



Independent Evaluation of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) Project 2225E

*"Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small
Island Developing States, to "recover better" from COVID-19"**

Final Evaluation Report

July 2026 |

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EU	European Union
IMO	International Maritime Organization
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SSP	Sustainable Smart Ports
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Trade and Development
UNDA	United Nations Development Account
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICC	United Nations International Computing Centre
USD	United States Dollars

Executive summary

Overview of DA14 SSP Project 2225E ‘Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to “recover better” from COVID-19’

The project **Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP) for African countries, including SIDS, to “recover better” from COVID-19**, which ran from Feb 2022 to March 2026, was designed to strengthen the capacity of selected African countries to manage ports in a more sustainable, energy-efficient, technologically enabled, and resilient manner. It was developed against a backdrop of increasing pressure on ports to decarbonize and transition towards more sustainable energy systems, improve energy efficiency, adopt cleaner technologies, and strengthen resilience following disruptions such as COVID-19, energy insecurity, geopolitical instability, and rapid digital transformation.

Its primary objective was to strengthen the capacity of selected African countries, including SIDS, to develop Sustainable Smart Ports that promote sustainable energy and technology-driven solutions and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project, with a total budget of USD 600,000, was implemented by UNCTAD in Ghana, Mauritius, and Morocco, with port authorities serving as the principal national focal points, alongside ministries, regulators, utilities, private operators, and regional organizations. To achieve this, the project pursued two main expected outcomes:

- Enhanced knowledge of relevant stakeholders in selected countries in Africa of: (i) the potential of national ports to emerge as Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP); and (ii) cross sectoral policies and measures that promote the realisation of this potential; and

Improved capacity of policy makers in selected countries in Africa to formulate and implement roadmaps/action plans that enable ports to meet the SSP status. **The project focused on three countries: Ghana, Mauritius, and Morocco**, which were selected based on elements such as maritime connectivity, relevance of blue economy strategies, renewable energy potential, interest in sustainable transport solutions, and the likelihood of generating tangible results within the project’s timeframe. The intervention targeted a broad set of beneficiaries, including port authorities, transport and energy policymakers, electricity utilities, environmental and infrastructure agencies, logistics and terminal operators, shipping associations, energy and technology firms, academia, and regional organizations. This reflected the cross-sectoral nature of sustainable port transformation.

The project began with the development of an SSP assessment methodology to diagnose port potential challenges and opportunities to shift to renewable and clean energy and enhance energy efficiency conditions and provide a practical basis for planning and implementation. This was followed by the preparation of knowledge products and training materials based on expert input, exchange of experiences and good practices. The methodology was applied across the three beneficiary countries through data collection, stakeholder consultations, country assessments, and validation workshops, resulting in recommendations and action plans tailored to national contexts. Finally, the project delivered capacity-building and training activities, a project website, and is developing an online repository and e-learning platform to support the implementation of priority actions identified in each roadmap.

The project was closely linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG 9 on resilient and sustainable infrastructure, SDG 8 on resource-efficient and sustainable economic growth, SDG 13 on climate action, and SDG 14 on reducing marine pollution and supporting sustainable ocean use. A distinctive feature of the project was its operationalization of the still-evolving SSP concept through a dedicated assessment methodology that viewed ports not only as logistics hubs but also as potential clean energy hubs. By combining sustainability, digitalization, and energy transition within a single framework, the project created a practical model that can be adapted, scaled up, and reused beyond the initial beneficiary countries.

Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and intended users/ audience

The purpose of the evaluation was to ‘systematically and objectively assess project design, project management, implementation, overall results, and the mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues such as gender and environmental sustainability’ as well as to ‘provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD Member States.’ As its specific objectives, the evaluation therefore (i) assessed the extent to which desired project outcomes and outputs have been realized with a focus on Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness (including Impact), Sustainability and UN cross-cutting issues; (ii) identified lessons learned on project design, management, implementation and mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues that could feed into and enhance implementation of related or future interventions. The scope of the evaluation covered: the entire project timeframe, the 3 beneficiary countries, and the evaluation criteria of focus, namely the five OECD-DAC criteria (relevance; coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and three cross-cutting themes. Primary users of the evaluation include: the management of UNCTAD; the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA); Project stakeholders; and UNCTAD Member States.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was undertaken using a theory-based and utilization-focused approach complemented by participatory and cost-effective methods. The evaluation used both primary and secondary sources of data to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation was based on stakeholder engagement from the start of the process. Where possible, information and views from interviews were triangulated from other sources, such as documents and data. A survey was also disseminated to stakeholders to gather a wider range of views on the project. The selection of key informants was based on purposive sampling, engaging stakeholders best positioned to provide detailed responses to the evaluation questions. This process was supported by a desk review of all relevant documents available for in-depth analysis.

Summary of key findings, conclusions and recommendations

Key findings

Relevance: The project design was closely aligned with UNCTAD’s mandate to support developing countries in ‘benefiting from a globalized economy more fairly and effectively’, with direct links to its Subprogramme 4 on Technology and Logistics. The project design, choice of activities and

deliverables were also consistent with UNDA's focus on results-based capacity development to achieve the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda. Additionally, the project addressed a clearly recognised need across beneficiary countries to transition towards SSP while being responsive to country-specific priorities and levels of readiness during implementation.

Coherence: UNCTAD brought significant and distinctive value to the project by translating the SSP concept into a practical country-level framework, convening diverse stakeholders around a common agenda, and facilitating access to relevant international expertise and peer learning. The project also demonstrated a high degree of complementarity with existing initiatives, particularly by helping to connect and structure efforts already underway in the target countries, which are often fragmented.

Effectiveness: The evaluation concludes that the project largely achieved its intended objectives. It strengthened stakeholder knowledge of the SSP concept, secured endorsement of the SSP methodology, and built capacity for roadmap development through assessments, consultations and targeted training. In addition to the intended results, the project generated several unintended positive outcomes that strengthened coordination, clarified implementation pathways, and created momentum for replication and contribution to SDG-related objectives. There is also evidence of early follow-up actions, improved coordination and growing demand for continued support and replication. At the same time, progress towards full implementation and broader contribution to SDG targets remains at an early and uneven stage across the beneficiary countries. The project's main achievement was therefore catalytic rather than transformative at this stage: it created a practical framework, built ownership, clarified implementation pathways and generated momentum for future action. The achievement of project results was supported by strong technical design, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with national priorities, but was constrained by coordination challenges, differing levels of institutional readiness, and delays linked to external factors.

Efficiency: Project management was generally effective in coordinating and delivering core activities despite limited staffing, administrative pressures and competing demands across the three beneficiary countries during important implementation periods. Although project implementation was informed by a risk assessment and mitigation plan, the disruptive effects of Ghana's political transition on project activities, stemming mainly from the time required to establish the new administration, were underestimated. Additionally, the project achieved a moderate level of efficiency, with good allocative and technical efficiency and a high degree of adaptive management during implementation, although overall efficiency was constrained by delays. Notably, the project leveraged selected partnerships within the wider UN system to support implementation, but these were uneven in depth and could have been strengthened further, particularly at the country level. External partnerships were key to the delivery of project activities and were leveraged effectively for stakeholder engagement, technical inputs, multi-stakeholder discussions and peer learning, although their strength varied across beneficiary countries, and the strategic use of regional partnerships could have been strengthened.

Sustainability: The evaluation also finds that the project incorporated credible mechanisms to support sustainability, notably through capacity building, a country-owned matrix of recommendations/roadmaps and stronger stakeholder coordination. There is already some evidence of institutional uptake and intention to use the knowledge and planning tools generated, especially in Mauritius and Morocco. Stakeholder feedback also suggests that the knowledge and skills gained through capacity-building activities are being applied, particularly in energy

management, electrification planning, and regulatory considerations. In several cases, participants noted improved understanding of cross-sectoral issues and greater ability to engage with technical and policy discussions. However, the sustainability of results will depend on continued implementation support, resource availability and the completion and active use of the online SSP platform

Cross-cutting issues: While environmental sustainability was fully embedded as the core objective of the intervention, broader cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, disability inclusion, and the "leave no one behind" principle were addressed more indirectly and were not systematically integrated into the methodology, outputs, or results measurement.

Overall, the evaluation positions the project as a strategically sound and valuable intervention that has laid a strong foundation for longer-term impact, while highlighting the need for sustained follow-through to convert early progress into durable results.

Conclusions

The SSP project was a targeted intervention that enabled selected African countries to strengthen their capacity to plan and advance sustainable, energy-efficient port development through the SSP methodology. Project implementation was built on national commitments to sustainable development and climate action, supporting countries in aligning port development strategies with broader national energy transition pathways and SDG objectives. The project provided a structured framework, technical tools, a project website, and will launch an e-learning and repository platform for knowledge exchange, enabling more countries to better understand and operationalize the SSP concept. It also facilitated collaboration among port authorities, government agencies and regulatory authorities, contributing to improved coordination on cross-cutting issues related to port sustainability.

There is evidence of early uptake and continued demand for the SSP methodology and related outputs, including interest in follow-up support and expansion to additional ports and countries. While implementation of the SSP roadmaps developed under the project remains in its early stages, the project has established a foundation for longer-term impact through strengthened capacities, institutional engagement, and increased awareness of sustainability pathways in the port sector. However, the sustainability and scaling of results will depend on continued technical support, resource mobilization and institutional commitment. Additionally, while environmental sustainability was central to the project, broader cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and inclusion were not systematically integrated into the analytical framework, methodology or results measurement, limiting the intervention's alignment with the 2030 Agenda's integrated approach.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the evaluation have been informed by the exercise's main findings and emergent lessons, and are addressed to the project's lead implementing agency, UNCTAD. It is recommended that:

1. Project conceptualisation should be preceded by planning consultations with key national stakeholders and United Nations Resident Coordinator offices, to establish synergies and minimise implementation risks. These consultations should inform and refine assumptions

about potential risks, including those related to political stability, institutional capacity, stakeholder availability, and data accessibility. **(High Priority)**;

2. Project management arrangements for future multi-country interventions should be strengthened through improved planning of staff time, greater flexibility in the use of project funds to recruit short-term staff support during peak workload periods, including for key project functions and unforeseen circumstances and proportionate coordination tools by the operational team such as Monday.com, Microsoft tools such as Planner and Trello among others **(High Priority)**;
3. Stronger and more systematic engagement with United Nations system partners and regional organisations, including port associations and development finance institutions, should be established from the design stage to enhance coordination, support scaling and strengthen follow-up to implementation of SSP roadmaps by the management team. **(High Priority)**;
4. The design and management of data collection processes for the national SSP assessments should be strengthened, including through clearer communication of their purpose, early engagement and preparation of stakeholders, and more streamlined information requirements **(High Priority)**;
5. Clear arrangements should be established for the post-project maintenance, dissemination and use of the online SSP platform by the operational team **(High Priority)**; and
6. Future interventions should integrate gender equality, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind more systematically into project design, methodology, implementation and results monitoring by the project design team **(High Priority)**.

1. Introduction

The UNDA-funded project 2225E, ‘Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP) for African countries, including Small Island Developing States to recover better from COVID-19’ (hereafter, the SSP project), was implemented from February 2022 to March 2026 under the 14th tranche of the UN Development Account (UNDA) with a budget of USD 600,000. UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was the implementing agency, providing technical assistance and capacity-building support, in close collaboration with national stakeholders in the beneficiary countries, namely Ghana, Mauritius and Morocco.

Evaluation activities were conducted from February 2026 to April 2026 by an independent external evaluator to coincide with the project's completion, including final reporting. The purpose of the evaluation was to ‘systematically and objectively assess project design, project management, implementation, overall results, and the mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues such as gender and environmental sustainability’ as well as to ‘provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD Member States.’¹

The remainder of this evaluation report is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the project and the operating context. Section 3 details the evaluation scope, objectives and questions. Section 4 presents the methodology used to conduct the evaluation. Section 5 provides the findings of the evaluation, and Section 6 presents conclusions. Section 7 provides recommendations based on the evaluation's findings and conclusions. Section 8 presents lessons learned and good practices identified during the project's implementation.

¹ Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), p.1.

2. Description of the Project

2.1 Background and Context

Over 80% of global trade is seaborne², making ports an important link in global supply chains. National economies, particularly those of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), are heavily reliant on ports for access to essential goods and for business connectivity. Ports serve as essential gateways to trade and play a central role in economic development by generating employment, facilitating business activity, and supporting national and local economies. This dependence is particularly pronounced in SIDS, where ports constitute vital lifelines for the provision of essential goods and economic connectivity. As such, port performance, particularly in terms of efficiency, reliability, and sustainability, has direct implications for trade competitiveness, economic resilience and development.

Beyond their economic function, ports are now increasingly recognized as key actors in advancing sustainable development. The global energy transition, along with energy security concerns, is increasing pressure on ports and global shipping to reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and integrate cleaner energy sources. Furthermore, disruptions to the port and shipping sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted vulnerabilities in current maritime transport systems, reinforcing the need to build resilience in critical port infrastructure and operations. In particular, many developing countries face significant challenges in transitioning towards more sustainable and smart port systems. These include limited technical capacity, insufficient access to finance, gaps in data and diagnostics, and weak coordination among stakeholders.

The operating context for the ports sector has been characterized by various transitions during the past five years: environmental, energy and digitalization. Notably, in July 2023, the IMO adopted the 2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) from Ships, which identifies *“measures to both encourage port developments and activities globally to facilitate reduction of GHG emissions from shipping, including provision of ship and shoreside/onshore power supply from renewable sources, and infrastructure to support supply of zero or near-zero GHG emission fuels and/or energy sources, and to further optimize the logistic chain and its planning, including ports”³* as a candidate mid-term greenhouse gas reduction measure. The ports sector has also been affected by geopolitical events, which have led to unpredictable shipments, disrupted shipping routes, and higher energy prices. Furthermore, the emergence of new data environments and technology-based solutions, including artificial intelligence, has accelerated the digital transformation of ports by enabling smarter, more efficient and resilient port operations

Against this background, UNCTAD has been working with select African countries, including SIDS, to strengthen capacities for building Sustainable Smart Ports (SSPs) under the Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to “recover better” from COVID-19 project (2022–2026). SSPs are defined as *“ports that leverage the energy transition and technology-based solutions to improve port operational efficiency through energy efficiency, whilst harnessing the ability to use, produce and distribute clean and renewable energy to support sustainable development.”⁴* The intervention was structured around two main components: (i) the development and application of a diagnosis and assessment methodology to determine the SSP status of ports in beneficiary countries and generate recommendations on how best to advance towards SSP; and (ii) a capacity-building component, including workshops, training, tools, and the sharing of best

² UN trade and development (2025). [Shipping data: UNCTAD releases new seaborne trade statistics](#).

³ International Maritime Organization (2023) IMO strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships, International Maritime Organization, 2023, <https://www.imo.org/en/ourwork/environment/pages/2023-imo-strategy-on-reduction-of-ghg-emissions-from-ships.aspx>.

⁴ Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), p.1.

practices, designed both to strengthen knowledge and to support implementation of priority actions identified in national action plans or roadmaps, while also promoting regional exchange of experience and collaboration on SSP development. The project was implemented in Ghana, Mauritius, and Morocco, engaging key stakeholders such as port authorities, government ministries, regulatory agencies, electricity utilities, private sector operators, and regional organizations.

