SAP009

Building resilience of urban populations with ecosystem-based solutions in Lao PDR

Lao People's Democratic Republic (the)

June 2025

Interim Evaluation Report

This report presents the Interim Evaluation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF)-funded project “Building resilience of urban populations with ecosystem-based solutions in Lao PDR”. The evaluation was independently commissioned by the Accredited Entity (AE), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and submitted to GCF. GCF assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of the information in this report.

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GCF INTERIM EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT "BUILDING RESILIENCE OF URBAN POPULATIONS WITH ECOSYSTEM-BASED SOLUTIONS IN LAO PDR"

Interim Evaluation Report

Prepared for

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

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ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

Acronym / Abbreviation	Explanation
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AE	Accredited Entity
APR	Annual Performance Report
BSP	The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building
CAWA	Climate Adaptation in Wetland Areas
CCAU	Climate Change Adaptation Unit
CO	Communications Officer
CPSC	City-level Project Steering Committee
CTA	Chief Technical Advisor
DCC	Department of Climate Change
DONRE	District Office of Natural Resources and Environment
DRIP	UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
EbA	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
EE	Executing Entity
EPF	Environmental Protection Fund
ESO	Environmental and Social Safeguards Officer
ESSF	Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FPO	Financial and Procurement Officer
FRMC	Flood Risk Management Committee
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH / German Development Agency
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
HRBA	Human Rights-based Approach
ICMFS	Integrated Climate-Resilient Flood Management Strategies
IPP	Indigenous Peoples Policy
ITE	Interim Evaluation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MGO	Monitoring and Gender Officer
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MONRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment

Acronym / Abbreviation	Explanation
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MTS	Medium-Term Strategy
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NCCS	National Climate Change Strategy
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLWU	National Lao Women's Union
NPSC	National Project Steering Committee
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NUoL	National University of Laos
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PD	Project Director
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PMC	Project Management Costs
PMU	Project Management Unit
PONRE	Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment
POW	Programme of Work
PPSC	Provincial Project Steering Committee
SCIP	Sustainable Cities Integrated/Impact Programme
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound
S-SC	South-South Cooperation
TL	Team Leader
TM	Task Manager
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNS	United Nations System
RF	Results Framework
RVE	Results Verification Exercise
WB	World Bank

Acronym / Abbreviation	Explanation
4GMS	Fourth Greater Mekong Subregion Corridor Towns Development Project

PROJECT SUMMARY TABLE

Table 1. Project summary table

UNEP PIMS/SMA[1] ID:	SAP009/S1-32GCF-000007		
Donor ID:	GCF		
Implementing Partners:	MONRE Lao PDR		
SDG(s) and indicator(s):	SDG 3 — Good Health and Well-being; SDG 5 — Gender Equality; SDG 10 — Reduced Inequalities; SDG 11 — Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 13 — Climate Action; and SDG 15 — Life on Land.		
Sub-Programme:	CC	**Expected Accomplishment(s):**	
UNEP approval date:	4 December 2019	**Programme of Work Output(s):**	POW 2020-2021: Subprogrammes 1, 2, 3, 5 and 7. POW 2022-2023: subprogrammes on Climate Action, Nature Action and Chemicals and Pollution Action.
Expected start date:	8 June 2020	**Actual start date:**	Feb 2021 (PCA date)
Planned operational completion date:	8 June 2026	**Actual operational completion date:**	N/A
Planned total project budget at approval (show breakdown of individual sources/grants):	$11,500,000 ($GCF Grant: 10,000)	**Actual total expenditures reported as of** 31 December 2023**:**	$2,032,630.44
Expected co-financing:	$1,500,000 (in-kind)	**Secured co-financing as of 31 December 2023[2]:**	$463,000
First disbursement:	21 October 2020	**Planned date of financial closure:**	8 December 2026
No. of project revisions:	1 (1.5 year no cost extension	**Date of last approved project revision:**	n.a

[1] Acronym for ID assigned by the Integrated Planning, Monitoring and Reporting (IPMR) system.
[2] State whether co-financing amounts are cash or in-kind.

	was approved in December 2024 by the GCF).			
No. of Steering Committee meetings:	4	**Date of last/next Steering Committee meeting:**	Last: 3 Nov. 2023	Next: 3 Jun 2025
Mid-term evaluation *(planned date)*[3]*:*	November 2024	**Mid-term evaluation (actual date):**	18 February 2025 (ext. deadline)	
Terminal Evaluation/Review *(planned date):*	To be launched no earlier than 3 months before operational completion.	**Terminal Evaluation/Review (actual date):**	*Not applicable*	
Coverage - Country(ies):	Lao PDR	**Coverage - Region(s):**	Asia Pacific	
Dates of previous project phases:	None	**Status of future project phases:**	N/A	

[3] UNEP policies require projects with planned implementation periods of 4 or more years to have a mid-point assessment of performance. For projects under 4 years, this should be marked as N/A.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

1. The project “Building resilience of urban populations with ecosystem-based solutions in Lao PDR” seeks to increase the resilience of the urban population and ecosystems in Lao PDR to more frequent and intense floods as a result of climate change, by implementing an integrated, climate-resilient approach to urban and peri-urban flood management in the country. The scope of the project includes the use of ecosystem-based adaptation interventions in four target cities: Vientiane, Paksan, Savannakhet and Pakse. The project is funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through a USD 10,000,000 grant as well as USD 1,500,00 in co-financing from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of Laos (MONRE). It was approved by the GCF in November 2019 and commenced implementation in February 2021, with a lifetime of 5 years (60 months). It is implemented by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)_and executed by MONRE.

Objectives and scope of the Interim Evaluation

2. The objective of this Interim Evaluation (ITE) is to analyze whether the project is on-track and identify what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required, in addition to providing lessons learned and recommendations. The evaluation covers the implementation of the project since its launch in February 2021 until July 2024. An evaluation matrix was developed as a guiding tool (Annex 1), that identifies the specific dimensions and questions addressed. The evaluation team has triangulated the information gathered through document review, interviews and focus groups and site visits to answer the evaluation questions, in accordance with the evaluation matrix. In this sense, for each of the evaluation questions, information from the different sources was compiled and analysed, identifying similarities and differenes, to provide a nuanced response, as appropriate. The evaluation also benefits from the findings of a Results Verification Exercise (RVE) carried out in July 2024 by Timesis.

Review findings summary and ratings

3. The project shows a low rate of delivery of outputs and spend (21%) after a considerable implementation period (62% of its originally planned duration). The 18-month extension granted by the GCF is very helpful to implement the remaining planned work and make more significant progress in achieving the expected outcome and impact level targets. The extension should address key recommendations summarised in Table 3 and set out in full form in pages 54-57 of this report (see section 6.3).

4. Table 2 summarises the findings of the review and provides ratings following Annex 1 of the Terms of Reference.

Table 2. Project performance rating table

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating[4]
A. Strategic Relevance		**Satisfactory (S)**
1. Alignment to UNEP's, Donors and Country (global, regional, sub-regional and national) strategic priorities	The project is well aligned with UN, UNEP and GCF Strategic priorities, and with national, regional and city level priorities, although the consistency with the latter is more implicit (see section 5.1.2)	Highly Satisfactory (HS)
2. Complementarity/Coherence with relevant existing interventions	The identification of relevant interventions in the Funding Proposal was partial. The project has integrated lessons from some projects, but there is room for improvement in this regard. The project complements other ongoing and planned interventions, with no severe duplications being observed. The project has coordinated with some projects and achieved some synergies, but there is significant room for improvement in both areas (see section 0).	Moderately Satisfactory (MS)
B. Quality & Revision of Project Design	The project design had several strengths, including a complete climate rationale, but the strategy was not fully effective (in part due to its scaling down at the Funding proposal review stage), the coherence with other interventions was partial and the Results Framework (RF) and M&E plan had important room for improvement (see section 0).	**MS**
C. Effectiveness		**MS**
1. Theory of change	The ToC represents overall a coherent and realistic change process from a cause and effect perspective, although there was room to further integrate a few key elements (see sections 4, 1.1.1.2 and 0).	MS
2. Availability of outputs	As of July 2024, considering the 18-month extension granted by the GCF, the project was on target in 67% of the output indicators – it is unlikely that the project will meet its expected end of the project target in these	MS

[4] UNEP uses a six-point scale running from Highly Unsatisfactory (1) to Highly Satisfactory (6). The performance ratings at Evaluation Criteria level are derived as a simple average of the ratings of the relevant sub-categories. The overall project performance rating is similarly derived from a simple average of the ratings of all the Evaluation Criteria.

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating[4]
	indicators by its revised completion date. It is likely that the project will be far from the expected end of the project targets in the other three output indicators, regarding hectares (see section 5.4.1)	
3. Progress towards project outcomes, including towards indicators	As of July 2024, considering the 18-month extension, the project was on target to meet the end of the project target of the only outcome indicator (see section 5.4.2)	S
4. Likelihood of impact, includes innovativeness and replication and scalability	The project's results framework includes four impact indicators. Considering the 18-month extension, the project was on target in the only impact indicator where progress can be assessed[5]. The project has the potential to support innovation through two of its proposed activities, but at midterm their implementation is not greatly contributing to it. The project design incorporates some relevant actions to advance the project's scaling-up and replication at the provincial and national level, which will to a great extent depend on the effectiveness of development the IFCMS that starts in 2025. (see section 5.4.3)	MS
5. Adaptive management	Several factors have hindered the fulfilment of project activities and the achievement of its expected outputs and outcomes. The project took a few adaptive actions, including a slight adjustment to the RF, some adjustments to cope with COVID-19 and changes to the procurement responsibilities, but while they were helpful did not fully resolve existing challenges (see section 5.4.4)	MS
D. Financial Management		**MS[6]**
1.Adherence to UNEP's/Donor policies and procedures	In the first three years of implementation, that is, when 62% of the total implementation time had run, the project had spent 21% of the total financing planned budget and had mobilized 31% of planned co-financing. The rate of spending is not consistent with the project's originally planned length of	MS

[5] Indicator A4.2: Value (US$) of ecosystem services generated or protected in response to climate change.
[6] This rating considers not only the adherence with UNEP and donor policies and procedures, and completeness of project financial information (considering only this the rating would be satisfactory), but also the (low) rate of expenditure and (limited) smoothness of disbursement, which has resulted in important delays in implementing activities, negatively affecting the achievement of project targets.

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating[4]
	implementation, although it is consistent with the actual delivery of outputs and the 18-month extension provides more time to disburse funds. Expenditure is aligned with UNEP's and GCF's financial policies and procedures, but long disbursement procedures are one of the reasons for the project delays. (see section 5.5.1)	
2.Completeness of project financial information	Financial reporting is aligned with UNEP and GCF financial reporting requirements. (see section 5.5.1)	S
E. Efficiency	Project execution is not cost-effective. In the first three years of implementation, largely due to delays in the procurement, PMC represented 13% of project expenditure, which is above the GCF ceiling (5%) for PMC. With the extension request granted on 14/01/2025, PMC is at 5% as of January 2025. Activities are not being delivered according to the originally expected timeframes, which has negatively affected the designed activity sequence and project effectiveness. (see section 5.5.2)	**Unsatisfactory (U)**
F. Monitoring and Reporting		**MS**
1. Monitoring of project implementation	The project has not adequately implemented its M&E plan, which had some important weaknesses, including key positions being vacant, some progress on some indicators not being reported and a tailored M&E system for the project not being in place. (see section 5.3)	Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)
2.Project reporting	While project reports have been produced on time, are complete and have been cleared by the donor, they do not allow to properly measure the progress of the project in all indicators. (see section 5.3)	MS
G. Exit Strategy & Sustainability	The Funding Proposal includes a specific and comprehensive, yet not fully realistic exit strategy that relies quite heavily on the development of the ICFMS, as the basis for more substantial investments in grey-green infrastructure for flood management. As of June 2024, the strategy had been implemented only partially (see section 5.13.1). While some useful ground is being built, there are significant	**Moderately Unlikely (MU)**

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating[4]
	sustainability risks in the policy, technical, social, political, institutional, economic, biophysical and environmental fronts. The start of the ICFMS in 2025 has the potential to address some of these risks (see section 5.13.2)	
H. Factors Affecting Performance and Cross-Cutting Issues		**MU**
1. Project Inception	There is no evidence that the project addressed the weakness in project design mentioned in section 0 (e.g. room for improvement in the integration of soft and hard adaptation, and considering the integrity of ecosystems, and multi-hazard approaches) or any changes in the context or needs during the inception stage, apart from a few adjustments to the RF that did not solve the main weaknesses. During the GCF Secretariat funding proposal review process, the project was scaled down because of safeguards concerns (see section 5.6.1)	MU
2. Quality of project management and supervision		MU
2.1 UNEP/Accredited Agency:	The quality of UNEP's supervision and backstopping has been undermined by the delayed recruitment of the CTA, following the departure of the previous CTA. This key delay has had a knock on effect on timely project delivery. It is noted that UNEP had to step in to take on this recruitment at the request of the EE). All other aspects of project implementation have been satisfactory, noting that UNEP has had to step in to assume the contractual processes for another major study and to closely support other areas[7] of the project. Project management is adequately minimizing UNEP's environmental footprint, although this might	MS

[7] Namely, production of the baseline study; procurement of the integrated flood management strategies; the partnership agreements with Monash and AIT, University of Laos or UN Habitat: signed by MONRE but UNEP supported on the comparative selection process (for the universities), preparation of the agreements in line with FP and GCF regulations etc.

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating[4]
	be preventing enough in country visits. (see section 5.7.1.2)	
2.2 Partners/Executing Agency:	The project's EE (MONRE) project management has not been fully adequate, with room for improvement in terms of quality and timeliness. While roles and responsibilities are predominantly clear, some roles have not been satisfactorily fulfilled. (see section 5.7.1.3)	U
3. Stakeholders participation and cooperation	The project has implemented inclusive stakeholder communication and consultation mechanisms during implementation of project activities, but more needs to be done, as limited social awareness and ownership has been observed. The project has established partnerships with several organizations to support the implementation of project activities. While these have enhanced technical quality and contributed to the sustainability of project results, some of the partners are not delivering outputs on time. (see section 5.10)	MU
4. Responsiveness to human rights and gender equity	The project design fairly considered human rights related principles, although it is unclear how they have been applied. Project design adequately considered gender inequalities and differentiation, but implementation has faced a difficult context for making progress on gender equity. (see section 5.8)	MS
5. Environmental and social safeguards	The Funding Proposal adequately assessed all relevant project risks and properly identified their respective mitigation measures. The project has adequately identified its social and environmental risks, and the corresponding mitigation strategies, through its Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP), which has been implemented. During project implementation, the project can still be categorized with a low safeguard risk category. The project designed a Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) protocol, which was endorsed during the second National Project Steering Committee (NPSC) meeting. (see section 5.9)	S

Criterion	Summary Assessment	Rating[4]
6. Country ownership and drivenness	As of October 2024, the project had been driven by MONRE and provincial governments, with good involvement of the National University of Laos (NUoL), but ownership of other key national stakeholders, city governments and local residents/ecosystems users did not seem sufficient for the long-term impact of the project to be realized. The major ICFMS activity that starts in 2025 has the potential to strengthen country ownership, but at the time of this MTR its impacts are yet to be seen. (see section 5.12)	MS
7. Communication and public awareness	The project is implementing communication and public awareness activities at the local level, but there is significant room for expanding their effectiveness and the work at the national level. (see section 5.11)	MU
Overall Project Rating		**Moderately Satisfactory (MS)**

Recommendations

5. Based on the findings above, the evaluation team provides the following recommendations (for details see section 6.3).

Table 3. Summary of recommendations

No.	Recommendations	Responsible parties
1	Revisethe RF of the project, especially in relation to end of project targets, and develop an internal monitoring system.	PMU, with support from UNEP, and in coordination with MONRE and the NPSC
2	Strengthen the national level work and the policy and land use planning and infrastructure planning and building related aspects	PMU, with support of UNEP and MONRE
3	Enhance technical oversight, including hiring an adequate Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) and the Task Manager (TM) visiting the country	UNEP
4	Accelerate the on-the-ground work including the implementation of physical interventions, particularly wetland and urban stream restoration.	UNEP, MONRE and the PMU, with support of the new CTA and PIUs
6	Enhance communication and local stakeholder engagement	PMU, with support of UNEP, MONRE and the CTA
7	Strengthen the technical capacity of stakeholders to sustain the results of the project	PMU, with support of UNEP, MONRE and the CTA

8	Explore ways of improving institutional arrangements for approvals and disbursements.	UNEP and MONRE
9	Work on the financial sustainability of project results	PMU, with support from MONRE and the CTA, and close guidance from UNEP

2. PROJECT OVERVIEW

6. **Development problem.** Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall events in Laos. As cities lack adequate flood management, these events are leading to more frequent and severe flooding in vulnerable cities along the Mekong River. Flood management in these cities is beset by limited technical and institutional governmental capacity, a hard infrastructure approach and limited knowledge about Ecosystem Based Adaptation (EbA) and the value of ecosystem services.

7. **Project objectives and components.** The project "Building resilience of urban populations with ecosystem-based solutions in Lao PDR" seeks to tackle this development challenge by shifting the paradigm of urban flood management in Laos from a limited, hard infrastructure approach towards an integrated approach that enhances climate resilience. The project goal is to increase the resilience of the urban population and ecosystems in Lao PDR to more frequent and intense floods as a result of climate change, by implementing an integrated, climate-resilient approach to urban and peri-urban flood management in the country, including the use of ecosystem-based adaptation interventions. The project works at the national, municipal, and intra-municipal levels. At the municipal level the project is implemented in four provincial capitals along the Mekong river in the Central and Southern part of Lao PDR: Paksan, Pakse, Savannakhet and Vientiane. These cities have been shown to be the most vulnerable to climate change through climate risk modelling and consultations with relevant planning institutions in Laos. Project interventions are expected to directly benefit 74,600 people and restore 1,500 ha of urban wetland and stream ecosystems.

8. The project is organized around two components and five outputs, with an overall outcome regarding the use by vulnerable households, communities, businesses and public-sector of services of Fund-supported tools, instruments, strategies and activities to respond to climate change and variability.

   - **Component 1.** *Technical and institutional capacity building to plan, design, implement and maintain integrated urban EbA interventions for the reduction of climate change induced flooding.* This component focuses on the institutional and technical aspects required to mainstream integrated climate-resilient flood management strategies (ICFMS) into planning frameworks. Output 1.1 seeks to strengthen the institutional capacity for integrated flood risk management and implementation of urban ecosystems-based adaptation and awareness of threats, while Output 1.2 seeks to strengthen city level institutional structures, through the establishment of Flood Risk Management Committees as coordination mechanisms and strengthen the technical capacity through the development of ICFMS and urban EbA guidelines for the four target cities.
   - **Component 2.** *Rehabilitation and protection of ecosystem in response to climate variability and change.* This component focuses on the implementation of on-the-ground EbA interventions, namely the restoration of ecosystems (the Nong Peung wetland in Paksan (Output 2.1) and urban streams in Savannakhet and Pakse (Output 2.2)) and the

installation of permeable paving solutions in public areas of Vientiane, Paksan, Savannakhet and Pakse (Output 2.3).

9. **Other project parameters of the project**. Funded by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) through a USD 10,000,000 grant as well as USD 1,500,00 in co-financing, the project has a total budget of USD 11,500,00. A five-year (60 month) project, it was approved by the GCF in November 2019 and commenced implementation in February 2021.

10. **Challenges faced by the project.** Originally planned for a duration of 5 years, with an anticipated completion date in June 2025, the project faced significant delays. Several factors negatively affected the timely delivery of the project activities, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited travel of the Chief Technical Advisor (CTA) and international experts for the baseline study, hydrological studies, and other consultancies, and prevented the Task Manager from participating in physical meetings and undertaking oversight missions. In addition, government personnel directly applying the UNEP procurement rules required intense and repeated training, and there were delays in disbursements affecting the announcement of the Project Management Unit (PMU) positions. More structurally, a key issue was that the project initiation period, including the setting up of the central and local implementation units, hiring personnel and formalizing legal instruments, was included in project implementation. This initiation period took almost a year (from June 2020 to mid 2021).

11. **Institutional context of the project.** The project seeks to involve a diversity of stakeholders, including national, provincial, metropolitan, municipal, and intra-municipal governments, civil society organizations, academic institutions, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), local communities and the private sector.

12. UNEP serves as the **Accredited Entity** (AE) for the project. As AE, UNEP is responsible for overseeing the implementation, financial management, evaluation, reporting and closure of the project. More specifically, as AE, UNEP does: i) sign a Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Lao PDR to establish clear roles and responsibilities for the execution of project activities[i]; ii) ensure that the project is executed in line with GCF and UNEP rules, policies and requirements; iii) supervise, oversee and manage project implementation, as well as report on project progress; iv) participate in the National Project Steering Committee (NPSC); and v) ensure that project activities are well coordinated and aligned with national priorities. Within UNEP these functions are performed by the Climate Change Adaptation Unit (CCAU) in the Adaptation and Resilience Branch in the Climate Change Division. Within the CCAU, a TM is responsible for project supervision to ensure consistency with GCF and UNEP policies and procedures and participate in i) biannual NPSC meetings; ii) the facilitation of the Mid-Term and Final Evaluations; iii) the preparation of Annual Performance Reports (APRs) and relevant documentation; and iv) technical reviews of project outputs.

13. The lead **Executing Entity** (Lead EE) is the State of Lao PDR, acting through its Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and Ministry of Finance (MoF). MONRE coordinates the execution of the project through the Department of Climate Change (DCC), which is accountable to the AE for project execution and the effective and efficient use of

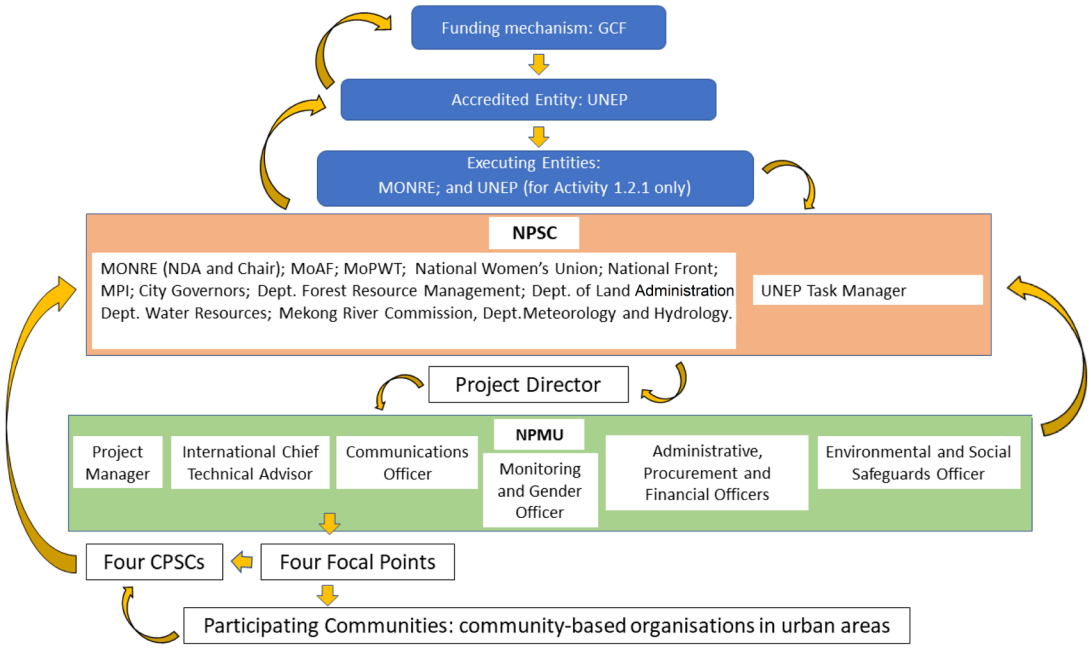
resources. MONRE executes all the project activities except for Activity 1.2.1, which is executed directly by UNEP, in particular by its Ecosystems Services Economics Unit in the Biodiversity and Ecosystems Branch. All operating policies and procedures follow the UNEP Programme Manual, which includes provisions for financial management and procurement. Project funds pass through the MOF, which is the "Recipient Entity". While before 2024 MOF did not have a role in the execution of activities apart from disbursement to MONRE, MOF's role changed significantly in 2024. Currently MOF directly pays to the vendors, payment requests being collected once a month.

14. In addition to the AE and EE, the governance of the project includes a National **Project Steering Committee (PSC)** and a Project Management Unit (PMU). The NPSC comprises representatives of UNEP and MONRE, as well as representatives of the: i) Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF); ii) Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI); iii) Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT); iv) National Women's Union; and v) National Front. This includes representation from all the relevant ministries and departments overseeing urban land, specifically land classification, management of Special Economic Zone (SEZ) land and spatial planning in cities, namely the Department of Land Administration within MONRE, SEZ Promotion and Management Office in MPI and Department of Housing and Urban Planning in MPWT, respectively. The co-chairs of the PSC are MONRE and UNEP. The NPSC is led by the MONRE Vice Minister and makes overall decisions regarding the management and governance of the project. The NPSC provides project oversight and advisory support such as: i) overseeing project implementation; ii) reviewing annual workplans and project reports; and iii) approving any changes to the project's targets, activities or timelines. Biannual NPSC meetings are held to take management-related and technical decisions, discuss the project's main performance indicators and provide strategic guidance.

15. The **PMU** consists of a national Project Director (PD); an international CTA; a national Project Manager (PM); a Financial and Procurement Officer; Environmental and Social Safeguards Officer; Communications Officer; Monitoring and Gender Officer and an Administrative Officer. The PD role is fulfilled by a high-level official from MONRE. The PD is responsible for: i) leading and directing the PMU; ii) overseeing the daily responsibilities of the PM; iii) providing administrative and technical expertise; and iv) serving as the focal point for interactions between project stakeholders and partner organisations. The PM is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the project. The CTA provides technical guidance on urban EbA and ensures that project activities result in building the climate-resilience of Laotian communities from national through to city level. Project activities are coordinated by the PMU between the project's AE, EE and various stakeholders. UNEP's Biodiversity Unit reports to the PMU and TM on the progress of Activity 1.2.1.

16. There are four City-level/Provincial Project Steering Committees (CPSCs), one for each of the four target provinces (Vientiane, Bolikhamxay, Savannakhet and Champasak). The CPSCs are governed by their respective provincial coordinator, to better coordinate and facilitate project activities in the provinces as well as to address the challenges of frequent turnover of PIU and government staff.

Figure 1. Implementation structure



Source: ToR, p.6.

17. ***Stakeholder analysis.*** The stakeholder analysis presented in Table 4 identifies key project stakeholders and provides an assessment of their level of interest in the project and of their influence over project results through their participation in project decision-making, implementation, and uptake. This analysis was used to inform the development of the evaluation matrix (Annex 1), which identifies the stakeholders to be consulted to answer each evaluation question.

Table 4: Stakeholder analysis

Project Stakeholder	Level of Influence	Level of Interest	Role in the Project
Regional and Global Level			
UNEP Task Manager	High	High	Project implementation (oversight and support)
Lao PDR			
Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE)	High	High	Project execution
Department of Land Administration, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE)	Medium	Medium	PSC
Special Economic Zone Promotion and Management Office, Ministry of Planning and Investment	Medium	Medium	PSC
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Medium	Medium	PSC
Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Public Works and Transport	High	Medium	PSC

Project Stakeholder	Level of Influence	Level of Interest	Role in the Project
National Women's Union	Medium	Medium	PSC
National Front	Medium	Medium	PSC
Vientiane Provincial Natural Resource and Environment Office (PoNRE)	Medium	High	Project implementation
Paksan Provincial Natural Resource and Environment Office (PoNRE)	Medium	High	Project implementation
Savannakhet Provincial Natural Resource and Environment Office (PoNRE)	Medium	High	Project implementation
Pakse Provincial Natural Resource and Environment Office (PoNRE)	Medium	High	Project implementation
Vientiane Provincial government	Medium	Medium	Beneficiary
Paksan Provincial government	Medium	Medium	Beneficiary
Savannakhet Provincial government	Medium	Medium	Beneficiary
Pakse Provincial government	Medium	Medium	Beneficiary
Municipality of Vientiane	Medium	High	Beneficiary
Municipality of Paksan	Medium	High	Beneficiary
Municipality of Savannakhet	Medium	High	Beneficiary
Municipality of Pakse	Medium	High	Beneficiary
PMU	High	High	Project execution
Population, NGOs, CBOs and special-stake groups (gender, youth) at project sites	Medium	High	Beneficiaries

3. EVALUATION METHODS

3.1 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

18. In line with the UNEP Evaluation Policy and Programme Manual, the objective of this Interim Evaluation (ITE) is to analyze whether the project is on-track and identify what problems or challenges the project is encountering, and what corrective actions are required. The evaluation covers the implementation of the project since its launch in February 2021 until June 2024. The target audience for the evaluation findings consists of UNEP CCAU and national executing partners, as well as the GCF Secretariat for portfolio monitoring, and the GCF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) to identify recurring issues across the GCF portfolio.

19. The ITE assesses project performance to date based on the following evaluation criteria[8] and the corresponding key questions:

1. Relevance: To what extent does the project meet the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries?

[8] For the definitions of these evaluation criteria, see the GEF Evaluation Policy (2019, p. 13) and the OECD-DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance: https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm

2. **Effectiveness:** To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?
3. **Efficiency:** To what extent is the project implementation timely and cost-effective?
4. **Sustainability**: To what extent are project results likely to continue after the end of the project?

20. An evaluation matrix was developed as a guiding tool for this ITE (see Annex 1). This identifies the specific dimensions and questions to be addressed under each evaluation criterion. The matrix integrates the performance criteria defined in the ITE Terms of Reference (ToR) under these four overarching criteria. The matrix also integrates the questions proposed by UNEP regarding the Theory of Change (ToC), impact, institutional arrangements, risks, safeguards and sustainability.

a. Methodology

21. This evaluation has been carried out following a structured process of data collection and analysis to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project. It provides conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned and rates project performance using the scales specified in the ToR.

22. An in-depth desk review was used as part of the evaluation process to provide critical context and background information to the evaluation team, to inform the evaluation design and enhance efficiency, to facilitate stakeholder engagement, to support triangulation, as well as to identify existing knowledge and gaps to be addressed. The complete list of documentation reviewed can be found in Annex 5.

23. Project results have been assessed against the project's logical framework – which provides performance and impact indicators along with their corresponding means of verification – and against the ToC presented in section 4, which was used as a reference to evaluate progress toward impacts and test the intervention model. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods have been used, as appropriate, to determine project achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts.

