

Evaluation Synthesis Report 2016-2017

Summary

Evaluation Office of UN Environment

- Adheres to UN Norms and Standards for evaluation
- Is independent of divisional management (reporting line to the ED)
- Conducts evaluations (no monitoring)
- Mandate: **All projects and programmes within Programme of Work**

Overview

Overall objective: To generate evidence on ‘what works’ and ‘what doesn’t’ and provide feedback for improving planning and management processes

Summarises performance trends across:

- more than 80 evaluations of UN Environment interventions 2016-17
- 129 evaluations during Medium-Term Strategy 2014-17

Value of projects evaluated in 2016-17: excess of **USD 556 million** of expenditure

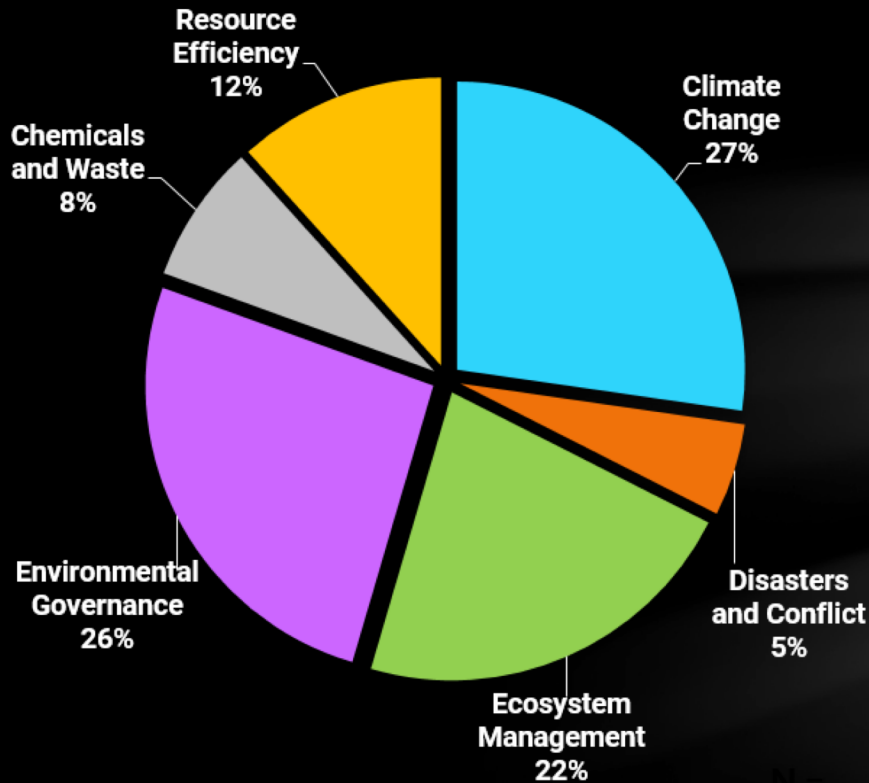
Summarizes strategic evaluations undertaken in the biennium