2.2 Project Objectives and Expected Results

The primary objective of the SSP project was to ‘strengthen the capacity of selected countries in Africa, including SIDS, in building Sustainable Smart Ports that promote sustainable energy and technology-driven solutions for a better sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and contributing towards the achievement of SDGs.’⁵ To support the achievement of the project objectives, the theory of change for the SSP project established two expected outcomes:⁶

Outcome 1: Enhanced knowledge of stakeholders in selected African countries on the potential of national ports to become Sustainable Smart Ports and cross-sectoral policies and measures supporting SSP principles

The project aimed to improve the understanding of the potential for national ports to transition to SSP status, as well as the cross-sectoral policies and measures required to support this transition across relevant stakeholders, including port authorities, regulatory agencies, ministries, and other actors in the maritime and energy sectors.

The measure of evidence for Outcome 1 comprised evidence of:

- A better understanding of the concept of SSP, its relevance, and the cross-sectoral policies and measures that promote SSP principles by 80% of the stakeholders participating in regional and sub-regional workshops;
- Endorsement of the UNCTAD SSP assessment methodology developed by the project by 80% of the stakeholders participating in the regional and sub-regional online workshops.

Outcome 2: Improved capacity of policymakers in selected African countries to formulate and implement SSP roadmaps/action plans enabling ports to meet SSP status

The project was expected to improve policymakers' capacity in the target countries to formulate and implement SSP roadmaps or action plans that would enable ports to progress towards SSP status.

At the level of Outcome 2, achievement was measured as evidence that:

- A national SSP roadmap/action plan is developed and validated by policymakers in each of the three beneficiary countries;
- Each of the three beneficiary countries had initiated at least one action for implementation of the roadmap/action plan.

The Results Framework for the project is provided in Annex 2.

2.3 Project Strategies and Key Activities

The main project strategy was designed to operationalize the overall objective through a sequenced combination of knowledge generation, methodology development, country-level assessment, and capacity-building. The strategy sought to ensure a coherent policy and implementation approach to

⁵ Project Document, p.2.

⁶ This section draws from the Project document, p. 8 (Results Framework).

the design and operationalization of the SSP concept, combining analytical work, stakeholder engagement and capacity-building through the four steps below:

Step 1: Development of assessment methodology

The first step of the project strategy focused on generating the knowledge and insights required to underpin the elaboration of a diagnosis and assessment methodology for SSP. This methodology was intended to help ports assess their SSP status and identify challenges and opportunities associated with SSP development. As part of this process, the methodology was to be peer-reviewed at an expert meeting to strengthen its analytical robustness and relevance for application in beneficiary countries.

Step 2: Development of knowledge products

The second step involved codifying the insights gained from the expert meeting, along with identified good practices, experiences, and success stories, into comprehensive training and guidance materials.

Step 3: Application of the assessment methodology in the target countries

The third step consisted of applying the SSP assessment methodology to targeted ports in selected beneficiary countries. This was intended to evaluate the SSP status of each port and to define an action plan or roadmap to support SSP development. Country-level stakeholder meetings, data collection, consultations and validation processes were central to this stage, ensuring that the assessment reports and roadmaps were grounded in national realities and endorsed by relevant policymakers and stakeholders.

Step 4: Delivery of training and capacity building activities

The fourth step focused on delivering training and capacity-building activities to support the implementation of one priority action identified in each roadmap/action plan. These activities were designed to target a broad group of stakeholders, including policymakers, port authorities, port operators, shipping associations, financiers, actors in the energy, environment and technology sectors, academia, and regional, sub-regional and national organizations.

2.4 Target Countries and Beneficiaries

The SSP project targeted African countries, including SIDS, as its intended beneficiary region, given the strategic role of ports in trade and development and the persistent challenges affecting port systems across the continent. Three countries from the region, namely Ghana, Mauritius and Morocco, were selected as target countries for project engagement.

The following criteria were used for selecting the target countries:

- Existence of relatively strong maritime transport connectivity;
- Presence of a blue economy strategy, including links to maritime transport and port development;
- Existing programmes aimed at producing renewable energy, including electricity and transport fuels;
- Demonstrated interest in sustainable transport solutions;
- Priority for African SIDS;
- Likelihood of achieving tangible country-level results within the project timeframe;
- Diversity in terms of port sizes and in terms of energy transition development and implementation level.⁷

⁷ Project document, p.6 and stakeholder consultations.

A stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment during project development were used to identify the target beneficiaries of the SSP. The target project beneficiaries included: port authorities; other policymakers in areas such as transport, energy, municipal development, environmental protection, economic planning and infrastructure; private actors operating in and around ports, including terminal operators, rail and trucking companies, logistics providers and bunkering service providers; other private sector actors such as shipping associations and companies in the energy, environment and technology sectors; academia; regional and sub-regional maritime and port organizations; and financiers, including multilateral development banks. Annex 3 presents an overview of the target beneficiaries, including their role in the development of sustainable smart ports and the capacity assets and gaps that were identified in their organizations for project support.

2.5 Key partners and other key stakeholders

As the implementing agency, UNCTAD was responsible for the overall coordination and delivery of the SSP project. At the national level, the implementation of project activities relied heavily on the engagement of port authorities in the selected beneficiary countries. Port authorities acted as the primary focal points for project implementation, given their central role in port management, infrastructure development, and coordination of port-related activities. Relevant government ministries, such as those responsible for energy and environment, as well as regulatory bodies and utilities involved in electricity and grid-related issues, were also key partners, contributing to policy discussions, validation processes, and the development of SSP roadmaps and action plans.

The project also leveraged expertise from other ports and terminals, including the Port of Antwerp and the Port of Busan, Port of Amsterdam, Port of Valencia and Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore to support peer learning, enrich technical discussions, and bring international operational experience into project workshops and capacity-building activities.

2.6 Resources

A budget of USD 600,000 was allocated to the SSP project. As shown in **Table 1**, the largest share of the planned budget was allocated to consultants and experts (38.3%), followed by grants and contributions (18.3%) and general operating expenses (16.1%). Smaller shares were allocated for staff travel (8.2%) and other staff costs (5.0%). This distribution reflects the project's intended emphasis on technical expertise, country-level activities, and stakeholder engagement.

In response to evolving implementation requirements, actual expenditure across several budget classes varied from the initial planned allocations. While these adjustments did not result in an overall budget overrun, they reflect a reallocation of resources towards categories that were more central to project delivery. Actual expenditure on consultants and experts increased substantially, rising from a planned allocation of 38.3% of the budget to 44.7% of total expenditure. This was followed by contractual services, which accounted for 19.3% of total expenditure, slightly above the planned share of 14.2%. In contrast, grants and contributions represented a significantly smaller share of expenditure than initially envisaged, falling from 18.3% of the planned budget to 16.5% of actual expenditure. General operating expenses also accounted for a much lower share of expenditure than originally budgeted, declining from 16.1% to 5.9%. Overall, total project expenditure amounted to USD 597,220, representing 99.5% of the planned budget, with an unspent balance of USD 2,780 (0.46% of the total budget).

Table 1. Planned budget and actual expenditure

Budget class	Project budget vs expenditure (USD \$)		
	Planned Budget (%of total budget)	Actual Expenditure (%of total expenditure)	Discrepancy between planned and actual
Other staff costs – General temporary assistance	30,000 (5.00)	30,407 (5.09)	-407
Consultants and experts	230,000 (38.33)	266,867 (44.68)	-36,867
Travel of staff	49,000 (8.17)	50,683 (8.49)	-1,683
Contractual services	85,000 (14.17)	115,099 (19.27)	-30,099
General operating expenses	96,500 (16.08)	35,275 (5.91)	61,225
Supplies and materials	0	102 (0.02)	-102
Grants and Contributions	109,500 (18.25)	98,787 (16.54)	10,713
Total	600,000	597,220	Unspent balance
			2,780 0.46% of the planned budget

Source: Final budget report, March 2026

2.7 Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SSP project was explicitly designed to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by supporting more sustainable, resilient, and technology-enabled port systems in Africa, including in SIDS, as highlighted by the project's objective (Table 2).

The project was most directly linked to **SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**. This was reflected in the project's emphasis on strengthening port infrastructure, supporting the adoption of cleaner, more efficient technologies, and enhancing port resilience. In this regard, the project aligned with Target 9.1, on developing quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure; Target 9.4, on upgrading infrastructure and retrofitting industries to make them sustainable; and Target 9.A, on facilitating sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries, including African countries and SIDS.

There was also a clear link with **SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**, especially Target 8.4, which calls for improvements in resource efficiency and the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation. By promoting more efficient port operations and encouraging the use of sustainable energy and cleaner technologies, the project sought to support a model of port development that combines economic performance with greater environmental sustainability. Furthermore, the SSP is also expected to lead to green job opportunities in the port.

The project further contributed to **SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**, particularly Target 13.2, by integrating climate-related and energy-transition considerations into port strategies to tap into clean energy potential.

In addition, the project was linked to **SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**, notably Target 14.1, through its emphasis on reducing environmental pressures associated with port activities, including pollution risks from fossil fuel consumption.

Table 2. Project linkages to SDGs and targets

Project objectives	Associated SDGS and targets
Strengthen the capacity of selected countries in Africa, including SIDS, in building Sustainable Smart Ports that promote sustainable energy and technology-driven solutions for a better sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and for achievement of SDGs	SDG8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
	Target 8.4 Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead.
	SDG9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
	Target 9.1 Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all.
	Target 9.4 By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries acting in accordance with their respective capabilities.
	Target 9.A Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.
	SDG13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
	Target 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning.
	SDG14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
	Target 14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.

Source: Based on Project Document and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (n.d)⁸

2.8 Innovative elements

The SSP project introduced an innovative approach to port development by operationalising the SSP concept, which is itself a relatively new and evolving framework. Given that the concept is subject to diverse interpretations, the project's development of a dedicated assessment methodology represents a key innovation. This methodology enabled a rapid, structured assessment of ports using a clearly defined SSP framework, providing a practical tool to support evidence-based quantitative and qualitative analyses and informed decision-making.

One innovative feature of the methodology is that it goes beyond conventional port assessments by examining ports' capacity to adopt clean, renewable energy sources and green technologies, and exploring their potential roles as producers and distributors of clean energy. In this regard, the methodology positions ports not only as transport and logistics hubs but also as potential energy hubs, capable of diversifying their activities and revenue streams through energy production and related

⁸ United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs. [The 17 Goals](#).

services, while becoming integral components of national energy transition pathways and energy supply chains, including through enhanced energy efficiency. The pilot projects indicated that, while all participating countries demonstrated a commitment to sustainable port development, there were notable differences in their knowledge and understanding of the SSP concept.

In addition, the project introduced innovative approaches to knowledge dissemination and the sustainability of results. Training materials and knowledge products were designed to be accessible beyond the duration of the project, including through webinars and publication on a training platform. This approach aimed to ensure that knowledge generated under the project could be reused, scaled up, and adapted in other contexts, thereby enhancing the long-term impact of the intervention.

3. Evaluation Objectives, Scope and Questions

3.1 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the evaluation was to ‘systematically and objectively assess project design, project management, implementation, overall results, and the mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues such as gender and environmental sustainability’ as well as to ‘provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD Member States.’⁹

In line with the ToR (see Annex 1), the specific objectives of the independent evaluation were to:

- (i) Assess the extent to which desired project outcomes and outputs have been realized with a focus on Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness (including Impact), Sustainability and UN cross-cutting issues;
- (ii) Identify lessons learned on project design, management, implementation and mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues that could feed into and enhance implementation of related or future interventions.

The intended audiences of the evaluation include:

- The management of UNCTAD;
- The Capacity Development Programme Management Office of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA);
- Project stakeholders;
- UNCTAD Member States.

3.2 Evaluation scope, criteria and questions

The scope of the evaluation covered the following three areas:

1. **Project duration:** The period of focus of the evaluation was the full duration of the project, from February 2022 to March 2026.
2. **Target beneficiary countries:** The evaluation covered all three beneficiary countries, Ghana, Mauritius and Morocco.
3. **Evaluation criteria:** The project was evaluated against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability, as well as against the UN cross-cutting issues of gender equality, environment and inclusion.

Annex 4 presents the detailed client-approved evaluation matrix, with the evaluation questions clustered according to the relevant OECD-DAC criteria, together with the judgement criteria and means of verification.

⁹ Evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), p.1.

4. Methodology

4.1 Methodological approach

The evaluation was undertaken using a theory-based and utilization-focused approach complemented by participatory and cost-effective methods. Notably, the evaluator assessed the project's intervention logic as reflected in the Results Framework, examining whether the assumptions linking activities, outputs and intended outcomes were valid and the extent to which they have materialized in practice.

To answer the evaluation questions, a review of the project was also undertaken as follows:

Sector Review	To precisely analyse the context and environment in which the project operated, the sector review included an outward-looking scan of issues and trends around ports and related reforms in the beneficiary countries. The review informed an assessment of the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries and examined the objectives, policies and activities of other international organizations working in the field.
Project Review	To review and highlight the objectives and achievements of the project itself. This was particularly helpful in informing evaluation questions related to effectiveness, sustainability and cross-cutting issues. This took an internal perspective, focusing on the way the project is designed and connected to other relevant technical assistance delivered by UNCTAD.
Governance and Management Review	To examine UNCTAD's project structure, policies and operations. Issues to be examined include good governance (including transparency, accountability, and inclusivity), risk management, flexibility, and the capacity to learn and adapt. This review also examined cross-cutting issues within UNCTAD's own governance structures and the adequacy of the project's monitoring, evaluation and learning system.
Financial information	Depending on the level of detail in the available budget and expenditure breakdown, the team carried out basic analysis, including efficiency measures such as overhead levels, budget fulfilment rates, and budget line flexibility.
Results Framework Review	To ensure the Results Framework is fully aligned with the goals, intended outcomes, and key challenges that UNCTAD seeks to address. This review also reflected on and learned from evidence and experience to date to inform adaptation, innovation, improvement in activity implementation and management, and results.

The evaluation was based on stakeholder engagement from the start of the process, including UNCTAD management UNCTAD consultants, beneficiaries and other relevant project stakeholders. Where possible, information and views from interviews were triangulated from other sources, such as documents and data.

4.2 Data collection

The evaluation used both primary and secondary sources of data to answer the evaluation questions. Primary data sources included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and online surveys, while secondary sources included the project document, results framework, progress reports, and other relevant data/information. The evaluation covered as many stakeholder engagements as possible while accounting for time and budget constraints. Attention was paid to cross-cutting issues, including gender equality, environment and inclusion, during the data collection process.