24. The evaluation process considered the guidelines and procedures established in the UNEP Evaluation Policy and the UNEP Programme Manual. The evaluation adopted a participatory approach to ensure that a variety of stakeholders were informed and consulted throughout the evaluation process, and sought to identify, hear and gain insight from the perspective of people and environments relevant to the project. At all stages of the evaluation, the team considered different evaluation elements (such as gender, ethnicity, age, income, and education) that intersect in project stakeholders, shaping their social relationships, capacities, needs and vulnerabilities in relation to urban development and climate change. The evaluation encouraged reflection and learning by these various stakeholders, including UNEP staff, the implementing partners and key project stakeholders. Through the Team Leader (TL), the

evaluation team maintained close communication with the project team to increase their (and other stakeholders) ownership of the evaluation findings.

25. Furthermore, with respect to ethics and human rights, throughout this evaluation process and in the compilation of the Evaluation Report, efforts were made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. Data were collected with respect for ethics and human rights issues. All pictures were taken, and other information gathered after informed consent from people, all discussions remained anonymous, and all information was collected according to the UN Standards of Conduct.

26. The evaluation team triangulated the information gathered through document review, interviews and focus groups and site visits to answer the evaluation questions, in accordance with the evaluation matrix. In this sense, for each of the evaluation questions, information from the different soures was compiled and analysed, identifying similarities and differenes, to provide a nuanced response, as appropriate. The evaluation also benefits from the findings of a Results Verification Exercise (RVE) carried out in July 2024 by Timesis. The report went through Baastel's quality assurance process. In addition, UNEP's Evaluation Office checked the quality of the report, assessingthe compliance of the evaluation process against the UNEP agreed standard procedures (please see Annex 10). Data collection through different methods and sources, robust triangulation and Baastel and UNEP quality assurance processes have ensured bias have been mitigated throughout the evaluation. No significant limitations affect this evaluation. The evaluation team was able to consult a wide range of stakeholders (28 persons were interviewed – the list of interviewees is provided in Annex 3) and visit all project sites (the mission agenda is provided in Annex 4). The evaluation team included a national evaluator, which helped overcome language barriers. No biases are identified. In addition, the evaluation is informed by the findings of an independent Results Verification Exercise (RVE), conducted by Timesis, which interviewed 71 people (39 women), including 6 MONRE staff, 15 PONRE staff and 50 villagers in the four target cities in July 2024.

4. THEORY OF CHANGE

27. As a background, it is worth mentioning that the original version of this project was a USD 30m proposal including grey infrastructure investments. This was scaled down to 10M and most of the flood protection infrastructure jettisoned because of safeguard concerns by the GCF Sec. review team. The project was scaled down to fit into the GCF Simplified Access Proposal window, which by definition considers only low risk projects. The exit strategy was for the ICFMS to provide the basis for more substantial investments in grey- green approaches to flood management in a phase 2 approach.

28. The resulting funding proposal includes a ToC, which presents the GCF results, the project results, the risks and the assumptions. The evaluation team considers this ToC reflects the project's intervention logic well, so there is no need to modify it (see Fig 2).

29. The problem that the ToC seeks to address is that cities in Laos are vulnerable to increases in fluvial flooding caused by increases in frequency and intensity of extreme rainfall. The Funding Proposal identifies four barriers that have hindered progress in addressing this problem: i) lack of data for modelling climate impacts to inform climate change adaptation solutions for flood management; ii) limited technical and institutional capacity of provincial and national governments for climate-resilient flood management; iii) lack of integrated, climate-resilient flood management approaches, and iv) limited knowledge about EbA and the valuation of ecosystems.

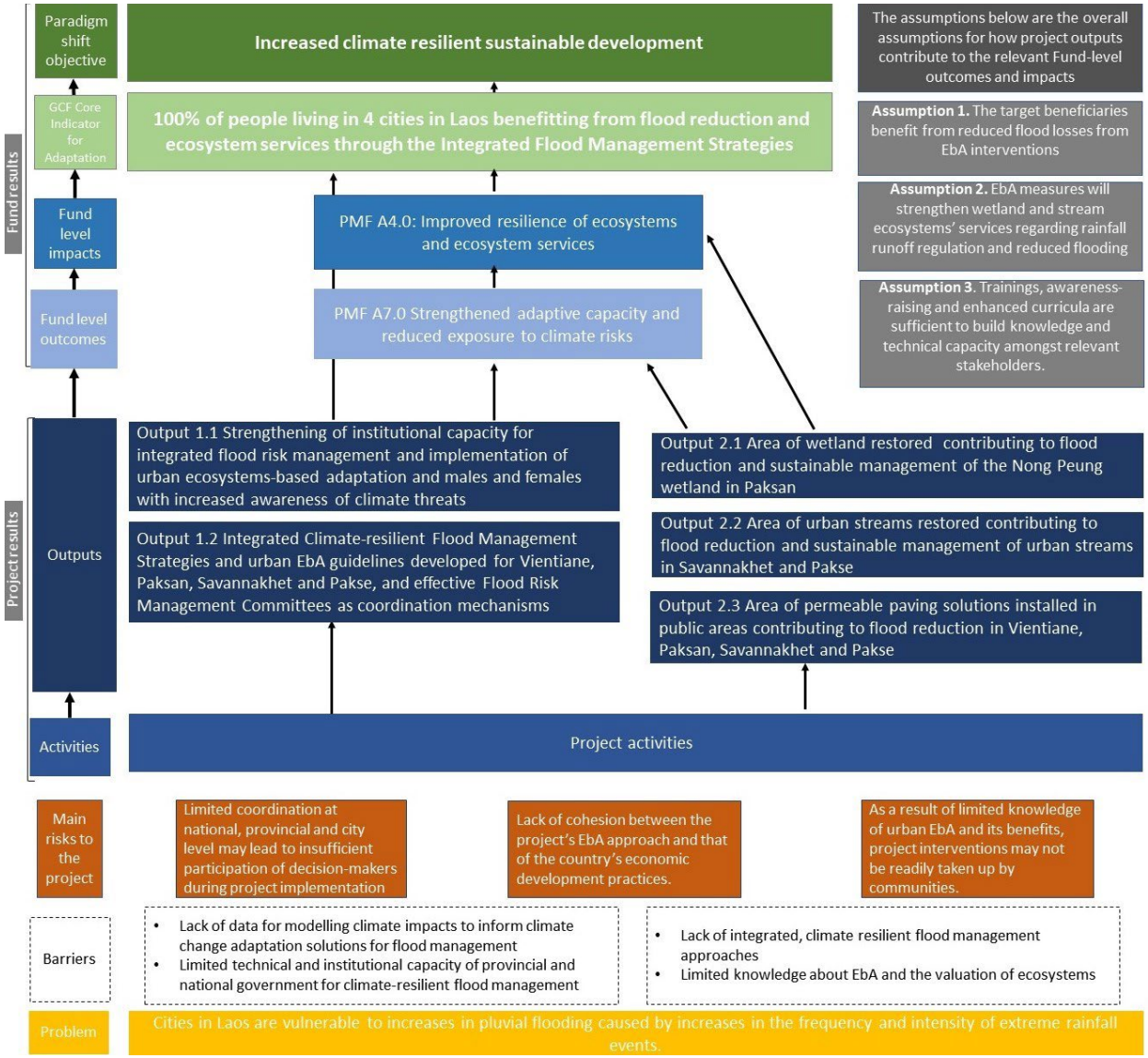
30. The project seeks to drive a paradigm shift to increased climate-resilient sustainable development through integrated flood management strategies. In this sense, it aims that 100% of the population of the four target cities benefit from flood reduction and ecosystem services through the improved resilience of ecosystems and ecosystem services and the strengthened capacity and reduced exposure to climate change. To achieve this the project implements the five outputs mentioned in section 2.

31. The Funding Proposal identified the following underlying assumptions:

- A1: The target beneficiaries benefit from reduced flood losses from EbA interventions.
- A2: EbA measures will strengthen wetland and streams' ecosystem's services regarding rainfall runoff regulation and reduced flooding.
- A3: Training, awareness-raising and enhanced curricula are sufficient to build knowledge and technical capacity amongst relevant stakeholders.

32. A2 is not considered appropriate assumptions, in the sense that it is largely within the sphere of influence of the project.

Figure 2. Theory of Change at Evaluation (*source:* Original Funding Proposal, see also para 28).



5. FINDINGS

5.1 Strategic Relevance

5.1.1. Relevance of the project in relation to the problem it addresses

1.1.1.1 Is the problem relevant to the local stakeholders involved in the project?

33. **The problem that the project addresses is very relevant to all the local stakeholders involved in the project.** The three target cities suffer frequent flooding, even during the dry season. Flooding affects residential, social (including educational), administrative, commercial and productive urban infrastructure as well agricultural land surrounding the urban centers of Paksan, Pakse and Savannakhet. Often water is contaminated by solid and liquid waste, which increases the negative impacts of flooding. According to the Funding Proposal, economic losses from flooding are around USD 50 million per year, and between 2.8 to 3.6% of GDP every year at city level. For instance, it has been estimated that 2018 floods caused damages of approximately USD 372 millions. Inadequate management of heavy rain is also resulting in soil erosion, sedimentation and poor water quality, negatively affecting natural resources-based livelihoods, including fishing, agriculture and forestry. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on hard flood management infrastructure is rapidly deteriorating it, as it is pushed to deal with too much water too frequently.

1.1.1.2 Does the project intervention model offer the most effective way to address the identified problem?

34. **The intervention model is partially effective to address the identified problem. The designed strategy includes important elements.** To begin with, it promotes ecosystem-based flood management approaches, which can be very effective, are cheaper than infrastructure approaches and can provide multiple benefits beyond flood management, for instance regarding livelihoods, social cohesion and biodiversity. Furthermore, the project rightly works in two types of ecosystems (i.e., streams and wetlands) to increase learning. Moreover, the design wisely incorporates the development of scientific data (climate impact modelling) and the testing of innovative technologies, such as permeable paving materials[9]. In addition, the project rightly links these on-the-ground interventions with policy, institutional, technical and social work, including the development of the local ICFMS and ecosystem management plans, the establishment of local Flood Risk Management Committees, the development of local EbA guidelines, the provision of training and the implementation of public awareness campaigns in relevant topics, such as waste management. All these are features of an effective strategy to deal with the identified development problem (i.e., flooding).

[9] It seems that some private firms, such as a modern coffee shop, already use permeable paving solutions, so the technology does not seem totally new in the country.

35. **However, the effectiveness of the strategy is weakened by several design aspects**. To start with the effectiveness of the strategy would benefit from a better integration of hard and soft adaptation. The project has made some progress in that front, promoting permeable paving solutions, considering the integration of hard infrastructure in the planning process and strategy development that is undertaking (i.e. ICFMS), developing some studies (i.e. hydrological modelling, ecosystem services valuation) that can help plan a right combination of hard engineering structures and EbA, and coordinating with, or at least complementing some, hard infrastructure World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) funded projects. Nevertheless, there is room to further strengthen the complementarity of the projects' EbA interventions with hard infrastructure, including strengthened river bank protection (see photograph 7), effective drainage systems, sufficient and modern solid waste collection bins and facilities and liquid waste connections and treatment plants, and the maintenance of already built grey infrastructure (e.g. proper maintenance of the flooding gate of the Nong Peung Wetland in Paksan to prevent flooding of agricultural land). Indeed, results seemed to be greater where the project benefitted from these types of hard infrastructure already being in place or being developed[10], as EbA, although certainly very important and useful, has its own important limitations. For instance, in some recently cleaned streams, which were again filled of solid waste, contributing thus to flooding, it was clear that sporadic cleaning and awareness raising would not be enough to solve the problem if not complemented with improved solid waste collection, treatment and disposal infrastructure, and a more effective solid waste management system (kindly see photographs 4 and 8 in Annex 9). Similarly, in some cases, engineering works (a drainage system taking the water out) can be more effective than a nature-based solution.

36. The effectiveness of the strategy is also beset by the considered geographical scope, which does not fully consider the watershed, implementing relevant interventions in upstream areas during project implementation. At midterm, project interventions focus on the urban (mostly peri-urban) systems, where the proposed activities indeed help reduce the impacts from flooding. However, at midterm, the project activities disregard cities' exposure due to intense rainfall events upstream, including in nearby hills, such as in Pakse. Without upstream management, extensive water run-off and solid and liquid waste discharge and sedimentation will still be an issue in the target cities. In this sense, reducing the frequency and intensity of flooding and its negative impacts requires increasing tree cover and improving solid and liquid waste collection, treatment and disposal upstream, integrating these aspects in the flood management plans. The ICMFS to be developed in 2025 is expected to assess watersheds and flood plains and consider inputs related to these issues, helping address this concern in the longer term, once the strategy is implemented after the completion of the project.

37. Furthermore, while, as mentioned, Component 1 includes some relevant policy, institutional and technical-related elements, the designed strategy has room for improvement regarding

[10] This is the case in Paksan, where the contribution of the restoration of the wetland to manage flooding benefits from engineering works funded by the World Bank in 1996 (a water gate and fish ladder) and ongoing costly hard infrastructure being funded by WB (erosion control works in the Mekong riverbank) and ADB (a road and five large drainage canals).

the strengthening of the enabling environment for integrated flood management, both at the subnational and national levels, which to a great extent relies on the major ICFMS activity which will start in 2025. While land use planning at each of the target sites and each of the villages is being done (some village plans are completed, consultations are ongoing in other villages), the incidence of the project in the enforcement of land use planning seems limited, when a key driver of the severe impacts of flooding is the location of key infrastructure in flood-prone areas, not respecting the legally established buffer zones. In this sense, often one of the most important adaptation measures is preventing new people locating in flood-prone areas, improving land use planning and/or its enforcement – in some cases relocation would also help, but this is of course often socially, politically and economically unfeasible.

38. Furthermore, the expected contribution of the project to the national enabling environment could have been strengthened. While the project plans to develop national level EbA guidelines, and local ICFMS will include national level mainstreaming, there is room for further contributing to establishing a national environment that supports the sustainability, scaling up and replication of the project's results in these four cities, when other cities in the country area also severely affected by flooding. The integration of the project's lessons in the NAP process is in this sense unclear. Also there is an opportunity to contribute to climate adaptation beyond EbA, as the project has the potential to inform the NAP both in EbA and non-EbA related aspects (see section 0 for an assessment of the coordination between the Urban EbA South and NAP projects during implementation). One of them is the complementarity of soft and hard adaptation.

39. Another key consideration is the recommendation for hard adaptation, in particular for educational infrastructure, where most of the permeable paving solutions work is planned to be carried out. The project works in 6-7 schools. While the approach so far has focused just in installing permeable paving solutions, the scope should have been wider, assessing flood risk in these schools and identifying flood reduction and management options, in plural (see below), although this was certainly affected by the scaling down of the original project proposal, and the ICFMS is expected to provide the basis for more substantial investments in grey- green approaches to flood management in a phase 2 approach. The systematization of that exercise provides insights, including on land use planning and building codes[11], that are useful to improve schools' flood risk management through policy level interventions. While increasing the resilience of education facilities was not an expected result of this project, it could be an important unexpected result, if the project would have an analytical approach to each site (see below), a stronger knowledge management (see section 5.11) and a wider impact lens. Similar lessons could be drawn and then mainstreamed regarding the design of drainage canals (wider, deeper, larger) and roads (better drainage systems, attention to not negatively affecting surrounding infrastructure, more trees).

[11] In particular, i) avoiding developing schools in low and flat sites (and considering externalities when building other infrastructure, particularly roads); ii) planting more trees; iii) raising buildings and to higher heights, revising building codes/standards accordingly.

40. Moreover, the strategy has room for promoting a multi-hazard approach. While heavy rains are the most significant hazard in Laos, they are certainly not the only climate-related hazard in the target cities. Increasing average temperatures and more frequent and intense heat waves are also important hazards in Laotian urban centres affected by the urban heat island effect. The project strategy does not fully consider this fact, not promoting approaches that allow simultaneously tackling several climate-related hazards. For instance, it promotes permeable paving in parking lots, which only help reduce flooding, without combining it with shrubs and trees, which, in addition to helping reduce flooding, also contribute to regulate temperatures (kindly see photograph 6 in Annex 9), and provide other non-adaptation related ecosystems services, for instance regarding biodiversity and cultural benefits. The ICFMS could look at increasing resilience at heat related climate risks.

41. In addition, while the project promotes new engineering technologies (permeable paving materials), the design did not identify and fully integrate relevant traditional local knowledge and practices, such as raising houses located along streams (kindly see photograph 3 in Annex 9)[12] or planting trees in parking lots[13], which should have been identified, compiled, assessed, improved[14], integrated into project activities, systematized, mainstreamed[15] and disseminated, valuing them and scaling them up, to the extent possible.

42. Finally, the designed strategy did not adequately integrate the economic dimension of flood management. The results framework includes references to the financial sustainability of the results of the project (see indicator 1.2.2), regarding the development of the ICFMS, assuming provincial government have enough resources for operating and maintaining activities and to scale them up and replicate them. However, as discussed in section 5.13.2 on sustainability, this does not seem the case. In this sense, while ICFMS is expected to provide the basis for more substantial investments in grey- green approaches to flood management in a phase 2 approach, the strategy would have benefited from more efforts to promote economic mechanisms and tools that can sustain flood management, which is a recent focus of many projects working in urban resilience, for instance projects in the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Sustainable Cities Impact/ Integrated Programme (SCIP), which foster sustainable sub-national/municipal finance and green growth (see Recommendation 9)[16].

43. **In addition, the effectiveness of the project strategy is limited by its implementation** in four ways**.** First, while, as shown by the feasibility assessment for the funding proposal, flooding is a severe problem in the four target cities and in Laos in general, the relevance of

[12] The site visit to Pakse showed that many houses were illegally located within the buffer zone, thus increasing their exposure to flooding. It also showed that the living areas of these houses were raised 1 metre from the ground, so that when flooding happened the water would reach the house walls but would not enter into the living area, where valuable assets (e.g. furniture, appliances) are located, ensuring also houses have shelter. This is a wise flood management measure (it doesn't prevent flooding, but it reduces its impacts when it happens). Water marks were visible in the external walls. A similar strategy was observed in some schools, where new buildings were raised from the ground.
[13] In most parking lots, cars were parked under existing trees rather in open, unshaded areas to diminish overheating.
[14] For instance, the height considered when raising buildings may need to be increased given projected climate changes (i.e. more frequent and more intense rainfall).
[15] See above. For instance in schools' building codes.
[16] https://www.thegpsc.org/blogs/gef-endorses-new-phase-sustainable-cities-integrated-program-scip-under-gef-8; https://www.shiftcities.org/sustainable-cities-impact-program

some of the selected sites could have been increased. Direct observation and in-site interviews suggest that flooding is not a major hazard in some of the sites. For example, according to interviewees, while relatively frequent during the rainy season, no long-lasting extensive flooding has been observed in some of the sites in Savannakhet, where flooding only lasts a few hours and affects the road, but not houses or businesses, with rather small direct negative impacts on people and assets. Furthermore, and related to this, despite the project's title's explicit reference to urban populations, some of the sites are peri-urban rather than urban, with a limited number of households or students directly benefiting from the interventions (according to APRs, due to space constraints). Selected schools for example tend to be rather small and tend to be located in areas of low-density residential infrastructure. Moreover, some of the sites do not have significant indirect beneficiaries, in the sense that the streams do not flow into larger rivers where the riverbanks are not protected (selected streams often flow into larger tributaries and then the Mekong, the riverbanks of which are protected). In this sense, in some sites, the impact of the ecological restoration of the stream would be more environmental than risk related, as the impact in terms of reducing floods and their negative impacts on people and assets are rather small.

44. Second, interventions require a precise analysis of the causes of flooding in each case (adaptation is site specific, contextual), which at the time of the site visits of the evaluation team had not always been carried out. Hydrological modelling exercises are being carried out to help with this. Criteria was developed by the former CTA to determine the sites, but this was not closely followed. Direct observation and on-site interviews in June 2024 suggested that on many occasions, especially regarding the permeable paving solutions, the technology was being proposed without an assessment of what the causes of flooding are and thus how different solutions can effectively help reduce or manage flooding. In many cases, the problem did not seem to be the paving but the location (flat and lower than the road), the poor maintenance of the drainage system, and/or the buildings or houses not being raised from the ground. Indeed, often permeable paving solutions were being proposed for already permeable surfaces, some of them well grown grass (kindly see photographs 1, 9 and 10 in Annex 9), which can actually result in maladaptation[17]. In this sense, adaptation is not about uncritically implementing standard adaptation technologies or measures (e.g. permeable paving solutions), but about assessing what the risks are (hazard, exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacities) and identifying and applying the combination of soft and hard approaches and technologies that work best in each particular site, noting that this may involve both strategies to reduce flooding (e.g. permeable paving, trees, drainage systems, relocation) and strategies to reduce its impacts when it occurs (management measures, such as, for example, raising buildings or establishing raised walk-boards), if flooding cannot be totally prevented[18], considering as well non-flood reduction and management related benefits. Based on a

[17] In the compound of the meteorological office in Paksan the project plans to test the new technology on the grass, which is totally permeable, whereas the proposed permeable paving solution is only partially permeable even if the testing succeeds, as it has some brick material. Moreover, the experiment may not succeed, and the grass may not grow, which would further reduce the current absorption capacity of the paving.

[18] Permeable paving has its own limits, as soil has a maximum absorbent capacity. If a site is low and flat, and water from higher places (in this case the road) comes a (better) drainage system may be needed.

debriefing by the evaluation team, the process was halted. The project seems to be addressing these issues more recently. The ToR of the ICFMS indicate that it should include (i) flood risk maps including 50 and 100-year flood lines and how these flood lines would shift under climate change scenarios (to be drawn from hydrological models which are being developed by the project); (ii) investment options on infrastructure, urban EbA, early warning, land use and urban planning; (iii) Priority urban EbA investments for each city; (iv) Operationalization of priority investments including identification of financing sources; scoping availability of potential service providers; assessment of technical and operational capacity to execute; operations and maintenance requirements and assessment of risks and mitigation measures, including vector-borne disease risk; (vi) Proposed land use plans and zonation in the context of flood risk reduction; and (vii) Institutional mapping and analysis of mandates on flood risk management.

45. Third, and related to the previous point, for the strategy to be effective, implementation must be carried out by technical personnel with good knowledge of the subject (urban EbA), something that has not happened systematically (see section 5.7). For the strategy to be effective, the selection of sites, the site-specific assessments of the problem and the identification of solutions has to be conducted applying expert judgement, along an institutional set up (PIU, PMU, CTA, TM, PSC and TC).

46. Last, but not least, to be effective, the intervention must follow a logical sequence, in which feasibility studies are carried out first, then strategic plans are drawn up, and then actions are implemented, monitored, evaluated and adapted as needed. As detailed in section 5.5.2.2 on work planning, this sequence has been only partially followed by the project.

5.1.2 Alignment to UN, UNEP, GCF, country and city strategic priorities

5.1.2.1 To what extent is the project aligned with UN and GCF Strategic Priorities?

47. **The project is well aligned with UN, UNEP and GCF Strategic priorities.** The project contributes to key international agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Urban Agenda. In particular, the project contributes to 6 out of 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (**SDG**s), namely SDG 3 “Good Health and Well-being”, SDG 5 “Gender Equality”, SDG 10 “Reduced Inequalities”, SDG 11 “Sustainable Cities and Communities”, SDG 13 “Climate Action”, and SDG 15 “Life on Land”. Similarly, the project is consistent with the **Urban Agenda**’s transformative commitments for sustainable urban development, particularly the “sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty”, “Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all”, and “Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development”.
48. In Laos, the project is in tune with the priorities of the **United Nations System** (UNS), as established in the 2022-2026 Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Specifically, the project contributes to strategic priority 4 – Environment, climate change, and resilience, by strengthening evidence-based natural resources management; improving the capacities to

adapt and prepare for natural disasters increase; and improving data availability and quality to support planning, resources management, pollution control and disaster risk management.

49. Furthermore, the project is in line with **UNEP** priorities, as established in its relevant Medium-Term Strategies (MTSs). The project is consistent with the MTS 2018-2021 through priority activities on (i) climate change, (ii) resilience to disasters and conflicts, (iii) healthy and productive ecosystems, (iv) chemicals, waste and air quality, and (v) environment under review. Similarly, the project is coherent with UNEP's MTS 2022-2025 through its Climate Action Subprogramme, specifically its principles *a* (supporting country and stakeholder emission cuts and adaptation to climate change to facilitate stronger interactions between science, policy, finance, technology and the economy) and *c* (focusing on those who can contribute to the highest impact while supporting the most vulnerable); the Nature Action Subprogramme, specifically its principles *a* (articulating a pathway to living in harmony with nature) and *b* (realizing impact and strength through partnership); and the Chemicals and Pollution Action Subprogramme, namely principle *d* (responding to country priorities and needs to reduce and prevent pollution).

50. The project is also coherent with the Programme of Work and Budget (POW) for the biennium 2020-2021, through its Subprogramme 1 (climate change), Subprogramme 2 (resilience to disasters and conflicts), Subprogramme 3 (healthy and productive ecosystems), Subprogramme 5 (chemicals, waste and air quality), and Subprogramme 7 (environment under review). The project is also in line with UNEP's POW for 2022-2023, through the following subprogrammes and their respective indicators: Climate Action Subprogramme, indicators i, iv, and v; Nature Action Subprogramme, indicators i, iii, v, and vi; and Chemicals and Pollution Action Subprogramme, indicator iii.

51. Additionally, the project is in tune with the Bali Strategic Plan for technology Support and Capacity Building (BSP), as the BSP strategically considers assisting in developing UNEP's response to national-level needs for capacity building on issues of relevance to its mandate. Moreover, the project is in line with the BSP's cross-cutting issues number *vii* (development of national research, monitoring and assessment capacity, including training in assessment and early warning), *viii* (support to national and regional institutions in data collection, analysis and monitoring of environmental trends), *ix* (access to scientific and technological information, including information on state-of-the-art technologies), *x* (facilitating access to and support for environmentally sound technologies and corresponding know-how), and *xi* (education and awareness raising, including networking among universities with programmes of excellence in the field of the environment); and with the thematic areas of climate change (ii), freshwater resources (iv), and conservation of wetlands (v). The project is also in harmony with UNEP's South-South Cooperation (S-SC) strategy, particularly with regards to the intention of intensifying efforts towards institutional capacity-building, including through the exchange of expertise, experiences, information, and documentation.

52. Finally, the project is consistent with **GCF**'s Strategic Plan for 2020-2023, particularly through the strategic priority 4.1 strengthening country ownership of programming, and 4.2 fostering

a paradigm shifting portfolio. Regarding the Strategic Plan for the GCF 2024-2027, the project is in line with the programming priorities 4.2 Mitigation and adaptation: supporting paradigm shift across sectors, and 4.3 Adaptation: addressing urgent and immediate adaptation and resilience needs, for particularly vulnerable countries.

5.1.2.2 To what extent is the project aligned with national, regional and city priorities?

53. **The project is well aligned with national, regional and city level priorities, although the consistency with the latter is more implicit.** The project is in tune with national mid- and long-term priorities including: the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) for 2021-2025, the National Climate Change Strategy (NCCS) of 2010, the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) of 2009, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) of 2015 and 2021, Draft Law on Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change of 2019, and the Strategic Plan on Disaster Risk Management in Lao PDR for 2021-2030. Importantly, the project is in harmony with ongoing policy development initiatives, particularly the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which is supported with GCF funds through a project implemented by UNEP, although there is room for more synergies. In addition, activities under the project's output 1.2 are well aligned with the priorities of MONRE's 5-year plan.

54. At the regional level, the project is aligned with the provincial socio-economic development plans, which prioritize green development and conserving natural resources. For example, interviews indicate that the province of Champassak, where Pakse is the provincial capital, has a certification scheme that seeks to increase green areas.

55. The alignment with city level priorities is more implicit. Target cities' flood related priorities are not explicitly identified in the Funding Proposal. While implementation has closely involved MONRE and PONRE, the engagement of city level authorities has been less significant. That said, as noted, flooding is a severe development problem in the target cities and city authorities seek to effectively and efficiently resolve it or manage it, which is exactly what the project is aiming to support.

5.1.3 Internal coherence

56. As mentioned in section 4, **the ToC represents overall a coherent and realistic change process from a cause and effect perspective**, although as noted in section 1.1.1.2, there was room to further integrate hard adaptation, a watershed angle, the strengthening of the enabling environment, a multi-hazard approach, relevant local knowledge and practices and the economic dimension. Overall, the causal pathways are effective and supported by contributing conditions, including assumptions. The ToC partially reflects UNEP's commitment to gender equality and human rights, with a reference to both men and female beneficiaries. An Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP) and a Gender Action Plan (GAP) were developed. Overall, no adjustments to the ToC are deemed necessary to support an assessment of the project's performance.

5.1.4 External coherence: Complementarity / coherence with relevant previous, ongoing, and future interventions

5.1.4.1 Were other relevant interventions clearly identified in the Funding Proposal?

57. **The identification of relevant interventions in the Funding Proposal was partial. The Funding Proposal rightly identified relevant medium-size environment-focused interventions funded by the GEF or the GCF in Laos.** In particular, the Funding Proposal identified three relevant interventions, all of them funded by the GEF: i) the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-implemented project "Effective governance for small-scale rural infrastructure and disaster preparedness"[19], ii) the FAO-implemented project "Climate Adaptation in Wetland Areas (CAWA) in Lao PDR"[20], and iii) the UNEP-implemented project "Building climate resilience of urban systems through EbA in the Asia-Pacific region"[21], which is executed in two Northern provinces of the country (and is also known in Laos as Urban EbA North, as opposed to the evaluated project, which is known as Urban EbA South, for their respective geographic focuses). The first project had concluded by the time the evaluated project was designed (its implementation period was 2013-2017). The other two projects were active then. The CAWA project concluded in September 2023 (it started in May 2016), while the UNEP project is still active, with the financial closure expected for 2026 (it started on November 2017). No other relevant GEF or GCF projects seem to have been active in Laos when the Funding Proposal was developed.

58. **However,** while UNEP normally uses its global knowledge base built by other similar projects when we develop a new one, **the project did not explicitly identify relevant projects outside Laos** that could have informed and complemented the project, increasing the effectiveness of its interventions. This would have helped since UNEP has been implementing and is implementing EbA projects and interventions worldwide and some lessons may have been useful for the reviewed project, for instance in complementing soft and hard adaptation, in linking national and local level work, in watershed management or even in more specific aspects such as hyacinth management[22].