Reports on compliance with evaluation recommendations

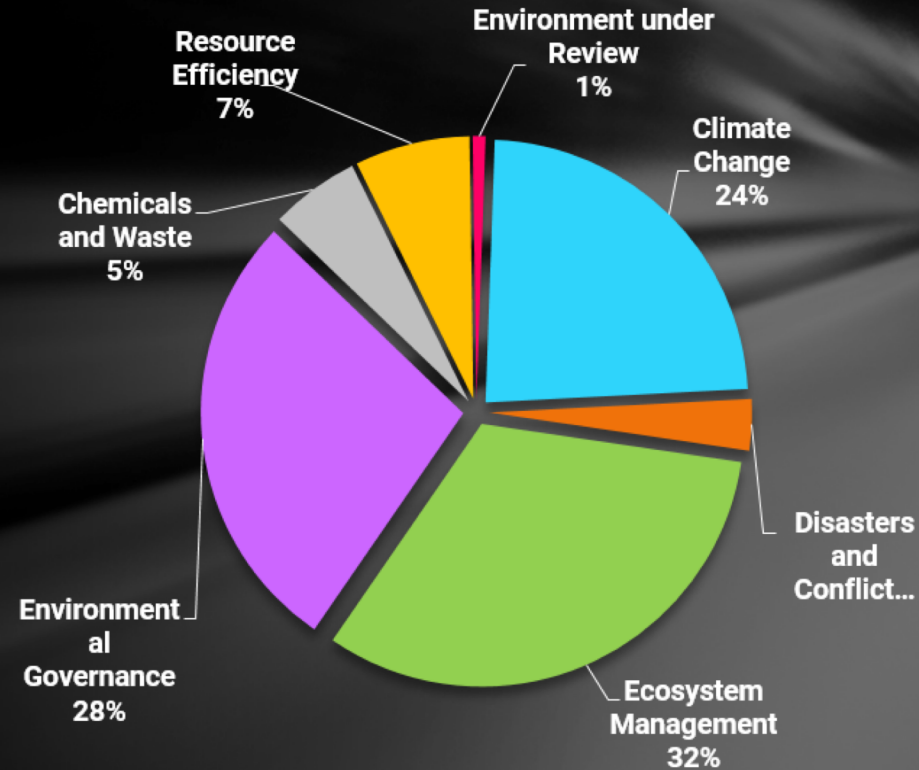
Evaluations by Sub-programme

Distribution of evaluated projects against thematic areas for the biennium 2016-17 and MTS period 2014-17