The key methods for data collection included:

i) Data and Document Review

An in-depth review of secondary data, comprising relevant project documents and the literature, was guided by the key questions and sub-questions of the client-approved evaluation matrix. All relevant project documents that were provided by UNCTAD were included in the review. Additional documents, e.g. on national policies, were also sourced for review throughout the evaluation as necessary. The list of documents consulted is provided in Annex 5.

ii) Semi-structured interviews

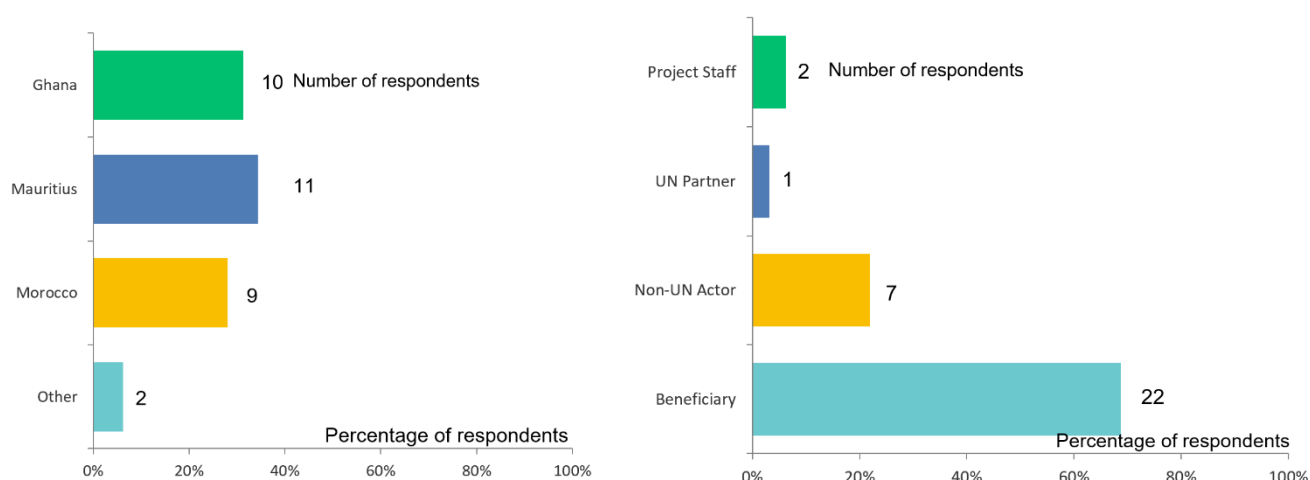
Key informant interviews were conducted with individuals via virtual consultations on Microsoft Teams. The consultations were semi-structured and guided by interview guides tailored to each stakeholder category (see Annex 6). The consultations gathered insights into each key informant's experience with the project and enabled a deeper exploration of the key issues and themes identified in the desk review. Consultations were held with 10 stakeholders, comprising 7 men and 3 women, including beneficiary country focal points, UNCTAD staff, consultants and a regional association.

iii) Online beneficiary survey

A short online survey of 10 questions was distributed via SurveyMonkey to broaden the evaluation's reach and gather additional perspectives on the project's design, implementation, and sustainability. The survey is provided in Annex 7. The target group for the survey included all project stakeholders, including those who had participated in workshops organised for the project. In line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)'s ethical guidelines, the survey was conducted anonymously. To further encourage stakeholder participation, the survey completion deadline was extended, and two reminders were sent to potential respondents.

The survey received 32 responses, with at least 30 respondents to all questions. Although the response rate was 24%, the survey provided a sufficiently broad range of perspectives across beneficiary countries and stakeholder groups to support triangulation with interview findings and evidence from document reviews.

Figure 1. Respondents to the survey by type and country



Source: Survey results

4.3 Ethical standards

All evaluation activities and outputs were conducted in accordance with the norms and standards of UNEG, including the 2020 UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation¹⁰ and the UNEG Code of Conduct¹¹, which emphasise independence, credibility, integrity, and ethical behaviour throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation criteria were guided by the OECD-DAC framework, ensuring a structured approach to assessing relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

The evaluation also adhered to UNCTAD evaluation guidelines¹², including requirements related to impartiality, transparency, and methodological rigour. Data collection and analysis were conducted in accordance with applicable data protection and confidentiality principles, ensuring that stakeholder inputs were handled with discretion and used solely for evaluation purposes. In this context, the evaluator maintained full independence and did not reproduce or use evaluation data and findings for any personal or external purposes.

4.4 Limitations and mitigation measures

The evaluation faced some limitations. First, as with most interview-based evaluation exercises, there was a risk of response bias, including social desirability and confirmation biases. This was mitigated through the use of semi-structured interviews, which allowed the evaluator to probe responses, clarify inconsistencies and build sufficient rapport to encourage candid reflection. Findings were also tested against evidence from the desk review and across different stakeholder groups.

The number of interviews conducted (10) was relatively limited, which may affect the breadth and representativeness of stakeholder perspectives captured and reduce the extent to which findings can be generalized. To mitigate this, the interview sample prioritized key informants, including core project staff, the national expert consultant in each pilot country, and focal points from beneficiary countries.

Second, a significant share of the documentary evidence available to the evaluation originated from UNCTAD project documentation. To mitigate the risk of overreliance on internal sources, the evaluation sought to triangulate documentary evidence with stakeholder consultations and, where relevant, publicly available information.

Third, the evaluation faced limitations in assessing impact, as some of the project's intended effects, particularly those related to implementation of roadmaps and contribution to longer-term sustainable development outcomes, had not yet fully materialised at the time of the evaluation. In response, the evaluation focused on assessing the project's contribution to observed changes and the likelihood of achieving medium- to long-term objectives based on evidence of early uptake, stakeholder commitment and emerging follow-up actions.

¹⁰ UNEG, *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.unevaluation.org/unevaluation/publications/unevaluation-ethical-guidelines-evaluation>

¹¹ UNEG, *Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System*, 2008. Available at: <https://www.unevaluation.org/unevaluation/publications/unevaluation-code-conduct-evaluation-un-system>

¹² UNCTAD, *Evaluation Policy*, Second Edition, 2023. Available at: https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/osg_evaluationpolicy2023_en.pdf

5. Findings

5.1 Relevance

Q1. To what extent were the project design, choice of activities and deliverables aligned with the objectives of UNCTAD and the UN Development Account?

The assessment of alignment focuses on the extent to which the project design, activities, and deliverables reflected the mandates and priorities of UNCTAD and the UNDA, particularly in supporting developing countries in achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the project was strongly aligned with the objectives of both UNCTAD and UNDA. The project design reflected UNCTAD's mandate in transport, logistics, technology and sustainable development, while also adhering to the UNDA's emphasis on results-based capacity development and tangible country-level outcomes. At the same time, the project allowed adaptation to differing national contexts during implementation, although country ownership was progressively deepened rather than fully established at the design stage.

Finding 1: The project design was closely aligned with UNCTAD's mandate to support developing countries in 'benefiting from a globalized economy more fairly and effectively'¹³, with direct links to its Subprogramme 4 on Technology and Logistics.¹⁴

The project's primary objective, which was to strengthen the capacity of selected African countries, including SIDS, in building SSPs, was strongly aligned with UNCTAD's overall mandate, which focuses on assisting developing countries in 'integrating beneficially into the global economy in support of inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth and development.'¹⁵ More specifically, the project aligns directly with Subprogramme 4: Technology and Logistics, which aims to 'harness innovation and technology, improve trade logistics and increase human capacities for inclusive and sustainable trade and development in developing countries...'¹⁶ The SSP project operationalized this objective by focusing on ports as key components of trade logistics systems, while integrating elements of energy sustainability and operational efficiency. Through the development of an SSP assessment methodology, country-level diagnostics, and targeted capacity-building activities, the project contributed to both improving port performance and strengthening national capacities, in line with the subprogramme's objectives.

The alignment is further reinforced when assessed against the strategic priorities set out in the Bridgetown Covenant 2021, which highlighted the importance of developing resilient maritime and transport systems, including at the regional level, as key enablers of deeper regional integration and as critical drivers for enhancing the participation of developing countries in the global economy.¹⁷ The Covenant also reaffirms UNCTAD's three core pillars of work, namely research and analysis, consensus-building, and technical cooperation. The SSP project reflected each of these in its design and delivery. Its focus on sustainable port development responded directly to the Covenant's emphasis on climate resilience and environmental sustainability, while its delivery approach, combining analytical work on the SSP methodology, consensus-building through stakeholder meetings, and technical cooperation through country assessments, roadmaps and targeted capacity-building activities, was aligned to UNCTAD's three core pillars of work.

¹³ UN Trade and Development (n.d.). [About UN Trade and Development \(UNCTAD\)](#).

¹⁴ United Nations General Assembly (2021). [Proposed programme budget for 2022](#).

¹⁵ Idem.

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly (2024). [Proposed programme budget for 2025](#).

¹⁷ UNCTAD (2021). [The Bridgetown Covenant](#).

Finding 2: The project design, choice of activities and deliverables were also consistent with the UNDA's focus on results-based capacity development to achieve the goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda.

The UNDA is explicitly mandated to 'enhance capacities of developing countries in the priority areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda' through projects that are demand-driven, results-oriented, and focused on achieving 'concrete results at the country level.'¹⁸ Notably, the SSP project design moved from methodology development to country diagnostics, validation workshops, targeted capacity-building, and knowledge sharing with the intention of generating two levels of change: (i) improved stakeholder knowledge of the SSP concept and related policy measures and (ii) strengthened policymaker capacity to develop and implement SSP roadmaps and action plans. The production of concrete deliverables, including SSP reports and nationally validated action plans, reflects the UNDA's emphasis on tangible country-level results.

In addition, the project incorporated elements of flexibility and adaptation in line with UNDA implementation practices. For instance, delivery modalities were adjusted (including virtual and hybrid formats), and capacity-building activities were tailored to country-specific priorities. This adaptability ensured continued alignment with both UNDA requirements and different country contexts.

However, although alignment with the objectives of UNCTAD and UNDA at the design level was strong, the project experience highlights the importance of complementing desk-based country selection with early validation of country readiness and implementation conditions. While the UNDA requires projects to be based on "clear demand from member States,"¹⁹ the design stage included a country-level situation analysis of a preliminary list of potential beneficiary countries. The selection of beneficiary countries was based on relevant criteria, including renewable energy programs, blue economy strategies linked to maritime transport or port development, and demonstrated interest in sustainable transport solutions, including ports. While these criteria provided a credible basis for identifying beneficiary countries, additional consultations at the concept note and project document stage could have helped clarify political and institutional risks. Evidence also suggests that more substantive stakeholder engagement and contextualization occurred during implementation, particularly through the diagnostic phase. This sequencing did not undermine overall alignment but suggests that country ownership and activity tailoring were strengthened progressively rather than at the outset.

Q2. To what extent did the project reflect and address the development needs and priorities of beneficiary countries?

The assessment of relevance examined the extent to which the project responded to the actual needs, priorities, and institutional contexts of beneficiary countries. Particular attention was given to whether project activities were aligned with national development strategies and remained responsive to evolving country-specific conditions.

Despite limited engagement with beneficiary countries during the project design stage, survey results indicate strong alignment with country priorities. 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the view that the project aligned with the needs and priorities of the countries (**Figure 2**).

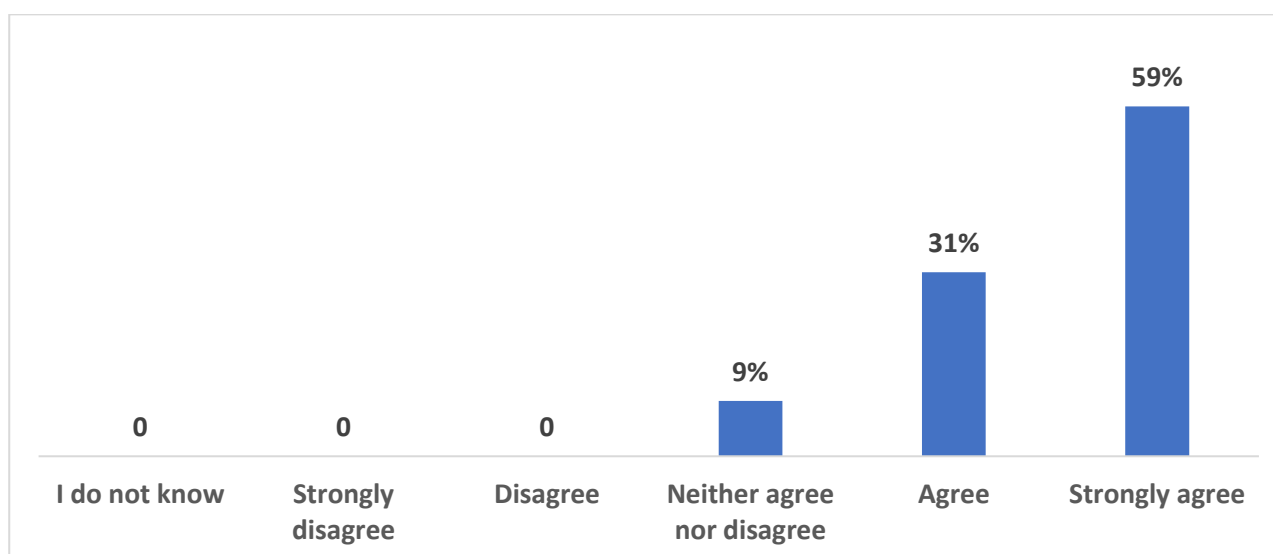
The evaluation finds that the project was highly relevant to the development needs and priorities of beneficiary countries, with strong evidence emerging from stakeholder feedback, country-level outputs and policy linkages.

¹⁸ UN DESA (2025). Working with the Development Account. A Guide for Implementing Entities.

¹⁹ Idem.

Figure 2. Survey results on alignment with national needs and priorities

Q: The project addressed the specific development needs and priorities of the national port sector



N=32; Source: Survey

Finding 3: The project addressed a clearly recognized need across beneficiary countries to transition towards SSP while being responsive to country-specific priorities and levels of readiness during implementation.

Evidence from stakeholder consultations, mission reports, and SSP assessment reports indicates that the transition towards more sustainable, energy-efficient, and technologically advanced port systems was a shared priority across all three beneficiary countries, though with varying levels of maturity and institutional readiness. In all countries, stakeholders highlighted increasing pressure to improve operational efficiency, reduce emissions, and align port operations with broader national strategies related to energy transition, climate commitments and trade competitiveness.

The project responded to these needs through the SSP concept and methodology, which provided a structured framework for assessing current port conditions, identifying gaps and defining practical transition pathways. Importantly, the project did not apply this framework uniformly. Rather, evidence shows that implementation was adapted to reflect country-specific contexts and priorities.

In Mauritius, where policy commitment to sustainable port development and the ocean economy was already well established, the project responded to a clearly defined set of national priorities while addressing persistent implementation gaps. Notably, the country's Renewable Energy Roadmap 2030, which aims to achieve a 60% share of renewable energy by 2030, is aligned with the phasing out of coal in electricity generation.²⁰ The Government Programme 2025-2029 further explicitly recognizes that a modern and efficient seaport will be of critical importance to boosting the competitiveness of the (Mauritian) economy.²¹ Additionally, the Mauritius Ports Authority had already initiated a Green Port Initiative, supported by a dedicated high-level committee and a Port Environment Charter signed by key stakeholders, reflecting a strong institutional commitment to environmentally sustainable port operations.²² The project was therefore aligned with an existing policy environment that prioritized sustainability, efficiency and competitiveness in the port sector.

²⁰ UN DESA (n.d.). [Mauritius Renewable Energy Roadmap 2030](#).

²¹ Government of Mauritius (2025). [Government Programme 2025-2029](#).

²² Mauritius Ports Authority (n.d.). [Green Port Initiatives](#).