59. **Moreover, the Funding Proposal did not consider relevant large hard infrastructure focused interventions in the country**. Indeed, the Funding Proposal did not consider relevant urban infrastructure projects implemented by WB and ADB that could complement the project's ecosystem-based adaptation interventions. More specifically, the Funding Proposal failed to consider the ADB funded (over USD 45 m) "Fourth Greater Mekong Subregion Corridor Towns Development Project" (also known as 4GMS)[23], whose Funding

[19] https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/4554
[20] https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5489
[21] https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5815
[22] The project could have been informed by the Cambodia and Bhutan interventions of the GEF Urban EbA Asia project. The GEF Urban EbA Latin America and the Caribbean, the sister project of the GEF Urban EbA Asia project, could have also informed the design.
[23] https://www.adb.org/projects/50099-003/main

Proposal had been cleared in 2016 and includes interventions in some of the cities where the reviewed project intervenes (i.e. Paksan).

5.1.4.2 To what extent has the project integrated lessons learned from previous and ongoing interventions?

60. **The project has integrated lessons from some projects, but there is scope for the project to continue drawing lessons from both past and ongoing projects, which in principle might benefit the project.** The 2018 Funding Proposal indicates that the design of the evaluated project was informed by the lessons of the identified GEF projects, in particular by lessons from the CAWA and the UNDP implemented projects[24]. No lessons were drawn and considered from the Urban EbA North project, probably because it was too early – the project had just started implementation. Interviews also mention that lessons from these projects around managing floods and drought were considered, although they were not EbA projects and focused on rural areas[25].

61. By the time the project started implementation one already approved project started implementation (4GMS, in 2018, the project is meant to conclude in 2026). In addition, during implementation six (6) relevant projects have been approved and started implementation. This comprises:

- Two national level adaptation planning projects
    - the GEF-funded UNEP-implemented "Building the capacity of the Lao PDR government to advance the national adaptation planning process"[26], with a budget slightly above USD 3.5 m, and a March 2021 - August 2025 implementation period, and
    - the GCF-funded UN-Habitat implemented project "Advancing Lao PDR's NAP through Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments for Disaster Risk Management in human settlements"[27], with a budget slightly below USD 2 m, and starting in 2022.
- Two forestry and landscape related projects
    - the GCF-funded GIZ-implemented project "Improving forest and land-use management in order to implement REDD+ in the Lao People's Democratic

[24] CAWA demonstrated the relevance of bioengineering (revegetation and tree planting) to stabilise erosion-prone riverbanks, reduce sedimentation and improve infiltration rates. The UNDP-implemented project highlighted the difficulty in finding adequate expertise to implement the identified EbA measures. "As a result, the integration of a new curriculum, the strengthening of EbA capacities amongst national engineers, and the development of a knowledge hub have all been integrated into the design of the proposed project". Funding Proposal, p. 34.
[25] CAWA looked at improving livelihoods, and adapting to flood and drought, for instance through store water through ponds focusing only on agriculture, especially on rice plantations. The UNDP project managed flooding through building and repairing irrigation system, small dams and bridge, and tree plantation, which can reduce landslides.
[26] https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/8022
[27] https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/advancing-lao-pdr-s-national-adaptation-plan-nap-through-climate-change-vulnerability. The end date is not clear.

Republic"[28], with a budget of USD 16.6 m and a 2020-2025 implementation period, and

- the WB funded project "Laos Landscapes and Livelihoods Project"[29], with a budget of over USD 57 m and a 2021-2027 implementation period

- two hard infrastructure projects

- the ADB funded "Urban Environment Improvement Investment Project"[30], with a budget of USD 45 m and a 2024-2030 implementation period

- the Department of housing is also implementing a WB funded project, although details could not be found.

62. During implementation, some sharing of lessons learned seems to have taken place at the national level between the UNEP projects (i.e. Urban EbA North and South, and the NAP project), as the three projects are executed by DCC and the teams sit in the same office. However, there is room for strengthening learning across these projects and with other ongoing projects such as the 4GMS, the UN-Habitat implemented NAP project, and the GIZ and WB forestry projects. In addition, there is room for enhancing sharing of lesson learned in UNEP at the global level between the three projects implemented in Laos, which are managed by three different people, all of them very busy (managing 6-7 projects) and in different time zones. There is also room in strengthening sharing of lessons between other relevant past and ongoing UNEP projects and the reviewed project, especially with the urban EbA projects – UNEP has a relatively large portfolio in this topic, with projects also in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean.

5.1.4.3 To what extent does the project complement (and not duplicate) other ongoing and planned interventions that address similar needs of the same target groups?[31]

63. **The project complements other ongoing and planned interventions, with no severe duplications being observed.** The reviewed project focuses on EbA for flood management at the local level in cities in the South of the country, while other projects focus on hard infrastructure at the local level (ADB projects)[32], adaptation including EbA but not limited to

[28] https://www.greenclimate.fund/project/fp117
[29] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P170559
[30] https://www.adb.org/projects/53203-001/main
[31] This question also considers the extent to which the project is coherent in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.
[32] Complementarities between the reviewed project and the 4GMS project comprise: i) Both projects aim to improve urban environmental services in Lao cities: the 4GMS project focuses on improving sanitation, waste management, and drainage in the towns of Paksan and Thakhek, while the EbA project aims to implement flood control measures in urban areas of Vientiane, Paksan, Savannakhet, and Pakse; ii) Flood protection and management is a key component of both projects: the 4GMS project includes improved drainage and riverbank protection measures, while the EbA project specifically targets urban flooding through integrated flood management strategies and soft adaptation solutions; iii) Institutional strengthening and capacity development are priorities for both: the 4GMS project includes developing city master plans to promote regional economic connectivity, while the EbA project focuses on strengthening technical capacity for implementing urban EbA interventions; v) Both projects promote more sustainable approaches

EbA, and flood risk, but also other risks (UNEP and UN-Habitat NAP projects)[33], and forestry and landscapes, but not in urban areas (GIZ and WB projects). While the Urban EbA North project shares the focus on EbA, cities and the local level, and in practice focuses as well quite a lot on flood management, it works in cities in the North of the country, so there is not a geographic overlap. During design, efforts were made to avoid duplications, removing planned activities related to the detention ponds and swales in Pakse, as the ADB project had already put in concrete channels in this city.

5.1.4.4 Is the project working in coordination with other interventions to seek synergies?[34]

64. **The project has coordinated with some projects and achieved some synergies, but there is significant room for improvement in both areas. From design, the country has some structures to help avoid duplication of efforts and maximise resources, thereby increasing efficiency.** The Funding Proposal mentions the DCC, provincial administrations and the city-level project steering committees (CPSCs)). The PSC also contributes to that.

65. While, as noted, the design identifies some relevant projects and integrates some of their lessons, the Funding Proposal does not identify in which way CAWA, and especially Urban EbA North and Urban EbA South complement each other from the design perspective and which synergies would be optimized during implementation through the mentioned coordination structures, which is an important weakness.

66. During implementation, the project has coordinated and established or planned synergies with the other UNEP implemented projects (i.e. Urban EbA North and NAP project). In particular, the project is coordinating with the EbA Urban North project. A joint exchange workshop has been organized and study tours are planned before the Urban EbA North project ends. The intention is also to develop national EbA guidelines that include case studies from both the South and North and are not just site specific which is the case so far with the Urban EbA North guidelines. However, synergies between these projects could be strengthened in the policy, institutional and educational fronts. Similarly, while the idea is that the knowledge of this project is fed into the NAP project, which is in the middle of implementation, this is yet to be materialized.

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to urban development: the 4GMS project incorporates elements of green growth and climate resilience, while the EbA project explicitly aims to shift urban flood management from traditional "grey" infrastructure to innovative "green" infrastructure solutions.

[33] Complementarities between the reviewed project and UN-Habitat's NAP project include: i) The NAP project provides a national-level framework and assessment tool, while the ecosystem-based project implements specific solutions in urban areas. This allows for a comprehensive approach from policy to practice; ii) The vulnerability assessments conducted under the NAP project can inform and guide the ecosystem-based interventions in urban areas; iii) Both projects aim to strengthen institutional capacity, with the NAP project focusing on national and sub-national authorities, and the ecosystem-based project likely targeting urban planners and local officials; iv) The NAP project develops tools for disaster risk management, while the ecosystem-based project directly implements flood reduction measures. This creates a synergy between planning and action; v) Both projects contribute to Laos' overall climate change adaptation efforts, with the NAP project providing a broader strategy and the ecosystem-based project offering concrete solutions; vi) The projects align with Laos' sustainable development goals, with the NAP project supporting the National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the ecosystem-based project promoting sustainable urban development.

[34] This question also considers the extent to which the project is coherent in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities.

67. Coordination and synergies with other ongoing projects have been more limited. Synergies with CAWA have not been observed. Similarly, while there are opportunities of collaboration with UN-Habitat's GCF readiness project, so far synergies have been limited, if not non-existent. Similarly, the reviewed project has built limited synergies with the two forestry projects, which can help in terms of broader watershed management, and the infrastructure projects. In this sense, collaboration seems to be limited to exchanging information with the WB project "Laos Landscapes and Livelihoods Project"[35] 2021-2027, and the project implemented by the Department of Housing. The project is developing a data-base/website/knowledge hub with the Faculty of Engineering, so that all projects use the same data-base. While it can contribute to it, this will not alone increase collaboration and synergies, which require proactive and intentional efforts.

5.1.4.5 In which instances has UNEP's comparative advantage been particularly well applied?

68. **The project has partially capitalized UNEP's comparative advantage, particularly on EbA.** Although other UN agencies also work on EbA, as the UN specialized agency on environment and ecosystems, UNEP is particularly well positioned to implement EbA-focused projects, on which it has extensive experience and sound technical knowledge. This is particularly the case in Laos, where other organizations, such as UNDP, FAO and UN-Habitat, have focused more on environmental sustainability, agriculture and infrastructure and risk assessment respectively, than on EbA. In addition to its EbA experience, with two projects in the country, South and North, in the topic, UNEP has mobilized for this project its economic valuation unit and its early warning and science division, which have provided useful products. However, as noted earlier, there is scope for continued knowledge exchange and synergies with other UNEP projects in the country (i.e., Urban EbA South, NAP), other CCAU regionally or globally implemented projects, especially those related to urban EbA (e.g., the work conducted in other Asian countries and in Latin America and the Caribbean on EbA[36]) and the work carried out by other relevant UNEP divisions, such as the cities division.

5.2 Quality and revisions of project design

69. It is worth noting that, as reflected in GCF interdivisional review sheet, the original design was for a USD 30m project including grey infrastructure investments, in particular dykes, to complement EbA. Between Feb and June 2019, this proposal was scaled down to USD 10M, and most of the flood protection infrastructure jettisoned because of safeguard concerns by the GCF Sec. review team. The project was scaled down to fit into the GCF Simplified Access Proposal window, which by definition only considers low risk projects (Category C). The exit strategy was for the ICFMS to provide the basis for more substantial investments in grey-green approaches to flood management in a phase 2 approach.

[35] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P170559
[36] https://www.thegef.org/projects-operations/projects/5681

70. Within this context**, the Funding Proposal delivers clear and specific information regarding the identified problem and the root causes to be addressed by the project.** The Funding Proposal clearly indicates that cities located along the Mekong River are highly vulnerable to increased risk of flooding due to a lack of adequate flood management, including:

    i. limited technical and institutional capacity in government.

    ii. lack of integrated, climate-resilient approaches to flood management, and

    iii. limited knowledge about EbA and the valuation of ecosystem services.

71. The Funding Proposal identifies that the main barriers to the implementation of integrated climate-resilient flood management in Laos, are:

    i. Lack of data for modelling climate impacts to inform climate change adaptation solutions for flood management.

    ii. Limited technical and institutional capacity of provincial and national government for climate-resilient flood management.

    iii. Lack of integrated, climate resilient flood management approaches.

    iv. Limited knowledge about EbA and the valuation of ecosystems.

72. The project interventions aim to shift the paradigm of urban flood management in Laos away from the use of mostly hard infrastructure towards innovative use of EbA measures and integrated flood management.

73. **The project design had several strengths.** The climate rationale was complete and aligned with the national and local context, presenting in a clear manner the climate change problem, the adaptation needs with proper scientific-based evidence, as well as clearly identifying the problem that the project addresses, the preferred solution and its alignment with current development practices regarding integrated flood management approach, and the main barriers to the implementation of the project's preferred solution. The project design presented a clear and interlinked ToC, implementation timetable and detailed budget plan. Even though the baseline information was provided during the design phase, it was explicitly indicated that, for some of the indicators, this information was completed through a baseline study carried out during the project inception phase. Financial management and procurement was concise and guided by UN financial regulations, rules and practices, as well as UNEP's programme manual. The Funding Proposal also presented the financial structure of how the project would be funded, as well as the flow of financial resources. Thus, this component included a robust economic and financial analysis, great attention to cost-effective evidence, and clear co-financing arrangements. The project design included an appropriate level of stakeholder engagement, which comprised the NDA, civil society, multiple representatives of the government, NGOs, academia, and international development agencies. Additionally, the

project design included a robust and comprehensive environmental and social safeguards plan, a complete risk assessment, and a gender assessment and action plan.

74. **Despite these strengths, as discussed, the strategy was not fully effective** (see section 1.1.1.2), **the coherence with other intervention was partial** (see section 0) **and the RF and M&E plan had important room for improvement** (see section 5.3)**.** The project underwent some changes to its RF, as detailed in section 5.3. These changes were based on the indicators baseline study conducted during the project inception phase, and properly reported in the APR-2023.

5.3 Monitoring Design and Implementation

5.3.1 Are the indicators relevant and consistent with the project objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities?

75. **The indicators included in the Results Framework (RF) are inadequate to monitor outputs and provide a measurable progress towards the project outcomes, impacts and objective**. The RF in the Funding Proposal includes 14 indicators: two (2) GCF indicators, two (2) fund level impact indicators, one (1) fund level outcome indicator, and nine (9) output indicators, four for component 1 and five for component 2. The GCF indicators, which are defined by the GCF, and chosen by projects as relevant, are not appropriate for monitoring project performance and impact, and the fund level-impact and outcome indicators have important weaknesses. In addition, most output indicators are really outcome indicators, so there is not a proper set of indicators to monitor outputs. Furthermore, there was room for improvement regarding targets, both mid-term targets and specially end of project targets. In this sense, while the indicators are aligned with project objectives and are specific to the context and nature of the project, and the RF allows to a certain extent to monitor progress towards outcomes, it does not allow to monitor outputs and progress towards impacts and the project objective.

76. The GCF indicators, which are beneficiaries' related indicators, are not adequate. They do not seem informed by evidence, in the sense of identifying how many people live in the flood-prone areas covered by the project in a significant way. The end of project targets (74,600 direct beneficiaries (~9% of the total population of the four target cities) and 1,069,500 indirect beneficiaries (100% of the total population of the four target cities)) seem in this sense over ambitious, but there is no solid way to assess it. Moreover, the inclusion of the total population of Vientiane is not appropriate. Population of this city is included as the population of the other three cities, but, unlike in Pakse, Paksan and Savannakhet, no ecosystem management plan nor restoration activities are planned in Vientiane, where the area for permeable paving solutions is also more limited than in the other three cities. Indeed, the GCF indicators, which consider the interventions in the four cities as equally relevant, are not consistent with the output indicators, which rightly consider that interventions in Pakse, Paksan and Savannakhet are more significant than in Vientiane, including indicators related to ecosystem management plans and ecosystem restoration in the three Southern cities, but not in the capital. In this

sense, the inclusion of 10% of the population of Vientiane as direct beneficiaries and 100% of its population as indirect beneficiaries does not seem appropriate given the limited scope of the interventions of the project in this city.

77. Furthermore, indicators on beneficiaries and losses of lives and economic assets (GCF indicators and indicator A1.1) are not fully relevant, as their assessment depends on the occurrence of flooding events. Indeed, one of the potential results of the project is not just the reduction of losses when flooding occurs, but the reduction of the frequency and magnitude of flooding, as healthier ecosystems would provide increased regulating services, including expanded capacity to infiltrate and store rainwater. The indicators in the RF should allow measurement of progress, which is not the case with these indicators, as demonstrated in this ITE.

78. Moreover, several of the output indicators are phrased as outcome indicators, as they refer not to the provision of outputs, but to their uptake. Indicators 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 refer not to the provision of trainings and awareness raising campaigns, but to their results in terms of strengthened institutional capacities and social ownership, respectively. At the highest score on Indicator 1.2.1 established FRMCs are expected to demonstrate effectiveness, which is an outcome. Indicators 1.2.2, 2.1.2 and 2.2.2 do not refer to the development of management plans, but to their uptake, which is an outcome level. Finally, indicators 2.1.1, 2.2.2 and 2.3, refer to the actual restoration of the ecosystems, which takes time, rather than restoration efforts or perhaps a more limited term. The baseline does not contain relevant information on the previous good health of the ecosystem and the expected future health of the ecosystem, in terms of quality of soil, water, air or biodiversity.

79. In addition, the RF shows important weaknesses in the definition of targets. The mid-term target of indicator A7.1 was not properly defined, as it aimed at no progress by then. The scorecard should have defined enough progress levels to support a reportable improvement by mid-term. Otherwise, as demonstrated in this ITE (see section 5.4), it is not possible to assess whether progress at all was made or not. Furthermore, progression in four targets does not seem realistic. Progression of targets on area (indicators 2.1.1, 2.2.1 and 2.3) seems overly optimistic: they increase by 1000% in indicators regarding ecosystem restoration[37], and by 10000% in the indicator regarding permeable paving solutions[38]. While a greater rate of delivery can be expected in the second half on the project in on the ground related activities, the expected progression is overly optimistic. Indicator 1.1.1 also has an unrealistic progression[39].

80. Finally, some indicators, such as 1.1.2 include quite different aspects, which is not appropriate. This indicator comprises awareness of climate threats and participation in implementing wetland and management plans and cleaning drainage lines. While the former

[37] From 80 ha and 70 ha at mid-term to 800 ha and 700 ha by the end of project for indicators 2.1.1 and 2.2.1, respectively.
[38] From 180 square metres at mid-term to 18,000 square metres by the end of the project.
[39] From 4 institutions with strengthened capacity with minimum score of 4 out of 10 each at mid-term to 10 institutions with strengthened capacity with minimum score of8out10each

can result in the latter, this is not necessarily the case. Individuals may be aware of the climate threats and yet not participate in the mentioned activities, autonomously or through activities organized by the project. Indeed, they refer to two types of project activities that may not be conducted in parallel: communication and restoration activities, respectively.

5.3.2 Are the indicators SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and the methods appropriate?

81. **Most of the indicators in the results framework are not SMART** (see indicator-specific analysis in Table 15).

82. The **GCF indicators** are not specific enough, as the benefits to be enjoyed by beneficiaries are not explicitly mentioned, especially for indirect beneficiaries. While these indicators are measurable, they are not achievable, particularly in Vientiane, when the interventions are not significant enough to provide relevant benefits to 9% of its population[40] (see paragraph 76). The indicators are, however, relevant and time-bound.

83. One of the **fund level impact indicators** (indicator A4.2) is SMART, but while the other one (indicator A1.1) is specific, achievable and time-bound, it is only partially measurable and relevant, as it depends on the occurrence of floods, which is itself influenced by the project, and can actually not occur, resulting in progress not being measured. **Output level indicators:** several of the output indicators are really outcome indicators[41], so in some cases there are no proper indicators to monitor outputs. For a more granular level, see Table 15.

84. **Overall, the project indicators are partially specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.** As presented in the overall SMART analysis of the project indicators (Table 5), from the 14 indicators, nine have been categorized as specific, one as not specific and three as partially specific; 13 have been found to be measurable, and one as partially measurable; 11 are achievable and two are not achievable; five have been found as relevant, one as not relevant, and eight as partially relevant; and nine indicators have been found to be time-bound, and five as partially time-bound.

Table 5. Project indicators assessed as being partially SMART.

Specific	Partially	Indicator 1.1.2 is not specific. Indicators GCF 1 and 2, and 1.2.2 are partially specific.
Measurable	Partially	Indicators A1.1 is partially measurable.
Achievable	Partially	Indicators GCF 1 and 2 are not achievable.
Relevant	Partially	Indicator A1.1 is not relevant as an output indicator. Indicators 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.2, 2.2.2, and 2.3 are partially relevant.

[40] This is probably due to the project design having been significantly altered to radically down the investment component during FP review stage. Even if the ICFMS would provide the basis for more substantial investments in grey- green approaches to flood management in a phase 2 approach, this contribution is probably not significant enough to provide relevant benefits to 9% of Vientiane's population.
[41] 1.2.2 Level of uptake of ecosystem valuation, 2.1.2 Level of uptake of wetland management plan, 2.2.2 Level of uptake of wetland management plan.

Time-bound	Partially	Indicators A7.1, 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.2.1 and 2.3 are partially time-bound

5.3.3 Were there any changes in the results framework (including expected outputs and outcomes) after the start of the implementation? Were revisions documented? Did they follow UNEP/donor policies for revisions?

85. **Relevant changes were made to the RF after the start of the implementation. They were properly documented and followed UNEP and GCF policies but were not able to solve most of the design weaknesses.** Five changes were made to the Results Framework based on the baseline study carried out during the first year of project implementation. Two of the changes consisted in providing a baseline level where the Funding Proposal had not provided one, indicating this would be done in Year 1 based on the baseline study, which was the case. One of the changes increased the baseline level, without modifying the targets, reducing therefore the level of ambition. Two changes lowered down the mid-term targets, making them more realistic, although the end of the project targets were not modified, thus maintaining the level of ambition of the project, but putting more pressure on the second half of project implementation. In this sense, the changes made were relevant. The changes are:

- Indicator 1.1.1, baseline information changed from “Baseline institutional capacity to be measured in Year 1” to “Institutional capacity was measured by the baseline study. The average institutional capacity score is 1 out of 10”.
- Indicator 1.1.2, mid-term target changed from “14,920 people with increased awareness (50% male and 50% female)” to “8,000 people, based on baseline study.”.
- Indicator 1.2.1, the baseline level changed from “Level 0” to “Level 1”.
- Indicator from Output 2.3, baseline information changed from “Baseline study to be conducted in Year 1 of project implementation” to “Zero square meters”.
- Indicator from Output 2.3, the mid-term target changed from “9,000 square meters of permeable paving solutions” to “180 square meters of permeable paving solutions”.

86. These changes were explicitly documented in the APR-2023 and appropriately followed UNEP and GCF policies for revisions. They improved the RF but were not able to solve most of the design weaknesses, as demonstrated in this MTR (see above and section 5.4)

5.3.4 Does the funding proposal include a monitoring and evaluation plan that defines the responsibilities, schedule, and estimated budget of M&E activities?

87. **The Funding Proposal includes a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan defining the roles and responsibilities of monitoring and reporting, but not defining clearly the**

monitoring and reporting schedule. The Funding Proposal adequately indicates the M&E related roles and responsibilities of each of the relevant project actors within the project management structure. In this sense, the PM, under the oversight of UNEP's TM, is responsible for monitoring progress against outputs and outcome indicators during project implementation. Additionally, the Funding Proposal specifies the activities to be carried out as part of the M&E, which include designing a performance monitoring framework to track the project's progress towards achieving its targets, carrying out the baseline study, preparing quarterly progress reports and annual performance and financial reports, hiring mid-term and end-of-project evaluations, and conducting evidence-gathering exercises to verify progress and supervision visits and field missions (undertaken by the AE). However, the Funding Proposal lacked a proper presentation of the data collection methods and management, detailing what data would be collected, how it would be collected, the frequency and who would be responsible for collecting data, how the data and information would be reported, as well as a proposed timeline for when the different M&E activities would take place throughout the project lifecycle. The Funding Proposal budgeted a M&E position at the PMU, as well as M&E of specific activities to be conducted by CTA and M&E officer at the PMU.

5.3.5 To what extent has the M&E plan and framework been implemented (to what extent is it operational) and have any adjustments been made to the plan? How has the information generated by the M&E system been used during project implementation?

88. **There is room for improvement in the implementation of the project's M&E plan.** The project has not fulfilled all the planned positions. As noted in section 5.7.1.1, the position of the M&E expert is vacant since 2022, which has made monitoring and reporting more challenging for the PMU. Moreover, design weaknesses in the RF (see section 5.3) have not been addressed, resulting in the progress in several indicators not being feasible to assess (see section 5.4). Furthermore, as mentioned in the RVE report, the project has not established an effective monitoring system and protocol. Monitoring reports have been produced on time (the 2023 APR was produced in time), and they overall comply with GCF and UNEP monitoring and reporting requirements, following the template defined for GCF funded and UNEP implemented projects. Indeed, GCF has cleared the reports. However, as noted in the RVE report,[42] the project has not established an M&E monitoring system specifically tailored to the project, which is crucial for decision-makers and project managers to track progress and make informed strategic decisions.

[42] RVE report, p. 45.

5.4 Effectiveness[43]

5.4.1 Availability of Outputs

89. Considering the assessment of progress presented in the RVE report, and the 18-month extension granted by the GCF, as of July 2024, the progress of the project in producing the planned outputs was at the Moderately Satisfactory level. The project's results framework includes nine (9) output indicators, related to strengthened institutional capacity (indicator 1.1.1) and social awareness and ownership (indicator 1.1.2), improved institutional coordination (indicator 1.2.1), ecosystem restoration (indicators 2.1.1, 2.2.1), uptake of ecosystem valuation and management plans (indicators 1.2.2, 2.1.2, 2.2.2) and installation of permeable paving solutions[44]. Considering the 18-month extension granted by GCF in December 2024, and being optimistic, as of July 2024, the project was on target in six output indicator (1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.1.2, and 2.2.2) or 67% of the output indicators.

90. In 3 or 33% of the output indicators (indicators 2.1.1, 2.2.1, and 2.3) the project was not on target – it is unlikely that the project will meet its expected end of the project target by its revised operational completion date, in December 2026. These indicators are related to the area of physical works, where ecosystem restoration or permeable paving solutions activities are to be conducted. In these indicators, the final achievements will likely be far from the expected end of the project targets.

91. It is worth stressing the impact of the 18-month extension in the above assessment. The delivery of outputs was very limited if the original project duration is considered. While budget expenditure had been low (21% of total budget by March 2024 (see section 5.5.1)), availability of outputs was still lower than what could be expected by that percentage of expenditure. The quality of the few outputs that have been produced is, however, good.

5.4.2 Progress towards outcomes

92. The project's results framework includes only one (1) fund level outcome indicator, regarding the use by vulnerable households, communities, businesses and public sector of services of Fund-supported tools, instruments, strategies and activities to respond to climate change and variability (indicator A7.1). Considering both the assessment presented in the RVE report and the 18-month extension granted by GCF in December 2024, as of July 2024, the project was on target to meet the end of the project target for this indicator. At midterm, the availability of outputs is not contributing to the degree expected to an increased capacity of vulnerable households, communities, businesses and public sector to respond to climate change and variability. This has to do with the limited quantity of outputs produced, but also with the limited access to them of key stakeholders and /or their limited uptake and adoption. For instance, only one of the three ecosystem management plans has been finalized, but potential users do not have access to it.

[43] The Theory of Change is assessed in section 0. Adaptive capacity is assessed in section 5.7.1.5.
[44] As noted in section 5.3, some of the output indicators are in reality outcome indicators.

Similarly, while training has been provided, the extensive consultations conducted by the RVE found that awareness remains low. However, it is expected that the 18-month extension will allow the project to make more significant progress and meet its end of the project target of the outcome level indicator.

5.4.3 Likelihood of impact

5.4.3.1 Is the project progressing toward achievement of intended, positive impacts? Has the project got all the elements in place to generate impact as planned?

93. The project's results framework includes four (4) impact indicators: two (2) GCF indicators, and two (2) fund level impact indicators. Progress could not be measured in three (3) of these four (4) indicators, specifically on the two GCF indicators and one impact indicator, due to the lack of data and the way the indicators had been defined. Considering the 18-month extension granted by the GCF, the project was on target in the only impact indicator where progress can be assessed, regarding the value (US$) of ecosystem services generated or protected in response to climate change.

94. Annex 7 provides the detailed assessment of the achievement of output, outcome and impact indicators in the project's results framework, based on the RVE report and considering the 18-month extension granted by GCF. It is important to provide a qualitative analysis. As of July 2024, the project had provided training, conducted some studies, established relevant committees, developed an ecosystem (i.e., wetland) management plan and conducted some ecosystem (i.e. wetland) restoration activities. More specifically, in partnership with UN-Habitat, the project conducted four (4) training policy and technical workshops, benefitting 141 participants[45], completing about 80% of the capacity building activities. The project had also completed the first phase of valuation of ecosystem services of wetland and streams of project target provinces, the results of which were presented to high level government officials during the 4th project steering committee in November 2023, and selected a firm to develop Digital Elevation Models for the four target cities using drone survey, as part of the hydrological model's development process. Furthermore, the project had conducted multiple awareness raising activities (see section 5.11).

95. At the provincial level, based on comprehensive stakeholder assessments, the project had established Provincial Flood Risk Management Committees (FRMCs), although management decisions have not been made and in two provinces meetings are not as frequent as planned. At the ecosystem level, there was only some progress in the Non Peung wetland in Paksan, where the management plan has been developed and some restoration activities conducted. However, the plan has not been formally approved after one year of submission, and the restoration activities have been very limited (5% of the mid-term target, 0.5% of the end of the project target) and have not had a great impact, as the invasive species has come back. Progress on the stream ecosystems, in Savannakhet and Pakse (Houay Khi La Meng and Houay Nhang), has been

[45] 38 participants (55% women) from 16 departments or organizations in Bolikhamxay, 35 participants (51% women) from 15 departments or organizations in Champasack, 30 participants (40% women) from 12 departments or organizations in Savannakhet and 38 participants (47% women) from 14 departments or organizations in Vientiane.

even more limited. The management plans have not been finalized and no ecosystem restoration activities have been conducted, beyond cleaning of solid waste. While the sites had been selected and testing and design of the permeable paving solutions were in the final stage, in none of the provinces have permeable paving solutions been installed, which in a way is positive, as the intervention strategy was not robust. As the FRMCS are not fully operational, the management plans have not been developed, approved nor implemented, and restoration activities have been limited, the health of the ecosystems has not improved as result of the project. Indeed, in the absence of significant project interventions, given the baseline, this has likely decreased. Accordingly, the ecosystem services provided by the wetland and the streams, including flood reduction and protection, have not expanded, and populations living nearby these ecosystems have not significantly benefited from the project, in terms of reduced losses of lives and economic assets. The 18-month extension is expected to provide time to make significant progress in these fronts. As discussed in more detail in section 5.13.2, the sustainability of interventions seems unlikely, given the limited progress in institutional capacity and awareness, integration of ICFMS in urban planning and the identification and implementation of financial mechanisms, although the ICFMS work starting in 2025 can greatly contribute to the sustainability of project results.

5.4.3.2 Have there been – or will there likely be - any unintended results (positive or negative)? Is there any risk of maladaptation?