Biennium 2016-17



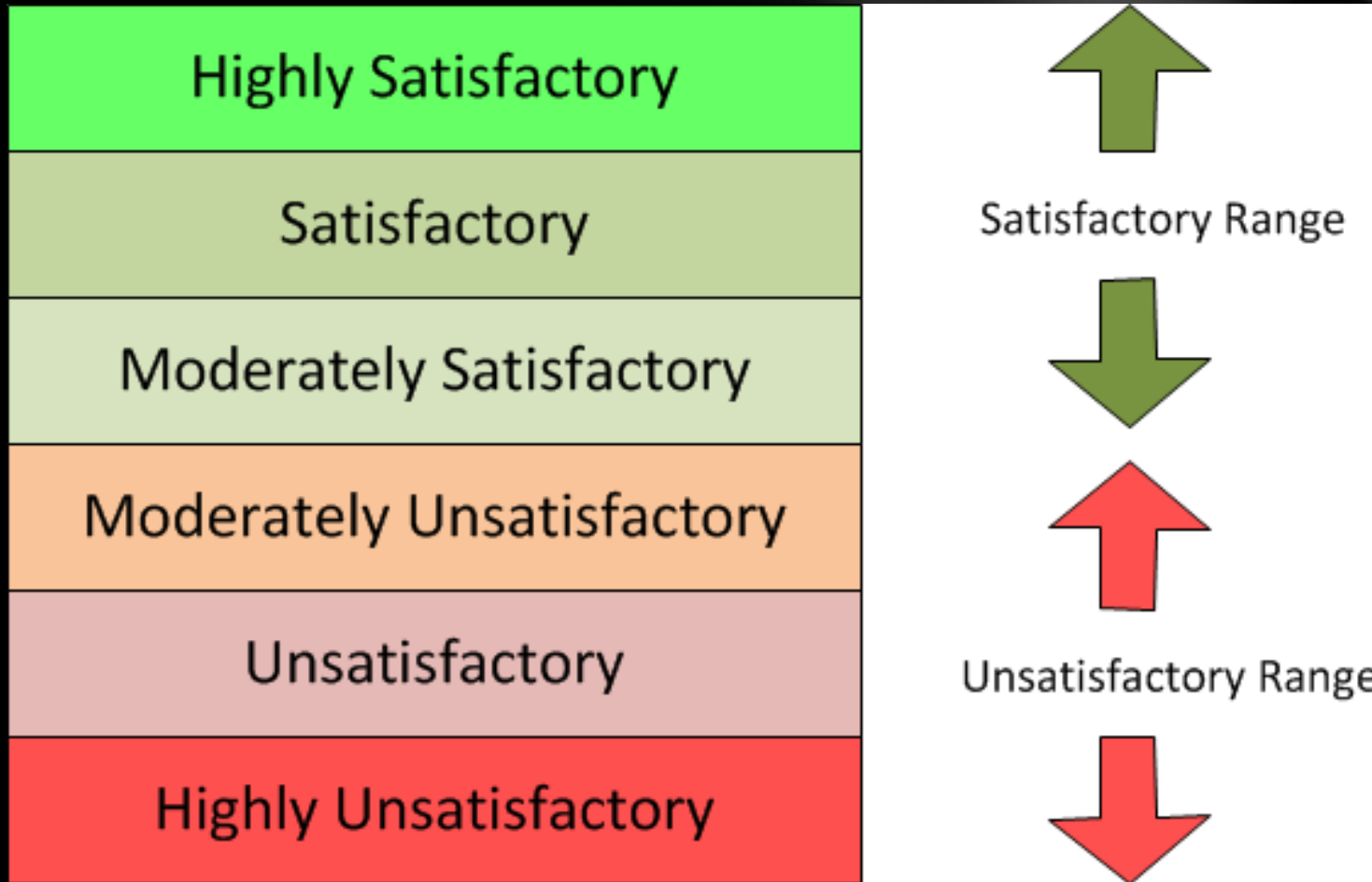
MTS 2014-2017



N =

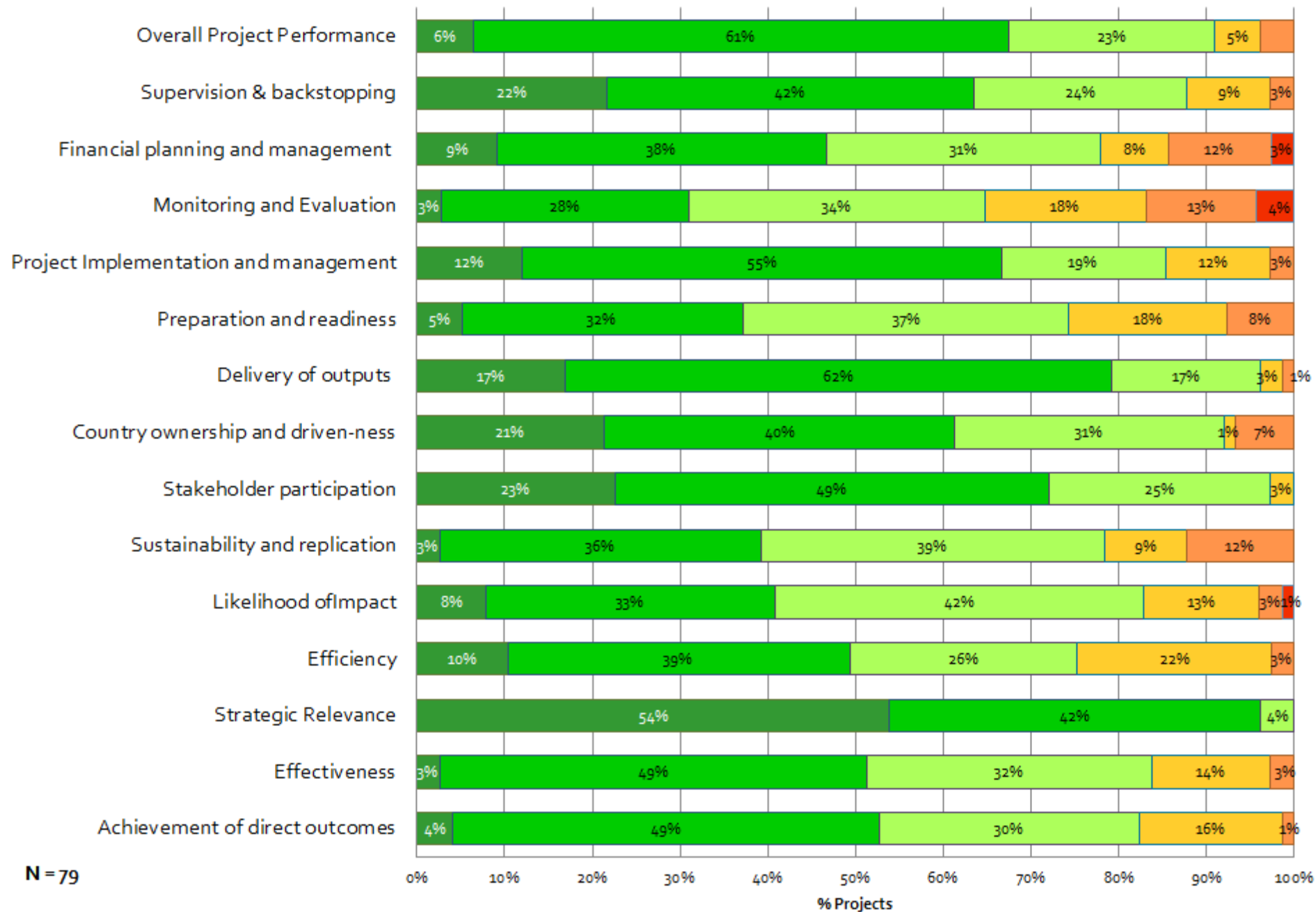
The evaluations undertaken by the Evaluation Office are strongly influenced by project life-cycles. Evaluations are scheduled and initiated as projects approach, or reach, their operational completion.