Stakeholder consultations in Mauritius highlighted that the SSP was key to addressing persistent gaps in translating these strategic commitments into operational action. While Mauritius had already undertaken EU-funded studies on energy efficiency and strategic planning for renewable energy, progress on cleaner energy solutions had been constrained in part by concerns over long payback periods, fragmented efforts across institutions, and insufficient buy-in at the senior management level. There was also a need to identify practical implementation priorities, given the absence of a common framework to bring together the various stakeholders involved. Thus, the project responded to Mauritius' need for a coherent implementation pathway for SSP development.

In Morocco, the project was implemented in a policy and operational context characterized by advanced progress in sustainable port development and energy transition. National strategies such as the National Low Carbon Strategy 2050 have prioritized green growth and the expansion of renewable energy across sectors, including energy production, buildings, industry, and transport.²³ In this context, the port has already reached a significant milestone, operating on 100% renewable electricity as part of a decarbonization roadmap to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.²⁴ Despite this advanced positioning, stakeholder consultations highlighted the need to strengthen coordination among stakeholders and better operationalize ongoing sustainability efforts. Notably, consultations also highlighted a specific gap in the ability to track progress, with limited use of intermediate indicators to assess whether strategic objectives were being achieved. In this context, the project was relevant to responding to Morocco's need for greater coherence and more structured approaches to planning and monitoring to advance its sustainable port agenda.

In Ghana, the project responded to a policy context in which improving port performance and trade efficiency were central national priorities, particularly to harness opportunities under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). While environmental sustainability was recognized as an emerging area of interest, port development efforts remained primarily focused on trade facilitation, logistics performance, and economic competitiveness, with limited progress in improving the environmental sustainability of ports. The project was therefore aligned with national priorities while introducing a complementary focus on sustainability. Additionally, stakeholder consultations highlighted that Ghana faced important institutional and coordination challenges, and the SSP thus addressed a clear need for a structured platform to facilitate dialogue, build a common understanding of constraints, and identify priority areas for action.

This differentiation in approach across the beneficiary countries reflects a high degree of responsiveness to varying country needs and starting points. It also indicates that the project moved beyond a purely conceptual intervention, tailoring its activities to support strategic planning for SSP development. Stakeholder feedback further confirms that the project was perceived as relevant across all three contexts, particularly in its ability to provide clarity, structure and direction in an area characterized by complexity and cross-sectoral interdependencies.

5.2 Coherence

Q3. What unique value did UNCTAD bring to the project? Has the project's work been complementary to initiatives from other UN and non-UN actors in the target countries?

The assessment examined UNCTAD's comparative advantage in the design and implementation of the project, as well as the extent to which project activities complemented existing initiatives by UN and non-UN actors at national and international levels.

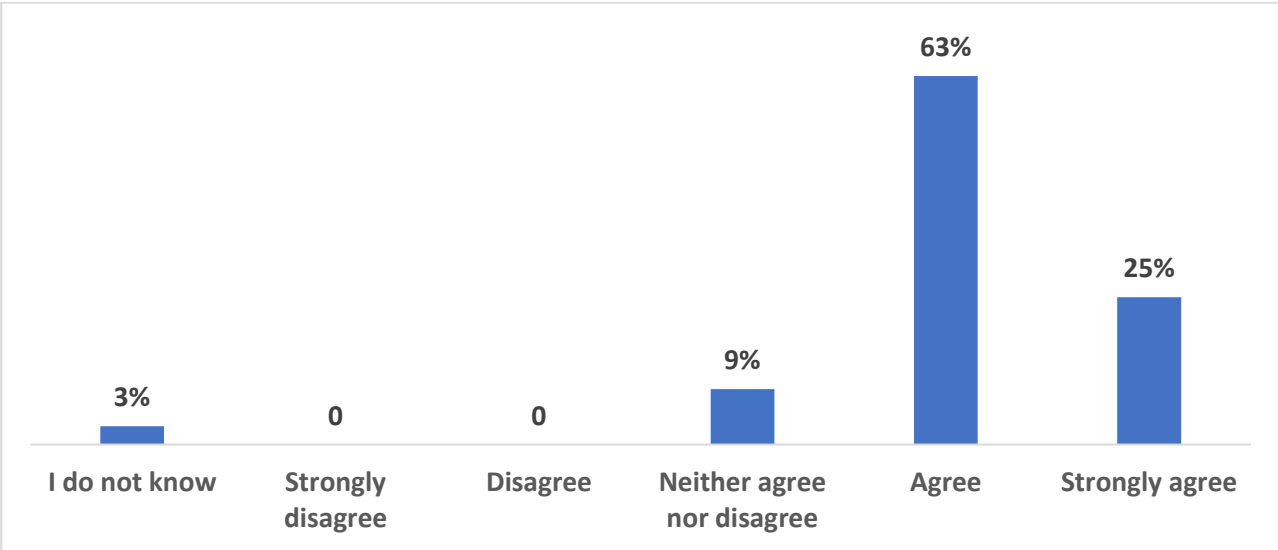
²³ UNEP (2023). [Morocco launches its National Low Carbon Strategy 2050: A roadmap to a net-zero carbon economy by 2050](#).

²⁴ Tanger Med Special Agency (2024). [TANGER MED PORT COMPLEX ACHIEVES 100% GREEN ELECTRICITY SUPPLY](#).

Overall, the evaluation finds that UNCTAD brought significant and distinctive value to the project by translating the SSP concept into a practical country-level implementation framework, convening diverse stakeholders around a common agenda, and facilitating access to relevant international expertise and peer learning. The project also demonstrated a high degree of complementarity with existing initiatives, particularly by helping to connect and structure efforts already underway, which are often fragmented in the target countries. Survey respondents broadly agreed that the project complemented existing UN initiatives (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3. Survey results on alignment to other UN initiatives

Q: The project complemented other UN or non-UN initiatives (e.g., blue economy strategies, digitalization) in the country or sector, rather than duplicating them.



N=32; Source: Survey

Finding 4: UNCTAD’s unique value lies in its ability to combine technical expertise, global normative work, and convening power to operationalize the SSP concept.

UNCTAD’s most distinctive contribution was its ability to operationalize the concept of SSPs, which, prior to the project, remained broadly defined and subject to varying interpretations. Through the development of the SSP assessment methodology and associated tools, UNCTAD translated this concept into a structured and actionable framework that could be applied at the country level. This enabled stakeholders to assess their current position, identify gaps, and define priority actions across multiple dimensions, including the energy transition, operational efficiency, digitalization, and institutional readiness.

This contribution was particularly relevant given that, across beneficiary countries, existing initiatives related to sustainability, energy and port development were often fragmented and not embedded within a unified framework. The SSP methodology, therefore, addressed a clear gap by providing a common reference point and a structured approach to guide planning and decision-making. Evidence from country assessments and stakeholder consultations indicates that this helped move discussions from general commitments towards more concrete and prioritized actions.

At the same time, UNCTAD added significant value through its convening role. Evidence from stakeholder interviews and mission reports indicates that the project created a structured platform for engagement among actors who do not typically interact in sustained or coordinated ways, including port authorities, government ministries, regulators, utilities, terminal operators, and other private-sector stakeholders. This was particularly important given the cross-sectoral nature of SSP development, which depends on coordinated action across policy, regulatory, operational and technical domains. Across all three countries, stakeholders highlighted that this convening role helped

create a shared understanding of ongoing initiatives, clarify responsibilities, and identify areas where stronger coordination was needed. Thus, UNCTAD’s unique value did not lie only in providing technical tools, but also in creating the conditions under which those tools could be collectively understood, validated and used.

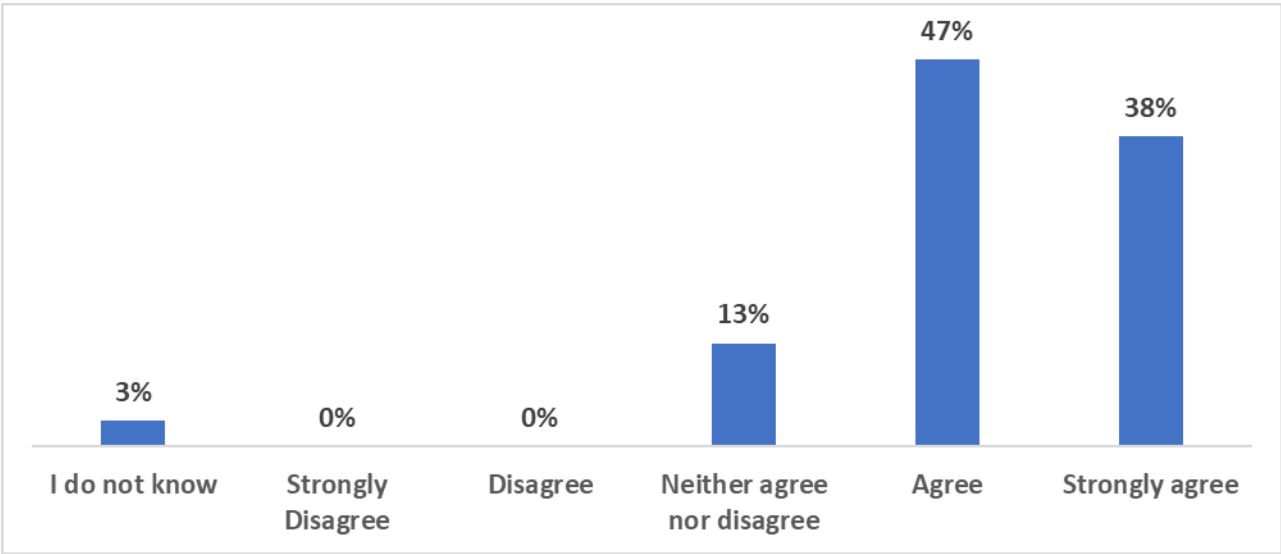
In addition, UNCTAD brought significant value through the quality of its technical expertise and its ability to facilitate international knowledge transfer. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the relevance of input from international experts, as well as the use of practical case studies from ports such as the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, the Port of Busan and the Port of Amsterdam among others, which helped ground discussions in real-world experience. This was particularly important in building confidence in the feasibility of proposed measures and in contextualizing the best global practices. Evidence from follow-up exchanges suggests that this contribution went beyond awareness-raising. In Morocco, for example, post-workshop engagement between Tanger Med and the Port of Amsterdam on risk analysis for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) bunkering operations indicates that knowledge shared through the project informed subsequent technical reflection and practical follow-up.²⁵ Knowledge sharing among the beneficiary countries was also an important component, with Mauritius and Ghana both able to draw lessons from Tanger Med's more advanced experience, particularly on practical approaches to advancing decarbonization in port operations.

Finding 5: The project was complementary to existing national and international initiatives.

The evaluation finds that the project was well aligned with, and complementary to, existing initiatives implemented by both UN and non-UN actors in the beneficiary countries. Evidence from stakeholder consultations indicates that a range of initiatives were already underway across the three countries, addressing specific aspects of green port development. However, these initiatives were often focused on discrete components rather than adopting an integrated approach to SSP development. Thus, the SSP project played a complementary role by providing an overarching framework that helped connect and structure these different initiatives. Survey respondents broadly agreed that the project successfully leveraged partnerships to deliver the planned activities (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Survey results on the project’s successful partnerships

Q: The project successfully leveraged partnerships to deliver the planned activities.



N=32; Source: Survey

Evidence from stakeholder interviews indicates that this unifying framework was particularly valued. In Mauritius, stakeholders highlighted that prior efforts were fragmented and that the project helped align

²⁵ Email exchanges between Tanger Med and Port of Amsterdam.

actors around a common objective and implementation pathway. In Ghana, stakeholders noted that coordination was limited and there was no shared understanding of key regulatory and technical constraints. In Morocco, stakeholders identified gaps in how ongoing initiatives are structured and tracked, including the need for a clearer performance-monitoring framework. Overall, the project demonstrated a high degree of complementarity by building on existing initiatives and contributing to greater coherence and coordination among them.

5.3 Effectiveness

Q4. Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document, including the SDG targets identified? Is there any evidence of (intended or unintended outcomes)?

Project effectiveness was assessed as the extent to which the SSP project achieved its intended objectives and outcomes, as defined in the project results framework. The analysis also examined whether there was evidence of intended and unintended outcomes emerging from project implementation.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the project was effective in achieving its immediate objectives, particularly in strengthening stakeholder knowledge of the SSP concept and enhancing capacity for SSP planning through assessments, roadmaps and targeted capacity-building. Progress towards implementing the roadmaps, and therefore towards a fuller contribution to the related SDG targets, remains at an early stage and is uneven across beneficiary countries. Nevertheless, evidence of follow-up action, including Mauritius' submission of a technical proposal to a development partner for implementation support, improved stakeholder coordination in all beneficiary countries, peer learning, and growing demand for replication in additional Moroccan ports, Indian Ocean Member States and other countries (e.g. the Port of Kribi in Cameroon) suggests that the project has established a solid foundation for further progress beyond the project period.

Finding 6: The intended result under Outcome 1 was achieved, with evidence of enhanced stakeholder knowledge of the SSP concept and related policy measures, together with endorsement of the SSP assessment methodology.

The expected result at the level of Outcome 1 was enhanced knowledge among relevant stakeholders about the potential of ports to transition to SSPs, as well as the cross-sectoral policies and measures required to support this transition. Outcome achievement was measured against two indicators: (i) improved stakeholder understanding of the SSP concept and related policy measures; and (ii) stakeholder endorsement of the SSP assessment methodology.

As shown in **Table 3**, evidence from workshop feedback and project outputs indicates that the project successfully achieved this outcome. While no formal baseline survey was conducted, self-assessment data suggests that initial levels of understanding of SSP potential and cross-sectoral policies to support SSP development were moderate, or indeed partial in scope, indicating that the project contributed to a meaningful increase in stakeholder knowledge. In the first regional webinar, 83% of participants reported improved understanding, slightly exceeding the target of 80%. In the second regional event, all participants reported improved understanding, with an average understanding score of 4.36 out of 5 at the end, representing a 28% increase from the beginning of the event.