96. **Significant unintended negative or positive results were not observed in this ITE and are not foreseen.** The project's efforts to conduct baseline studies and engage provincial government officials and communities contribute to reducing unintended negative effects. However, limited technical capacity and oversight has led to the definition of permeable paving interventions that could result in maladaptation. Indeed, as noted, permeable paving interventions had been identified without assessing properly the causes of flooding. In some cases, it was proposed to replace already well-working permeable paving with a paving with uncertain performance, which could lead to maladaptation. As noted, local knowledge was also not integrated into project interventions, thus reducing the capacity of the project to contribute to climate adaptation and eventually resulting in maladapation. No unintended positive impacts have been observed or are expected, as the project management team is trying to closely follow the results framework, although progress is limited.

5.4.3.3 To what extent is the project playing a catalytic role, or promoting longer-term scaling-up and/or replication?

97. **The project design incorporates some relevant actions to advance the project's scaling-up and replication at the provincial level, but likelihood of scaling up and replication is limited at that level, and low at the national level.** The strengthening of the institutional capacity and governance structures, and the generation and dissemination of ICFMS, urban EbA guidelines and ecosystem management plans contribute a long-term systemic impact. Given the scope of these outputs, mostly focused on the provincial and ecosystem level rather than at the national level (only the ICFMS and the urban EbA guidelines have a national scope), scale up and replication is more likely at that level than in Laos more broadly. Even in the targeted cities, as discussed in section 5.13.2, scaling up and replication will in any case very much depend on how well the project secures financial

resources for those purposes. As noted there, the availability of these resources does not seem likely. At the national level, there is room for greater contributions to scaling up and replication by building synergies with the Urban EbA North, which is also developing urban EbA guidelines, and the NAP project, by integrating urban EbA in the NAP, both implemented by UNEP, and with the sustainability and resilience-related projects implemented by UN-Habitat, among others.

5.4.3.4 To what extent is the project driving innovation? To what extent is the project on track for producing the paradigm shift as planned?

98. **The project has the potential to support innovation through two of its proposed activities, but their implementation is not greatly contributing to it.** First, the project is promoting innovation through the development of hydrological assessments and climate risk assessments to inform climate change adaptation solutions for flood management in the target cities. Second, the project promotes innovation through the design and installation of permeable paving solutions in public areas. However, these two innovations are not properly implemented, which reduces their potential and thus their contribution to innovation. The wetland management plan has been developed without the finalization of the hydrological assessments, and permeable paving interventions have been defined without considering those assessments nor more broadly examining the causes of flooding and how different interventions can best contribute to reduce and manage it. Furthermore, it is still early to assess the impacts and results of the adoption of such measures. The project will need to assess and reflect on them upon completion of the proposed activities.

99. **In its design, the project had certain potential to produce a paradigm shift at the provincial and ecosystem level.** Indeed, the project was set to work on the policy, institutional, technical, technological, social and financial aspects. **However, this potential is currently limited,** given the reduced progress made so far, although the extension of the project duration gives more time to achieve this. As noted, as of October 2024, production of outputs was scarce, and their adoption limited. As explained in detail in section 5.13.2, the sustainability of its results is also not likely, which further reduces the likelihood of a paradigm shift, which requires medium- and long-term changes. **The project design set the ground for a paradigm shift at the national level, through the ICFMS,** which will start in 2025, and is expected to provide the basis for more substantial investments in grey- green approaches to flood management in a phase 2 approach. There are also opportunities to create synergies with other projects, particularly the urban EbA North, the NAP, and UN-Habitat implemented projects. Indeed, while at midterm, the engagement of key stakeholders was not systematic enough to make the structural changes needed to mainstreaming urban EbA into urban planning, the development of the ICFMS brings the opportunity to do so, although its actual impact is yet to be seen.

5.4.4 What external actors and factors are enabling and hindering the achievement of expected outputs and outcomes?

100. **Several factors have hindered the fulfilment of project activities and the achievement of its expected outputs and outcomes.** To start with, the project has been affected by the health and economic crisis originated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic impacts of COVID reduced the commitment of communities to project activities, since this does not have a strong focus on community livelihoods. The inflation generated by COVID and then the global economic crisis has also negatively affected the ability of the project to hire qualified staff, as the budget salaries have ended up being lower than the market price, which has created challenges to retain or hire qualified personnel. COVID-19 also negatively affected field activities, including delays in planned travels for trainings, workshops, conferences and awareness-raising campaigns; limited access to project sites; and delays in feasibility and baseline studies. However, the impact was rather limited, as the project stakeholders implemented measures to adapt to this context, such as increased virtual interactions. In addition, security and weather-related conditions have resulted in limited access to project sites and postponing field missions for collecting/validating information and for conducting consultations with local stakeholders. Furthermore, project delivery has been negatively affected by the low ownership and capacity of national level institutions (although to a certain extent this is a design and implementation caveat, and not fully an external hindering factor), the limited capacity of key partners (NUoL has showed limited capacity to deliver quality products on time, in line with their Cooperation Agreements) and the frequent provincial government staff turnover. The project has also been negatively impacted by the limited understanding of urban EbA of key partners, and their unsound prioritization of sites and interventions, although this could have been managed better by the project with more and/or better training and structures to ensure the selection of sites and interventions was robust.

101. In turn, progress in achieving the expected outputs and outcomes has been enabled by the interest and commitment of provincial governments, which have overall closely followed up the progress of activities, conducting regular meetings to maintain up-to-date communications, and engaging with local communities.

5.5 Efficiency and financial management

5.5.1 Financing and co-financing

5.5.1.1 Is there any difference between planned and actual expenditures? Why?

102. **In the first three years of implementation, largely due to delays in the procurement, expenditure was significantly lower than planned, except for expenditure on Project Management Costs (PMC), that has been on budget.** By the end of the first three years of implementation (February, 2021, to March, 2024) (

103. Table 6), when 62% of the total implementation time had run, the project had spent 30% (USD 2,062,855) of its cumulative planned budget for those three years (USD 6,913,960). This is the equivalent of 21% of the total financing planned budget (USD 10 M).

104. Disbursement had been low for both components and all outputs. It was particularly low for component 2, where only 12% of the total planned budget had been disbursed – disbursement was also low in component 1, where 23% of the total planned budget had been disbursed. At the output level, expenditure was low in all of them, but especially low in outputs 2.1 and 2.3, where only 12% and 7% of the total planned budget had been disbursed respectively. The highest disbursement rate was on output 1.2, but only 21% of the total planned budget had been spent. Per year, expenditure was low across all years, but particularly so in 2021 (16% of planned expenditure) and 2022 (26%). Expenditure was better in 2023 (51%), but still low.

105. Lower expenditure was due to internal and external factors. The most impactful internal factors include delays on workplan budget approvals, as well as delays on contracting processes due to low understanding of internal procurement processes; for example, the permeable paving solutions design was planned to take place on November 2023, but it had not been conducted as of July 2024. External factors that have impacted the project include COVID-19 pandemic and the health crisis (globally and nationally) associated with it, as well as high international market costs for specialized personnel under the different project activities (activities 1.1.2, 1.2.1 and 1.2.3).

Table 6. Difference between planned and actual expenditure of financing sources, for the period between February 01, 2021, to March 30, 2024.

Cumulative (February 2021 – March 2024)				
	Planned (Funding Proposal)	Actual	Over Funding Proposal	
			First three years	Whole project
Component 1	$ 4,215,580	$ 1,309,072	31%	23%
Output 1.1	$ 1,223,100	$ 602,830	49%	16%
Output 1.2	$ 2,995,480	$ 706,242	24%	21%
Component 2	$ 2,443,380	$ 488,349	20%	12%
Output 2.1	$ 820,160	$ 171,615	21%	12%
Output 2.2	$ 908,660	$ 239,936	26%	17%
Output 2.3	$ 714,560	$ 76,799	11%	7%
PMC	$ 255,000	$ 265,433	104%	62%
Total	**$ 6,913,960**	**$ 2,062,855**	**30%**	**21%**

Source: Based on the Funding Proposal and the financial information shared by UNEP

Table 7. Project financing per year

	2021 (1 Feb - 31 Dec)		Percentage	2022			2023		
	Planned	Actual		Planned	Actual	Percentage	Planned	Actual	Percentage
	Prodoc		Over the prodoc	Prodoc		Over Prodoc	Prodoc		Over Prodoc
Component 1	**$ 1,500,060**	**$ 238,063**	**16%**	**$ 1,558,972**	**$ 386,792**	**25%**	**$ 1,115,320**	**$ 653,993.53**	**59%**
Output 1.1	$ 519,860	$ 118,806	23%	$ 392,092	$ 198,592	51%	$ 328,220	$ 285,431.62	87%
Output 1.2	$ 980,200	$ 119,257	12%	$ 1,166,880	$ 188,200	16%	$ 787,100	$ 368,561.91	47%
Component 2	**$ 826,650**	**$ 37,582**	**5%**	**$ 815,740**	**$ 184,512**	**23%**	**$ 787,850**	**$ 266,255.61**	**34%**
Output 2.1	$ 171,490	$ 16,720	10%	$ 338,490	$ 58,674	17%	$ 299,490	$ 96,220.64	32%
Output 2.2	$ 400,680	$ 13,072	3%	$ 235,240	$ 116,249	49%	$ 258,290	$ 110,614.93	43%
Output 2.3	$ 254,480	$ 7,790	3%	$ 242,010	$ 9,589	4%	$ 230,070	$ 59,420.03	26%
PMC	$ 85,000	$ 108,885	**128%**	$ 90,984	**$ 65,573**	**72%**	$ 85,000	**$ 90,974.99**	**107%**
Total	**$ 2,411,710**	**$ 384,530**	**16%**	**$ 2,465,696**	**$ 636,877**	**26%**	**$ 1,988,170**	**$ 1,011,224**	**51%**

Source: Financial information shared by UNEP

Table 8: Disbursements received from GCF

Disbursement Requests	Date Received	Activity Amount (USD)	AE Fee (USD)
1	21/10/2020	2,411,710	184,496
2	19/01/2024	2,514,080	192,327
TOTAL		**4,925,790**	**376,823**

Source: Financial information shared by UNEP

5.5.1.2 Did the co-financing occur as planned?

106. **As of July 2024, when 67% of the implementation time had run, the project had mobilized 31% of planned co-financing. In particular, the project had mobilized** USD 463,299 out of the USD 1.5 million planned in co-financing. In the three first years of implementation the Funding Proposal planned USD 1,053,100 in co-financing and, as of March 2024, the project had leveraged 44%. In the Funding Proposal, co-financing contemplated only one source, explicitly MONRE, in the form of an in-kind grant. As planned, co-financing has come from that source – co-financing from additional sources has not been raised. Mobilization of planned MONRE cofinancing has been particularly low on materials and goods, and consultants and individuals, where mobilization rates were 14% and 16%, respectively (it increased to around 30% for staff time and workshops and training). The main reason for the lower-than-expected cofinancing is that project activities are delayed.

Table 9. Difference between planned and actual expenditure of co-financing sources, for the period between February 01, 2021, to March 30, 2024.

	Planned (Funding Proposal)	Cumulative Actual	Cumulative Over Funding Proposal for the first three years	Cumulative Over the whole project
Total	**$ 1,053,100**	**$ 463,299**	**44%**	**31%**

5.5.1.3 Is the rate of spending, incl. co-financing, consistent with the project's length of implementation to date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs?

107. **The rate of spending is not consistent with the project's originally planned length of implementation but is coherent with the actual delivery of outputs. The 18-month extension provides more time to disburse funds.** As noted, when 62% of the project's originally planned implementation had run, the project had disbursed 30% of the project funds and mobilized 31% of planned cofinancing. That means that in the remaining 20 months, in less than 40% of the planned implementation time, the project would have to spend 70% of the project funds and mobilize almost 70% of the planned cofinancing. This could have been challenging in terms of management. The 18-month extension granted by the GCF allows the project to spend the planned project funds, and mobilize planned co-financing, in a more manageable way. While by March 2024 the project had only spent 30% of the funds, progress in output delivery was also low (see section 5.4.1). In this sense, funds are still available for the delivery of the planned outputs.

5.5.1.4 Are financial reporting requirements being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties? To what extent are proper financial management standards applied? To what extent does the project adhere to UNEP's financial management policies? To what extent is standard financial documentation is complete, accurate, and available in a timely manner?

108. **Available information suggests financial management is consistent with UNEP's and GCF's policies and procedures and financial reporting is aligned with their financial reporting requirements.** The project appointed a FO within PMU to monitor, report, and approve requests for funds on a quarterly basis for activities executed by MONRE. The financial information provided in APRs follows the corresponding requirements. In this sense, standard financial documentation is complete, accurate, and available in a timely manner. Communication between the UNEP TM and the FMO is adequate.

5.5.2 Cost-effectiveness and Timeliness

5.5.2.1 To what extent is project execution cost-effective? How is the project enhancing its cost and time effectiveness?

109. **Project execution is not cost-effective**. In the first three years of implementation, actual PMC represented slightly over (102%) of what had been planned for that period[46]. Indeed, when 62% of the total project time had run, the project had actually spent 62% of its total PMC. However, by then, the project had only disbursed 30% of the project's total funds. Indeed, actual PMC represented 13% of the actual expenditure, which is well above the GCF ceiling of 5% for PMC. However, with the extension request PMC is at 5% as of January 2025. Furthermore, the delivery of outputs and the progress towards the expected results had been low.

110. As noted, in December 2024 the GCF approved a 1.5 year no cost extension, until 2026 (closing date on 8 June 2026, and completion date on 8 December 2026). This makes sense given the funds still to be spent, the outputs to be delivered and the progress to be made towards meeting the expected results. Nevertheless, while the percentage of PMC over the total project funds will likely decrease from the current 13%[47] once the rate of expenditure of component related project funds increases, PMC costs are likely to be greater than expected (above 5% of total project funds). In this regard, it will be important that the project mobilizes the expected co-financing, which given its source (i.e. MONRE) and nature (e.g. project staff, workshops, goods and materials) should help reduce PMC. In relation to cost-effectiveness, knowledge of other initiatives addressing similar needs of the same beneficiaries can avoid the duplication of effort and spend. Although as mentioned in section 0, some collaboration has already been achieved, continued collaboration with other projects would be beneficial particularly with Urban EbA South and the NAP UNEP and UN-Habitat projects

5.5.2.2 Are planned activities being delivered according to expected timeframes? Are there any delays? How significant are they? To what extent are activities being sequenced efficiently?

111. As also noted in the RVE report, **activities are not being delivered according to the expected timeframes, which has negatively affected the designed activity sequence.** Several project activities are running behind schedule, including studies and strategic plans, as well as the implementation of interventions on the ground. For example, the permeable paving solutions design was planned to take place on November 2023, but it had not been conducted as of July 2024. These delays have affected the planned logic sequence, where studies inform strategic planning and interventions are implemented based on the plans. On some occasions, interventions on the ground are being conducted or are planned to be conducted before the strategic plans are finalized. Delays have also had other implications,

[46] In particular, actual PMC were USD 265,433, while the planned PMC were USD 260,000.
[47] Specifically, actual PMC were USD 265,433, while the total expenditure was USD 2,062,855.

where on-the-ground activities had to be planned and implemented later in the season, overlapping with the rainy season, which made logistics more complicated.

112. Delays in implementation of activities are related to delays in the approval process of workplans, as well as disbursements. According to Laos procedures, requests for transfers of funds must first go to the Ministry of Finance, then an approval is also needed from the Bank of Laos, and then it is transferred to the project account, which was managed by the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). Once the money was available to the project, the PMU must send a letter to EPF to request the disbursement and get an approval to transfer the funds to project partners. It was a long process, where a delay in one of the steps of the chain could affect the entirety of the process. This has recently changed. Currently, MoF pays vendors directly.

113. Project activities have also been delayed due to a lack of process fluidity within the multi-layered governance structure. To conduct some of the project activities, the project team must go through a non-responsive tiered structure. In this sense, when considering the design of permeable paving solutions (activity 2.3.1), the project first needed the inputs and approval from the university and its relevant faculties involved, as well as from the PPSC and CTA, which can be time consuming. In this sense, as also noted in the RVE report (p. 38), the project lacks a binding mechanism for ensuring partners, such as the NUoL, deliver agreed products on time.

114. Some external factors have also negatively impacted the project, creating delays on project implementation, including, as noted, COVID-19 and the health crisis (globally and nationally); high market costs which caused delays in the staff procurement process, which did not allow the project to retain and to hire experienced personnel in a timely manner; and security issues that delayed and complicated project logistics of on-the-ground activities. Due to these delays, some of the project activities were conducted in advance, prior to budget approval, for example permeable paving site identification initial survey and data collection.

5.6 Preparation and readiness

5.6.1 Has the project addressed weaknesses in project design or any changes in the context or needs during the inception stage?

115. **There is no evidence that the project addressed weakness in project design or any changes in the context or needs during the inception stage**, apart from the adjustments to the RF mentioned above**.** In fact, the project did not have a proper inception phase, in the sense of a time dedicated to set up the institutional arrangements and hire the teams, which caused delays to the project from early stages.

5.7 Quality of project management and supervision / adaptive management / environmental and social safeguards

5.7.1.1 Are roles and responsibilities commonly understood between different project stakeholders? Are roles and responsibilities played as planned?

116. **The roles and responsibilities of project stakeholders were adequately defined during project design** (see section 2) **and have been mostly understood during project implementation.** This institutional structure is indeed mostly well understood, although is complex and involves long processes, which, as noted above, has resulted in significant delays. **While roles and responsibilities are predominantly clear, some roles have not been satisfactorily fulfilled.** At a higher project level, the AE and EE have had good bilateral communication between them and amongst relevant stakeholder and project partners and have maintained and promoted transparent communication channels. However, the PSC has not met frequently enough. The NPSC has met four times, with the last meeting being held on November 2023. Moreover, some of the roles within the CPSCs have faced frequent staff turnover, which has significantly affected the implementation of activities, particularly at the provincial level. Furthermore, key project staff positions have not been satisfactorily fulfilled, due to significant staff turnover and challenges to find replacements. The M&E, MGO, and ESO left the project and, until the date of the ITE, the positions have not been replaced. Additionally, the CO contract was not renewed, and the position remains vacant. The Admin and finance officer was changed twice already. Critically, the CTA position has been vacant for long periods of the implementation. It was vacant in 2021 and 2022, due to delays in the procurement process, and then for a long time in 2024, when the former CTA resigned. As of October 2024, a new CTA has been identified but the procurement process has not been finalized, so the project does not have this critical support. In addition, while the previous CTA was committed and had some useful experience and skills, he was not an urban EbA specialist, so he could not fully fulfill the capacity gaps of the national team. In this sense, while EbA and urban EbA share core principles, they differ in their specific scope and application. It is thus important that the CTA and TM of urban EbA project are experts on urban EbA, aligning with the scope, needs, and ToC of the project to provide tailored technical support. In the absence of a CTA, much of its work fell into the TM, who has six or seven additional projects to manage in parallel. The TM position changed early in 2024, but this did not have a significant negative implication to the project. Furthermore, there has been a change of rules at the government level, including regarding the role of the MOF. While before 2024 MOF did not have a role in the execution of activities apart from disbursement to MONRE, MOF's role changed significantly in 2024. As it was taking MONRE a lot of time to access funds transferred by UNEP (e.g. in June 2024 MONRE could not still access the funds transferred by UNEP early this year), MOF directly pays to the vendors now. The payment requests are collected once a month, which causes a lot of delays.

5.7.1.2 Has UNEP CCAU provided leadership towards achieving project outcomes, and provided adequate technical backstopping and supervision?

117. **The quality of UNEP's backstopping and oversight as accredited entity has been mixed on the technical and administrative sides.** On the technical side**,** UNEP stepped in on the development of baseline study, which the UN agency practically wrote, although this was not its role. Moreover, UNEP developed a partnership with Monash University to strengthen the technical quality of the project. In addition, the two TMs have been committed and have provided technical supervision. UNEP was also required to step in to hire a new CTA, which was originally a responsibility assigned to the EE. Due to UNEP's long administrative processes, during a great percentage of its implementation, the project has not been supported by a CTA, who has a key role to play, including on sustainability and scaling up, but also in the selection of sites, the development of long-term management plans and guidelines for the restoration activities, and the design of other interventions on the ground, including testing of permeable paving solutions. Moreover, when the first CTA was on board, he was not an urban EbA specialist. This has resulted in a not fully adequate technical supervision of the project, which, given the limited national capacities on urban EbA, has led to the suboptimal selection of sites and design of interventions, as discussed in section 1.1.1.2. Although the EE has engaged UN-Habitat to support the implementation of Activity 1.1.1, a closer and longer involvement of UN-Habitat, which has a strong office in the country, thematic expertise and a broad network of local experts to work on such topics. Its expertise could have been better leveraged for the benefit of the project. That said, although there is room for improvement in technical oversight, there are good examples of adequate supervision. UNEP rightly rejected a project intervention (restoration of a bridge destroyed by flooding) in Kaysone, Savannakhet Province, that while it had been prioritized by the community did not align with the EbA and IFCM concepts.

118. On the administrative side, upon request of the EE due to lack of capacity to process the procurement, UNEP has procured the ICFMS, effectively executing a major part of the project. Furthermore, it provided training and guidance on administrative and financial procedures to the EE, although this could have perhaps been provided earlier and with more intensity, given the observed steep learning curve on the side of the EE. UNEP provided guidance and training to build the capacity of project staff on procurement and financial management in compliance with the applicable regulations and policies as per the PCA, including online follow-up training sessions on UN procurement regulations to EPF and MONRE personnel, but this was provided late.

5.7.1.3 Have executing entities provided quality and timely project management?

119. **The project's EE (MONRE) project management has not been fully adequate, with room for improvement in terms of quality and timeliness.** While MONRE has had an adequate communication with UNEP and cooperation with other stakeholders, its project management has not been fully appropriate. MONRE has allowed for several staff to be

dedicated to the project through co-financing, including project's PM, Assistant PM and a National Designated Authority (NDA). Nonetheless, this has been lower than planned (31% of planned resources when 62% of the planned implementation time had run). Furthermore, the administrative and technical capacities have been limited. The EE did not have the adequate initial capacity to incorporate UN procurement process and requirements, making project disbursements challenging. The initial quality of the baselines studies was also low, and CTA and TM had to intervene to improve such products. In addition, apparently, some procurement processes prioritized government needs, disregarding project needs and priorities, so UNEP had to directly carry out some procurement processes. Moreover, as noted, understanding of urban EbA was limited. Furthermore, some approval processes are taking too long (for instance, the approval of the wetland management plan has taken more than a year), which, as noted, have created delays and negatively affected the logical sequence of activities. In addition, as noted above, there has been significant PMU staff turnover and challenges to find quick and suitable replacements. Finally, the EE has not established adequate mechanisms to ensure national partners, such as NUoL, deliver agreed products on time. At the provincial level, MONRE's management has been adequate. MONRE has supported PONRE with budget and technical guidance, and they have maintained a multilateral communication.

5.7.1.4 To what extent is the management of the project minimising UNEP's environmental footprint?

120. **Project management is adequately minimizing UNEP's environmental footprint, although this might be preventing enough in country visits.** UNEP has combined missions with some project milestone events, such as the inception workshop and NPSC meetings. Additionally, to minimize travel and maximize results, UNEP plans its monitoring visits once a year, with previous approval from the NPSC and PPSC, although actually the number of visits is probably too limited to ensure adequate technical oversight. UNEP's operating modality is overseen from the respective regional office, which minimizes UNEP's environmental footprint as much as possible.

5.7.1.5 What significant changes has the project experienced in its implementation? What is the quality of the adaptative actions taken?

121. Available PSC meetings minutes[48] indicate the project took some adaptive actions to improve its delivery. The minutes suggest that the meetings resulted mostly in the approval of already prepared documents, in particular annual performance reports, work plans and procurement plans, and the GRM and the community strategy, without significantly modifying them. However, the minutes reveal a few non predetermined actions, namely: i) the request to postpone the submission of the baseline report, in the first PSC meeting, in July 2021; ii) the share of responsibility of procurement between MONRE and EFP, where the former would be responsible for procuring goods and the latter for procuring services, and the establishment of an EbA Technical Working group in the second PSC meeting, in March 2022; and iii) the

[48] These are available for three of the four PSC minutes, in particular for the first three meetings.

recruitment of Project coordinators for three provinces and NUOL in the third PSC meeting, in December 2022. These adjustments were useful, although especially the one on procurement not enough to speed up project delivery to the expected degree.

5.7.1.6 Have recommendations from previous learning exercises e.g. PIRs been appropriately addressed?

122. The 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 APRs do not include any specific recommendations. Recommendations from PSC meetings were implemented.

5.8 Human rights and gender equity

5.8.1 To what extent has the project applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), the UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) and the GCF's environmental and social safeguards?

123. **At a high level, the project design fairly considered human rights, gender and environmental and social safeguards related principles, although it is unclear how they have been applied.** The design integrated the principles established in the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), the UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) and the GCF's environmental and social safeguards. This was done in the following manner:

- The project aims to strengthen the resilience of urban populations, particularly vulnerable groups, to climate change risks like flooding. This aligns with the human rights-based approach of addressing inequalities and empowering disadvantaged populations.
- The project includes a gender assessment and a gender action plan, indicating efforts to incorporate gender equality principles. This is in line with UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment.
- The use of ecosystem-based solutions demonstrates a focus on environmental sustainability. The project seeks to restore 800 hectares of urban wetland and 700 hectares of urban stream ecosystems, aligning with environmental safeguards.
- The project aims to build capacity of national and local representatives to use ecosystem-based adaptation approaches. This suggests efforts to ensure local participation and ownership, which are key principles of human rights-based approaches.
- The second project steering committee meeting endorsed the project-specific Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) protocol. The protocol aligns with the Government of Lao redress mechanisms, UNEP Stakeholder Response -Mechanism and GCF's Independent Redress Mechanism. A GRM brief was prepared and disseminated among project stakeholders and participant communities.

- The project developed an ESAP. When the need arises, *i.e.* some of the lands were privately owned, the project has updated the ESAP and procedures to reflect the consultations at individual household levels.

124. While the project incorporated several elements of the above-mentioned principles, especially regarding environmental sustainability, gender equality, and capacity building, the available information does not provide explicit details on how comprehensively each principle has been applied during implementation.

5.8.2 To what extent have the project design, implementation and monitoring considered gender inequalities and differentiation? Have plans for inclusivity, equality and/or equity been implemented as planned, or does more need to be done?

125. **During project design, the project adequately considered gender inequalities and differentiation.** During project design, a comprehensive gender analysis was developed, covering the background and context of gender in Laos, the roots of exclusion due to gender, and gender roles within the three target cities – the report also considers ethnicity. The Funding Proposal also included a Gender Action Plan (GAP), where for each of the project's outcomes, gender-related activities were proposed and criteria for evaluating performance were also developed. Additionally, during year 1 of implementation, the project successfully carried out the baseline study, allowing to properly adjust some of the project's RF targets to consider gender inequalities.

126. **During implementation, the consideration of gender inequalities and differentiation has been limited**. Women's representation in the project steering committees and activities is low. The project has made efforts to change this, always seeking that both women and men attend capacity building workshops, seminars, as well as meetings and awareness raising work, and involving the National Lao Women's Union (NLWU), with which a cooperation agreement has been signed. The M&E consultant monitors this aspect and is discussed within PSC meetings. However, there are structural barriers in the country for the equal participation of women, specially at the decision-making level. due to traditional gender roles where women are mostly working and supporting their household. In this sense, the output and activity gender targets aiming at 50% participation are unlikely to be achievable, especially in governance bodies such as the Flood Risk Management Committees, despite the gender-enabling actions proposed and implemented by the project.

5.9 Environmental and social safeguards

5.9.1 Were all relevant risks identified in the funding proposal? What has been the quality of risk mitigation strategies?

127. **The Funding Proposal adequately assessed all relevant project risks and properly identified their respective mitigation measures.** Seven of the eleven identified risks included mitigation measures that are valid and aligned with the project's expected results, namely risks 1 to 5, 7, and 10. Regarding risk 6, the Funding Proposal insufficiently demonstrates that the project does not overlap with previous or current initiatives within the country and provides incomplete evidence indicating that the project successfully integrated lessons learned from previous or similar interventions.

128. While the proposed mitigation actions were suitable for risk 8, there were circumstances outside the project control that did not allow for the project to adequately incorporate gender considerations. The complete assessment for risk 9 should be commented upon during the Terminal Evaluation. Finally, the proposed mitigation measures of risk 11 were not sufficient to mitigate the identified risk. The ITE assessment to each of the identified risk in the Funding Proposal is presented in Table 17.

129. In addition, the Funding Proposal included a GCF Secretariat's risk assessment (Table 10). This concluded that the overall programme risk was medium, since the country's debt burden limits its access to loans from international and regional development banks, and GCF grant funded activities are largely public goods and do not generate a financial return on the investment. The Funding Proposal also included an AE (UNEP) risk assessment, which also concluded that risk was medium, because, even though MONRE demonstrated a track record in executing projects funded by external donors, the entity had a high staff turnover that could affect the capacity of the EE, and MONRE had a limited technical institutional capacity of provincial and national government for flood management. The project-specific execution related risk was also rated as medium, since the AE stated that whether the policy recommendations/guidelines would lead to actual policy changes or not is beyond the project's scope. Similarly, the compliance risk rating was medium, given that the higher risk elements attributable to the Laos (i.e. deficiencies with Laotian laws and regulations to address money laundering and terrorist financing) are offset to a great extent by the anti-money-laundering/countering the financing of terrorism efforts of the AE. No mitigation measures were included for the risks identified and assessed in this table.

Table 10. GCF Secretariat Risk Assessment.

GCF Secretariat Risk Assessment	
Overall programme	Medium
Accredited Entity (AE) / Executing Entity (EE) capability to implement this project	Medium

Project-specific execution	Medium
Compliance	Medium
GCF portfolio concentration	Low

5.9.2 Were social and environmental risk screened, and mitigation strategies identified? Is the Grievance Redress Mechanism adequately designed? Were these mitigation strategies implemented effectively? Are they well monitored?

130. The project has adequately identified its social and environmental risks, and the corresponding mitigation strategies, through its Environmental and Social Action Plan (ESAP), which has been implemented. During the design stage, the AE screened and assessed the project to have minimal or no adverse environmental and/or social risks and impacts equivalent to category C and provided an environmental and social risk screening and an ESAP, which identified actions necessary to carry out the avoidance, minimization, and risk mitigation measures. The ESAP provides an analytical rationale for why the project activities are unlikely to trigger the application of GCF Indigenous Peoples Policy (IPP).