Evaluation Rating Scales

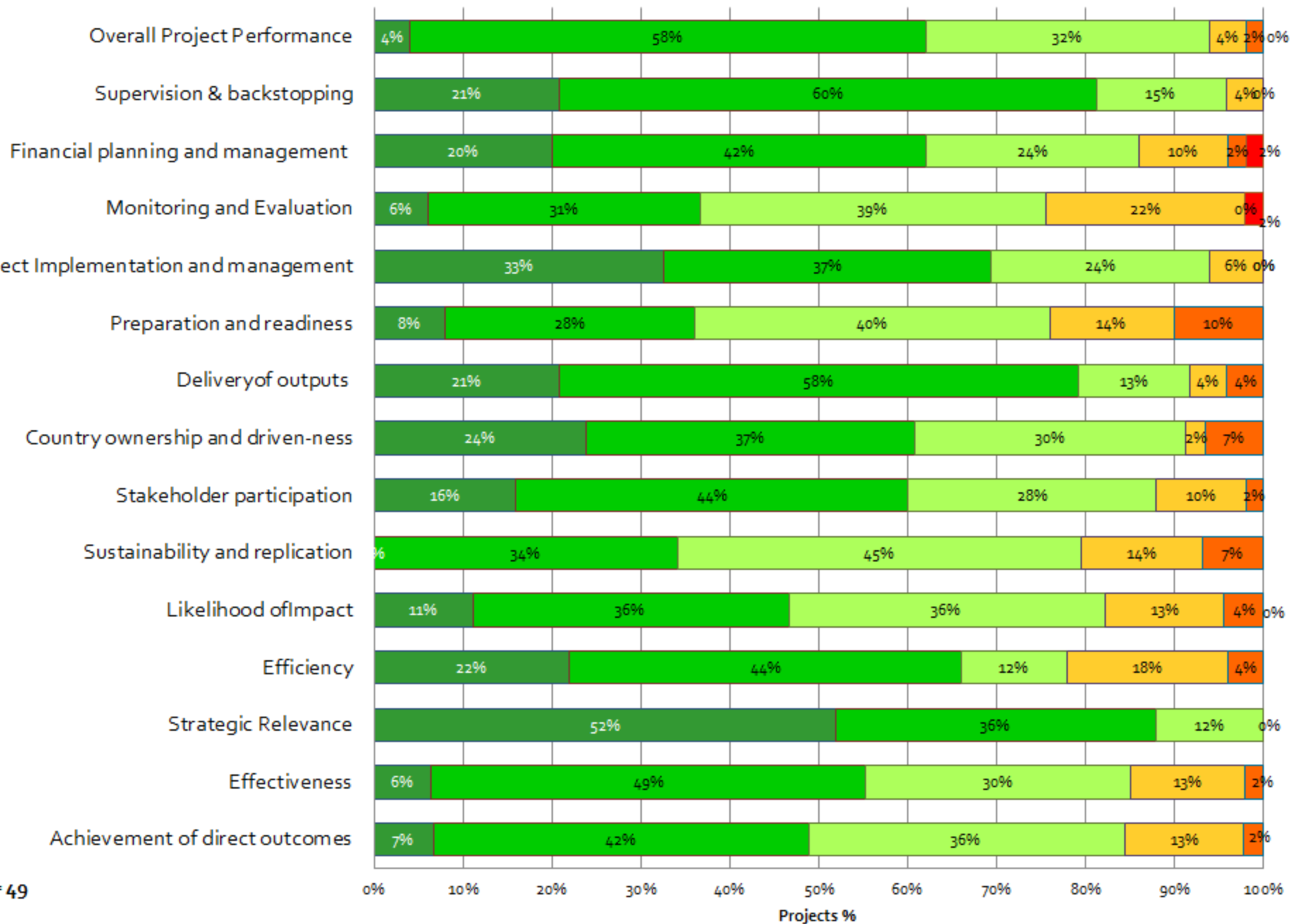


UNEP Evaluation Office project performance ratings are annually benchmarked against UNDP and World Bank by the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF