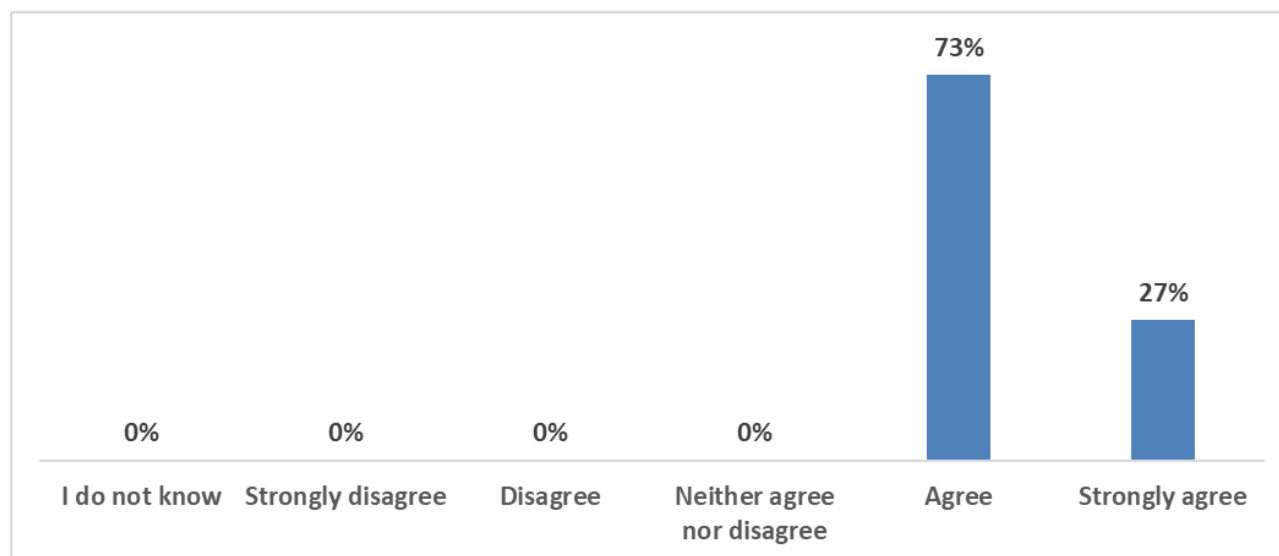
Similarly, there is strong evidence that stakeholders endorsed the SSP methodology developed for the project. In the first regional webinar, 88% of participants endorsed the methodology, rising to 92% in the second, exceeding the established target.

According to the survey results, all participants that responded overwhelmingly felt that they strengthened their capacity to formulate and implement SSP roadmaps or action plans (**Figure 5**).

At the output level, the project delivered most of its planned outputs, including the SSP methodology, expert consultation process, and regional workshops, which collectively supported the achievement of the outcome. However, one key output, the online SSP training platform, had not yet been fully completed at the time of evaluation; some of the associated course was still under development and was expected to launch in the second half of 2026. Stakeholder consultations indicated that progress on the platform has been advancing in close collaboration with the UNICC. Draft scripts for three modules had been developed and were under review at the time of writing this report.

Figure 5. Survey results of the project reaching outcome 1

Q: The project has enhanced understanding of the potential for the national port to become Sustainable Smart Ports, including the cross-sectoral policies and measures needed to support this transition (Project Outcome 1).



N=30; Skipped=2; Source: Survey

Table 3. Summary of results - Outcome 1

Outcome	Indicator	Status of the indicator	
		Baseline	Endline
OC1: Enhanced knowledge of relevant stakeholders in selected countries in Africa of: (i) the potential of national ports to emerge as Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP); and (ii) cross-sectoral policies and measures that promote the realisation of this potential	IA1.1: 80% of stakeholders participating in the regional/sub-regional online workshops report a better understanding of the concept of Sustainable Smart Port (SSP), its relevance, as well as of cross-sectoral policies and measures that promote the SSP principles.	Self-assessed understanding at the start of the regional events was moderate. In the first regional webinar, participants rated their understanding of the SSP concept at 3.8/5 and of cross-sectoral policies and measures that support SSP principles at 3.1/5. In the second regional event, participants reported an average baseline understanding of the SSP concept and related cross-sectoral policies at 3.4/5.	Achieved: 83% of the participants who took part in the first regional online workshop confirmed an improved comprehension of the SSP concept, its relevance, and the cross-sectoral policies and measures that support SSP, with an average self-assessment score of understanding of the SSP concept and cross-sectoral policies that promote their development recorded as 4.7/5. For the second regional workshop, 100% participants reported a stronger understanding of the SSP concept and cross-sectoral policies and

Outcome	Indicator	Status of the indicator	
		Baseline	Endline
			measures that promote the SSP principle. The self-assessment endline score was 4.36/5, representing a 28% increase over the beginning of the session.
	IA1.2: 80% of stakeholders participating in the regional/subregional online workshops endorse the UNCTAD SSP assessment methodology developed by the project.	0	Achieved: 88% of stakeholders expressed their endorsement for the UNCTAD SSP assessment methodology developed as part of the project in the first regional webinar. 92% of stakeholders endorsed the SSP assessment methodology during the second regional webinar.
Outputs	Summary of results		
OP1.1: Methodology developed to assess the Sustainable Smart Port (SSP) status of ports	Fully completed: Comprehensive five-step methodology developed and finalised in November 2023.		
OP1.2: One Expert meeting (2 days) held in Geneva/UNCTAD to discuss and further refine UNCTAD SSP methodology	Fully completed: The Expert Meeting was held in Geneva on 25 September 2023 in a hybrid format and brought together 17 participants, including representatives from the three beneficiary ports. The discussions helped identify key areas for further refinement of the SSP methodology, including stronger integration of energy-efficiency considerations, greater attention to informal sectors, and a more structured approach to assessing renewable-energy infrastructure in ports. The meeting was followed on 26 September by a project meeting with beneficiaries to begin planning the 2024 country assessments.		
OP1.3. Online SSP platform and relevant guidance and training material developed (including SSP methodology guidebook, case studies/best practices relating to the SSP principles/concept , training modules) and made available on the platform.	Not completed: At the time of writing this report, the online e-learning and repository platform SSP platform was not yet fully operational. The team confirmed that they were still working on the course, which brings together the project's main knowledge products and training materials, including content on ISO 50001, port equipment electrification and country assessment reports, in a structured format intended for a wide range of port stakeholders. The course was being developed in collaboration with UNICC and was planned for launch in the second half of 2026 (after the evaluation phase will end).		
OP1.4. Two online regional/sub-regional workshops (half day each) organized in Africa to raise awareness on SSP principles/concept	Fully completed: The first regional webinar, held on 7 December 2023, brought together 82 participants from a broad range of stakeholder groups. Port-related authorities and institutions represented the largest share of participants (33%), followed by intergovernmental organizations (17%) and associations (12%), with additional representation from government (7%) and the private sector (9%). Of the total participants, 66 were considered highly relevant to the project, including target beneficiaries, potential partners and stakeholders from Ghana, Mauritius and Morocco. Participation was predominantly male, with 50 men and 26 women identified, while the gender of the remaining participants could not be confirmed.		

Outcome	Indicator	Status of the indicator	
		Baseline	Endline
, share experience, gather feedback and input and endorse the UNCTAD SSP methodology.	The second regional workshop was held on 23 May 2024 as a hybrid closed meeting alongside the Global Supply Chain Forum in Barbados, co-organised by UNCTAD and the Government of Barbados. Holding the event in this context allowed participants, including representatives from African SIDS such as Cabo Verde, Mauritius and Seychelles, to engage with wider discussions on decarbonisation, energy transition, digitalisation and the role of ports. Organised in partnership with the Indian Ocean Commission, the meeting focused on endorsing the UNCTAD SSP methodology and exchanging national experiences on ports and energy transition in African SIDS. A total of 33 participants attended the meeting, of whom 21 were male and 12 females. Out of a total of 33 unique participants, 30 were classified as highly relevant, holding institutional roles directly linked to port governance, port operations, transport and energy policy, or regional and international organizations engaged in sustainable port development, including port authorities, government agencies, regional associations, development partners and UNCTAD. This categorization reflects the meeting's closed nature and alignment with the SSP project logic and meeting objective.		

Source: Project output report, progress reports and workshop feedback reports provided by UNCTAD and stakeholder consultations.

Finding 7: The intended result under Outcome 2 was partially achieved, with evidence of strengthened capacity to formulate SSP roadmaps and early steps towards implementation, although progress remains uneven across beneficiaries.

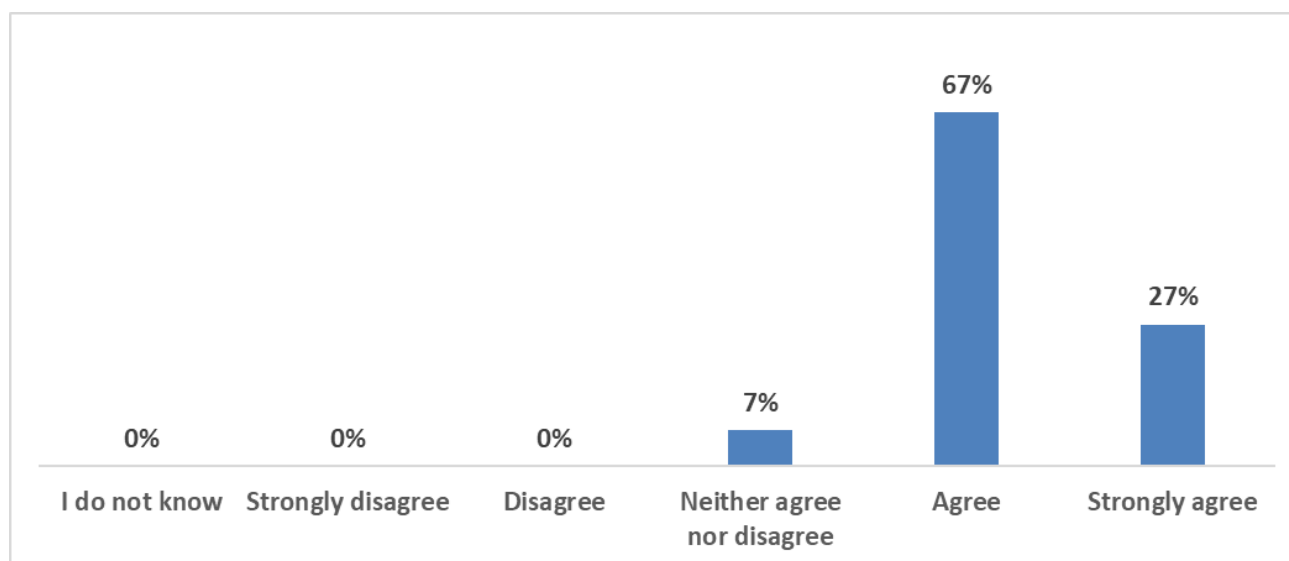
The expected result at the level of Outcome 2 was improved capacity of policymakers in the selected countries to formulate and implement SSP roadmaps and action plans. Outcome achievement was measured against two indicators: (i) the development and validation of national SSP roadmaps; and (ii) the initiation of at least one action for implementation in each beneficiary country.

As shown in **Table 4**, evidence from project outputs and stakeholder consultations indicates that the project partially achieved this outcome. SSP assessment reports, including recommendations and action plans, were developed and validated through national workshops in all three countries, and according to the survey results, 84% of respondent felt that the project did deliver on Outcome 2 (**Figure 6**). However, at the time of the evaluation, the roadmap and action plan had been fully finalized only in Mauritius, while the reports for Ghana and Morocco had been validated but were still in the process of finalization. In Morocco, the recommendations and roadmap were validated, but the report was undergoing revision following a request to update and revalidate data with stakeholders, including government counterparts. In Ghana, the draft report and recommendations had been validated, but the integration of new developments identified during the validation process remained ongoing at the time of writing of this report.

Additionally, stakeholder consultations indicate that Mauritius and Morocco had initiated follow-up actions linked to the SSP assessments. In Mauritius, priority strategies were integrated into national and international policy processes, including proposals for the Green Port Strategy and engagement with development partners. In Morocco, a multi-stakeholder task force was established to advance reforms, strengthen coordination, and promote the sharing of experience. In addition, stakeholders in Morocco began defining key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor sustainability objectives. In contrast, progress in Ghana remained at an earlier stage. While the project supported the identification of key regulatory and institutional constraints and facilitated stakeholder dialogue, there was no evidence of concrete actions implemented at the time of evaluation.

Figure 6. Survey results on the project reaching outcome 2

Q: The project has strengthened the capacity of relevant institutions or policymakers to formulate and/or implement SSP roadmaps or action plans (Project Outcome 2).



N=30; Skipped=2; Source: Survey

At the output level, the project delivered most of the activities necessary to support this outcome. Stakeholder consultations were conducted in all three countries, contributing to the application of the SSP methodology and the preparation of country assessments. National validation workshops were completed, resulting in formal endorsement of the SSP assessments and their recommendations. In addition, capacity-building activities were delivered both jointly to the three beneficiary countries and at the country level, targeting country-specific requirements and priority actions.

In addition to the intended results, there is evidence of emerging outcomes which will support future implementation. The project contributed to improved coordination among stakeholders and the identification of clear priority actions in each country. It also generated demand for continued technical support from Mauritius and Morocco, including assistance with implementation, financing, and capacity building. These developments suggest that, although implementation has only begun in part, the project has laid a foundation for future progress towards SSP objectives.

Table 4. Summary of results - Outcome 2

Outcome	Indicator	Status of indicator	
		Baseline	Endline
OC2: Improved capacity of policy makers in selected countries in Africa to formulate and implement roadmaps/action plans that enable ports to meet the SSP status.	IA2.1: A national Sustainable Smart Port (SSP) roadmap/action plan is developed and validated/endorsed by policymakers in each of the three beneficiary countries.	0	Achieved: The SSP roadmaps and action plan were developed and validated for all three countries.
	IA2.2: Each of the three project beneficiary countries has initiated at least one action for	0	Partially achieved: Stakeholder consultations confirmed that only Mauritius and Morocco had initiated implementation of the

	implementation of the roadmap/action plan.	roadmap at the time of writing of this report.
Outputs	Achievements	
OP2.1: Stakeholders' meetings (virtual and one face to face) to present the methodology, collect information, apply the UNCTAD SSP assessment methodology and determine the SSP status of targeted ports	Fully completed: Stakeholder consultations were completed in all three beneficiary countries and contributed directly to the application of the SSP methodology and the finalisation of the country assessments. In Mauritius, meetings held from 25-28 June 2024 during the field mission combined bilateral discussions with a final multi-stakeholder session, which helped validate preliminary findings, gather additional data and refine the basis for the action plan. In Morocco, a first stakeholder meeting was held in hybrid format on 18 December 2024, followed by bilateral consultations in Tangier and Rabat from 23-26 September 2024, which were essential for identifying and consolidating the diverse challenges faced by the wide range of stakeholders involved. In Ghana, virtual consultations held from 7-9 October 2024 supported stakeholder engagement and informed the preparation of the SSP assessment report.	
OP2.2: An SSP Assessment Report drafted for each target country and its port(s) which will include recommendations and action plan/roadmap to be discussed and validated at national workshop.	Fully completed: The SSP assessment reports, including tailored recommendations and action plans, were discussed and validated for all three countries. Only the report for Ghana was pending finalisation at the time of writing of this report. The evaluation understood that the team was working to integrate feedback and suggestions from the validation workshop and the final report would be available shortly after the evaluation.	
OP2.3. One national validation workshop (2-3 days) organized with relevant stakeholders in each target country (3 countries) to discuss the SSP Assessment Report carried out and validate its findings/recommendations/action plan/roadmap and discuss implementation.	Fully completed: National validation workshops were completed in all three beneficiary countries and resulted in formal endorsement of the SSP assessments. In Mauritius, the workshop was held on 27 May 2025 in collaboration with the Mauritius Ports Authority and was attended by policymakers, the port authority and other stakeholders. In Morocco, the validation workshop took place in Tangier on 25 November 2025 with representatives from government institutions, the Tanger Med Port Authority and port operators, who endorsed the assessment findings and recommendations. In Ghana, the validation meeting was held in Tema on 10 December 2025, where UNCTAD presented the main outcomes of the SSP report, which were then formally endorsed by participants.	
OP2.4. At least two capacity building and training workshops (3-5 days) to support in the delivery of one priority action from the action plan/roadmap.	Fully completed: One of the two planned capacity-building activities was delivered jointly for all three beneficiary ports and their relevant stakeholders on 29-30 October 2024. Requested by the beneficiary countries at the first Expert Meeting, this training focused on ISO 50001 and helped raise awareness of the benefits of adopting a systematic approach to energy management and energy efficiency. The second capacity-building activity was then delivered separately in each country and aligned with the priority actions identified in the respective SSP assessments: in Mauritius (28–30 May 2025), the workshop focused on operational electrification sequencing; in Morocco (25–27 November 2025), it addressed advanced decarbonization and fuel transition, including e-fuel readiness; and in Ghana (10–12 December 2025), it focused on regulatory planning and institutional readiness to support implementation, particularly in relation to scaling solar energy.	
OP2.5. One online regional webinar organized to disseminate project findings and lessons learnt with a broad regional audience, scale up project results and promote exchange of experience.	Fully completed: The online regional webinar took place on 31 March 2026, with 102 participants attending out of approximately 140 registered. The event reached a broad and diverse audience, with representation from over 50 countries. Participants included stakeholders from port authorities (e.g. Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority, Namibian Ports Authority, Transnet National Ports Authority), government institutions (including ministries of transport and energy), international organisations (e.g. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Bank), private sector entities (e.g. DP World, APM Terminals) and academia (e.g. World Maritime University). Women accounted for 32 participants, representing approximately 31% of total attendance.	