131. **During project implementation, the project can still be categorized with a low safeguard risk category**, since the potential risk issues summarised in the ESAP have been assessed to be low or avoidable through the adequate stakeholder engagement and safeguard measures the project is implementing. The project continuously monitors the risks identified in the ESAP and, with the implementation of the grievance redress mechanism (GRM), it is expected that any unexpected problems would be prevented or properly addressed and solved. GCF proceeds have been applied to the approved project activities, and environmental, social and economic safeguards (ESE) screening has been conducted on all the restoration activities conducted so far. However, site visits suggest that some potential negative environmental effects have not been fully considered. This is the case of the testing of the permeable paving solutions in some sites, particularly when this is planned to be applied in already permeable solutions, especially when this is well grown grass, as in the meteorological office of Pakse.

132. **The project designed a GRM protocol, which was endorsed during the second NPSC meeting.** According with the APR2023, the protocol aligns with the Government of Lao redress mechanisms, UNEP Stakeholder Response Mechanism, and GCF's Independent Redress Mechanism. A GRM brief was prepared in the local language and disseminated among project stakeholders and participant communities. Additionally, the project developed and presented four policy briefs to project stakeholders, which included, amongst others, a comprehensive component on environmental and social safeguards requirement and processes, as well as a GRM.

133. Available evidence suggests that the ESS expert consultant, along with the CTA and TM, have provided appropriate guidance and capacity building to screen and monitor identified risks in all the project activities and ensured compliance by all project stakeholders with the ESS management plan. The project updated its ESAP with possible risks associated with the

buffer areas that are owned or used by the local farmers as well as measures to mitigate risks. The project has also adequately addressed pollution risk management following ITAP recommendations and the baseline water quality results by providing training to local communities before the implementation of the restoration activities.

5.10 Stakeholder participation and cooperation

5.10.1 Are the stakeholder communication and consultation mechanisms effective and inclusive of differentiated groups?

134. **The project has implemented inclusive stakeholder communication and consultation mechanism during implementation of project activities, but more needs to be done, as limited social awareness and ownership has been observed.** The project has extensively engaged with stakeholders through targeted meetings and training sessions, as well as awareness raising events. For instance, workshops were organized in the target cities on topics such as wetland assessment, stakeholder analysis findings, management plan development, policy briefs and draft guidelines, as well as training on EbA. Additionally, the faculty of Forestry engaged provincial and village-level stakeholders in different steps of the wetland and stream management planning process in Paksan, Pakse and Savannakhet. The PSC and the PCSCs have also contributed to stakeholder communication and consultation to different types of groups. However, while communication and capacity development are certainly a continuous process, that often takes time, extensive government staff and village-level consultations conducted by the RVE team in mid 2024, that is, almost 4 years since project start, concluded that the awareness of the problem and the importance of the proposed strategy (EbA) and the ownership of project activities were limited[49]. Indeed, the RVE found that a great percentage of villagers indicate that they have not been significantly economically affected by the flooding phenomena, and that ecosystems do not help reduce flood risk[50] (indeed, most of them do not consider ecosystem services as highly valuable for their families[51]). The report also found a limited willingness of villagers to volunteer in ecosystem restoration, their involvement having been paid for[52]. The site visits of the MTR also

[49] The RVE report (p. 37) mentions that "UN Habitat conducted eight workshops, reaching up to 141 beneficiaries, but the impact on awareness, as measured by the same questionnaires used in the baseline, remains relatively low".
[50] While 92% of the villagers consulted by the RV team affirmed to have received information about flooding risk from the project and the government, 74% considered the risk of flood independent from the conditions of the ecosystem. RVE report, p. 15.
[51] The report found that, in general, villagers in and around the wetland valued more the ecosystem services than the villagers in and around the urban streams. Fishing, rice and vegetable cultivation and livestock grazing are more common in the wetland than in the urban streams, where cattle grazing is more prevalent in the streams. RVE report, pp. 15-16.
[52] "The only tangible implemented activity to date (*the removal of approximately 2 kilometres of invasive species from a stream bordering the wetland*) was carried out by paid beneficiaries using project funds. However, in the absence of additional funding, no volunteer participation is expected in the coming years. Given that the project seems to prioritize awareness-raising over livelihood improvements, it is important to note that awareness has not made a significant impact", p. 37

demonstrated limited awareness and ownership in terms of solid waste disposal and removal of invasive species.

5.10.2 To what extent were effective partnership arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders?

135. **The project has established partnerships with several organizations to support the implementation of project activities, but some of them are not being effective.** The project developed partnerships with national and international academic institutions, other UN agencies established in the country and national NGOs. Indeed, the project has partnered with the NUoL, including its Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Water Resources, and Faculty of Forest Sciences, to support several assessments, management plans, a knowledge hub and testing of permeable paving solutions; the Thai Asian Institute of Technology, to support the development of EbA curriculum and to conduct joint research; and the Australian Monash University, to develop EbA guidelines and produce joint research in the topic. In addition, it partnered with UN-Habitat's office in Laos, to build the capacity of stakeholders on EbA planning and implementation, and to acquire technical advice on urban EbA. Furthermore, the project has partnered with NLWU, to support project communication activities by using the Union's extensive grassroots network and to promote gender mainstreaming. Moreover, as noted, the project has worked with PONREs and to a lesser extent the city-level government. While this large number of partnerships is very positive and has added a lot of technical value in a context where knowledge on EbA is limited in the country and even the PMU, and contributes to the sustainability of project results, it has also led to coordination challenges, as well as project delays, with agreed outputs not been provided on time, as mentioned earlier.

5.11 Communication and public awareness

5.11.1 To what extent has the project implemented appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns? Does the project effectively communicate lessons and experience with project partners and interested groups?

136. **The project is implementing communication and public awareness activities at the local level, with room for expanding their effectiveness and the work at the national level.** The project developed a Communication and Awareness Strategy, which was endorsed by the NPSC in 2022. On that basis, the project has conducted multiple and diverse communication and awareness raising efforts, including in person campaigns at city, village and school levels, radio programmes, videos, a website and social media. In person awareness raising campaigns have been conducted as other field activities were implemented, such as the restoration of the wetland, and during special days, such as World Wetland Day, the World Environment Day and the Thatlaung Festival. Posters have been developed, distributed and displayed in the villages in key topics[53]. The project has also

[53] (i) the value of wetlands and urban streams; (ii) the need to protect natural streams and rivers; (iii) the importance of proper solid waste disposal, (iv) regulations on waterway buffer zones, and (v) household-level adaptation measures

produced and distributed merchandise items (T-shirts, caps, etc.) to stakeholders. In addition, the project has disseminated six policy briefs in English and Lao languages on different topics[54]. Furthermore, the project ran a radio programme on climate change, flood risks, values of wetlands and streams management and proper waste management in Bolikhamxay between August 2022 and April 2023. PMU staff made a short video story of Pakpeung villager's contribution to remove invasive species and restoration of Nong Peung Wetland. The procurement process is ready to start for production of three different Awareness raising videos targeting policy level and grassroot level audiences. Furthermore, MONRE has opened a dedicated Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/UrbanEBSLaoPDR) for the project to raise awareness and inform stakeholders about the project activities. The project has been communicating on project activities through this Facebook page. Some provinces, such as the Bolikhamxay province, have also disseminated information through their website. Through these communication and awareness raising activities the project estimates that it has directly reached 2,430 community members and students with 52% (1,232) women. Furthermore, as noted earlier, the project has recently partnered with NLWU, the primary role of whom is wide scale awareness raising, which is yet to be completed.

137. However, the sites visits conducted by the ITE team and the consultations conducted by the RVE team suggest awareness is still limited at government and the village levels, even where more progress has been made[55]. Moreover, no or little communication and awareness raising efforts have been conducted at the national level, which is key for the sustainability and scaling up and replication of the project's results. Furthermore, the focus of communication has been more on raising awareness on key issues and the project than on sharing lessons, in part due to the limited progress in project delivery.

5.12 Country ownership and drivenness

5.12.1 Is the level of involvement of government/local level officials sufficient to ensure ownership over project outputs and outcomes necessary for long term impact to be realized?

138. **As of October 2024, the project had been driven by MONRE and provincial governments, with good involvement of the NUoL, but ownership of other key national stakeholders, city governments and local residents/ecosystems users did not seem**

[54] (i) a project brief that includes a summary of the project outcomes, outputs and activities and implementation approach; (ii) environmental and social safeguards requirement and process; (iii) a brief on the Gender Action Plan, (iv) Grievance redress mechanism, (v) Socio-economic and institutional environment analysis of Stakeholders for EBA and ICFMS in Laos, and (vi) Valuation of Ecosystem services of target wetland and streams.

[55] The RVE report (p. 21) argues that "The highest awareness seems have been reached in the Province of Bolikhamxay where the project developed also a radio-based campaign…" However, while "in principle about 82% of the sample declared to know the problem of global warming but the relationship between the problems experienced and climate change is not considered obvious by all the villagers (40% versus 36%)".

sufficient for the long term impact of the project to be realized. The project had been driven by MONRE, as the EA, comprising key roles, such as the PM, Assistant PM and a NDA. While workshops on urban EbA planning and implementation have also involved other ministries and national level stakeholders and some of them participate in the NPSC, as of October 2024 their involvement had been limited, when they play an essential role for the sustainability and scaling up and replication of project's results. This is in particular the case of the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, which includes the Department of Housing and Urban Planning, and to a lesser extent the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In this sense, the promotion of urban EbA in Laos requires cross-sectoral ownership at the national level, definitely from the stakeholders in charge of urban planning and hard infrastructure, and not just the institution leading the environmental agenda.

139. The project had also been driven to a great extent by the provincial governments. While the engagement has been led by the PONREs, the involvement of other sectors has been more significant at provincial than at the national level, through training activities but also through the implementation of concrete, on the ground activities, which represent the majority of project activities. The PCSCs have played an important role in this regard.

140. However, as of October 2024, the involvement of city level authorities has been more limited, and their ownership of project activities and results does not seem significant. In part this is due to the decentralization level in the country, where many city-level interventions are decided at the provincial level. In this sense, as at the national level, capacity building and participation in governance bodies from time to time does not seem enough. Nevertheless, the ownership of city authorities seems critical for the long term impact of the project to be realized.

141. At the village level, the project has involved local residents and ecosystems users. During the management planning process and land use survey of the Pakse wetland, PIU found that some of the buffer areas are either owned by farmers or used for agriculture activities. Accordingly, the PONRE carried out detailed consultations and negotiations with these farmers to build ownership among the communities and ensure long term sustainability of the restoration activities. As of June 2024, the PONRE had signed agreements with 61 farmers who live next to buffer area, or own or uses buffer areas, with the long term commitment to support the wetland ecosystem. However, as noted above, awareness and ownership of local residents and ecosystem users seems still insufficient, especially around the urban streams.

142. The major ICFMS activity that starts in 2025 has the potential to strengthen country ownership, further engaging relevant national, provincial, city and village stakeholders, but at the time of this MTR its impacts are yet to be seen.

5.13 Sustainability

5.13.1 Does the project have a specific, sufficient, and realistic exit/sustainability strategy or measures, and to what extent have they been implemented?

143. **The Funding Proposal includes a specific and comprehensive, yet not fully realistic sustainability strategy.** Section C5 of the Funding Proposal presents the actions that the project is meant to implement to ensure the sustainability and foster the scaling up and replication of project results. In particular, the exit strategy stipulates that, upon project completion, project sustainability would be ensured by the information and knowledge base built, and the understanding and uptake of urban EbA, which would continue to be advanced by the knowledge hub, the strengthened coordination mechanisms, the developed strategies and plans, and the regular monitoring and maintenance of the EbA interventions implemented under Component 2 (i.e. the restored wetland and streams, and permeable paving). In this sense, the designed exit/sustainability strategy is comprehensive, comprising explicitly technical capacity and social awareness (knowledge), and institutional and financial aspects, while covering policy and political aspects more implicitly. The only risks that were not considered were the biophysical and environmental risks. However, the designed exit strategy does not seem fully realistic, in particular regarding knowledge, given the original awareness and technical capacity gaps, as demonstrated at mid-term. In this sense, as of October 2024, the proposed actions do not seem sufficient to fully build the social and technical capacity needed to monitor and maintain project results after the completion of the project (for a more detailed assessment see below).

144. Similarly, the approach to ensure the financial sustainability of the project is limited and does not seem realistic. On the one hand, as discussed, the project does not strengthen municipal finance nor green growth and circular economy at the local level, which would have been key to ensure municipalities have resources to operate and maintain project results, and to scale them up, and to ensure that livelihoods consistent with the reduction and management of flood risks can be sustained, both in terms of ecosystem provisioning services (e.g. sustainable agroforestry or agriculture) and an appropriate management of solid waste, On the other hand, while the exit strategy refers to submitting applications for financing to the EPF, providing training seems insufficient to ensure the mobilization of funding, which is actually not included in the RF.

145. **As of June 2024** (when 30% of the project funds had been disbursed, and around 80% of the originally planned project time had run, and around 73% of the revised project duration had been used)**, the exit strategy had been implemented only partially.** While the project had conducted significant efforts in raising social awareness and strengthening technical capacities and has made some progress in executing actions in the policy and institutional fronts, progress in completing the actions related to the financial sustainability of project results has been very limited, probably because the policy work is in the preliminary stages

and the on the ground interventions have not fully started. The start of the ICFMS work in 2025 is expected to address these aspects, as ICFMS is expected to provide the basis for more substantial investments, including in both EbA and grey infrastructure, after project completion. At mid-term the effectiveness of the ICFMS is yet to be seen. The section below discusses existing and likely sustainability risks.

5.13.2 What are the main risks to the sustainability of project benefits, including legal and policy, governance and institutional, technical and socio-political, financial and environmental/biophysical risks?

Legal and policy related risks

146. At the legal and policy level, the project is strengthening, and plans to strengthen, the legal and policy framework at the local level. This includes the development of ICFMSs and ecosystem management plans, which, importantly, come together with signed partnership agreements with ecosystem users. As of October 2024, the PONRE had already signed agreements with 61 farmers who live next to the wetland buffer area, or own or use buffer areas, with the long-term commitment to support the wetland ecosystem, although agreements with stream users have not been reported. These strategies, plans and agreements can greatly contribute to the sustainability of the project results. However, although the exit strategy assumes that the approaches promoted by these strategies will be integrated in other policies and plans, this is still to be seen and will require significant efforts. This seems relatively likely at the provincial level, which may have important implications at the city-level given the decentralization level of the country. However, the progress at national level is limited, which negatively affects the sustainability of project results. Indeed, as of June 2024, in the legal and policy domain, the project seems to have focused exclusively at the subnational level, with limited interaction with the NAP process and limited influence on land-use planning and infrastructure development related laws, policies, strategies, plans and regulations at the national level, which greatly determine subnational plans and investments.

Technical, social and political related risks

147. As noted, the project has conducted several capacity building trainings and awareness raising efforts, including events, posters, radio programmes, and work in social media (see section 5.11). It has also produced studies that clearly show the importance of the flood risk management and of EbA in that regard and is promoting academic research. In addition, the project plans to produce EbA guidelines, create a knowledge hub and adjust the university curricula, in principle for civil engineers. All these efforts will likely greatly contribute to political and social awareness and technical capacity. For instance, the valuation of the benefits provided by urban ecosystems will encourage decision-makers to continue maintaining the ecosystems restored under the project and to invest further in such adaptation interventions. However, as noted in section 5.10.1, at midterm, field visits conducted by the ITE team and consultations carried out by the RVE team showed that technical capacities were still very low, with a poor understanding of what EbA entails in urban areas to reduce and manage

flooding, and how feasible it is to do so[56]. In this sense, more capacity building seems to be needed to ensure stakeholders have the capacity to monitor and maintain, as well as scale up and replicate, project results once the project finalizes. Moreover, the project does not fully address the high government technical staff turnover. The establishment of a knowledge hub providing training and the improvement of the university curricula are interesting efforts. However, it will be important that training is provided frequently enough and that is structured, active and tailored. In turn, the revision of the curricula would need to cover a wide range of relevant careers, not only civil engineering, but also urban planning, architecture, economics and management, for example, and will only provide benefits in the medium to long term.

148. As mentioned in section 5.10.1, despite the multiple awareness raising activities conducted by the project, social awareness of the problem and the importance of EbA to address it is still limited. Furthermore, high poverty rates and the related urgency for quick benefits could further reduce social ownership of project results, and thus their sustainability, given that EbA related benefits are often materialized in the medium to long term, and some of them are not obvious or clearly visible even then. Any economic shock would hamper the sustainability of project results. In this sense, there is a need to continue communicating the short, medium and long term EbA benefits at the local, community, user groups levels, and to do so in more effective ways. Both in terms of more technical and formal capacity building and social awareness, it will also be important to further identify and integrate relevant local, traditional knowledge, which can increase ownership and support sustainability, as those relevant practices are already integrated into everyday actions.

149. Political instability or discontinuity does not seem to have been an important challenge during the implementation of the project and will likely not be a sustainability issue in the short term. Further social awareness would put pressure on politicians to sustain the project's results, but this might require as well further collaboration with development partners promoting a similar urban resilience agenda and a more active high level advocacy involvement from UNEP, directly or through the UN resident coordinator or sister agencies with in-country presence, such as UNDP or UN-Habitat.

Governance and institutional related risks

150. The project has made some progress in establishing local governance structures that can contribute to the sustainability of project results. The creation of local ecosystem (wetland or stream) management committees is very important in this regard, as it creates decentralized decision-making bodies and builds ownership. However, at mid-term, FRMCs are not fully operational, and will need to be further strengthened to contribute to the sustainability of project results[57]. In this sense, provinces do not yet have a mechanism to sustain the results

[56] The RVE report (p. 21) found that some interviewees at the provincial level declared to not understand the concept of integrated flood management and that there is no "long-term solution".

[57] In this line, the RVE report (p. 44) argues that "so far, the FRMCs appear to function more as a political body, lacking the capacity to link the needs of the population with decision-makers. It also struggles to translate those needs into funded tools, instruments, and strategies necessary to advance climate change adaptation for local communities".

of the project[58]. Furthermore, it will be critical to combine this with stronger land use planning enforcement capacities. The involvement of PONRE's land section is in this sense crucial. Moreover, governance structures regarding the maintenance of permeable paving solutions, which should involve MOPT, but also the Ministry of Education, are less clear. Similarly, little progress seems to have been made, and insufficient efforts seem to be planned, to promote national-level governance structures that can support the sustainability of project results, within and beyond the NAP process. For instance, while MONRE's engagement is significant, a greater the involvement of MOPT at this level seems critical.

Economic and financial related risks

151. The Funding Proposal considered the use of regular domestic spending, by integrating ICFMS provisions through guidelines, planning frameworks, and performance frameworks of key institutions, and the mobilization of other, non-regular sources of funding for the maintenance of project results. While some officials in the provincial governments seem to be willing to monitor and maintain project results with the provincial regular resources, at mid-term none of the provinces had established a consistent annual budget to sustain the progress achieve. If they do, provincial resources will most likely be insufficient, given shortcomings in provincial finances. The Funding Proposal considered three additional sustainable financial mechanisms to cover these gaps, namely i) establishing dedicated, ring-fenced funds for ICFM for each of the target cities; ii) increasing and more strongly enforcing fines for encroachment into stream and wetland buffer zones to help fund ICFM; and iii) preparing loan financing applications for the Environment Protection Fund for installing urban EbA interventions, which would be promoted through capacity building of city authorities and community organizations. These strategies could be useful, although perhaps insufficient, as noted in section 5.13.1. As of October 2024, however, the project has not made progress in any of these three mechanisms, nor worked in alternative financial solutions. In this sense, it is unclear how the national and city governments will mobilize financial resources for the sustainability of project results. In this regard, the capacity of city governments seems particularly low, with no support from the project to strengthen municipal finance to sustain (and scale up and replicate) project results. Similarly, it is still to be seen to what extent the planned ICFMS work is able to help leverage other non-public and domestic resources for this purpose. In this regard, for example, no progress has been observed in public-private partnerships, and on promoting green growth and circular economies, which would be critical to improve the management of solid and liquid waste[59], and invasive species. The availability of financial resources for the maintenance of the knowledge hub seems also uncertain. In this

Moreover, "Although the FRMC committee seems to be put in place, still must move towards a more proactive activities and implement the internal management by clearly defining roles and responsibilities to manage flooding events" (p. 24).

[58] See also RVE report, p. 25.

[59] Some GEF SCIP projects are promoting solid and liquid waste management approaches that allow companies to make profit out of plastic, organic and liquid waste, thus establishing incentives for solid and liquid waste to be properly managed, and not inappropriately dumped in water bodies, helping therefore reduced flooding.

sense, as also concluded by the RVE report[60], the economic and financial related risk are significant for the sustainability of project results.

Biophysical and environmental related risks

152. As discussed in section 5.3, while the project will likely make progress in implementing ecosystem restoration activities, it will likely not meet the end of the project target established in its RF, even with the 1.5 year no cost extension that has been granted by the GCF. This could have implications not only in terms of delivering expected results, but also in terms of the sustainability of these results, because ecosystems will likely be less restored and thus less resilient to external shock, including extreme weather events. Furthermore, while the project has conducted hydrological studies and land surveys to inform its interventions, as noted, site visits in June 2024 suggested that at mid-term these studies and surveys were actually not fully informing the selection of sites nor the design of interventions (hydrological modelling outcomes are being made available in November 2024). Indeed, flood management interventions, especially those related to permeable paving solutions, seem to had been defined without properly analyzing the causes of flooding and which combination of strategies could more effectively reduce and manage flooding. The ICFMS is expected to address some of these issues, including a task to look at watershed restoration. This approach might result in significant environmental risks to the sustainability of project results, especially considering projected climate changes. Moreover, the limited enforcement of land use regulations, such as the protection of buffer zones, does not help. The absence of a multi-hazard approach also implies sustainability risks, as health of the ecosystems where restoration activities have been conducted can be negatively affected by climate hazards not considered by the project. For instance, more frequent and intense heat waves and dry spells or drought can severely affect the ecosystems, jeopardizing the efforts made to restore them, when interventions do not factor these changes in in terms, for example, of the tree species planted. Furthermore, the limited capacity to address key environmental challenges, such as solid waste management, which is often disposed of at the targeted ecosystems, especially streams, reduces the likelihood of sustainable project results. Indeed, addressing waste management requires not only awareness raising campaigns, but also infrastructure and business models that the project is not considering and is probably not suited to deliver. Similarly, as also noted in the RVE report (p. 26), the project has not found an effective way of managing hyacinth[61], which also affects the results of the project and their sustainability.

153. The development of the ICFMS, which starts in 2025, has the potential to address some of these issues by providing a basis for the sustainability (and scaling up) of the EbA interventions of the project, and strengthening them through the promotion of complementary grey infrastructure investments. As of December 2024, the progress on developing the ICFMS

[60] The RVE report (p. 25) indicates that “none of the provinces have identified financial solutions to boost investment or established a consistent annual budget to sustain the progress achieved. The dependence of the work implementation by projects funds was well expressed in the answers received, and no further work will be done anywhere without direct funding from the project, excluding every possibility of autonomous sustainability of the Project”.

[61] A few years after the intervention of the project, the vegetation is back again.

and its likely contribution to the sustainability of the project results is to be seen – it should be assessed by in the terminal review report.

6 CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 Main Strengths

154. S1. The project is well aligned with global (UN, UNEP, GCF), national, provincial and city priorities (see section 5.1.2).

155. S2. The project rightly focuses on a key development problem, related to two global and national trends of high importance, urbanization and climate change, by dealing with urban floods. In this sense, the project is significantly strategic (see section 1.1.1.1).

156. S3. The strategy of the project rightly considers ecosystem services to increase adaptation, wisely complementing EbA with other types of solutions, such as permeable paving solutions, promoting innovation (see section 1.1.1.2).

157. S4. The project strategically works on local policy and planning instruments and governance structures to complement the on the ground work, which is key for the sustainability and scaling up and replication of the project results (see section 1.1.1.2).

158. S5. The project tries to expand scientific knowledge, through the development of hydrological models and economic valuation exercises (see section 1.1.1.2).

159. S6. The project has established partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders, leveraging technical expertise, human resources and social capital, which contributes to the effectiveness and efficiency of the project and the sustainability of its results (see section 5.10.2).

6.1.2 Main Weaknesses

160. W1. While the original intention of the project was to increase the resilience to floods of urban populations, the selected sites are mostly peri-urban rather than urban, with low density, and do not tend to indirectly benefit downstream vulnerable urban populations (see section 1.1.1.2).

161. W2. The project does not fully integrate soft and hard adaptation. While, as mentioned, it considers both EbA and permeable paving solutions, there is limited intentional

complementarity with infrastructure investments that can help reduce and manage flood risks (see section 1.1.1.2).

162. W3. The project puts forward an ecosystem lens, but does not fully consider the integrity of ecosystems, in particular the integrity of watersheds, disregarding upstream work, which is critical to reduce flood risk downstream (see section 1.1.1.2).

163. W4. The project would have benefited from putting forward a multi-hazard approach, where in addition to flood risk, heat related climate risks are also considered and addressed, to the extent possible. Similarly, the project has room for further considering environmental and social co-benefits, including biodiversity co-benefits, which can often be promoted without additional costs, and leveraging potential un-expected adaptation benefits (e.g. climate proofing educational infrastructure) (see section 1.1.1.2).

164. W5. The project promotes innovative technologies (i.e. permeable paving solutions), but does not critically assess in which contexts and under which conditions their implementation adds value. Interventions are proposed without assessing the cause of flooding and how different solutions complement each other to best address the existing problem (see section 1.1.1.2).

165. W.6 The project strengthens subnational capacities, which are essential to deal with climate-related hazards, such as flooding. However, it pays limited attention to the national level, including limited complementarity with national level planning processes, which are fundamental to enable, support, sustain, scale up and replicate local action, in this case integrated flood risk management (see sections 1.1.1.2 and 5.4.3.3).

166. W7. As of July 2024, progress in delivering outputs and advancing towards achieving outcome and impact level indicators has been very low, progress being particularly slow in the implementation of on-the-ground activities, but the 18-month extension, granted on 14/01/25, provides very helpful time to make more progress and achieve expected end of the project targets (see section 5.4). While the expenditure was overall low (see section 5.5.1), the project was not cost-effective, having very high PMC, well beyond the GCF ceiling (see section 5.5.2).

167. W8. COVID-19 and slow procurement processes, both by design and by an inadequate understanding of them, have negatively affected project delivery and the logical sequence of activities (see section 5.5.2.2).

168. W9. The project has not received sufficient technical oversight: it has not benefited from a specialized CTA[62] throughout the implementation, and partnerships with key institutions, such as UN-Habitat, who were engaged by the EE to implement Activity 1.1.1, could have been extended. TMs have not visited sites regularly enough to provide the needed and detailed supervision (see section 5.7).

[62] When the initial CTA resigned, UNEP was required to step in to hire a CTA, a responsibility which was originally assigned to the EE.

169. W10. Despite the significant efforts to raise awareness and engage stakeholders, technical and social awareness and ownership are still limited (see section 5.10.1).

170. W11. The RF is not appropriate to monitor progress at the output, outcome and impact levels. While the M&E plan had some strengths, it had important weakness and has not been fully implemented (see section 5.3).

171. W12. The project design included a relative comprehensive exit strategy, but at mid-term there are important policy, governance, technical, social, financial and biophysical risks to the sustainability of projects results (see section 5.13).

6.2 Lessons learned

Technical related

172. L1. **Urban resilience projects are essential**.In an urbanized and urbanizing world, and in the climate emergency, it is critical that development and adaptation projects, including those funded by the GCF and implemented by UNEP, such as the reviewed project (Laos Urban EbA South), aim at enhancing the resilience of urban populations to climate hazards, including extreme heavy precipitation, in order to reduce and better manage flooding, which is often a critical issue in developing cities (see paragraph 34). In these projects, it is important to ensure that projects work with truly urban populations, directly and/or indirectly (upstream in rivers that run through urban areas), instead of focusing on rural or peri-urban populations downstream (see paragraph 44). (S2, W1)

173. L2. **Climate adaptation projects need to tailor their interventions the specific contexts in which they work.** Climate adaptation is context specific. There are no-size-fit-all solutions. An approach that can greatly increase resilience in one context can greatly reduce it in another context. Climate change adaptation needs to be informed by an assessment of the context, as scientific as possible, considering that climate risk (and flood risk) is a function of hazard, exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity, and to some extent risks can be reduced and to certain extent they have to be managed. Technological innovation, such as on permeable paving solutions, needs to be tailored, rather than be applied in a generic manner (see paragraph 45) (S5, W5)

174. L3. **Multi-hazard approaches are essential.** Given the relatively scarce resources to support international development and adaptation, and complementarities between adaptation measures, it is important that development and adaptation projects favour a multi-hazard approach and try to maximize co-benefits. In this sense, it is crucial that adaptation projects focusing on flood risk management can also contribute to reduce heat related risks, especially when working on cities in relatively warm areas affected by the urban heat island effect (see paragraph 41) (W4).

175. L4. **Financial sustainability should be activitly promoted during project designs and implementation.** The availability of financial resources is an essential condition for the

sustainability of the results of a project, and to its scaling up and replication. In developing countries, like Laos, where sub-national governments often have weak financial capacities, the sustainability of urban resilience projects, including urban flood risk reduction and management projects, such as the Urban EbA South project, often requires enhancing municipal finance, supporting the mobilization of national and international public funds, and the leverage of non-public resources, for instance by promoting the circular economy, supporting business that can help the economy grow by addressing an environmental problem, such as solid and liquid waste, or using ecosystems in a sustainable way (green growth) (see paragraphs 43 and 152) (W12).

176. L5. **Delivery of co-benefits should be enhanced in project design and implementaiton.** Given the multi-dimensional nature of adaptation, adaptation projects often have, or can have, non-expected results (in this case, flood resilient schools). It is important that projects identify, systematize and maximize these results to the extent possible (see paragraph 38) (W4).

Institutional and goverance related

177. L6. **Climate change adaptation requieres multi-level and multi-sectoral governance arrangements.** Development, and climate change adaptation, including flood risk management, require multi-level work, that is synergetic efforts at the national, regional (ecosystem integrity) and local levels, given their complementary responsibilities and resources considering the decentralization framework of each country. In this sense, achieving a paradigm shift demands complex, multi-dimensional approaches that work in a synergistic manner on the policy, governance, technical capacity, social awareness, technology, and financial fronts. It is also essential to work in land use planning at the ecosystem scale and building codes, of different infrastructure (including schools if interventions greatly focus on this type of infrastructure), which have a key role in shaping the built environment (see paragraph 38) (S4, W3, W6)

178. L7. **Partnerships can add value, but need to be strategically selected.** Coordination and collaboration with other stakeholders can greatly benefit development and adaptation projects. Partnerships with subnational governments (including provincial governments) and universities, both local, national and international, can help significantly, but it is also important to ensure coordination and collaboration between projects, particularly within an institution (e.g. Urban EbA North and South, and the NAP projects in Laos). It has also to be considered that having many partnerships creates management challenges. In this sense, finding a balance is crucial, establishing partnership when, on what and with whom is strategic. (see paragraphs 67, 69 and 136) (S6).