Project performance by evaluation criteria 2016-2017

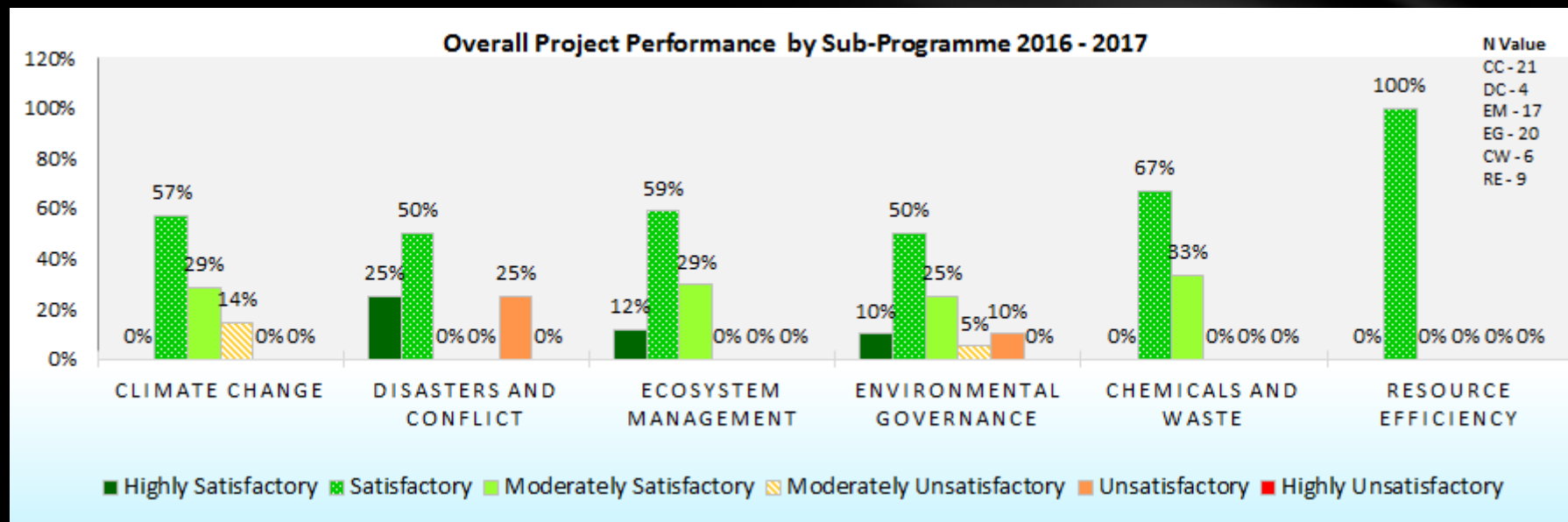


Project performance by evaluation criteria 2014-2015



N = 49

Projects by sub-programme rated 'Satisfactory' or better in overall performance in 2016-17 biennium



- During the 2016-17 biennium, Evaluation Office began using **weighted scores** across all evaluation criteria to calculate the overall project performance instead of calculating the mathematical average.
- **Criteria that hold the greatest 'weights' in this scoring system include:** **'Effectiveness'** (includes 'delivery of outputs', 'achievement of direct outcomes' and 'likelihood of impact'); **'Sustainability'** (includes socio-political, financial and institutional dimensions of sustainably); and **'Efficiency'**.
- In other words, not all criteria are considered equal; there is a strong **focus on the achievement of sustainable results and value for money.**

Project Performance 2016-2017

Overall
Performance
67%

More than two thirds of the projects evaluated achieved a rating of 'Satisfactory' or better in the assessment of their **overall performance**

Strategic
Relevance
96%

The **alignment of the interventions' intentionality (strategic relevance)** remains the evaluation criterion that attains the highest ratings, with 100% rated as 'Satisfactory' or better

Effectiveness
52%

Up to 52% of projects were rated 'Satisfactory' or better for their **effectiveness** in delivering their programmed outputs and achieving immediate and longer-term outcomes

Outputs
79%

The **delivery of outputs** remained a strong dimension of project performance with nearly four fifths of projects attaining a rating of 'Satisfactory' or better.