Source: Project output report, progress reports and workshop feedback reports provided by UNCTAD and stakeholder consultations.

Finding 8: In addition to the intended results, the project generated several unintended positive outcomes that strengthened coordination, clarified implementation pathways, and created momentum for replication and contribution to SDG-related objectives.

In addition to the intended results under Outcomes 1 and 2, the project generated early evidence of broader outcomes relevant to achieving its longer-term objectives, including contributions to SDG targets related to sustainable infrastructure and operations, energy efficiency, and climate action.

Stakeholder consultations indicate that the project improved coordination and dialogue among institutions, particularly in contexts where responsibilities for port operations, energy and regulation were previously fragmented. In Ghana, for example, discussions revealed underlying regulatory constraints, including differing interpretations of electricity supply and distribution, thereby contributing to a clearer understanding of the challenges that must be addressed before implementation can proceed. In Morocco, work on KPIs responded to a previously unaddressed need for intermediate milestones and more structured monitoring of progress towards sustainability objectives. In Mauritius, the project contributed to strengthening internal momentum around the Green Port agenda by supporting clearer sequencing and prioritization of actions.

The project also facilitated peer learning across the beneficiary countries and beyond them. Stakeholders in Mauritius and Ghana were able to draw on Morocco's more advanced experience in areas such as energy transition, electrification, and stakeholder coordination, while inputs from international ports such as Antwerp-Bruges, Busan, and Amsterdam further enriched discussions with practical operational examples. This broader knowledge-sharing helped contextualize global practices and provided concrete reference points for implementation.

Furthermore, the project generated strong demand for follow-up technical support and replication beyond the initial pilot countries. Interest was expressed in extending the SSP approach to additional ports in Morocco, to Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) Member States such as Seychelles and Cabo Verde, and to the Port of Kribi in Cameroon. Mauritius and Morocco also indicated demand for continued collaboration, particularly to support roadmap implementation, finance mobilization and further targeted capacity-building.

These unintended outcomes suggest that the project has not only strengthened immediate capacities but also helped create the enabling conditions for future progress towards building SSPs and advancing the related SDG targets. In particular, by promoting more integrated, energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable port development, the project is likely to support contributions to SDG targets related to resilient infrastructure and sustainable industrialization (SDG 9), energy efficiency and clean energy transition (SDG 7), and climate action (SDG 13), although the realization of these impacts will depend on continued implementation of the SSP roadmaps beyond the project timeframe.

Q5. What are the key enabling and limiting factors with respect to the achievement of the project's results?

Finding 9: The achievement of project results was supported by strong technical design, stakeholder engagement and alignment with national priorities, but constrained by coordination challenges, differing levels of institutional readiness and delays linked to external factors.

The project's results were facilitated by several enabling factors. Strong alignment with national priorities on port development, energy transition and trade competitiveness supported stakeholder buy-in and reinforced the relevance of project activities. The quality and practical orientation of technical inputs, including international expertise and case-based learning, enhanced the applicability of SSP concepts and helped ground discussions in concrete operational experience. UNCTAD's convening role also proved important, creating a platform for dialogue across port authorities, government agencies, utilities and private operators, and helping to bring together actors who had

previously worked in silos. Stakeholder consultations further indicate that early engagement of key institutions and the presence of a dedicated focal point at the country level were critical in maintaining momentum and ensuring follow-through. In particular, the focal point played an important bridging role on technical matters, ensuring communication between management and operational actors and maintaining oversight of evolving project needs and implementation. This enabling function was especially important in public sector settings, where strong internal coordination was needed to keep the process moving.

At the same time, progress towards implementation was constrained by several factors, many of which were country-specific and beyond the project's control. In Ghana, a change in government delayed engagement and reduced continuity in decision-making processes. Stakeholder consultations also indicated that the data collection process was extensive and, in some cases, perceived by participating organisations as burdensome, with some stakeholders initially interpreting the exercise as an audit rather than a diagnostic and planning tool. This appears to have affected responsiveness and slowed the collection of information needed for the SSP assessments. Consultations also highlighted that, in public organisations, administrative delays linked to internal procedures and approval requirements could slow implementation, making advance planning, briefing notes and early circulation of documentation necessary for timely implementation. Additionally, it was further indicated that implementation was also affected by unsatisfactory consultant deliverables, which required more substantive internal review and redrafting than initially anticipated. It was also reported during the consultations that the sick leave and advance retirement of a staff member in the last quarter of 2025 further affected administrative continuity during a critical period of financial closure and report finalization. Project reports also indicate that external factors, including adverse weather conditions in Morocco and overlapping end-of-year reporting demands in beneficiary institutions, affected the scheduling and pace of implementation.

5.4 Efficiency

Q6. To what extent was the project management adequate in ensuring the coordination, planning, execution and monitoring of the project within the defined scope and timeline?

The assessment examined the adequacy of project management arrangements to ensure effective coordination, planning, execution, and monitoring within the defined scope and timeline.

Overall, the evaluation finds that project management was generally effective in delivering core activities despite limited dedicated staffing. The project benefited from strong technical oversight, responsive coordination and adaptive management during implementation. The respondents to the survey also indicated strong satisfaction with the management of the project, with 82% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that the project was well managed, including timely communication, keeping to deadlines and being relevant and effective (**Figure 7**).

However, the efficiency of project management was constrained by limited staffing resources, administrative bottlenecks and competing demands across multiple country workstreams. In addition, while risks were identified at the design stage, those related to political and institutional changes were underestimated, affecting implementation timelines in Ghana.

Finding 10: Project management was generally effective in coordinating and delivering core activities despite a lean team structure, but was constrained by limited staffing, administrative pressures and competing demands across the three beneficiary countries during important implementation periods.

The project was implemented through a small-team structure that combined technical and administrative roles. The team included a P5 staff member providing strategic and substantive input

and oversight, a P4-level staff member responsible for overall coordination, planning, consultant recruitment, stakeholder engagement, reporting and monitoring, as well as substantive contributions, and a P2 staff member supporting the delivery of activities, particularly SSP reports, workshops and knowledge products. Administrative support was provided by G-level staff (G6, G5, and G4) responsible for logistics, procurement, travel, and payments. The project was implemented largely by regular budget staff, with additional support from a JPO for the P2 staff position, and limited project-specific administrative funding.²⁶ This structure required a small number of staff to manage a wide range of substantive, technical, operational, logistical and coordination tasks across the three beneficiary countries.

Stakeholder consultations indicated that project management was generally effective in ensuring coordination, planning and execution of activities. Several stakeholders highlighted the project team's responsiveness and support as excellent. However, the adequacy of project management was affected by capacity constraints. The limited cumulative staff time available for the project, spread across several roles, placed significant pressure on available resources, particularly during peak implementation periods. In some instances, competing demands across country workstreams affected the timing of engagement, with some delays in follow-up attributed to the team's workload.

Additionally, extensive data collection requirements and the need to tailor engagement to diverse institutional contexts required more time and effort than initially anticipated, particularly where stakeholders were not immediately familiar with the SSP concept or perceived the process as complex. Experience from Morocco shows that more proactive engagement approaches, such as dedicated kick-off meetings to introduce the project, clarify expectations and build ownership among stakeholders, were critical in facilitating cooperation and improving responsiveness. The presence of a highly engaged focal point in Morocco further helped overcome data constraints by actively coordinating across institutions.

Stakeholders highlighted that the administrative processes, particularly those related to recruitment, contracting and payment of consultants, involved several procedural requirements. These requirements, characteristic of UN rules and procedures, required substantial time and effort and placed additional pressure on limited administrative support, although temporary reinforcement by a dedicated administrative assistant (through the project General Temporary Assistance) helped alleviate some of these constraints. Staff turnover further affected continuity, notably the sick leave and advance retirement of a G-level staff member in late 2025, which disrupted administrative processes during a critical phase of financial closure and report finalization.

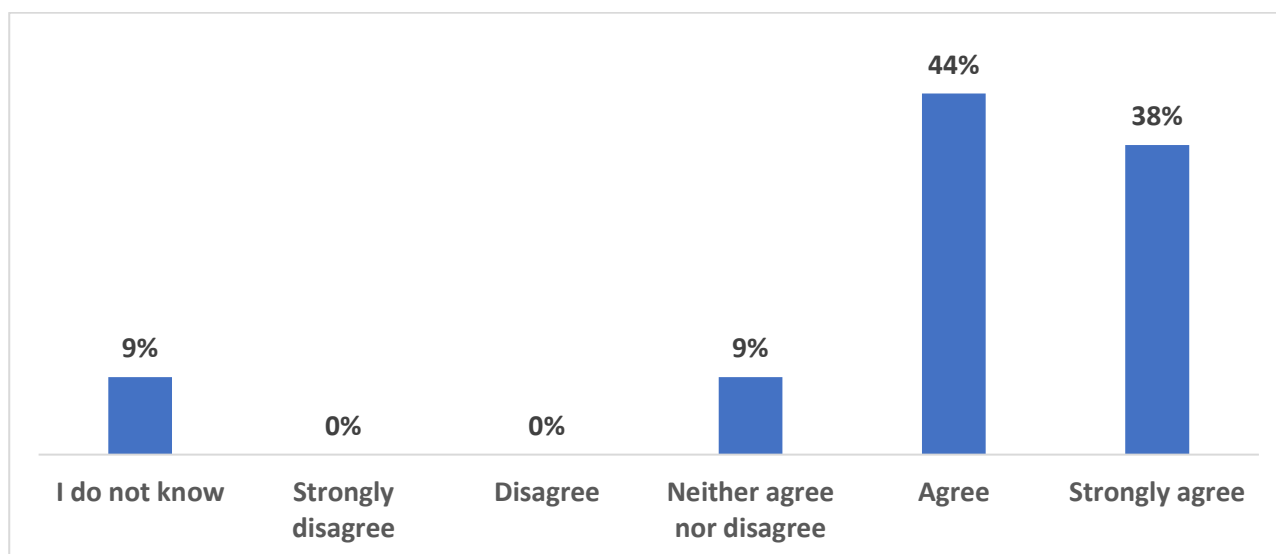
Internal coordination among UNCTAD team members was generally strong and supported by several planning and tracking instruments, including milestone planning tools, weekly task trackers and periodic project update and resource planning briefings. Consultations nevertheless indicated some variation in perceptions of how systematically information was shared across all team members, particularly during periods of competing responsibilities and workload pressures. These perceived gaps likely reflect the use of multiple coordination tools and the intensity of parallel workstreams.

Overall, survey respondents indicated that the project was well managed, with 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing, particularly regarding timely communication, adherence to deadlines, and relevance and effectiveness.

²⁶ UNDA does not provide resources for additional staffing. UNDA projects are typically implemented by regular budget staff already assigned to deliver the regular programme of work, with UNDA deliverables undertaken in addition to their existing responsibilities.

Figure 7. Survey results on the management of the project

Q: The project was well managed, including timely communication, keeping to deadlines and being relevant and effective



N=32; Source: Survey

Finding 11: Although project implementation was informed by a risk assessment and mitigation plan, the disruptive effects of Ghana's political transition following the 2024 December election on project activities were underestimated.

Project documentation indicates that implementation risks were identified at the design stage, including government priorities, policymaker turnover, and challenges to stakeholder commitment. Mitigation measures were incorporated, such as stakeholder engagement strategies, phased implementation and flexibility in delivery modalities. These risks were assessed as having a low to medium likelihood, and mitigation measures were proposed, including ensuring broad stakeholder participation, maintaining flexibility in the sequencing of activities, and adjusting implementation across countries as necessary.

However, evidence from implementation indicates that the impact of the December 2024 general election and associated institutional changes in Ghana was more significant than initially anticipated. The occurrence of a government transition during the project period directly affected stakeholder engagement and continuity, delaying interactions with national counterparts and slowing decision-making. While this type of risk had been identified in the project document, the time taken for the new administration to be settled appears to have been underestimated, and the associated mitigation measures were insufficient to fully offset its effects on implementation timelines, resulting in delays in achieving project milestones in Ghana.

Q7. How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources?

Efficiency was assessed by the extent to which project resources were allocated and used economically and in a timely manner to deliver the planned outputs and support the achievement of expected results. The analysis considered allocative, time, technical and dynamic efficiency.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the project had an overall moderate level of efficiency. Financial resources were largely directed towards the outputs most important to delivery, and the technical quality and practical relevance of outputs indicate that resources invested generated meaningful results. At the same time, efficiency was reduced by delays in completing some deliverables, the need to reallocate resources during implementation, and the fact that important differences across

beneficiary countries, in terms of institutional readiness, data availability and implementation needs, among others, only became fully apparent after implementation had begun.

Finding 12: The project achieved a moderate level of efficiency, with good allocative and technical efficiency and a high degree of adaptive management during implementation, although overall efficiency was constrained by delays.

Allocative efficiency²⁷

The project demonstrated good allocative efficiency, as resources were ultimately directed towards the activities most critical to achieving results. Overall budget utilization reached 99.5%, indicating that the budget allocation was largely appropriate for the scope of activities.