179. L8. **Lessons from relevant projects can provide useful insights.** While there have been some exchanges, there is scope for the project to continue drawing lessons from relevant projects, including Urban EbA North, the NAP, UN-Habitat's project in Laos, and other GEF and infrastructure projects, which may be able to inform project delivery and increase cost-effectiveness (see section 5.1.4.4).

Execution related

180. L9. **Execution requieres specialized technical and on the ground oversight.** To be effective and efficient, development and adaptation projects, including those funded by the GCF and implemented by UNEP, need permanent specialized technical oversight, especially so for making key decisions, including the selection of sites and the design of the interventions in them. Urban EbA is a very specific field, quite different to EbA in rural areas. In this sense, urban EbA projects require oversight from people with knowledge and experience in that field. As adaptation is context-specific, it is important that the key people providing technical oversight (i.e., TM, CTA) do visit project sites, and that they have enough time for the project, not being overbooked with too many projects. Specialized institutions with strong in-country presence (such as UN-Habitat in Laos regarding urban resilience) may also be able to help provide technical oversight when the implementing agencies or accredited entities do not have in country presence and the executing partner is not an expert in the specialized topic, such as urban EbA. (see paragraphs 46 and 118) (W9)

181. L10. **Procurements capacities need to be assessed and strengthened as needed as early as possible.** The smoothness of procurement greatly affects the effectiveness and efficiency of development and adaptation projects. It is key to simplify procedures to the extent possible, and when they do not have the required skills or experience, which is often the case when projects are executed by public institutions in least developed countries, like Laos, train responsible parties as early in the process as possible, including before the project gets approved, to avoid delays by getting cases rejected. Slow procurement will otherwise have negative impacts on project delivery, logical sequence and cost-effectiveness (see paragraph 113 and 119) (W8).

6.3 Recommendations

Recommendation #1:	**Revise the RF of the project, especially in relation to end of project targets, and develop an internal monitoring system.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	With support from UNEP, and in coordination with MONRE and the NPSC more broadly, the PMU should revise the RF of the project, considering the findings of this report (see section 5.3). In particular, based on Table 15, the PMU should revise output and impact indicators, adjust end of the project targets (especially for indicators A7.1, 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.2.1, and 2.3), and ensure indicators (e.g. indicator 1.1.2) consider one element only, spliting them when needed. In addition, the PMU should develop an internal monitoring system to ensure partners complete the planned activities on time,

	assess the progress in all indicators, and inform decision making (see section 5.3)[63]. (W12)
Priority Level:	Medium
Responsibility:	PMU, with support from UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	6–12 months

Recommendation #2:	**Strengthen the logic of the interventions on the ground**, including revisiting the selection of sites and interventions in the selected cities, considering environmental challenges (e.g. waste, invasive species) in a more systemic way, and paying more attention to ecosystem integrity (i.e. watersheds)
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	This should include revisiting site selection and intervention design, based on a robust assessment of the causes of flooding and the most effective combination of soft and hard interventions (e.g., drainage systems, soil stabilization) to reduce and manage flooding. The approach should consider other hazards, particularly heat-related risks, and their co-benefits, integrate traditional knowledge, and establish synergies with other projects (see section 5.1.1.2). It should also explore substantive ways to address waste, such as incorporating it into management plans, which should be finalized and approved as soon as possible[64]. Additionally, the PMU, with UNEP and the CTA's support, should work on strengthening land use plans and their enforcement. The PMU should also explore ways of dealing with invasive species like hyacinth, leveraging UNEP's global expertise (see sections 5.1.4.5 and 5.12.2). The project should further strengthen integrated watershed management approaches (see sections 5.1.1.2 and 5.12.2). A starting point should be integrating forest management in the Pakse stream area within the management plan (W1, W2, W3, W4, W5). The development of the ICFMS should promote a watershed approach to mitigate upstream flooding and adopt a multi-hazard framework, to the extent possible.
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	UNEP and MONRE, with support of the new CTA
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Within the next 6–12 months

Recommendation #3:	**Strengthen the national level work and the policy and land use planning and infrastructure planning and building related aspects**

[63] This is also recommended in the RVE report, which provides useful specific recommendations in pp. 42-43 and 45-47, respectively. On the latter the RVE provides detailed recommendations on staff orientation and capacity building, coordination, effective reporting, streamline indicators, data management, monitoring plan

[64] This is also a recommendation of the RVE report, pp. 42 and 43.

Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	With support of UNEP and MONRE, through but also beyond the ICFMS, the PMU should strengthen the national level work and the policy and land use planning and infrastructure planning and building related aspects, including increasing synergies with Urban EbA North and the NAP, but not limited to that (see sections 1.1.1.2, 0 and 5.4.3.3). In this sense, at the national level, the project should not only develop EbA guidelines, but should also inform the NAP based on its findings from different types of sites, including the revision of building standards for educational infrastructure, as well as drainage canals (wider, deeper, larger) and roads (better drainage systems, more trees). In this line, more specifically, with support from UNEP and the CTA, the PMU should leverage their work in schools to contribute to the strengthening of the building codes of educational infrastructure, working with the Ministry of Education, and linking with UN-Habitat, for instance regarding raising buildings higher (50 cm or 60 cm) to cope with the projected increased intensity of rain[65]. (W5, W6, W11)
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	PMU, with support of UNEP and MONRE
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12–18 months

Recommendation #4:	**Enhance technical oversight, including hiring an adequate Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) and the Task Manager (TM) visiting the country**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	UNEP should strengthen technical oversight (see section 5.7). To that end, UNEP should hire a specialized CTA urgently. This person should have knowledge and experience in urban EbA. In addition, the TM should visit the country, including visit to the proposed intervention sites. UNEP and MONRE should also assess the need for expanding the PMU, considering the importance of managing the very high PMC and assuming that it will not likely be feasible to increase the available budget for consultants[66]. (W9)
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	UNEP
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Immediate (within 3–6 months)

[65] The recommendation is not to fund the raising of the buildings, but to help strengthen the building codes of educational infrastructure (for instance, regarding the raising of buildings).

[66] The RVE report (p. 42) recommends that the technical staff of the PMU is expanded and strengthened, with the aim of identifying specific task managers responsible for the implementation of the tasks throughout the life of the project. The MTR team believes that while this could improve project delivery, it may not be strictly needed. Furthermore, it may not be financially feasible given the current need to reduce the ratio of PMC with regards to total project expenditure to comply with GCF PMC policies. While the salary of national consultants has increased, the project does not have much flexibility to increase them, even if this means that it is unfeasible to get the best national consultants.

Recommendation #5:	**Accelerate on-the-ground work, including the implementation of physical interventions, particularly wetland and urban stream restoration.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	Once R2 and R4 have been implemented, UNEP, MONRE and the PMU, with support of the new CTA and PIUs, should **accelerate the on-the-ground work**, in particular regarding the restoration of the Nong Peung wetland and the urban streams, and the testing of permeable paving solutions, given the slow progress in this front, as the project has so far mostly focused on knowledge and awareness raising activities (W7)[67].
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	UNEP, MONRE, and the PMU, with support of the new CTA and PIUs
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Immediate (within 3–6 months)

Recommendation #6:	**Enhance communication and local stakeholder engagement**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	With support from UNEP, MONRE and the CTA, the PMU should strengthen communication and local stakeholder engagement, to increase social awareness and ownership, and community willingness to participate in project activities, thus expanding the effectiveness, sustainability and medium to long term impact of the project. To that end, as suggested by the RVE report (p.44), the PMU could promote partnership with local organizations beyond the Women Union[68]. This should also involve a stronger involvement of city-level governments (W10).
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	PMU, with local government and community groups
Proposed implementation time-frame:	Ongoing

Recommendation #7:	**Strengthen the technical capacity of stakeholders to sustain the results of the project**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	With support of UNEP, MONRE and the CTA, and based on the training materials already developed by the project, the PMU should strengthen the technical capacity of relevant stakeholders to sustain the results of the project, by incorporating traditional knowledge, strengthening the university curricula of a wide range

[67] This is also recommended in the RVE report, p. 45.

[68] The RVE report (p. 44) also recommends the project enhances its communication efforts and fosters community ownership by encouraging volunteer participation and reducing reliance on paid incentives. To that end, it recommends developing volunteering programs that highlight the long-term benefits of environmental and ecosystem management to local communities, providing non-financial incentives for volunteer participation, such as training, capacity-building workshops, or recognition programs to sustain community involvement, and collaborating with local organizations to promote volunteerism as a sustainable approach to ecosystem restoration and protection. The latter seems the most promising to the ITE team.

	of disciplines, expanding linkages and synergies with international projects (for example, those implemented by UN-Habitat), and identifying and working with institutions that can provide regular training to practitioners. (W13)
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	UNEP, MONRE, and PMU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12–24 months

Recommendation #8:	**Explore ways of improving institutional arrangements for approvals and disbursements.**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	UNEP and MONRE should explore ways of improving institutional arrangements for approvals and disbursements. In this sense, with support from UNEP and MONRE, the PMU should follow up more closely with partners in charge of delivery of outputs, establishing a stronger binding mechanism[69]. In addition, to avoid further delays, UNEP and MONRE should streamline procurement processes to the extent possible and assess if additional training on procurement is needed. If this need still exists, UNEP should deliver it as soon as possible. Furthermore, with support from UNEP and in coordination with PONREs, MONRE should start the procurement process as early as possible, to minimize or avoid future implementation delays. (W7, W8)
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	UNEP, MONRE, and PMU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12–24 months

Recommendation #9:	**Work on the financial sustainability of project results**
Challenge/problem to be addressed by the recommendation:	With support from MONRE and the CTA, and close guidance from UNEP, the PMU should work on the financial sustainability of project results. This should involve implementing the strategies mentioned in the exit strategy, including the commitment of provincial and city budgets, and training for the mobilization of national funds. It should also comprise exploring other avenues, in terms of strengthening municipal finance and promoting green growth and circular economy approaches, for instance payment for ecosystem services schemes, and sustainable business models around plastic, organic and liquid waste. (W13)
Priority Level:	High
Responsibility:	MONRE, CTA, UNEP and PMU
Proposed implementation time-frame:	12–24 months

[69] This is also recommended in the RVE report, p. 42.

7 ANNEXES

Annex 1. Evaluation Matrix[70]

Table 11. Evaluation matrix

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
1. RELEVANCE: To what extent does the project meet the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries?				
1.1 Relevance of the project in relation with the problem it addresses	Does the Funding Proposal clearly and specifically identify the problem to be addressed? Is the problem relevant to the local stakeholders involved in the project? Does the project intervention model offer the most effective way to address the identified problem?	- Level of clarity and specificity of the problem analysis in the Funding Proposal, including identification of root causes - Evidence of the relevance of the problem to project stakeholders - Extent to which a clear and evidence-based relationship is established in project documents between the problem and project objectives/ components	- Funding Proposal - Interviews with municipal governments, executing partners, and beneficiaries at project sites	Desk Review Interviews Site visits (direct observation)
1.2 Consistency with UN, GCF, country and city strategic priorities	To what extent is the project aligned with UN and GCF Strategic Priorities? To what extent is the project suited to city, regional and national priorities?	- Level of alignment with global priorities (2030 agenda; Urban Agenda) - Level of alignment with the GCF strategic priorities - Level of alignment between the project and UNEP's Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW), the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building[71] (BSP) and South-South Cooperation (S-SC).	- Funding Proposal and project planning documents - 2030 Agenda, Urban Agenda - GCF strategic documents - UNEP MTS, POW, BSP and S-SC - National, sub-national and municipal climate change and urban plans, policies and strategies	Desk Review Interviews

[70] Key strategic questions, additional criteria and factors affecting project performance included in the ToRs are highlighted in yellow.
[71] http://www.unep.fr/ozonaction/about/bsp.htm

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
		- Level of alignment with national priorities or plans related to urban development and climate change - Level of alignment with sub-national (state/provincial) priorities or plans related to urban development and climate change - Level of alignment with city priorities (at municipal and/or metropolitan level)	- Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, PMU, MONRE, other ministries, provincial governments, municipal governments	
1.3 Quality and revisions of project design / Monitoring and reporting	How clear and logically integrated are the project objectives, outcomes, outputs, and activities? Does the TOC properly reflect the project's intended change process? Did the ToC represent a coherent and realistic change process from a cause and effect perspective? To what extent were causal pathways effectively shown /articulated and supported by a full set of contributing conditions? Are the indicators relevant and consistent with the project objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities? Are the indicators SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) and the methods appropriate? Were there any changes in the results framework (including expected outputs and outcomes) after the start of the implementation? Were revisions documented? Did they follow UNEP/donor policies for revisions?	- Consistency between project objective, outcomes, outputs, activities, and the corresponding indicators - Use of SMART indicators in the results framework -Examples of changes in the results framework - Existence and clarity of an M&E plan with: 1. Roles and responsibilities 2. Estimated budget 3. Schedule	- Funding Proposal, PIRs - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, PMU, executing partners	Desk Review Interviews

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
	Does the Funding Proposal include a monitoring and evaluation plan that defines the responsibilities, schedule, and estimated budget of M&E activities?			
1.4 Complementarity /coherence with relevant previous, ongoing, and future interventions	Were other relevant interventions clearly identified in the Funding Proposal? To what extent has the project integrated lessons learned from previous interventions? To what extent does the project complement (and not duplicate) other ongoing and planned interventions that address similar needs of the same target groups? Is the project working in coordination with other interventions to seek synergies? In which instances has UNEP's comparative advantage been particularly well applied? To what extent has the project been coherent in climate finance delivery with other multilateral entities?	- Linkages (coordination efforts and synergies) with previous, ongoing and planned UNEP work - Linkages with ongoing or planned UNEP work on cities - Linkages with other UN interventions - Linkages with other GCF interventions - Linkages with other development partners working on urban adaptation - Application of UNEP's comparative advantage	- Funding Proposal, documents from other relevant interventions - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, MONRE, other ministries, provincial governments, municipal governments, executing partners - Interviews with organizations with whom the project has established collaboration/ synergy	Desk review Interviews
1.5 Preparation and Readiness	Has the project addressed weaknesses in project design or any changes in the context or needs during the inception stage?	- Nature and extent of weaknesses, changes or needs identified during the inception stage, specifically: o Changes in the context (e.g., extreme climate events, political events)	- Inception Workshop Report - APRs and HYPR - Steering Committee minutes	Desk Review Interviews

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
		○ Nature and quality of engagement with stakeholder groups by the project team in each country ○ Capacity of partners ○ Number and quality of partnership agreements ○ Staffing and financing arrangements - Nature and quality of adjustments made and actions undertaken to address these changes or needs - Availability of an inception report - Examples of changes in project design or approach as a result of changes made	- Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, PMU, executing partners	
1.6 Human rights and gender equity	To what extent has the project applied the UN Common Understanding on the human rights-based approach (HRBA), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), the UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) and the GCF's environmental and social safeguards? To what extent have the project design, implementation and monitoring taken into account gender inequalities and differentiation? Have plans for inclusivity, equality and/or equity been implemented as planned, or does more need to be done?	- Level of alignment between project design and implementation of the UN HRBA, the UN DRIP, the UNEP Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment and UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) - Number and quality of measures in project design, implementation and monitoring, respectively, that address: 1- Possible gender inequalities in access to and control over natural resources; 2- Specific inequalities in access to and control over natural resources; 3- The role of women in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes, and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation	- Planning documents - Monitoring and reporting documents - Technical project reports - UN HRBA, UN DRIP, UNEP Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, UNEP's ESSF - Guidelines on GEF's Policy on Environmental and Social Standards - Interviews with UN Task Manager, PMU, executing partners	Desk Review Interviews

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
		- Level of perceived consideration of gender inequalities in the project design, implementation and monitoring - Availability and implementation of inclusivity plans		
2. EFFECTIVENESS: To what extent is the project achieving its objectives?				
2.1. Outputs and outcomes	Is the project successfully producing the outputs and achieving targets and milestones as per the project design document? Are the outputs contributing to the achievement of outcomes? What actors and factors are enabling and hindering the achievement of expected outputs and outcomes?	- Number, quality and type of outputs delivered - Timeliness of output delivery - Progress towards targets at the output and outcome level - Evidence of enabling conditions or barriers towards achievement of outputs and outcomes	- Project planning documents - PIRs and monitoring reports - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, PMU, executing partners, municipal governments, project beneficiaries at project sites	Desk Review Interviews Site visits (direct observation)
2.2. Likelihood of impact	Is the project progressing toward achievement of intended, positive impacts? Has the project got all the elements in place to generate impact as planned? Within the current project is there means to further enhance impacts to the beneficiary communities? Have there been – or will there likely be - any unintended results (positive or negative)? Is there any risk of maladaptation? To what extent is the project playing a catalytic role, or promoting longer-term scaling-up and/or replication?	- Number and extent of achievement of milestones toward meeting impact indicators - Examples of unintended results, including of indications of maladaptation - Nature and likelihood of adverse environmental, social and economic effects from the project - Examples of the catalytic role played by the project, as well as ongoing efforts for scaling-up and replication - Examples of project good practices or opportunities for replication and upscaling - Examples of innovation and extent of their uptake	- Project planning documents - PIRs and monitoring reports - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, PMU, local executing partners, municipal governments, project beneficiaries at project sites	Desk Review Interviews Site visits (direct observation)

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
	To what extent is the project driving innovation? To what extent is the project on track for producing the paradigm shift as planned?			
3. EFFICIENCY: To what extent is the project implementation timely and cost-effective?				
3.1 Financing and co-financing	Is there any difference between planned and actual expenditures? Why? Did the co-financing occur as planned? Is the rate of spending, incl. co-financing, consistent with the project's length of implementation to date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs?[72] Are financial reporting requirements being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties? To what extent are proper financial management standards applied? To what extent does the project adhere to UNEP's financial management policies? To what extent is standard financial documentation is complete, accurate, and available in a timely manner?	- Budget execution per year, component, and output, against total budget - Level of discrepancy between planned and leveraged cofinancing - Level of spending against the initial budget and identification of potential gaps or discrepancies with planned costs - Periodicity, types and quality of financial reporting - Fluidity of communication between the UNEP Task Manager and the Fund Management Officer	- Financial reporting - Monitoring and reporting documents - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, UNEP financial officer, executing partners - GCF/ UNEP reporting requirements	Desk review Interviews

[72] This includes *Is the rate of expenditure appropriate for the mid-point?*

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
	To what extent is communication between the UNEP Task Manager and the Fund Management Officer adequate?			
3.2 Efficiency	To what extent is project execution cost-effective? How is the project enhancing its cost and time effectiveness? Are planned activities being delivered according to expected timeframes? Are there any delays? How significant are they? To what extent are activities being sequenced efficiently?	- PMC ratio - Cost or time-saving measures put in place to maximize results - Consistency between planned and actual workplans - Efficiency of the workplan	- Reporting documents - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, PMU, executing partners	Desk review Interviews Direct observation
3.2 Quality of project management and supervision / Adaptive management / Environmental and social safeguards	Are roles and responsibilities commonly understood between different project stakeholders and playing out effectively? Are roles played as planned? Has UNEP CCAU provided leadership towards achieving project outcomes, and provided adequate technical backstopping and supervision? Have executing entities provided quality and timely project management?	- Clarity of roles and responsibilities - Coordination of UNEP and executing partners - Perception of quality of supervision and leadership of UNEP CCAU by executing partners - Extent to which the planning documents anticipated or reflected the risks faced by the project during implementation - Quality of risk mitigation strategies identified and implemented - Quality of the ES safeguards management system[75]	- Reporting documents (PIRs, PSC minutes) - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, MONRE, PMU, local executing partners	Desk review Interviews

[75] Did the project screen the projects for any safeguarding issues; conduct sound environmental and social risk assessments; identify and avoid, or where avoidance is not possible, mitigate, environmental, social and economic risks; apply appropriate environmental and social measures to minimize any potential risks and harm to intended beneficiaries and report on the implementation of safeguard management measures taken.

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
	Were all relevant risks identified in the Funding Proposal? What has been the quality of risk mitigation strategies? Were in particular social and environmental risk screened, and mitigation strategies identified? Is the Grievance Redress Mechanism adequately designed? Were these mitigation strategies implemented effectively? Are they well monitored?[73] To what extent is the management of the project minimising UNEP's environmental footprint? What significant changes has the project experienced in its implementation? What is the quality of the adaptative actions taken?[74] Have recommendations from previous learning exercises e.g. PIRs been appropriately addressed? What changes were made to adapt to the effects of COVID-19 and how might any changes affect the project's performance?	- Examples of changes in project strategy/approach - Examples of measures to minimize UNEP's environmental footprint		

[73] This includes *Are safeguard identification and mitigation plans being monitored and steps taken to minimize negative effects?*
[74] Related to Cv criterion on adaptive management.

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
3.3. Stakeholder participation and cooperation	Are the stakeholder communication and consultation mechanisms effective and inclusive of differentiated groups? To what extent were effective partnership arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders?	- Number, type and quality of stakeholder engagement activities at each stage of the project - Evidence of transparency and inclusiveness in stakeholder communications and consultation (including vulnerable groups and communities) - Number and types of partnerships arrangements established with relevant stakeholders - Extent and quality of interaction/ exchange between project implementers and local partners	- Reporting documents (PIRs, PSC minutes) - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, MONRE, other ministries, provincial governments, municipal governments, PMU, and municipal governments, beneficiaries at project sites	Desk review Interviews Site visits (direct observation)
3.4. Communication and public awareness	Does the project effectively communicate lessons and experience with project partners and interested groups? To what extent has the project implemented appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?	- Awareness of the project results and activities by partners and interested groups, including by gender and vulnerable groups - Number and quality of communication strategies and knowledge products elaborated - Existence of a communication plan, communication protocols and feedback mechanisms/channels/networks/platforms - Number and quality of public awareness activities undertaken - Number and type of public reached - Changes in public awareness as a result of project outreach / communication	- Project planning - Communication plan and materials, including online sites - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, MONRE, other ministries, PMU, local executing partners, subnational and municipal governments, participants at project sites	Desk review Interviews Site visits (observation)

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
3.5. Country ownership and drivenness	Is the level of involvement of government/local level officials sufficient to ensure ownership over project outputs and outcomes necessary for long term impact to be realized?	- Number and types of representatives from government and local authorities involved in implementation - Number and types of regulations, policies or other national or local government initiatives related to climate change and urban development enabling the project outputs and outcomes - Declared willingness, and or initiatives from national and local stakeholders to take forward and capitalize on project results - Perception of urban EbA mainstreaming into policy and potential gaps	- Reporting documents (PIRs, PSC minutes) - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, MONRE, other ministries, subnational and municipal governments	Desk review Interviews
3.6. Monitoring and reporting (implementation)[76]	To what extent has the M&E plan and framework been implemented (to what extent is operational) and have any adjustments been made to the plan? How has the information generated by the M&E system been used during project implementation? Has the project complied with GCF and UNEP monitoring reporting requirements, including quality and timeliness of reports?	- Proportion of executed monitoring budget against planned monitoring budget - Degree of alignment with timeline and work plan, and (if any) evidence of external factors affecting them - Evidence of collection of monitoring data, including baseline data - Coherence between types of reported results (activities, outputs) and actual activities and outputs on the ground - Coherence of lessons learned and good practices on project activities and dissemination to relevant stakeholders - Types, number, and quality of reporting materials submitted - Evidence of meeting and field mission reports being written and centrally stored	- Planning documents - PIRs and other monitoring and reporting documents - GCF Guidelines of the Project and Program Cycle Policy - UNEP Programme Manual - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager and PMU	Desk review Interviews

[76] This includes the question "*Is there an effective monitoring mechanism for the project's implementation (this is separate from, and supports, reporting)?*"

Dimension	Specific questions	Indicators	Information source	Data collection method
		- Number of corrective actions identified in PIRs that were implemented		
4. SUSTAINABILITY: To what extent is the project likely to maintain and develop direct outcomes after the close of the intervention?				
4.1. Factors affecting sustainability of project benefits [77]	Does the project have a specific, sufficient, and realistic sustainability strategy or measures, and to what extent have they been implemented? Does it have an exit strategy? What are the main risks to the sustainability of project benefits, including institutional-governance, financial, socio-political, and environmental/biophysical risks? What are the most important aspects and actions to be taken to enhance longer-term sustainability and impact of the project interventions and results?	- Existence and quality of a sustainability and exit strategy - Level of implementation of the sustainability strategy or actions undertaken - Existence of obstacles and/or risks to, as well as opportunities for, the sustainability of project results ○ Level of dependence of the project outcomes on issues relating to the legal and policy framework, and the institutional framework and governance ○ Level of political and social ownership and technical capacity among government and other stakeholders to take the project achievements forward ○ Level of dependence of the project on future funding for the benefits they bring to be sustained and existence of funding opportunities to pursue/ support project results in the long term ○ Existence of environmental risks	- Funding Proposal - PIRs - Interviews with UNEP Task Manager, MONRE, other ministries, PMU, local executing partners, subnational and municipal governments	Desk review Interviews

[77] This includes *Is there an exit strategy in place and are the elements needed for the project's benefits to be sustained after the project end, being incorporated in the project implementation?*

Annex 2. Interview questionnaire

The interview questionnaires are indicative and will be tailored to each interviewee. The key categories of stakeholders to be interviewed are the following:

- AE (UNEP CCAU) and Executing agency (MONRE).
- Executing partners.
- PMU.
- Local governments.
- On-site participants.

Table 12. Interview protocols

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
General					
How long have you been involved in the project and what is the nature of your involvement (specific activities)?	X	X	X	X	X
Relevance					
Is the problem relevant to the local stakeholders involved in the project?			X	X	X
Does the project intervention model offer the most effective way to address the identified problem?	X	X	X		
To what extent is the project aligned with global priorities?	X	X			

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
To what extent is the project aligned to UNEP and GCF priorities?	X				
To what extent is the project aligned with national priorities or plans related to urban development and climate change?		X			
To what extent is the project aligned with sub-national (provincial) priorities or plans related to urban development and climate change?				X	
To what extent is the project aligned with city priorities (at municipal and/or metropolitan level)?				X	
To what extent is the results framework adequate?	X	X	X		
Were there any changes in the results framework (including expected outputs and outcomes) after the start of the implementation?	X		X		
Was the M&E plan appropriate?	X		X		
Were other relevant interventions clearly identified in the Funding Proposal?	X	X	X		
To what extent has the project integrated lessons learned from previous interventions?	X	X	X	X	
To what extent does the project complement (and not duplicate) other interventions (ongoing or planned work of UNEP on cities, linkages with GCF interventions and other development partners)?	X	X	X		

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
Is the project working in coordination with other interventions to seek synergies?	X	X	X	X	
In which instances has UNEP's comparative advantage been particularly well applied?	X	X	X		
Has the project addressed weaknesses in project design or any changes in the context or needs during the inception stage?	X	X	X		
To what extent has the project applied the UN Human rights-based approach (HRBA), the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (DRIP), the UNEP's Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF) and the GEF's environmental and social safeguards?	X				
To what extent have the project design, implementation and monitoring taken into account gender inequalities and differentiation?	X	X	X	X	X
2 Have plans for inclusivity, equality and/or equity been implemented as planned, or does more need to be done?	X	X	X		
Effectiveness					

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
To what extent do you consider that the project is successfully delivering its outputs as initially planned, in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness?	X	X	X	X	X
To what extent is the project achieving its outcome level targets?	X	X	X	X	
What actors and factors are enabling and hindering the achievement of expected outputs and outcomes?	X	X	X	X	X
Is the project progressing toward achievement of intended, positive impacts?	X	X	X	X	X
Have there been – or will there likely be - any unintended results (positive or negative)? Is there a risk of maladaptation?	X	X	X	X	X
To what extent is the project playing a catalytic role, or promoting longer-term scaling-up and/or replication?	X	X	X		
3 To what extent is the project driving innovation? To what extent is the project on track for producing the paradigm shift as planned?	X	X	X	X	
Efficiency					
To what extent have funds been disbursed according to the initial work plan (disbursement rate, timeliness of funds availability, etc.)	X	X	X		

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
Is the rate of spending, incl. co-financing, consistent with the project's length of implementation to date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs?	X	X	X		
Are financial reporting requirements being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties?	X	X	X		
How often and how do the UNEP Task Manager and the Fund Management Officer communicate?	X				
How is the project enhancing its cost and time effectiveness?	X	X	X		
Did the project implementation face any significant delays, and why?	X	X	X		
Are roles and responsibilities clear?	X	X	X		
Has UNEP provided leadership towards achieving project outcomes, and provided adequate technical backstopping and supervision?		X	X		
Has MONRE provided quality and timely project management?	X	X	X		
Were all relevant risks identified in the Funding Proposal? What has been the quality of risk mitigation strategies?	X	X	X		

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
Does the project have a social and environmental safeguards mechanism and grievance redress mechanism in place?	X	X	X		
To what extent is the management of the project minimising UNEP's environmental footprint?	X	X	X		
What significant changes has the project experienced in its implementation? What is the quality of the adaptative actions taken?	X		X		
Are the stakeholder communication and consultation mechanisms effective and inclusive of differentiated groups? (To what extent has the project been successful in establishing effective communication with key stakeholders?)	X	X	X	X	X
To what extent were effective partnerships arrangements established for implementation of the project with relevant stakeholders involved in the country/region?	X	X	X	X	
Does the project effectively communicate lessons and experience with project partners and interested groups?	X	X	X	X	X
How can the project results and approach best be demonstrated and communicated by the project?	X	X	X	X	

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
Has the project implemented appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns?	X	X	X	X	
Is the level of involvement of government/local level officials sufficient to ensure ownership over project outputs and outcomes?	X	X	X	X	X
To what extent did on-site beneficiaries take ownership of the project results? Any examples?			X	X	X
Can you describe the M&E processes in the Project? To what extent has the M&E plan been implemented and have any adjustments been made to the plan?	X	X	X		
How has the information generated by the M&E system been used during project implementation?	X	X	X		
Has the project complied with GEF and UNEP monitoring reporting requirements, including quality and timeliness of reports?	X				
Sustainability					
Does the project have a specific, sufficient, and realistic sustainability strategy or measures, and to what extent have they been implemented?	X	X	X		
What are the main risks to the sustainability of project benefits, including institutional, financial, social, and environmental risks?	X	X	X		

	Implementing and executing agency	Executing Partners / Other ministries	PMU	Sub-national governments	On-site participants
What are the most important aspects and actions to be taken to enhance longer-term sustainability and impact of the project interventions and results?	X	X	X	X	X
Lessons learned and recommendations					
In your opinion, what are the lessons learned and good practices from the Project that should be shared with other communities and stakeholders in the region or the country, if any? How are they collected and disseminated?	X	X	X	X	X
Do you have any recommendations to improve the project?	X	X	X	X	X

Annex 3. Interviewees

Table 13. List of interviewees[78]

Organization	Project Role	Project Arrangement
MONRE (DCC)	Project Coordinator	PMU
MONRE (DCC)	Project Manager	PMU
UNEP	Task Manager	AE
	Chief Technical Advisor	PMU
UN-Habitat	Key stakeholder in the sector	Key Stakeholder
UN-Habitat	Key stakeholder in the sector	Key Stakeholder
UN-Habitat	Key stakeholder in the sector	Key Stakeholder
Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	National Representative	NPSC
Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)	National Representative	NPSC
Faculty of Forestry Science, National University of Laos (NUoL)	Service Provider and Implementing Partner	Service Provider and Implementing Partner
Faculty of Engineering, National University of Laos (NUoL)	Service Provider and Implementing Partner	Service Provider and Implementing Partner
Provincial Government of Paksan; Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE)	Implementing Partner	PIU
Provincial Government of Paksan; District level Agriculture and Forest (DONRE)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Paksan; District level Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Paksan; District Government Office Authority	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Lao National Women's Union, Paksan	Sub-National Representative	CPSC

[78] This table presents the people interviewed by the ITE team. In addition, the evaluation is informed by the findings of an independent Results Verification Exercise (RVE), conducted by Simesis, which interviewed 71 people (39 women), including 6 MONRE staff, 15 PONRE staff and 50 villagers in the four target cities.

