuals that are currently listed will be interviewed. The exact number of interviews and interviewees will be determined at the beginning of the main evaluation phase. Next to interviews with approximately 30 stakeholders, the evaluation team plans to conduct focus group discussions.

The evaluators will carry out semi-structured interviews that are structured along an interview guide, which will be drawn up based on the evaluation matrix. The evaluation team together with the Evaluation Managers will arrange the interviews. If further relevant individuals or groups are identified during the evaluation process, these stakeholders may be added to the interview list. If the interviewees allow, the interviews will be recorded and transcribed. However, this technology has been rejected in many evaluation processes by interviewees. In such cases, minutes will be taken during the interviews. The collected data in the form of text will be analyzed via qualitative content analysis.

The collected data in form of text will be compiled either into Excel or MAXQDA and analyzed via qualitative content analysis. By utilizing qualitative content analysis, the evaluation team can identify information and patterns significant for the evaluation. The data will be analyzed with a focus on the evaluation's objective: identifying retrospective and evaluable information about the project. In more detail, the analysis will follow these steps:

- Step 1 – Simple and clear record of **the interview**: this stage includes dividing the notes into specific sections of text and reproducing the information in one's own words. It is important that the content of the interview is captured in its entirety
- Step 2 – **Thematic arrangement of words in evaluating the interview**: the paraphrased information is assigned to headings and keywords. The aim is to organize the segments of the interview thematically while utilizing the interviewee's terminology; and
- Step 3 – **Thematic assessment and comparison of the interviewees' statements**: the analyst compares the text sections and identifies important similarities and subsequently creates categories. The results of the analysis will be cross compared to triangulate, as this increases the validity of the collected information.

Desk-based review

An analysis and coding of the thematic and strategic documents to situate the sub-programme within sectoral and global contexts and to articulate UNEP's position and efforts within the national, regional, and global contexts will be conducted.

Reconstructed Theories of Change

A significant number of the evaluation questions relate to the internal logical relationship between the overarching goals of the organization's engagement on climate change, the formulated expected results on the level of the subprogramme, and the activity of the contributing projects in the various divisions. This will be approached by reconstructing the ToC. As many stakeholders are contributing to the subprogramme, and they approach climate action in different systems (e.g., ecosystems vs energy systems) with different angles (e.g., mitigation vs. adaptation) and different instruments (e.g., policy vs finance vs capacity building vs. raising awareness for challenges), it is expected that different ToCs could be reconstructed by different UNEP staff as well as by the evaluation team. This process itself can be a source of insight and provide the basis for an assessment to what degree the formulations of the overarching goals are able to capture all of UNEP's activities. By comparing the reconstructed ToCs and with an externally constructed ToC for moving towards a climate compatible world (e.g., the Theory of No Change) it is possible to understand better the role that UNEP can play in moving towards that target and its limitations. For further details on the theories of change within the Subprogramme, see chapter 2.3.2.

Synthesis of findings from project evaluations

The evaluated projects of the SP-CA will be aggregated and the trends will be analyzed against UNEP's standard evaluation criteria, which include: strategic relevance, achievement of outputs, effectiveness (achievement of project objectives and results), sustainability and replication, efficiency, and factors affecting performance (preparation and readiness, project implementation and management, stakeholder participation, communications and public awareness, country ownership, financial management, UNEP supervision and technical guidance and monitoring and evaluation). The analysis will also provide a synthesis of the recommendations and lessons learned from the evaluations.

2.6.1 Process analysis

Process analysis supports the identification of positive and negative aspects elements in programme processes and helps to identify needed improvements (Rubin and Babbie, 2009). In this inductive method of theory building, the focus is put on the operation and implementation of the subprogramme. In the process analysis, various steps and factors of the subprogramme's implementation will be examined, which can include the management and administrative structures, the staffing patterns, and deliverables. It thereby allows to identify factors that positively or negatively influenced the subprogramme's performance. The insights provided by the process analysis can provide information for potential replication in the next phases of the sub-programme or for other sub-programmes.

Contribution analysis

Contribution Analysis is a hypothesis-based evaluation method that tests for alternative explanations for an observable situation. If an observable situation cannot be explained

without the intervention (in this case the SP-CA), the intervention has made a contribution to the observed situation.

The main focus of the contribution analysis will be on UNEP's internal organization, asking the question whether the SP-CA has contributed to shaping UNEP's work on Climate Action in a relevant manner. In a variation of the hypothesis-based approach, we will look for voices and anecdotal evidence on how the SP-CA has "made a difference", on various potential levels including internal and external coordination and reporting, representation of UNEP's work at the COP or internal championing of the issue, as well as other potential impacts. This method will be particularly useful for the case studies. One particular focus can be on assessing how bringing the climate-related activities of different divisions under the umbrella of SP-CA improved UNEP's impact, for example through its high-profile reports, such as the Adaptation Gap Report. The background to this question is that without the subprogramme, the climate-related activities of the Ecosystems or Economic Divisions would have been implemented in a siloed approach, without – possibly – sharing the gained knowledge across divisions. A strategic evaluation question of the ToRs that will be addressed on the basis of the contribution analysis is the question: to what extent are the partnerships with the GEF and the GCF influencing UNEP's climate action strategy, subprogramme and effectiveness of delivery? And to what extent has UNEP influenced international climate and environment funds?

2.6.2 Semantic trend analysis

This subprogramme evaluation is significant as it covers one of the planetary mega-challenges and spans a long-time horizon. It offers an opportunity to analyze the portfolio for trends. For example, there are evaluation questions that try to understand whether and how the subprogramme formulation and the operationalization into projects has reacted to or have had influence on the international discussion and negotiations on climate change. During the period covered by the evaluation, a number of topics surfaced in the international discussions and gained importance. At the beginning of the evaluation period, the international community started to digest the Copenhagen Accord, with the promise of significant additional funds being provided by Northern countries in the form of climate finance. Associated modalities were NAMAs and the establishment of the GCF. NAPAs had been the preferred planning tool for adaptation action at the time. Developing countries were moving from National Communications to Biennial Update Reports (BUR). The most pivotal moment in the climate change discussion is the Paris Agreement which lent significant momentum to climate action and introduced "new" concepts like net-zero, NDCs, NAPs or others. By the Glasgow COP 2022, most countries announced net zero targets, and the discussion started to revolve around loss and damages.

The evaluation is tasked with understanding whether and how UNEP is coining or adopting such trends with the subprogramme activities. For that, the project proposes to develop a language-based analysis method that attempts to trace how key words associated with these trends "travel" through the UNEP body of documents: are they showing up in project documents first, or in outreach publications, in internal planning and programming documents or in discussions around the UN Environment Assembly? It is proposed to analyze documents for the frequency of use of selected keywords in different document types and to see if conclusions can be drawn about the direction of these influences. The results of this analysis will be validated with stakeholder interviews or focus group discussions.

The following steps will be taken to conduct the trend analysis:

- Compilation of a timeline of relevant keywords or keyword-chains, for example
 - Adaptation needs assessments – national adaptation programme of action – national adaptation plan
 - Ecosystem-based adaptation – nature-based solutions
 - National communications – BURs – NDCs
 - Project-based mechanism – carbon finance – Art 6
 - Vulnerability - resilience – loss and damage
 - Compilation of a document database
- Analysis of frequency of key words from key word chains in document database, by date and type of document
- Understanding whether there is a time trend in these uses.
- If trend is discovered, analyze citations and references to understand UNEP's contribution to the establishment and development/elaboration of such the keywords/keyword-chains.