Table 5. Yearly implementation rates (2022-2026)

Reporting Period	Planned cumulative implementation rate at end of reporting period (%)	Actual cumulative implementation rate at end of reporting period (%)
03/2022 – 12/2022	6.4	5.3
01/2023 – 12/2023	39.7	8.4
01/2024 – 12/2024	84.1	46.0
01/2025 – 01/2026	100.0	99.5

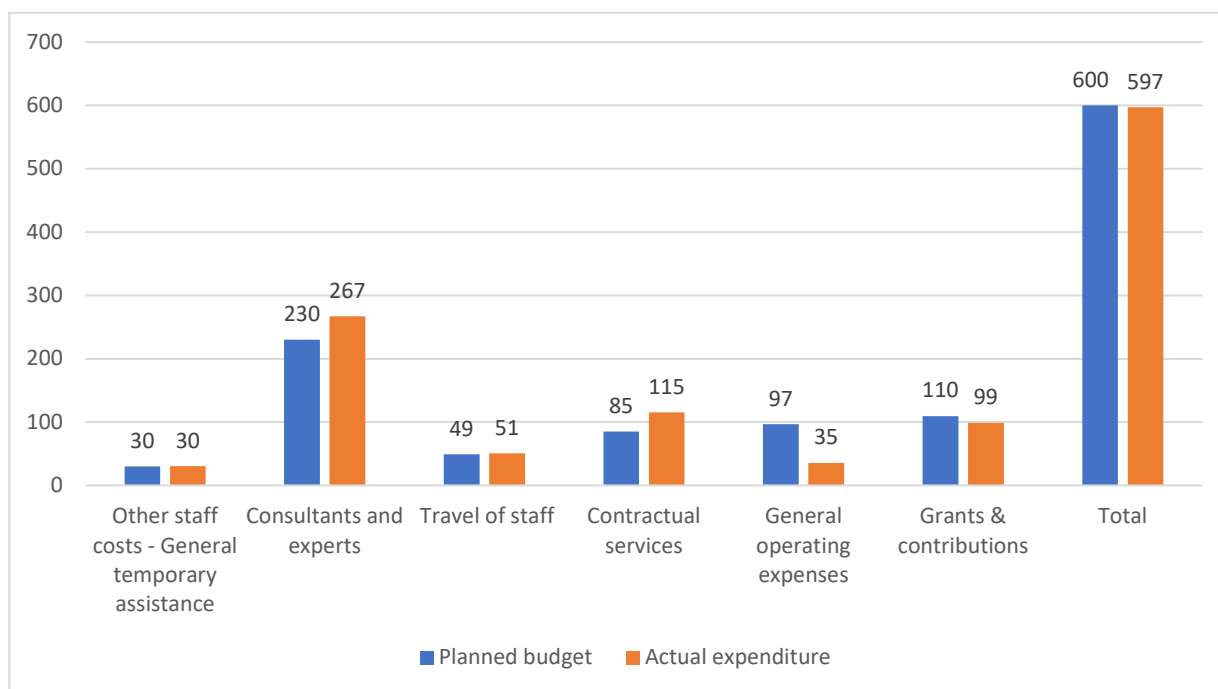
Sources: Annual Progress Reports 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2026

However, budget-line analysis (**Figure 8**) shows important deviations from initial allocations. Expenditure patterns show that a larger share of resources than initially planned was allocated to consultants and experts (44.7% vs 38.3% planned), reflecting the technical nature of the project and the importance of specialized expertise for delivering SSP assessments, capacity-building and technical guidance. Contractual services also accounted for a slightly higher share of expenditure than anticipated. In contrast, general operating expenses and grants and contributions were significantly underutilized, suggesting that some activities were delivered more cost-effectively than expected, partly due to in-kind contributions from partners through the provision of facilities for workshops and meetings, or that initial allocations overestimated operational needs.

The subsequent reallocation of expenditure towards technical outputs should not, however, be interpreted as evidence of inefficiency. Overall, most planned outputs were delivered within the available budget, supporting a broadly positive assessment of allocative efficiency.

²⁷ The allocative efficiency dimension addresses the issue of using an appropriate combination of resources to achieve the maximum advantage for a given cost.

Figure 8. Planned versus actual expenditure by budget item



Source: Final budget report, March 2026

Time efficiency

Time efficiency performance was moderate (see **Table 5**). While most planned outputs were delivered, there were delays in the completion and finalization of some key deliverables, including the SSP assessment for Ghana and the online SSP platform, which had not been fully completed by the project end date. The delay in operationalizing the SSP platform was due to several factors. First, it reflects a deliberate sequencing choice to consolidate materials generated across project activities before finalizing the modules, particularly as the last country-level activity took place in December 2025. In addition, stakeholders indicated that the development process proved more iterative than initially anticipated, requiring multiple rounds of review and including decisions on the integration of materials such as recordings and videos, which has required consultation with beneficiary countries. Furthermore, competing priorities during the final phase of implementation, including the organisation of major outputs in late 2025/early 2026, as well as reduced junior staff support, also contributed to slower progress.

Moreover, progress varied across beneficiary countries, with slower implementation observed in Ghana due to external factors such as government transition and coordination challenges. Other factors contributing to delays included the complexity of coordinating across multiple countries with a lean team, extensive data collection requirements for the SSP assessment, and administrative processes related to consultant recruitment and management.

Technical efficiency²⁸

The project also demonstrated good technical efficiency, as resources were effectively translated into substantive outputs. The use of specialized expertise supported the delivery of SSP assessments, recommendations and capacity-building activities that were considered relevant and of high technical quality by stakeholders. These outputs strengthened national capacities and provided a basis for further action, indicating that the resources invested translated into meaningful results.

²⁸ The technical efficiency dimension addresses the issue of using given resources to maximum advantage.

Evidence from country cases illustrates this. In Mauritius, technical outputs informed ongoing policy processes, including the development of the Green Port Strategy and engagement with development partners. In Morocco, technical work contributed to establishing a multi-stakeholder task force and to initiating the development of KPIs to monitor SSP objectives. In Ghana, the project supported the identification and clarification of regulatory and institutional constraints, contributing to a more structured dialogue among stakeholders.

In addition, technical outputs were complemented by capacity-building activities, including training on ISO 50001 and energy transition, as well as country-specific workshops aligned with priority actions. This combination of analytical work and capacity development enhanced the usability of outputs.

Table 6. Completion status and timeline by output

Output	Status	Timeline				
		2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
1.1. Methodology developed to assess the Sustainable Smart Port (SSP) status of ports	Fully completed					
1.2 One Expert meeting held in Geneva/UNCTAD to discuss and further refine UNCTAD SSP methodology	Fully completed					
1.3 Online SSP platform and relevant guidance and training material developed	Still active					
1.4 Two online regional/sub-regional workshops (half day each) organized in Africa	Fully completed					
2.1 Stakeholders' meetings in each beneficiary country	Fully completed					
2.2 An SSP Assessment Report drafted for each target country	Still active					
2.3 One national validation workshop (2-3 days) organized with relevant stakeholders in each target country (3 countries)	Fully completed					
2.4 At least two capacity building and training workshops (3-5 days) to support the delivery of one priority action from the action plan/roadmap	Fully completed					
2.5 One online regional webinar was organized to disseminate project findings and lessons learned	Fully completed					

Source: Final budget report, March 2026

Dynamic efficiency²⁹

The project demonstrated a high degree of dynamic efficiency, reflected in its ability to adjust implementation approaches in response to evolving challenges and differing country contexts. This was evident in the reallocation of resources across budget lines, the adaptation of stakeholder engagement approaches, and the tailoring of capacity-building activities to the priority actions identified through the SSP assessments.

In Morocco, for example, where green port development is at an advanced stage, the project supported efforts to define KPIs to track progress towards SSP objectives. In Ghana, where stakeholder consultations highlighted coordination challenges and regulatory constraints, the project placed greater emphasis on strengthening interinstitutional dialogue and on focusing capacity building on regulatory planning and institutional readiness. This ability to differentiate approaches across countries strengthened the relevance and usefulness of project activities and helped ensure that resources were applied where they were most likely to add value. At the same time, the need for these adjustments also reflects a limitation at the design stage. As the beneficiary countries had not yet been fully selected and some consultations had been undertaken at project inception, important differences in, stakeholder configurations and implementation needs and priorities only became fully apparent during execution. This also reflects the fact that country contexts, priorities and implementation conditions can evolve between project design and implementation, making flexibility and adaptive management essential to effective project delivery.

Q8. To what extent did the project leverage internal and external partnerships to deliver the project's activities?

The assessment examined the extent to which the project leveraged internal partnerships within the United Nations (UN) system and external partnerships with beneficiary institutions, technical partners and regional actors to support implementation.

Overall, the evaluation finds that partnerships played an important role in delivering project activities, particularly at the country level and in providing technical expertise and peer learning. Internal UN partnerships were mobilized selectively, with effective collaboration in specific areas such as the development of the online learning platform as well as support and collaboration in organizing and delivering validation workshops, but remained limited in scope and depth, particularly at the country level. External partnerships were more consistently leveraged and were central to stakeholder engagement, data collection, experience sharing, peer learning and technical delivery, although their effectiveness varied across beneficiary countries. At the same time, the project made more limited use of regional organizations and platforms than originally envisaged, indicating missed opportunities to strengthen coordination, expand outreach and support follow-up to implementation.

Finding 13: The project leveraged selected partnerships within the wider UN system to support implementation, but these were uneven in depth and could have been strengthened further, particularly at the country level.

The project document envisaged collaboration with a range of UN system actors, including UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as appropriate for project development and implementation. It also anticipated that UN Country Teams and Resident Coordinators would provide country-level intelligence, support implementation of national activities and contribute to strengthening policy analysis and recommendations.

²⁹ The dynamic efficiency dimension considers how well the project reallocated resources to reflect evolving circumstances and opportunities in the context of the project's implementation.

In practice, the most concrete internal partnership was with the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC), which is supporting the development of the online SSP course and e-learning modules. Project reporting and stakeholder consultations indicate that the course was being developed in close collaboration with UNICC, with regular coordination to consolidate project materials and translate them into a structured learning product for a broader range of port stakeholders. This partnership added value by helping position the project's knowledge products for wider dissemination beyond the immediate beneficiary countries.

The project also engaged UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCOs) and United Nations Country Team actors, although the extent of their contribution varied across countries. Evidence from project documentation and consultations indicates that RCOs participated in selected project events and, in some cases, facilitated connections with relevant stakeholders. However, their role appears to have been limited, due to capacity constraints in some cases. Future projects could make more strategic use of UN country offices by defining, at the inception stage, where their contribution would add most value, taking into account specific country implementation contexts and RCO capacity constraints. This could include leveraging the RCO's existing relationships to identify synergies with other country initiatives, facilitate links with relevant government counterparts, and support follow-up during implementation where needed.

Consultations also highlighted that collaboration with UNEP did not materialize in a substantive way during implementation. While UNEP has previously engaged in port-related environmental initiatives, including through its Global Clean Ports programme on emissions reduction and air quality, no major dedicated UNEP programme on green port transformation was identified during the SSP implementation period. Thus, while UNEP's previous work was complementary to the SSP project but did not translate into an operational partnership under the project.

Finding 14: External partnerships were key to the delivery of project activities and were leveraged effectively for stakeholder engagement, technical inputs and peer learning, although their strength varied across beneficiary countries, and the strategic use of regional partnerships could have been strengthened.

External partnerships were key to project implementation. At the country level, the project relied heavily on beneficiary institutions, particularly port authorities and designated focal points, to facilitate stakeholder mobilization, provide data and support country-level dialogue. These partnerships were particularly effective in Mauritius and Morocco. Interview evidence shows that strong focal points played a decisive role in helping UNCTAD access data, convene stakeholders, and advance implementation in these two countries. In contrast, partnerships were weaker in Ghana during the earlier stages of implementation, where engagement was more difficult, and the lack of face-to-face interaction limited early momentum.

The project also leveraged external partnerships effectively to strengthen technical delivery and peer learning. Stakeholders interviewed highlighted successful interactions with the International Standards Organisation (ISO), which recommended an expert for training, as well as collaboration with consulting firms such as Moffatt & Nichol and international port actors, including the Ports of Antwerp-Bruges, Amsterdam and Busan. These partnerships enriched the technical content of capacity-building activities and provided practical examples on SSP development.

At the same time, the project did not fully leverage regional organizations and port associations during design and implementation. Although the involvement of these organizations was, in some cases, constrained by factors beyond the project's control, consultations suggest that more systematic engagement and information sharing with these actors could have enhanced regional support, and strengthened connections including with development partners for facilitating follow-up towards implementation.

5.5 Sustainability

Q9. What measures have been built into the programme to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?

The assessment examined the extent to which the project had built-in measures to sustain results beyond the implementation period.

The evaluation finds that the project incorporated several mechanisms to promote sustainability, notably through capacity building, country-owned roadmaps/action plans, and stronger stakeholder coordination. There is also early evidence of institutional uptake and demand for follow-up and replication. However, the sustainability of results will depend on continued implementation support, resource availability, and the completion and use of the online SSP platform.

Finding 15: The project put in place several mechanisms to support the sustainability of its outcomes, particularly through capacity-building, country-owned roadmaps/action plans and strengthened stakeholder coordination, but the extent to which results will be sustained will depend on continued follow-up, availability of resources for implementation, and the completion and use of the online SSP platform.

The project design included several features to ensure that results would be sustained beyond the implementation period. A key element was the emphasis on capacity building, delivered through regional and national workshops and targeted training aligned with country-specific priorities. These activities went beyond awareness-raising and were designed to build practical skills in areas such as energy management (ISO 50001) and regulatory planning. Evidence from stakeholder consultations suggests that these activities helped strengthen technical understanding and create a shared basis for action among institutions that had previously operated in silos.

A second key measure was the development and validation of country-specific SSP assessments and roadmaps/action plans, which were endorsed through national workshops. These outputs have already begun to influence national processes in some cases. In Mauritius, for example, project recommendations were integrated into the Green Port Strategy and informed engagement with development partners, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the European Union (EU). In Morocco, the project contributed to establishing a multi-stakeholder task force and initiating work on KPIs to monitor SSP objectives. These developments reflect institutional uptake and ownership, which is important for sustaining results.

Evidence from consultations also highlights that sustainability was supported by the strengthening of stakeholder coordination mechanisms. In all beneficiary countries, the project created platforms for dialogue among port authorities, regulators, utilities and private actors who had not previously engaged in a structured manner. This has helped improve alignment on cross-sectoral issues, particularly those related to energy transition, and will likely contribute to more coordinated implementation of future actions.

The project further sought to promote sustainability by developing knowledge products and learning tools, including the online SSP platform and a training course. These were intended to institutionalize project knowledge and enable continued access to materials by a broader range of stakeholders. However, at the time of the evaluation, these tools were still under development.

In addition, there is evidence of emerging sustainability through follow-up demand and replication potential. Stakeholders expressed interest in continuing collaboration with UNCTAD, particularly for further technical assistance to support implementation of identified priority actions and to facilitate dialogue with development partners and financing institutions. There was also demand to extend the SSP approach to additional ports, including in Morocco and through regional organizations such as the

Indian Ocean Commission. These developments suggest that the project has generated momentum that could support the continuation and scaling of results beyond the initial scope.

At the same time, consultations indicate that sustaining outcomes will depend on several factors, including the availability of resources, continued engagement of key stakeholders, and the extent to which coordination mechanisms established during the project are maintained. Systematic engagement with regional organizations and RCOs can also provide opportunities for scaling.