Organization	Project Role	Project Arrangement
Provincial Government of Paksan; Urban Development Administrative Office Authority	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Pakse; Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE)	Implementing Partner	PIU
Provincial Government of Pakse; District Government Office Authority	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Pakse; District level Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Pakse; District level Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Lao National Women's Union, Pakse	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Savannakhet; Provincial Office of Natural Resources and Environment (PONRE)	Implementing Partner	PIU
Provincial Government of Savannakhet; District level Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Savannakhet; District level Urban Development Administration Authority	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Savannakhet; District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Savannakhet; District level Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)	Sub-National Representative	CPSC
Provincial Government of Vientiane; District Office of Natural Resources and Environment (DONRE)	Implementing Partner	PIU

Annex 4. Field Mission Plan

Table 14. Lao PDR Mission Agenda

Time	Topic	Location
June 16, 2024 – Arrival of the evaluation TL		
Day 1 – Monday, June 17, 2024		
9:00 -10:00	Meeting with DCC, MONRE	Vientiane
10:30 – 12:00	Meeting with MAF, MIP and MPWT	
13 :30 - 14:30	Meeting with Vientiane PONRE for Municipality	
15:00 – 17:00	Site visit to EbA intervention of Vientiane - Installation of permeable paving solution in public areas	
Day 2 – Tuesday, June 18, 2024		
7:40-8:55	Fly to Pakse	
9:30 - 10:30	Meeting with PONRE PIU	Pakse
11 :00 – 12 :00	Meeting with PSC at provincial level	
13.30-16.00	Site visit to EbA intervention of Pakse - Restoration of urban stream - Installation of permeable paving solution in public areas	

16:00 -18:00	Travel to Savanhnakhet by Car	Savanhnakhet
Day 3 – Wednesday, June 19, 2024		
9:00 -10:00	Meeting with PIU PONRE	Savanhnakhet
10:30 - 12:00	Meeting with PSC at provincial level	
13:00 – 15:00	Site visit to EbA intervention of Savanhnakhet - Restoration of urban stream - Installation of permeable paving solution in public areas	
15:05 -20:05	Travel to Paksan by Car	Paksan, Bolikhamxay
Day 4 – Thursday, June 20, 2024		
09:00 -10:00	Meeting with PIU PONRE (in all cases also municipal level)	
10:30 -12:00	Meeting with PSC at provincial level	Paksan
13.30-16.00	Site visit to EbA intervention of Paksan - Restoration of the Nong Peung wetland - Installation of permeable paving solution in public areas	
	Travel by car to Vientiane	Vientiane
Day 5 -Friday, June 21, 2024		
9:00-10:00	Meeting with UN-Habitat	Vientiane

10:30-11:30	Meeting with National University of Laos	
14:30-15:30	Hybrid debriefing from MTR mission for Urban EbA Lao	
20:30	Departure of the evaluation TL	

Annex 5. List of Reviewed Documents

- Funding Proposal and Annexes, including ESAP and GAP.
- Project design documents.
- Annual Work Plans and Budgets.
- Project monitoring and reporting documents: six-monthly progress report (Jan-June 2022 and Jan-June 2023), and Annual Performance Report 2023.
- Financial reporting, budget revisions.
- GCF/ UNEP Reporting requirements.
- PSC meeting minutes July 2021, March 2022 and December 2022
- GCF Programming Strategy.
- Relevant legislative and political documents.
- Documents from other relevant interventions.
- Report on economic valuation of the ecosystem services provided by urban wetlands in the four target cities.
- Wetland restoration and management plan.
- Report on progress in management planning.
- Steps agreed between FEN and PWT.
- Recommendations of “Analysis of stakeholders and the socio-economic and institutional environment to enable sustainable governance framework for integrated climate resilience flood management strategies”.
- List of engaged stakeholders.
- Topographical survey of Paksan district.
- Results Verification Exercise report and village questionnaire.

Annex 6. Detailed analysis of indicators in the results framework

Table 15. Detailed analysis of the indicators in the project's results framework

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Comments
Objective: To establish integrated flood management that includes the use of urban ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) in four major cities of Vientiane, Paksan, Savannakhet and Pakse.				
GCF indicators				
Number of direct and indirect beneficiaries	0	Direct: At least 14,920 people (~1.4% of the total population of the four target cities) Indirect: no beneficiaries yet	Direct: Approximately 74,600 people (~9% of the total population of the four target cities) benefitting from reduced flooding from clean drainage lines, implementation of wetland and stream management plans, and restoration Indirect: 1,069,500 people (100% of the population of the four target cities) benefiting from flood reduction and enhanced ecosystem services through the ICFMS.	• It is not specific enough (benefits are not explicitly mentioned, especially for indirect beneficiaries). • It is measurable. • It is not achievable (particularly in Vientiane). • It is relevant. • It is time-bound
Fund level impact indicators				
Change in expected losses of lives and economic assets (US$)	Average loss in economic assets per flood event in the period (1995-2021) is 55.1M US$ in Vientiane, 20.9M US$ in Savannakhet, 22M US$ in	US$ amount can only be determined based on the magnitude of the flood	US$ amount can only be determined based on the magnitude of the flood that	• It is specific. • It is partially measurable within the project timeline (it depends in the occurrence of floods; if this do not occur

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Comments
	Bolikhamxay and 4.8M US$ in Champasak province.	that may or may not occur in Year 3[79]	may or may not occur in Year 5 [80]	during the project timeline despite the return period of the flood event, then it is not possible to measure changes in losses). • It is achievable. • It is partially relevant ((it depends in the occurrence of floods). • It is time-bound
Value (US$) of ecosystem services generated or protected in response to climate change	The current estimated value of flood protection and other ecosystem services from Nong Peung wetland is US$ 451,700/year or 6,782 million Lak/year. The current estimated value of flood protection and other ecosystem services	Same as baseline: US$ 34,464/year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from Nong Peung wetland US$ 20,104/year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from urban streams in Pakse and Savannakhet[81]	Ten times more than in the baseline: US$ 344,640/year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from Nong Peung wetland US$ 201,040/ year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from urban streams in Pakse and Savannakhet [82]	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is relevant. • It is time-bound

[79] PIR 2023: If no flood event of above average magnitude occurs, the average loss of economic assets per flood event at mid-term is expected to be the same as the baseline since the project interventions for flood risk reduction will still be under implementation by the end of Year 3.
[80] PIR 2023: If no flood event of above average magnitude occurs, the average loss of economic assets per flood event is expected to be below the average for the period (1995-2021) by the end of Year 5 thanks to the implementation of the wetland and stream management plans and the restoration activities implemented
[81] PIR 2023: Same as the baseline value. The values at the end of Year 4 (June 2023) will be equivalent to the floor values measured in August 2022
[82] PIR 2023: The endline target will be provided in the final economic valuation study based on the simulation of the additional economic value generated in flood protection and other protection and restoration efforts.

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Comments
	from urban streams in Pakse and Savannakhet (combined) is US$ 1,134,667/year or 17,045 million Lak/year			
Fund level outcome indicators				
A7.1 Use by vulnerable households, communities, businesses and public-sector of services of Fund-supported tools, instruments, strategies and activities to respond to climate change and variability	No incorporation of ICFMS in government policies and plans (level 0[83])	No change respect with baseline	Government departments have incorporated ICFMS into their policies and plans at Level 2 of policy uptake scorecard	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is relevant. • It is partially time-bound (no measurable progress is requested by mid-term).
Project output indicators				
1.1.1 Number of institutions with strengthened institutional capacity for integrated flood risk management and implementation of urban	Institutional capacity was measured by the baseline study. The average institutional capacity score is 1 out of 10[84].	4 institutions with strengthened capacity with minimum score of 4 out of 10 each.	10 institutions with strengthened capacity with minimum score of 8 out 10 each.	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is partially relevant.

[83] This policy uptake scorecard will have four levels and will measure the extent of use of the ICFMS in relevant government policies and plans. Level 0: ICFMS not integrated meaningfully into urban development plans and policy; Level 1: ICFMS narrative woven through the draft urban development plan; Level 2: Action plan and toolkit for implementation of the ICFMS with EbA fully mainstreamed have been developed; Level 3: Budgets allocated to implement the ICFMS.
[84] The capacity scorecard developed at baseline is based on five-step criteria of capacity assessment for each stakeholders group: i) Are the stakeholders aware of the current and expected impacts of climate change-induced floods on cities?; ii) Do the stakeholders have the capacity to plan for and implement integrated flood management and urban EbA approaches at city, provincial, and national levels, including coordination among institutions?; iii) Do the stakeholders have access to the city-level urban EbA manuals within the ICFMS and to national urban EbA guidelines?; iv) Do the stakeholders have the capacity to access funding

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Comments
ecosystems-based adaptation as measured by the capacity scorecard.				• It is partially time-bound, as the progression between the mid-term and the end of the project is not realistic.
1.1.2 Number of males and females with increased awareness of climate threats and participating in implementation wetland and stream management plans and cleaning of drainage lines.	Males = 0 Females = 0 Total = 0	8,000 people (50% male and 50% female), based on baseline study.	37,300 people with increased awareness (50% male and 50% female).	• It is not specific • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is partially relevant. • It is time-bound.
1.2.1 Level of effectiveness of Flood Risk Management Committees (FRMC) established as coordination mechanisms.	Level 1[85]	Level 1 for 4 cities	Level 3 for 4 cities	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is relevant. • It is time-bound.
1.2.2 Level of uptake of ecosystem valuation.	Level 0[86]	Level 1 for 4 cities	Level 3 for 4 cities	• It is specific. • It is measurable.

for integrated flood management and urban EbA interventions?; v) Is there evidence of adequate institutional capacities for the continuous monitoring and reviewing of ICFMS and learning from urban EbA interventions that have been implemented through the project and the ICFMS?. Each question is answered with an assessment and score for the extent to which the associated criterion has been met: not at all (= 0), partially (= 1) or to a large extent/completely (= 2). An overall score is calculated, with a maximum score of 10 given five criteria. Under each of the five capacity criteria, follow-up questions provide evidence and justification of the selected answer. These five capacity criteria have been further elaborated in the Training Needs Assessment questionnaire to inform the design and deliverables of capacity building activities in the project. Training activities will have tests to measure learning of participants

[85] Level 0 = no coordination mechanism; Level 1= coordination mechanism in place; Level 2 = coordination mechanism in place, meeting regularly with appropriate representation (gender and decision-making authorities); Level 3 = coordination mechanism in place, meeting regularly, with appropriate representation, with appropriate information flows and monitoring of action items/issues raised.

[86] Level 0 = provincial governments have no awareness of ecosystem valuation generated by the project; Level 1 = provincial governments have awareness of ecosystem valuation generated by the project; Level 2 = provincial governments implement one of the following activities: identify sustainable financial mechanisms based on the economic valuation; include operations and maintenance of restoration interventions in annual budgets; identify new investments to

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Comments
				• It is achievable. • It is partially relevant. • It is time-bound.
2.1.1 Area (ha) of wetland restored contributing to flood reduction.	No new protection or restoration efforts with climate change risks incorporated for ecosystems in the target sites.	80 ha of the Nong Peung wetland restored (10% of target area).	800 ha of the Nong Peung wetland restored.	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is partially relevant. • It is time-bound, but the progression between the mid-term and the end of the project is not realistic.
2.1.2 Level of uptake of wetland management plan.	Level 0 for the community management committee and Level 0 for government agencies specified in the management plan[87].	Level 1 for the community management committee and Level 1 for all government agencies specified in the management plan.	Level 2 for the community management committee and Level 2 for at least 40% of government agencies specified in the management plan.	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is partially relevant. • It is time-bound.
2.2.1 Area (ha) of urban streams restored	No new protection or restoration efforts with climate change risks	70 ha (10% of total target) of urban stream	700 ha (100% of target) of urban stream ecosystems	• It is partially specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable.

scale up project interventions; cite the ecosystem values in Socio-Economic Development Plan; and devise a natural capital accounting system for the province; Level 3 = provincial governments implement at least two of the following activities: identify sustainable financial mechanisms based on the economic valuation; include operations and maintenance of restoration interventions in annual budgets; identify new investments to scale up project interventions; cite the ecosystem values in Socio-Economic Development Plan; and devise a natural capital accounting system for the province

[87] Level 0 = the relevant bodies and agencies are not aware of the management plan; Level 1 = the relevant bodies and agencies are aware of and have access to the management plan; Level 2 = the relevant bodies and agencies are implementing at least 50% of the management practices proposed in the plan; Level 3 = the relevant bodies are implementing 80% of the management practices proposed in the plan.

Indicator	Baseline	Mid-term Target	End-of-Project Target	Comments
contributing to flood reduction.	incorporated for ecosystems in the target sites.	ecosystems rehabilitated and sustainably managed.	rehabilitated and sustainably managed.	• It is relevant. • It is time-bound, but the progression between the mid-term and the end of the project is not realistic.
2.2.2 Level of uptake of stream management plans.	Level 0 for 3 community management committees and Level 0 for government agencies specified in the management plan[88].	Level 1 for 3 community management committees and Level 1 for all government agencies specified in the management plan.	Level 2 for 3 management committees and Level 2 for at least 40% of government agencies specified in the management plan.	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is partially relevant. • It is time-bound.
2.3 Square meters of permeable paving solutions installed in public areas contributing to flood reduction in Vientiane, Paksan, Savannakhet and Pakse.	Zero square meters	180 square meters of permeable paving solutions.	18,000 square meters of permeable paving solutions	• It is specific. • It is measurable. • It is achievable. • It is relevant. • It is time-bound, but the progression between the mid-term and the end of the project is not realistic.

[88] Level 0 = the relevant bodies and agencies are not aware of the management plan; Level 1 = the relevant bodies and agencies are aware of and have access to the management plan; Level 2 = the relevant bodies and agencies are implementing at least 50% of the management practices proposed in the plan; Level 3 = the relevant bodies and agencies are implementing 80% of the management practices proposed in the plan.

Annex 7. Detailed analysis of progress towards de expected targets at mid term

Table 16. Detailed analysis of progress towards the expected targets at mid-term

Indicator	Description	Quantity At Baseline	Quantity Expected at MTR	End of the project target	Status observed by the RVT in July 2024	Achievement of Mid-term Target	Rating (likelihood of achieving end of the project target by June 2026)	
							Assessment	Justification
GCF indicator	Number of direct and indirect beneficiaries	0	Direct: At least 14,920 people (~1.4% of the total population of the four target cities) Indirect: no beneficiaries yet	Direct: Approximately 74,600 people (~9% of the total population of the four target cities) benefitting from reduced flooding from clean drainage lines, implementation of wetland and stream management plans, and restoration Indirect: 1,069,500 people (100% of the population of the four target cities) benefiting from flood reduction and enhanced ecosystem services through the ICFMS.	No data available and no major flooding appeared occurring in year 3	Progress cannot be measured	Likelihood cannot be measured	

GCF indicator %	Number of direct and indirect beneficiaries	0	1.4 %, half are women	Direct: Approximately 74,600 people (~9% of the total population of the four target cities) Indirect: Approximately 1,069,500 people (100% of the total population of the four target cities)	No data available and no major flooding appeared occurring in year 3	Progress cannot be measured	Likelihood cannot be measured	
Fund level impact indicators								
A1.1	Change in expected losses of lives and economic assets (US$)	Average loss in economic assets per flood event in the period (1995-2021) is 55.1M US$ in Vientiane, 20.9M US$ in Savannakhet, 22M US$ in Bolikhamxay and 4.8M US$ in Champasak province.	US$ amount can only be determined based on the magnitude of the flood that may or may not occur in Year 3[89]	US$ amount can only be determined based on the magnitude of the flood that may or may not occur in Year 5 [90]	No data available and no major flooding seemed to occur in year 3.	Progress cannot be measured	Likelihood cannot be measured	
A4.2	Value (US$) of ecosystem services	The current estimated value of flood	Same as baseline:	Ten times more than in the baseline:	The project aims to increase the	NOT ACHIEVED[93]	ON TARGET	With 1.5 years available (until June 2026), it

[89] PIR 2023: If no flood event of above average magnitude occurs, the average loss of economic assets per flood event at mid-term is expected to be the same as the baseline since the project interventions for flood risk reduction will still be under implementation by the end of Year 3.
[90] PIR 2023: If no flood event of above average magnitude occurs, the average loss of economic assets per flood event is expected to be below the average for the period (1995-2021) by the end of Year 5 thanks to the implementation of the wetland and stream management plans and the restoration activities implemented
[93] The RVE report is not consistent in the assessment provided for this indicator. The detailed assessment concludes that the mid-term target has not been achieved (p. 15), while the executive summary (p. 2) and the conclusions (p. 39) indicate that it has been partially achieved. This MTR follows the detailed assessment. It is worth noting that the RVE uses the "partially achieved" rating when the indicator achievement is equal or greater than 50% of the expected target value.

	generated or protected in response to climate change	protection and other ecosystem services from Nong Peung wetland is US$ 451,700/year or 6,782 million Lak/year. The current estimated value of flood protection and other ecosystem services from urban streams in Pakse and Savannakhet (combined) is US$ 1,134,667/year or 17,045 million Lak/year	US$ 34,464/year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from Nong Peung wetland US$ 20,104/year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from urban streams in Pakse and Savannakhet[91]	US$ 344,640/year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from Nong Peung wetland US$ 201,040/ year in flood protection and other ecosystem services from urban streams in Pakse and Savannakhet[92]	value of ecosystem services through the implementation of ecosystem management plans, which would lead to a greater protection of the corresponding ecosystems. At mid-term, only one management plan has been developed, but it has not been approved. None of them have been implemented. Indeed, in the absence of management plans protecting the ecosystem services, their value has likely decreased in the three cities.			is moderately likely that the project will be able to develop the management plans, get them officially approved, and implement them to some extent, increasing the value of ecosystem services to some extent (although probably not to the planned extent).

[91] PIR 2023: Same as the baseline value. The values at the end of Year 4 (June 2023) will be equivalent to the floor values measured in August 2022
[92] PIR 2023: The endline target will be provided in the final economic valuation study based on the simulation of the additional economic value generated in flood protection and other ecosystem services from the project protection and restoration efforts

Fund level outcome indicators								
A7.1	A7.1 Use by vulnerable households, communities, businesses and public-sector of services of Fund-supported tools, instruments, strategies and activities to respond to climate change and variability	No incorporation of ICFMS in government policies and plans (level 0[94])	No change respect with baseline	Government departments have incorporated ICFMS into their policies and plans at Level 2 of policy uptake scorecard	Only one of the provinces (Bolikhamxay) presented relevant documentation supporting the concepts of IFCMs/EbA into the disaster management plan. Although not approved, the knowledge of the plan and relevant environmental target seems high. Based on this situation, the score assigned to this Province is 1, while the scores to Champasak and Savannakhet is 0. Average score is hence 0,33	ACHIEVED[95]	ON TARGET	As noted, this indicator is not well developed. It seems likely that the project develops the mentioned outputs, but only moderately likely that the expected outcome will be achieved, that is, they are used, within the 18-month extension, given the low awareness and technical capacity, long institutional processes and financial constraints.

[94] This policy uptake scorecard will have four levels and will measure the extent of use of the ICFMS in relevant government policies and plans. Level 0: ICFMS not integrated meaningfully into urban development plans and policy; Level 1: ICFMS narrative woven through the draft urban development plan; Level 2: Action plan and toolkit for implementation of the ICFMS with EbA fully mainstreamed have been developed; Level 3: Budgets allocated to implement the ICFMS.
[95] It is worth noting that this target was achieved although no progress was made. In this sense, as noted in section 5.3, the target was not properly defined. The scorecard should have defined enough levels to request a reportable improvement by mid-term.

PROJECT OUTPUT INDICATORS								
1.1.1	Number of institutions with strengthened institutional capacity for integrated flood risk management and implementation of urban ecosystems-based adaptation as measured by the capacity scorecard	0 Institutions	4 institutions with strengthened capacity with minimum score of 4 out of 10 each[96]	10 institutions with strengthened capacity with minimum score of8out10each	2 institutions with score 3,5 1 institution with score 3,5 with score 3 Average score: 3,1 in three provinces	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED	ON TARGET	Despite the significant increase in ambition from mid-term to the final target, and that the mid-term target has not been achieved, given the 18-month extension, it seem moderately likely that the end of the project target will be met by project completion.
1.1.2	Number of males and females with increased	0	8000 people with increased awareness	37,300 people with increased awareness (50%	60 - 70 people involved in works about wetland	NOT ACHIEVED[97]	ON TARGET	As noted, this indicator considers two different

[96] The capacity scorecard developed at baseline is based on five-step criteria of capacity assessment for each stakeholders group: i) Are the stakeholders aware of the current and expected impacts of climate change-induced floods on cities?; ii) Do the stakeholders have the capacity to plan for and implement integrated flood management and urban EbA approaches at city, provincial, and national levels, including coordination among institutions?; iii) Do the stakeholders have access to the city-level urban EbA manuals within the ICFMS and to national urban EbA guidelines?; iv) Do the stakeholders have the capacity to access funding for integrated flood management and urban EbA interventions?; v) Is there evidence of adequate institutional capacities for the continuous monitoring and reviewing of ICFMS and learning from urban EbA interventions that have been implemented through the project and the ICFMS?. Each question is answered with an assessment and score for the extent to which the associated criterion has been met: not at all (= 0), partially (= 1) or to a large extent/completely (= 2). An overall score is calculated, with a maximum score of 10 given five criteria. Under each of the five capacity criteria, follow-up questions provide evidence and justification of the selected answer. These five capacity criteria have been further elaborated in the Training Needs Assessment questionnaire to inform the design and deliverables of capacity building activities in the project. Training activities will have tests to measure learning of participants.

[97] The RVE report uses the rating “not achieved” if the indicator achievement is below than the expected target value.

	awareness of climate threats and participating in implementation wetland and stream management plans and cleaning of drainage lines.			male and 50% female)	reported on the field (they were paid); 4349 according to APR 2023.			aspects, in the sense that not all individuals aware of climate threats will likely participate in the mentioned activities. When 3 years of implementation remained, the project had reached only 12% of the targeted audience in terms of awareness raising, according to the last APR. Moreover, the village-level surveys conducted by the RVE suggest the awareness raising activities have not significantly increased awareness. The number of people participating in

								restoration activities is even lower. In this context, considering the 18-month extension, it seems only moderately likely that the project will reach out the expected number of people through awareness raising efforts, that these efforts will actually raise awareness and that all that people will participate in restoration activities by 2026.
1.2.1	Level of effectiveness of Flood Risk Management Committees established as coordination mechanisms	score = 1[98]	1	Level 3 for 4 cities	FRMC have been created in the three provinces, although management decisions have not been taken	ACHIEVED	ON TARGET	The committees are in place. While they do not make management decisions and do not meet

[98] Level 0 = no coordination mechanism; Level 1= coordination mechanism in place; Level 2 = coordination mechanism in place, meeting regularly with appropriate representation (gender and decision-making authorities); Level 3 = coordination mechanism in place, meeting regularly, with appropriate representation, with appropriate information flows and monitoring of action items/issues raised.

					and in two provinces meetings are not as frequent as planned[99]. Score: 1.33 (2 in Champasak, and 1 in Savannakhet and Bolikhamxay)			frequent enough, it is moderately likely that frequency of meetings increases and management improves. however, the identified low awareness does not help.
1.2.2	Level of uptake of ecosystem valuation	Level 0[100] for the 4 cities	Level 1 for 4 cities	Level 3 for 4 cities	Ecosystem valuation activities were only carried out in one of the three provinces (Bolikhamxay). There is awareness of this only in this province. None of the three provinces have implemented	NOT ACHIEVED	ON TARGET	It is likely that valuation activities are conducted in three cities, and awareness on them raised there, but only moderately likely that provincial governments implement 2 of the mentioned

[99] Committees were described as meeting regularly once a year (compared to the bi-monthly meetings planned before, see APR 2023), with the exception of what was reported by men in Champassak Province, where they would meet on a three-months based.The RVE report (p. 24) concludes that "Although the FRMC committee seems to be put in place, still must move towards a more proactive activities and implement the internal management by clearly defining roles and responsibilities to manage flooding events".

[100] Level 0 = provincial governments have no awareness of ecosystem valuation generated by the project; Level 1 = provincial governments have awareness of ecosystem valuation generated by the project; Level 2 = provincial governments implement one of the following activities: identify sustainable financial mechanisms based on the economic valuation; include operations and maintenance of restoration interventions in annual budgets; identify new investments to scale up project interventions; cite the ecosystem values in Socio-Economic Development Plan; and devise a natural capital accounting system for the province; Level 3 = provincial governments implement at least two of the following activities: identify sustainable financial mechanisms based on the economic valuation; include operations and maintenance of restoration interventions in annual budgets; identify new investments to scale up project interventions; cite the ecosystem values in Socio-Economic Development Plan; and devise a natural capital accounting system for the province

					any of the expected sustainability activities. Score: 0,3 (1 in Bolikhamxay, 0 in the two other cities).			activities. Achieving the mid-term target by the end of the project seems likely. Achieving level 2 in the three cities seems moderately likely with the extension.
2.1.1	Area (ha) of wetland restored contributing to flood reduction	No new protection or restoration efforts with climate change risks incorporated for ecosystems in the target sites	80 ha	800 ha of the Nong Peung wetland restored	Restoration works have only been conducted in an area of 3,8 ha (1.9 Km x 20 m) (5% of the mid-term target), in particular regarding the removal of invasive species. However, a few years the intervention, the invasive species were back.	NOT ACHIEVED	NOT ON TARGET	With the management plan not approved, at midterm the project had achieved only 0.5% of the final target. It is moderately unlikely that the project achieves the mid-term target. This is the case even assuming that restoration works will actually restore the wetland, which is a strong assumption, as the implemented

								activity demonstrates.
2.1.2	2 Level of uptake of wetland management plan	Level 0[101] for the community management committee and Level 0 for government agencies specified in the management plan	Level 1 for the community management committee and Level 1 for all government agencies specified in the management plan	Level 2 for the community management committee and Level 2 for at least 40% of government agencies specified in the management plan	The province management plan has been developed but is not approved and has not been widely shared nor implemented. Score = 0	NOT ACHIEVED	ON TARGET	It is likely that management plans are developed and shared widely, so that relevant bodies are aware and have access to it. It is moderately likely that some of the management practices proposed in the plan are implemented, and moderately likely that this reaches 50% by the end of the project considering the 18-month extension.
2.2.1	Area (ha) of urban streams restored contributing to flood reduction	No new protection or restoration efforts with climate change risks	70	700 ha (100% of target) of urban stream ecosystems rehabilitated and	No river restoration has been carried out: 0 ha	NOT ACHIEVED	NOT ON TARGET	Even considering the 18-month extension, it is moderately unlikely that

[101] Level 0 = the relevant bodies and agencies are not aware of the management plan; Level 1 = the relevant bodies and agencies are aware of and have access to the management plan; Level 2 = the relevant bodies and agencies are implementing at least 50% of the management practices proposed in the plan; Level 3 = the relevant bodies are implementing 80% of the management practices proposed in the plan.

		incorporated for ecosystems in the target sites		sustainably managed				the project achieves the ambitious final target given that the management plans have not been developed and interventions on the ground have not started. Achieving the mid-term target is moderately likely.
2.2.2	Level of uptake of stream management plans	Level 0[102] for 3 community management committees and Level 0 for government agencies specified in the management plan	Level 1 for 3 community management committees and Level 1 for all government agencies specified in the management plan	Level 2 for 3 management committees and Level 2 for at least 40% of government agencies	No stream management plans are available or provided to the VT Score: 0	NOT ACHIEVED	ON TARGET	Considering the 18-month extension, it is moderately likely that the project meets the final target given that the plans have not been completed, and the approval process is very long. It is moderately likely that the plans are

[102] Level 0 = the relevant bodies and agencies are not aware of the management plan; Level 1 = the relevant bodies and agencies are aware of and have access to the management plan; Level 2 = the relevant bodies and agencies are implementing at least 50% of the management practices proposed in the plan; Level 3 = the relevant bodies and agencies are implementing 80% of the management practices proposed in the plan.

								approved and shared widely and some of their practices are implemented.
2.3	Square meters of permeable paving solutions installed in public areas contributing to flood reduction	0	180 square meters of permeable paving solutions (demonstration plot)	18,000 square meters of permeable paving solutions	No permeable paving solutions have been installed: 0 square meters	NOT ACHIEVED	NOT ON TARGET	Even considering the 18-month extension, it is unlikely that the final target is achieved. The causes of flooding should be assessed in the selected sites before installing permeable paving solutions, which would take time. Achieving the mid-term target is likely but achieving more than 50% of the final targets seem unlikely even with the 18-month extension.

Source: Developed by the evaluation team, based on the Funding Proposal, the progress reported on the APR-2023 and the report of the RVE.