Efficiency
49%

2016-17 had a 17% reduction of projects rated 'Satisfactory' or better in **delivering planned results** using the available resources and within the expected timeframe.

Sustainability
39%

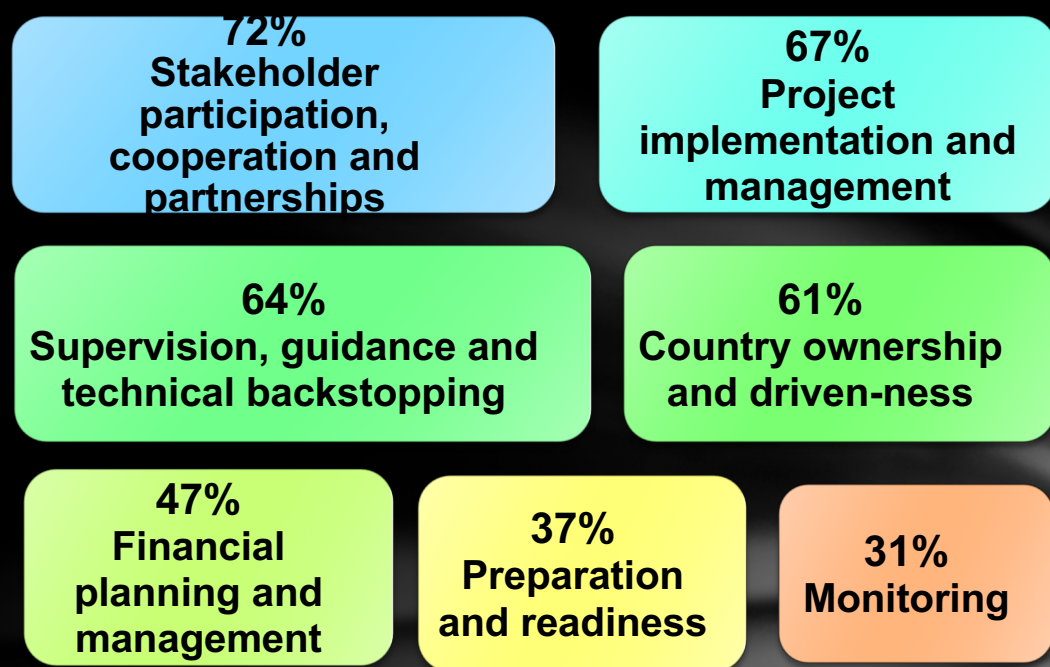
just over one third of projects evaluated achieving favourable ratings in **sustaining their outcomes**

Impact
41%

The **likelihood that interventions will influence the change processes** that lead beyond project outputs to higher level results was considered 'Likely' or 'Highly Likely' in only 41% of the projects evaluated in 2016-17

Processes Affecting Performance

% projects rated 'Satisfactory or better'



- Sub-criterion '**stakeholder participation, cooperation and partnerships**' showed the greatest improvement (12% increase from previous biennium)
- 67% of projects showed favorable results in their **implementation and management** approaches
- Performance in '**country ownership and driven-ness**' remained constant, 61% of the projects evaluated attaining a 'Satisfactory' or better score in 2016-17 compared to 60% in 2014-2015.
- 17% drop in '**project supervision, guidance and technical backstopping**' criterion in 2016-17 to 64%