Annex 8. Detailed assessment of the project risks

Table 17. Detailed assessment of the project's risks

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
1	A lack of cohesion between the proposed project's EbA approach and that of the country's economic development practices.	Low	Medium	The development and mainstreaming of the ICFMS will address this risk factor. The project will undertake extensive engagement with policy makers, planners and decision-makers and the public, as well as recommending policy revisions to ensure incorporation of integrated flood management and urban EbA into policies and socio-economic development plans.	The proposed mitigation measures are valid and aligned with project's upcoming results. The activities, so far, reflect that the project is aimed at maintaining the proposed probability and impact ratings.
2	Failure to engage local-level stakeholders sufficiently.	Low	Medium	Local-level stakeholders have been engaged with extensively through all phases of project design and have shown support for project activities. A comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan (see Annex 12: ESAP) will ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged further during project implementation.	The proposed mitigation measures are valid and aligned with project's upcoming results. The activities, so far, reflect that the project is aimed at maintaining the proposed probability and impact ratings.
3	Political instability could influence project implementation.	Low	Medium	The risk of political instability in Laos cannot be mitigated against but it is unlikely to occur.	The assigned probability and impact ratings are

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
				Laos has been a peaceful and stable country for many years and ranks high in terms of political stability globally.	valid, as well as the mitigation measures.
4	International and national experts/consultants do not perform to expectations.	Low	High	These mitigation measures will reduce the impact level to low: • The services of consultants and contractors will be procured according to the guidelines in the UNEP Manual. This will ensure that only suitably qualified applicants are contracted for project activities. • The NUoL and international academics will be involved in project activities through the national knowledge hub. These academics will have the opportunity to review and provide input on all designs, surveys and reports provided by international experts/consultants. • Technical supervision of the project will leverage on expertise of UNEP in ecosystem-based adaptation and restoration.	The proposed mitigation measures are ample. The project activities are still ongoing. The project has not encounter issues related with the identified risk.

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
5	Communities do not take ownership of the EbA interventions.	Low	Medium	• Target communities will be engaged about urban EbA interventions within their cities through the awareness-raising campaigns that will be conducted (Activity 1.1.3) and will participate in land-use planning (Activities 2.1.1. and 2.2.2). This will ensure all community members understand the benefits of EbA interventions. The co-benefits from EbA interventions are likely to promote community ownership. • The establishment of a Community Wetland Management Committee at the village level in Paksan (Activity 2.1.1) as well as the Community Stream and Drainage Management Committees will further increase community participation in monitoring and maintenance of the urban EbA interventions.	The proposed mitigation measures have been successful. The project on-the-ground interventions and actions have been copious and have been targeting community engagement and involvement. The provincial governments of Bolikhamxay, Savanakhet and Chapasack have established wetland and stream management committees to decentralize decision makings regarding restoration and management of wetland and streams directly by the local communities.

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
6	Overlapping or conflict between the proposed project activities and those being implemented by other departments or organisations in Laos.	Low	Low	• The proposed project has been designed with extensive stakeholder engagement at all levels of government to ensure there is no conflict between the proposed project and any past and ongoing initiatives in Laos. • The ICFMS developed under Activity 1.2.3 will ensure that all future water management projects in the four cities complement existing and planned projects. • Regular meetings between the NPSC and the four CPSCs will further ensure that any future projects or initiatives do not conflict with the proposed interventions. The NPSC and CPSCs will include stakeholders from all relevant sectors, which will ensure complementarity between all sector specific projects.	The Funding Proposal insufficiently demonstrates that the project does not overlap or conflict with previous or current initiatives within the country. The project has incompletely integrated lessons learned from previous or similar interventions in the country. The project has great potential to work in coordination with other interventions to seek synergies, including the "Fourth Greater Mekong Subregion Corridor Towns Development Project" (4GMS); the Asian Development Bank funded project “Urban Environment Improvement Investment Project” in Luang Prabang; as well as from the GCF funded project “Advancing Lao PDR’s National Adaptation Plan (NAP) through Climate Change Vulnerability Assessments

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
					for Disaster Risk Management in human settlements". Regular meeting have been held between the NPSC and the CPSC/PPSC, however, there is no evidence how these actions have been ensuring that the project complement and not duplicate other ongoing and planned interventions that address similar needs of the same target groups.
7	Inadequate coordination at a national level – resulting in limited participation of the relevant institutions and agencies.	Medium	Low	• The implementation arrangements of the proposed project are outlined in Section B.3. Key agencies will be part of the Steering Committee, which will facilitate coordination across institutions. • The relevant institutions have agreed on all roles and responsibilities. To ensure that these institutions and agencies are fulfilling their responsibilities during the proposed project's implementation period, the following activities will take place: i) monitoring and evaluation; ii) the writing and	The project has an adequate internal governance structure, with all roles and responsibilities clearly defined in the Funding Proposal. Project partners are aware of the project configuration and the proper communication channels. The different project committees (NPSC, CPSC/PSC, and the flood risk management committees-FRMC) have allowed for the engagement of all relevant

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
				dissemination of reports; and iii) regular meetings/engagements to facilitate information sharing.	stakeholders with project activities and interventions.
8	Failure of the proposed project to incorporate gender considerations into its implementation and management.	Low	Low	• Representatives from the National Women's Union will sit on the NPSC and the four CPSCs to ensure project activities are compliant with the Gender and Social Inclusion Assessment and Action Plan (Annex 4). In addition, a Monitoring and Gender Officer will be contracted under the project and will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the application of gender-disaggregated indicators. • The National Women's Union has also been identified as a dissemination agent for the awareness-raising campaigns that will be conducted under Activity 1.1.3.	The proposed mitigation measures have been suitable to the identified risk. However, due to circumstances outside the project control (Covid, health and economic impacts, and deeply rooted gender roles within the communities) the proposed mitigation measures haven't been enough to adequately incorporate gender considerations.

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
9	Continued maintenance of the proposed project's urban EbA interventions could cease after the conclusion of the project.	Low	Low	An Exit Strategy has been developed to ensure the proposed project's long-term sustainability, including options for financing, and to decrease the likelihood that this risk will occur.	The Funding Proposal has a brief description on some of the elements required by the exit strategy, including i) the understanding and uptake of urban EbA continues to be advanced by the knowledge hub; ii) the coordination mechanisms strengthened, strategies and plans developed, information and knowledge base built, and enhanced capacity continue to support urban EbA interventions; and iii) EbA interventions (i.e. the restored wetland and streams) and permeable paving implemented under Component 2 are regularly monitored and maintained. However, the project still needs to develop a comprehensive exit strategy.
10	Disaster events / hazards negatively affect or delay project interventions.	Low	Medium	• Construction activities, i.e. permeable paving installation, will be conducted during low storm risk periods. • Project activities will be	The proposed mitigation measures are ample. The project activities are still ongoing. The project has not encounter issues

Risk #	Description	Funding Proposal Probability	Funding Proposal Impact	Funding Proposal Mitigation Measures	ITE Assessment
				planned in coordination with Department of Meteorology and Hydrology (DMH) to reduce the risk of disaster impact.	related with the identified risk.
11	High staff turnover affects the technical capacity of MONRE to implement the project.	Medium	Low	The establishment of the knowledge hub (Activity 1.1.2) will enable knowledge generated from project activities and knowledge products on EbA and integrated flood management to be widely disseminated. In addition, relevant decision-makers and technical staff will be trained on how to implement integrated flood management and manage EbA solutions. As a result, recipients of such information and training will be able to fast-track to take on technical roles within MONRE where required.	The proposed mitigation measures have been implemented; however, they have not been sufficient nor adequate to mitigate the identified risk. Evidence indicates that government and internal staff turnover is still a recurrent circumstance, with negative impacts for the project.

Annex 9. Field photographs

Photograph 1. Already permeable surface in a school in Pakse



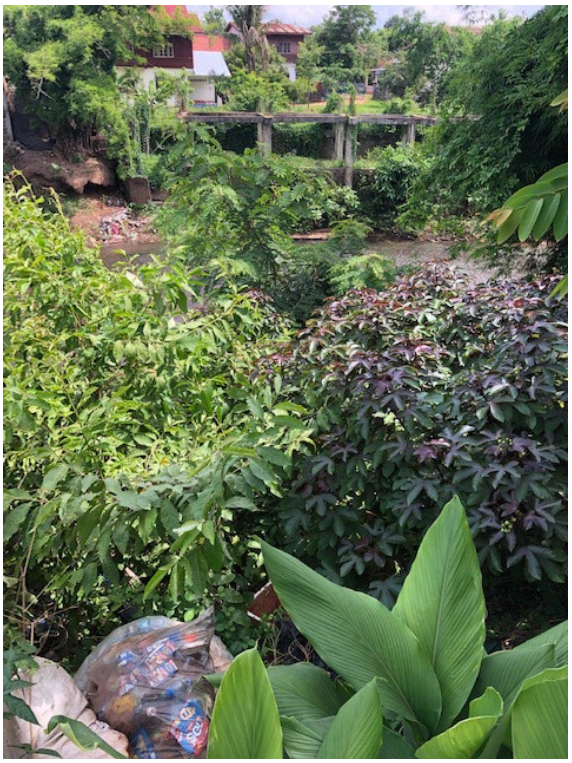
Photograph 2. Houses in the flood prone area in Pakse



Photograph 3. Local flood management measures in Pakse



Photograph 4. Waste in the Pakse stream



Photograph 5. Local ecosystem benefits in parking lots in Pakse



Photograph 6. Hard and soft adaptation needs in Savanhakhet



Photograph 7. Waste in Savanhakhet



Photograph 8. Already permeable surface in Paksan (Meteorology office)



Photograph 9. Already permeable surface in Paksan



Photograph 10. Already permeable surface in Paksan



Annex 10: Quality Assessment of the GCF Interim Evaluation Report

Title: GCF INTERIM EVALUATION of the project "Building resilience of urban populations with ecosystem-based solutions in Lao PDR"

Consultant: Jon Garcia, Le Groupe-conseil baastel ltée

This is an assessment of the quality of the interim evaluation product (i.e., the Main Evaluation Report). The Evaluation Office notes that the approach to writing interim evaluation reports is more flexible compared to terminal evaluation reports. However, this assessment tool is structured around the requirements typically applied to terminal evaluation reports.

	Evaluation Office Comments	**Final Interim Evaluation Report Rating**
Report Quality Criteria		
Quality of the Executive Summary Purpose: acts as a stand alone and accurate summary of the main review product, especially for senior management. To include: • concise overview of the review object • clear summary of the review objectives and scope • overall review rating of the project and key features of performance (strengths and weaknesses) against exceptional criteria • reference to where the review ratings table can be found within the report • summary response to key strategic review questions • summary of the main findings of the exercise/synthesis of main conclusions • summary of lessons learned and recommendations.	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The Executive Summary meets most the quality criteria outlined. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses)*: The Executive Summary offers a clear overview of the project, its objectives, scope, and performance. It includes a detailed performance rating table and a structured summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. A summary response to key strategic review questions, lessons learned and a synthesis of main conclusions would have been appreciated.	5

Quality of the 'Project Overview' Section Purpose: introduces/situates the evaluand in its institutional context, establishes its main parameters (time, value, results, geography) and the purpose of the review itself. To include: • its institutional context within UNEP (where managed from etc) • **implementation structure (with diagram)** • the problem/issue the project aims to address • project parameters for the review (start and end date; geographic reach; total budget etc) • **project results framework - Theory of Change diagram**[103] **to be included under Review findings below** *(justify any revisions to the formulation of results statements to conform to UNEP definitions and/or international standards)* • any major and agreed changes to the project (e.g. formal revisions, additional funding etc) • description of targeted groups/stakeholders and their relationship with the project **(including, stakeholder analysis diagram)** • any external challenges faced by the project (e.g. conflict, natural disaster, political upheaval etc • financial tables ((a) budget at design and expenditure by components (b) planned and actual sources of funding/co-financing	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The rport largely meets the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report clearly outlines the project's purpose, structure, and context, including its goals, budget, timeline, and key stakeholders. It effectively presents the implementation setup and identifies major challenges, supported by financial data and a stakeholder table.	5
Quality of the 'Review Methods' Section Purpose: provides reader with clear and comprehensive description of review methods, demonstrates the credibility of the findings and performance ratings. To include: • description of review data collection methods and information sources • justification for methods used (e.g. qualitative/ quantitative; electronic/face-to-face) • number and type of respondents *(see table template)* • selection criteria used to identify respondents, case studies or sites/countries visited	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report clearly explains the evaluation's purpose, methods, and ethical safeguards, with strong stakeholder engagement and data triangulation.	5

[103] During the Inception Phase of the evaluation process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports, etc. Revisions to results may be formalized through official communication between the project team and the funding partner (e.g. Steering Committee minutes; email exchange with the donor; GEF Project Implementation Review report; email confirming adoption of revisions after a mid-term review etc.)

• strategies used to increase stakeholder engagement and consultation • methods to include the voices/experiences of different and potentially excluded groups (e.g. vulnerable, gender, marginalised etc) • details of how data were verified (e.g. triangulation, review by stakeholders etc.) • methods used to analyse data (scoring, coding, thematic analysis etc) • review limitations (e.g. low/ imbalanced response rates across different groups; gaps in documentation; language barriers etc) • ethics and human rights issues should be highlighted including: how anonymity and confidentiality were protected. Is there an ethics statement? E.g. *'Throughout the review process and in the compilation of the Final Review Report efforts have been made to represent the views of both mainstream and more marginalised groups. All efforts to provide respondents with anonymity have been made.*		
Quality of the Theory of Change Purpose: to set out the TOC at Review in diagrammatic and narrative forms to support consistent project performance; to articulate the causal pathways with drivers and assumptions and justify any reconstruction necessary to assess the project's performance. To include: • description of how the *TOC at Review*[104] was designed (who was involved etc) • confirmation/reconstruction of results in accordance with UNEP definitions • articulation of causal pathways • identification of drivers and assumptions • identification of key actors in the change process • summary of the reconstruction/results re-formulation in tabular form. *The two results hierarchies (original/formal revision and reconstructed) should be presented as a two-column table to show clearly that, although wording and placement may have changed, the results 'goal posts' have not been 'moved'.* This table may have initially been presented in the	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The Theory of Change section provides a narrative, diagram, causal pathways, and assumptions. It was deemed valid, so no reconstruction was needed. This section would have benefited from an identification of drivers and the key actors in the change process.	5

[104] During the Inception Phase of the review process a *TOC at Evaluation Inception* is created based on the information contained in the approved project documents (these may include either logical framework or a TOC or narrative descriptions), formal revisions and annual reports etc. During the evaluation process this TOC is revised based on changes made during project intervention and becomes the *TOC at Evaluation*.

Inception Report and should appear somewhere in the Main Review report.		
Quality of Key Findings within the Report <u>Presentation of evidence:</u> nature of evidence should be clear (interview, document, survey, observation, online resources etc) and evidence should be explicitly triangulated unless noted as having a single source. <u>Consistency within the report:</u> all parts of the report should form consistent support for findings and performance ratings, which should be in line with UNEP's Criteria Ratings Matrix. <u>Findings Statements (where applicable):</u> The frame of reference for a finding should be an individual review criterion or a strategic question from the TOR. **A finding should go beyond description and uses analysis to provide insights that aid learning specific to the evaluand.** In some cases a findings statement may articulate a key element that has determined the performance rating of a criterion. Findings will frequently provide insight into 'how' and/or 'why' questions.	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report largely meets the specified requirements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report meets UNEP's standards for quality findings by clearly identifying sources of evidence -such as interviews, documents, and site visits- and applying triangulation to validate conclusions. The findings are consistent with the rest of the report and align with UNEP's performance rating criteria, ensuring coherence between evidence and ratings.	5
Quality of 'Strategic Relevance' Section <u>Purpose:</u> to present evidence and analysis of project strategic relevance with respect to UNEP, partner and geographic policies and strategies at the time of project approval. To include: Assessment of the evaluand's relevance vis-à-vis: • Alignment to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS), Programme of Work (POW) and Strategic Priorities • Alignment to Donor/GEF/Partners Strategic Priorities • Relevance to Regional, Sub-regional and National Environmental Priorities • Complementarity with Existing Interventions: complementarity of the project at design (or	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report effectively meets the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report comprehensively addresses all the required element and includes and assessment on the relevance of the project in relation to the problem it addresses.	5.5

during inception/mobilisation[105]), with other interventions addressing the needs of the same target groups.		
Quality of the 'Quality and Revision of Project Design' Section Purpose: to present a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design, on the basis that the detailed assessment was presented in the Inception Report.	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets the required elements of the evaluation criterion, assuming that a more detailed assessment was provided in the Inception Report.	5
Quality of 'Effectiveness' Section **(i) Theory of Change:** Purpose: to present the (reconstructed Theory of Change) used to represent the change process the project expected to drive. To include: • Assessment or confirmation that the Theory of Change/Results Framework represents a coherent and realistic change process from a cause and effect perspective. • Effectively shown/articulated causal pathways that are supported by a full set of contributing conditions (('drivers' are external factors largely under the influence of the project; 'assumptions' are external factors largely outside the influence of the project). • The TOC should also reflect UNEP's commitment to increasing equality in line with the UN's commitment to human rights (e.g. as a Driver if the project has made explicit intentions on equality or	Final report (coverage/omissions): As mentioned above, the report meets most of the required elements. Final report (strengths/weaknesses): The Theory of Change section is supported by a visual and narrative explanation.	5

[105] A project's inception or mobilization period is understood as the time between project approval and first disbursement. Complementarity during project implementation is considered under Efficiency, see below.

as an Assumption if the project is silent on equality). If adjustments to the TOC are needed they should be clearly presented and justified during the MTE process and a recommendation made on how many revisions could be formally approved.		
(ii) Availability of Outputs: Purpose: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the outputs made available to the intended beneficiaries. To include: • a convincing, evidence-supported and clear presentation of the outputs made available by the project compared to its approved plans and budget • assessment of the nature and scale of outputs versus the project indicators and targets • assessment of the timeliness, quality and utility of outputs to intended beneficiaries • identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report does assess the scale and nature of outputs against indicators and targets, and it comments on the timeliness and quality of outputs. A discussion about the effects on disadvantaged groups, including gender or marginalized populations, beyond general mentions of awareness-raising and participation would have been appreciated.	5
iii) Progress Towards Project Outcomes: Purpose: to present a well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the uptake, adoption and/or implementation of outputs by the intended beneficiaries. This may include behaviour changes at an individual or collective level. To include: • a convincing and evidence-supported analysis of the uptake of outputs by intended beneficiaries • assessment of the nature, depth and scale of outcomes versus the project indicators and targets • discussion of the contribution, credible association and/or attribution of outcome level changes to the work of the project itself • any constraints to attributing effects to the projects' work	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report gives a basic, evidence-based overview of how outputs are being used, showing that some progress has been made.	5

• identification of positive or negative effects of the project on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).		
(iv) Likelihood of Impact: Purpose: to present an integrated analysis, guided by the causal pathways represented by the TOC, of all evidence relating to likelihood of impact, including an assessment of the extent to which drivers and assumptions necessary for change to happen, were seen to be holding. To include: • an explanation of how causal pathways emerged and change processes can be shown • an explanation of the roles played by key actors and change agents • explicit discussion of how drivers and assumptions played out • identification of any unintended negative effects of the project, especially on disadvantaged groups, including those with specific needs due to gender, vulnerability or marginalisation (e.g. through disability).	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the project's potential to achieve long-term impact. It also discusses enabling and hindering factors. It also addresses various issues beyond the required elements, such as the extent to which the project is driving innovation, progressing toward a planned paradigm shift, playing a catalytic role, or promoting longer-term scaling-up and replication.	5.5
iv) Adaptive Management Purpose: to record any measures taken to adapt the project in light of experiences and events. To include: • Confirmation of whether any adaptive management has taken place. • Consideration of the project's performance to-date from a risk perspective considering: a) the likelihood of any non/late delivery of the project's workplan; b) likelihood of any negative effects, including reputational risks and safeguard issues and c) factors undermining	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report meets most of the required elements. In the report, adaptive management is covered in the ratings table, and sections 5.4.4 and 5.7.1.5. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* Regarding adaptive management, the report confirms that some	5

the endurance of project achievements. In the MTR report are forward plans reviewed and adaptive management strategies discussed such that the project's effectiveness and efficiency are maximized. Actions for adaptive management should be reflected in the MTR recommendations, which may include recommendations on governance structures, implementation arrangements, project design elements, monitoring and/or exit strategies etc.	adjustments were made -such as changes to the Results Framework and procurement processes- and that risks like delays, safeguard issues, and sustainability concerns were considered.	
Quality of 'Financial Management' Section Purpose: to assess a) whether the rate of spend is consistent with the project's length of implementation to-date, the agreed workplan and the delivery of outputs and b) whether financial reporting and/or auditing requirements are being met consistently and to adequate standards by all parties. Consider how well the report addresses the following: • *adherence* to UNEP's financial policies and procedures • *completeness* of financial information, including the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used • *highlights* any financial management issues that are affecting the timely delivery of the project or the quality of its performance	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report comprehensively addresses the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report assesses compliance with UNEP and GCF financial policies, as well as the completeness and timeliness financial reporting. It provides detailed financial data, including disbursements, expenditures by component, and co-financing figures. It also identifies key financial issues affecting project performance and acknowledges corrective actions.	5
Quality of 'Efficiency' Section Purpose: to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under efficiency (i.e. the primary categories of cost-effectiveness and timeliness). To include: • time-saving measures put in place to maximise results within the secured budget and agreed project timeframe • discussion of making use, during project implementation, of/building on pre-existing institutions, agreements and partnerships, data sources, synergies and complementarities with other initiatives, programmes and projects etc.	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report's section "Cost-effectiveness and Timeliness" under Efficiency meets most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* An assessment of the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint is cover	5

• implications of any delays and no cost extensions • the extent to which the management of the project minimised UNEP's environmental footprint.	under the report's section on "Quality of project management and supervision / adaptive management / environmental and social safeguards".	
Quality of 'Monitoring and Reporting' Section Purpose: to present well-reasoned, complete and evidence-based assessment of the evaluand's monitoring and reporting. Each project should be supported by a sound monitoring plan that is designed to track progress against SMART results. Consider how well the report addresses the following: • quality of monitoring of project implementation *(including use of monitoring data for adaptive management)* • quality of project reporting *(e.g. UNEP and donor reports)*	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* All required elements addressed. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* Overall, the report clearly identifies both strengths and gaps in monitoring and reporting.	5
Quality of 'Exit Strategy & Sustainability' Section Purpose: to present an integrated analysis of all dimensions evaluated under sustainability (i.e. the endurance of benefits achieved at outcome level given the socio-political, financial and institutional context). Consider how well the report addresses the following: • likelihood of enduring benefits from the project • existence of an appropriate exit strategy	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report covers all the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The section provides a thorough, evidence-based analysis of sustainability and exit strategy at midterm.	5.5
Quality of Factors Affecting Performance Section Purpose: These factors are not always discussed in stand-alone sections and may be integrated in the other performance criteria as appropriate. However, if not addressed substantively in this section, a cross reference must be given to where the topic is addressed and that entry must be sufficient to justify the performance rating for these factors.	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The report addressed all the "Quality of Factors Affecting Performance", either directly or through cross-referenced sections. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):*	5

Consider how well the review report, either in this section or in cross-referenced sections, covers the following cross-cutting themes: • quality of project management and supervision[106] • stakeholder participation and co-operation • responsiveness to human rights and gender equality • environmental and social safeguards • country ownership and driven-ness • communication and public awareness	The report substantively addresses all the required cross-cutting themes. Each is evaluated in its own dedicated section, and where relevant, the report provides cross-references and integrated analysis across sections.	
Quality of the Conclusions Section **(i) Conclusions Narrative:** Purpose: to present summative statements reflecting on prominent aspects of the performance of the evaluand as a whole, they should be derived from the synthesized analysis of evidence gathered during the review process. To include: • compelling narrative providing an integrated summary of the strengths and weakness in overall performance to-date (achievements and limitations) of the project • clear and succinct response to any key strategic questions • human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention should be discussed explicitly (e.g. how these dimensions are being considered, addressed or impacted on)	Final report *(coverage/omissions):* The conclusions section in the report covers most of the required elements. Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The conclusions narrative is well-structured and effectively synthesizes the project's main strengths and weaknesses in overall performance at mid-term. A discussion on the human rights and gender dimensions of the intervention would have been appreciated.	5
ii) Utility of the Lessons: Purpose: to present both positive and negative lessons that have potential for use during the remainder of the project (replication and generalization) Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: • are rooted in real project experiences (i.e. derived from explicit review findings or from problems encountered and mistakes made that should be avoided in the future)	Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The Lessons Learned section in the report covers the required elements. This section presents insights based on real project experiences, clearly distinguishing them from	5

[106] In some cases 'project management and supervision' will refer to the supervision and guidance provided by UNEP to implementing partners and national governments while in others, specifically for GEF funded projects, it will refer to the project management performance of the executing agency and the technical backstopping provided by UNEP. This includes providing the answers to the questions on Core Indicator Targets, stakeholder engagement, gender responsiveness, safeguards and knowledge management, required for the GEF portal.

• briefly describe the context from which they are derived and those contexts in which they may be useful • do not duplicate recommendations	recommendations, and providing relevant context and applicability for future use. The lessons are concise, well-structured, and support replication and learning in similar projects.	
(iii) Utility and Actionability of the Recommendations: Purpose: to present proposals for specific action to be taken by identified people/position-holders to resolve concrete problems affecting the project or the sustainability of its results. Consider how well the lessons achieve the following: • are feasible to implement within the timeframe and resources available (including local capacities) and specific in terms of who would do what and when • include at least one recommendation relating to strengthening the human rights and gender dimensions of UNEP interventions • represent a measurable performance target in order that the UNEP Unit/Branch can monitor and assess compliance with the recommendations.	Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The Recommendations section in the report covers most of the required elements. The recommendations are feasible and clearly specify who should do what and when; and many include measurable deliverables that UNEP can monitor, making them actionable.	5
Quality of Report Structure and Presentation **(i) Structure and completeness of the report:** To what extent does the report follow the UNEP Evaluation Office structure and formatting guidelines? Are all requested Annexes included and complete?	Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report is well-structured, follows most of the UNEP Evaluation Office's formatting guidelines, and includes annexes in a complete and organized manner.	5
(ii) Writing and formatting: Consider whether the report is well written (clear English language and grammar) with language that is adequate in quality and tone for an official document? Do visual aids, such as maps and graphs convey key information?	Final report *(strengths/weaknesses):* The report is well written in clear, professional English, with appropriate grammar and tone for an official UNEP document. Visual aids such as tables and figures are used effectively to support the narrative and convey key information. However, the	5

	report would have benefit from more visual summaries (e.g., charts or infographics) to make complex findings more accessible to a broader audience.	
OVERALL REPORT QUALITY RATING		**5**

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1. The overall quality of the review report is calculated by taking the mean score of all rated quality criteria.

At the end of the evaluation, compliance of the evaluation process against the agreed standard procedures is assessed, based on the table below. *All questions with negative compliance must be explained further in the table below.*

Evaluation Process Quality Criteria	**Compliance**	
	Yes	**No**
Independence:		
1. Were the Terms of Reference drafted and finalised by the Evaluation Office?	**x**	
2. Were possible conflicts of interest of proposed Evaluation Consultant(s) appraised and addressed in the final selection?	**x**	
3. Was the final selection of the Evaluation Consultant(s) made by the Evaluation Office?	**x**	
4. Was the evaluator contracted directly by the Evaluation Office?	**x**	
5. Was the Evaluation Consultant given direct access to identified external stakeholders in order to adequately present and discuss the findings, as appropriate?	**x**	
6. Did the Evaluation Consultant raise any concerns about being unable to work freely and without interference or undue pressure from project staff or the Evaluation Office?		**x**
7. If Yes to Q6: Were these concerns resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both the Evaluation Consultant and the Evaluation Manager?		
Financial Management:		
8. Was the evaluation budget approved at project design available for the evaluation?	**x**	

9. Was the final evaluation budget agreed and approved by the Evaluation Office?	x	
10. Were the agreed evaluation funds readily available to support the payment of the evaluation contract throughout the payment process?	x	
Timeliness:		
11. If a Terminal Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within the period of six months before or after project operational completion? Or, if a Mid Term Evaluation: Was the evaluation initiated within a six-month period prior to the project's mid-point?	x	
12. Were all deadlines set in the Terms of Reference respected, as far as unforeseen circumstances allowed?	x	
13. Was the inception report delivered and reviewed/approved prior to commencing any travel?	x	
Project's engagement and support:		
14. Were the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and identified project stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on the evaluation Terms of Reference?	x	
15. Did the project make available all required/requested documents?	x	
16. Did the project make all financial information (and audit reports if applicable) available in a timely manner and to an acceptable level of completeness?	x	
17. Was adequate support provided by the project to the evaluator(s) in planning and conducting evaluation missions?	x	
18. Was close communication between the Evaluation Consultant, Evaluation Office and project team maintained throughout the evaluation?	x	
19. Were evaluation findings, lessons and recommendations adequately discussed with the project team for ownership to be established?	x	
20. Were the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and any identified project stakeholders given an opportunity to provide comments on the draft evaluation report?		x
Quality assurance:		
21. Were the evaluation Terms of Reference, including the key evaluation questions, peer-reviewed?	x	
22. Was the TOC in the inception report peer-reviewed?	x	
23. Was the quality of the draft/cleared report checked by the Evaluation Manager and Peer Reviewer prior to dissemination to stakeholders for comments?	x	

24. Did the Evaluation Office complete an assessment of the quality of both the draft and final reports?	x	
Transparency:		
25. Was the draft evaluation report sent directly by the Evaluation Consultant to the Evaluation Office?	x	
26. Did the Evaluation Manager disseminate (or authorize dissemination) of the cleared draft report to the project team, Sub-Programme Coordinator and other key internal personnel (including the Reference Group where appropriate) to solicit formal comments?	x	
27. Did the Evaluation Manager disseminate (or authorize dissemination) appropriate drafts of the report to identified external stakeholders, including key partners and funders, to solicit formal comments?	x	
28. Were all stakeholder comments to the draft evaluation report sent directly to the Evaluation Office	x	
29. Did the Evaluation Consultant(s) respond adequately to all factual corrections and comments?	x	
30. Did the Evaluation Office share substantive comments and Evaluation Consultant responses with those who commented, as appropriate?	x	

Provide comments / explanations / mitigating circumstances below for any non-compliant process issues.

Process Criterion Number	Evaluation Office Comments
20	As this was the Evaluation Office's first engagement in a GCF Interim Evaluation, and given the tight evaluation deadlines, consultations on the various drafts of the evaluation report were limited to the Project Team. Despite these constraints, the Evaluation Office remained fully committed to upholding the quality and integrity of the evaluation process.

Baastel

30 Years Promoting Sustainable Development

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