Areas for Improvement

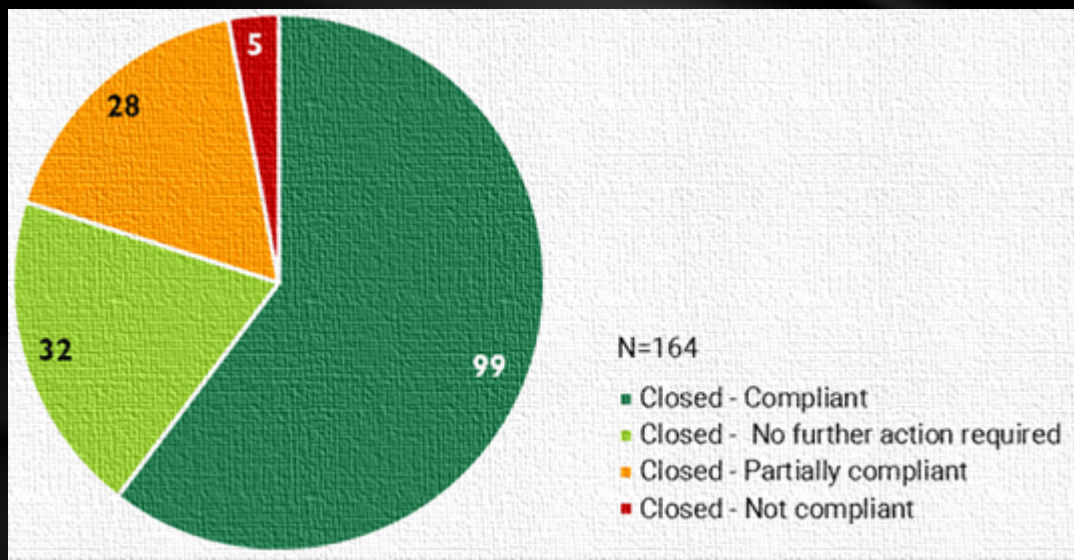
% projects that achieved a 'Satisfactory' or better rating

47%	41%	39%	37%	31%
Financial Planning & Management	Likelihood of Impact	Sustainability of outcomes	Preparation and readiness	Monitoring & Reporting

- Although **financial planning and management is critical for reducing financial risks**, this remains one of the evaluation criteria against which poor performance has persisted in both MTS 2010-13 and MTS 2014-17
- The need for projects to place **greater emphasis on creating conditions for sustaining their outcomes** is highlighted by the fact that a little over a third of projects achieved a rating of 'Satisfactory' or better in 2016-17
- To improve likelihood of impact achievement, there is a continued need for project designs and implementation actions to **focus on, and invest more in, influencing the change processes** that lead beyond project outputs to higher level results
- **A robust monitoring system is better able to support results-based project implementation** by providing data needed for strategic and evidence-based adaptive management. This criterion has consistently had low performance ratings in the last eight years (2010-17)
- Considering the knock-on effect on later implementation, there is clearly a **need to continue efforts to enhance the quality of project designs**

Evaluation Recommendation Compliance by end of 2016-17

- **The formal recommendation compliance system promotes accountability & reinforces positive feedback and learning.**
- **Encourages staff, partners and other stakeholders to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of past performance and to feedback good practices into future intervention designs and management actions.**



Of 164 evaluation recommendations, 20% (32) required no further implementation action as conditions or contexts had changed, making further implementation unnecessary.

60% (99) were fully implemented,
21% (28) were partially implemented
3% (5) 'not compliant' (i.e. not implemented).

Evaluation Lessons

Numerous lessons from evaluations undertaken during the biennium were of high strategic importance to the organization. A small, highly selective set of lessons is summarised below:

- ✓ **Stakeholders with policy interest need to be an integral part of assessment processes**
- ✓ **Boundary organizations at the science-policy interface should be identified and selected carefully**
- ✓ **'Risk' can be a common entry point to convene multiple actors**
- ✓ **'Conscious opportunism' to influence decision-making - a key facet of adaptive management**
- ✓ **Effective mainstreaming requires a robust targeting strategy from the outset to reach beyond the environment sector**

UN Environment Evaluation Office Performance

- **Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN, 2017):** *The quality of independent evaluations conducted by UN Environment's Evaluation Office was rated as good to very good, with appropriate quality assurance systems operating effectively, although independence could be further improved*
- **UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS, 2017):** *UN Environment's Evaluation Office was found to be the most productive UN Secretariat evaluation function in terms of evaluation report delivery, producing 52 reports in the biennium assessed compared to a Secretariat average of 12 reports per function*
- **Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility (IEO GEF, 2017):** *Based on a 2015 review, 100% of UN Environment evaluation reports of GEF projects were assessed as being of 'Moderately Satisfactory' or better for quality, as compared to 66% and 75% for the World Bank and UNDP respectively*