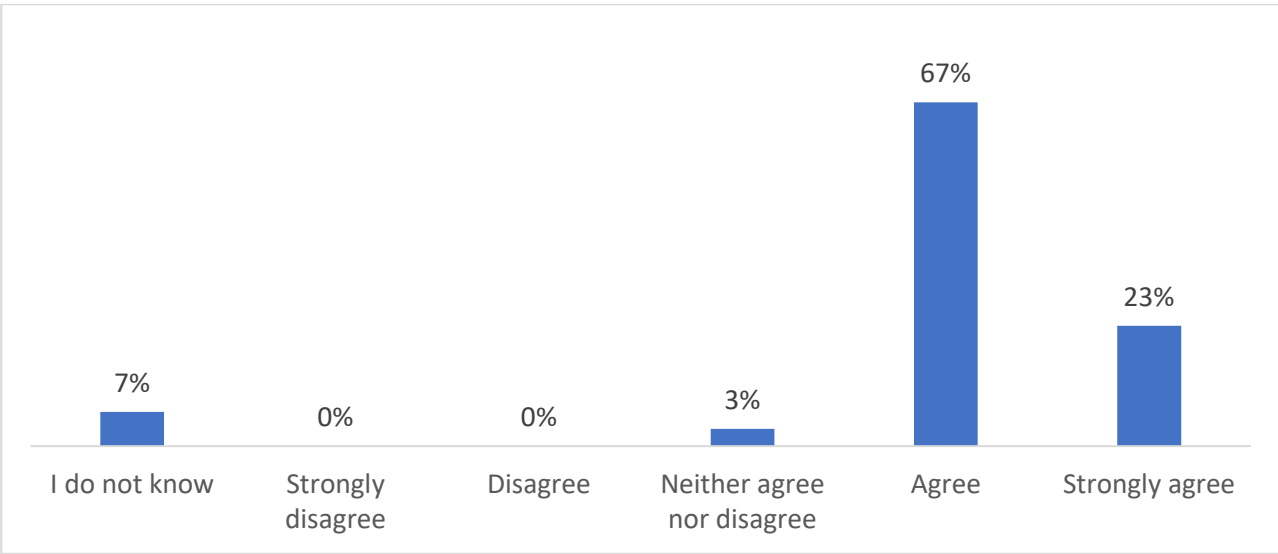
Q10. To what extent have project participants from each beneficiary country utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and SSP roadmaps/action plans developed and their implementation through the project’s activities?

The assessment examined the extent to which project participants have begun to use, or intend to use, the knowledge, skills and planning tools developed through the project.

The evaluation finds that utilization remains at an early stage and varies across countries, reflecting the recent completion of several key outputs. Nevertheless, there is consistent evidence across all three beneficiary countries that stakeholders intend to use the knowledge gained and the SSP roadmaps/action plans to guide future policy, investment and operational decisions. Early signs of utilization are already visible in Mauritius and Morocco. According to the survey results, respondents overwhelmingly (90%) believe that the knowledge, skills and tools provided under the project will be used after the project closes (**Figure 9**).

Figure 9. Survey results on future use of capacity provided under the project

Q10. The knowledge, skills or tools developed through the project (including SSP roadmaps or action plans) have been used, or are intended to be used, by relevant authorities.



N=30; Skipped=2; Source: Survey

Finding 16: Utilization of project outputs is at an early stage and varies across countries, but there is consistent evidence of intention to use the knowledge gained and SSP roadmaps to guide future actions.

Stakeholders indicated that utilization of knowledge, skills and roadmaps is still in its initial stages at the time of the evaluation. This reflects the timing of the project, as several outputs, particularly the SSP assessments and associated roadmaps/action plans, were only recently completed or were still being finalized. As roadmap implementation is a long-term process that can take several years, evidence at the time of the evaluation mainly relates to early uptake, intended use and initial follow-up actions rather than full implementation.

At the same time, there is clear evidence that stakeholders in all three beneficiary countries intend to use the project's outputs. Participants consistently indicated that the SSP roadmaps and action plans provide a useful framework for guiding future policy development, investments and operational improvements. In Mauritius and Morocco, there is already evidence of early utilization, including integration of recommendations into national strategies, the establishment of coordination mechanisms, and initial steps towards defining implementation priorities. In Ghana, although progress is at an earlier stage, stakeholders expressed commitment to using the roadmap as a reference for future planning.

Stakeholder feedback also suggests that the knowledge and skills gained through capacity-building activities are being applied, particularly in energy management, electrification planning, and regulatory considerations. In several cases, participants noted improved understanding of cross-sectoral issues and greater ability to engage with technical and policy discussions.

However, the extent to which these intentions translate into concrete implementation will depend on several factors, including the availability of financing, continued institutional coordination and follow-up support. Overall, while utilization remains in its early stages, the project has established a credible basis for the continued and future use of its outputs across all beneficiary countries.

5.6 Cross-cutting issues

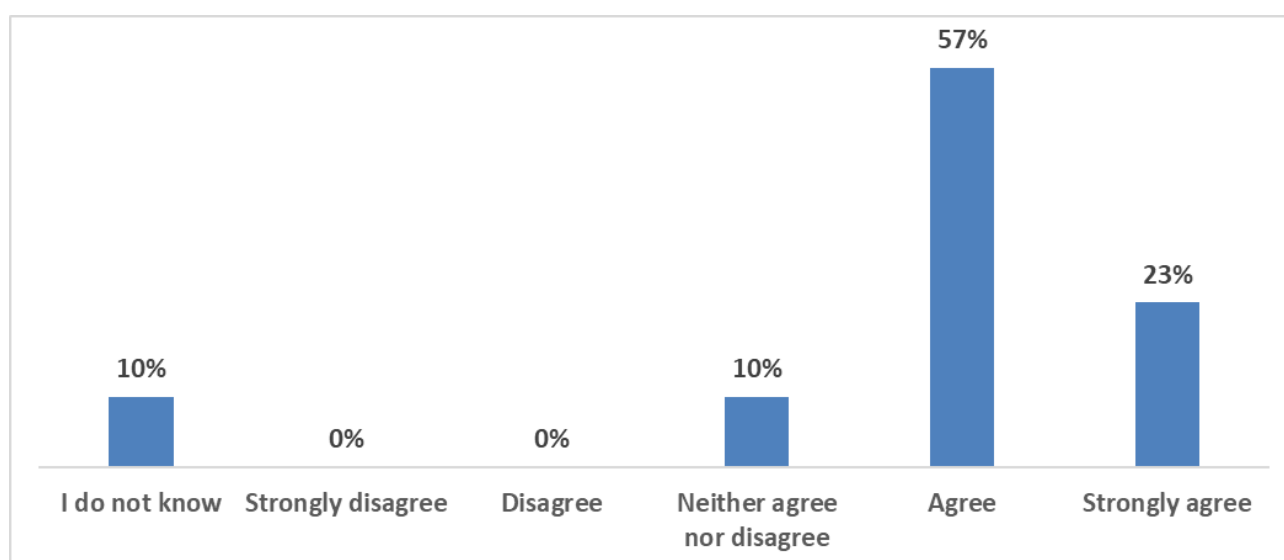
Q11. To what extent were UN cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and the principles of leaving no one behind) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project? Can results be identified in this regard?

The assessment examined the extent to which UN cross-cutting issues were reflected in the project's design and implementation, and whether there was evidence of related results.

The evaluation finds that environmental sustainability was fully integrated, as it formed the project's core objective. By contrast, gender equality, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind were addressed more indirectly, mainly through efforts to encourage broad participation in project activities. While women were represented in project events, there is limited evidence that gender or wider inclusion considerations were systematically integrated into the project's methodology, outputs or results. Survey results show that 80% of respondents believed the project integrated cross-cutting issues effectively into the project (**Figure 10**). However, as the survey question referred collectively to gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind, it is not possible to determine which dimension respondents had primarily in mind. This result is therefore interpreted alongside qualitative evidence, which indicates that environmental sustainability was fully integrated as the project's core objective, while gender equality and broader inclusion were addressed more indirectly.

Figure 10. Survey results on the integration of cross-cutting issues into the project

Q: UN cross-cutting issues, i.e. gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind, were incorporated into the project design and implementation.



N=30; Skipped=2; Source: Survey

Finding 17: Environmental sustainability was fully integrated as the project's core objective, while gender equality and broader inclusion, including the principle of leaving no one behind, were incorporated indirectly and yielded limited measurable results.

Environmental sustainability was at the core of the project's design and implementation. The SSP methodology, assessments, and capacity-building activities focused explicitly on the energy transition, decarbonization, electrification, and resource efficiency in port operations. These elements are directly aligned with global environmental priorities and relevant SDGs, and stakeholders consistently recognized this as a key strength of the project. Thus, environmental sustainability was not a cross-cutting issue but rather the central objective around which the project was structured.

Regarding gender equality, consultations indicated that the project made efforts to promote inclusive participation in activities, including encouraging women's involvement in workshops and stakeholder consultations. Project data and consultations confirm that women were represented in project events. However, given that the port and maritime sector remains predominantly male-dominated, the project faced structural constraints in achieving a stronger gender balance. The project also recognizes that the transition to sustainable energy systems in ports can create new employment opportunities, including for young people and women, and highlights the need to ensure their participation in these emerging jobs opportunities and capacity building.

Moreover, while gender considerations were reflected in some project outputs, they were not systematically integrated into the analytical framework, methodology or results measurement. There is limited evidence of gender-specific analysis, targeted actions or differentiated outcomes for women. For instance, the Mauritius SSP assessment reflected gender considerations through its recommendation to promote gender inclusivity in capacity-building for SSP and port-related training as well as to ensure gender inclusivity in consultative mechanisms established to coordinate matters related to SSP transition. Consultations highlighted that integrating gender more substantively into a technically focused project of this nature proved difficult in practice.

Similarly, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind were not explicitly addressed in the project design or implementation. While the project adopted an inclusive approach to stakeholder engagement, engaging both the public and private sectors, there is no evidence of specific measures targeting persons with disabilities or other marginalized groups, nor of systematic consideration of accessibility or inclusion in project outputs. Stakeholders highlighted that these dimensions were not a focus of the project and were more difficult to operationalize within the technical scope of port energy transition.

Thus, the project demonstrates strong alignment with environmental sustainability objectives, but the integration of other cross-cutting UN issues remains limited. There is scope for future projects of a similar nature to adopt more deliberate approaches to mainstreaming gender and inclusion considerations alongside their core technical objectives.

6. Conclusions

The SSP project was a targeted intervention that enabled selected African countries to strengthen their capacities to plan and advance sustainable and energy-efficient port development through the SSP methodology and related capacity-building activities. Project implementation built on national commitments to sustainable development and climate action, supporting countries in aligning port development strategies with broader SDG objectives. The project provided a structured framework, technical tools, tailored training and capacity building activities, and a platform for knowledge exchange, enabling countries to better understand and operationalize the SSP concept. It also facilitated collaboration among port authorities, government agencies and regulatory authorities, contributing to improved coordination on cross-cutting issues related to port sustainability.

There is evidence of early uptake and continued demand for the SSP methodology and related outputs, including interest in follow-up support and expansion to additional ports and countries. While implementation of the SSP roadmaps developed under the project remains at an early stage, the project has established a foundation for longer-term impact through strengthened capacities, institutional engagement and increased awareness of sustainability pathways in the port sector. However, the sustainability and scaling of results will depend on continued technical support, resource mobilization and institutional commitment.

The conclusions of the evaluation are presented below under the main assessment criteria.

Relevance

The analysis indicates that the project was highly relevant and strategically well positioned, both in relation to the institutional objectives of UNCTAD and UNDA. Overall, the project demonstrates a strong degree of relevance in its design, implementation approach, and intended development outcomes. From a strategic alignment perspective, the project was clearly anchored in UNCTAD's mandate to support developing countries in achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth through stronger participation in the global economy. Its emphasis on SSPs directly reflected UNCTAD's work on technology, logistics, transport and sustainable development, while also supporting the organization's three core functions of research and analysis, consensus-building, and technical cooperation **(Related to Findings #1 and #2).**

The evidence further suggests that the project's relevance extended beyond institutional alignment to a strong response to country needs. The project adapted the SSP framework to differing national contexts, levels of institutional readiness and sector priorities. This tailored approach significantly strengthened the project's relevance. In Mauritius, the project aligned with an already established policy commitment to sustainable port development and the ocean economy, while helping address a key gap between strategic ambition and operational execution. In Morocco, where important progress had already been made in decarbonization and renewable energy use, the project added value by supporting stronger coordination, planning discipline and progress monitoring. In Ghana, where port reform priorities were more closely linked to trade efficiency and competitiveness, the project remained relevant by introducing sustainability as a complementary, forward-looking dimension and by providing a platform for coordination and dialogue **(Related to Finding #3).**

Coherence

The SSP project also demonstrated a high degree of complementarity with existing initiatives, particularly by helping to connect and structure efforts already underway, which are often fragmented in the target countries. The project played a complementary role by providing an overarching framework that helped connect and structure the different initiatives addressing green port development. UNCTAD's most distinctive contribution was its ability to operationalize the concept of SSPs, which, prior to the project, remained broadly defined and subject to varying interpretations. Evidence from stakeholder interviews and mission reports also suggests that the project created a structured platform, thanks to UNCTAD's convening power, for engagement among actors who do not typically interact in sustained or coordinated ways, including port authorities, government ministries, regulators, utilities, terminal operators, and other private-sector stakeholders. In addition, UNCTAD brought significant value through the quality of its technical expertise and its ability to facilitate international knowledge transfer **(Related to Findings #4 and #5).**

Effectiveness

The evaluation concludes that the project was largely effective in achieving its immediate objectives. The findings suggest strengthening stakeholder knowledge of the SSP concept, securing endorsement of the SSP methodology, and building capacity for SSP development through assessments, consultations and targeted training were achieved. While progress towards full implementation of the roadmap/action plan, and therefore contribution to SDG targets remains in its early stages across countries, there is clear evidence of initial follow-up actions, improved stakeholder coordination, and growing demand for continued support and replication. The findings also indicate that the project generated positive unintended outcomes, including stronger inter-institutional dialogue, clearer identification of implementation priorities, increased peer learning across countries, and wider interest in applying the SSP approach in other ports and regional contexts. The analysis finds that progress was enabled by the effective technical design of the project, in alignment with national priorities, and UNCTAD's effective convening role. It also finds that delivery was constrained by factors such as coordination challenges, varying institutional readiness across beneficiary countries, administrative delays, and external disruptions. Overall, the project's principal achievement lies in operationalizing a broad cross-cutting practical framework, fostering stakeholder ownership, and creating momentum for continued and future implementation **(Related to Findings #6, #7, #8 and #9).**

Efficiency

The SSP project demonstrated a moderate level of efficiency, delivering a broad set of technical outputs and capacity-building activities across three countries within the available budget. There is evidence of good allocative and technical efficiency, with resources ultimately directed towards the most critical and knowledge-intensive components of the project, particularly SSP assessments, capacity-building and technical guidance. The project also adapted resource use over time in response to evolving implementation needs and country contexts, indicating flexibility in delivery. Nevertheless, efficiency was affected by several constraints. Time efficiency was moderate, as delays were experienced in the completion of some key deliverables, including country assessments and the online SSP platform. These delays were linked to the complexity of multi-country coordination, extensive data collection requirements and administrative processes. In addition, the project was implemented with relatively limited staffing and constrained capacity to recruit additional staff from the project budget, which placed pressure on staff during peak periods. Underestimation of political and institutional changes in Ghana further contributed to delays in implementation. Overall, while the project delivered value for money, efficiency was moderated by operational and contextual challenges that affected timeliness and delivery processes **(Related to Findings #10, #11 and #12).**

In addition, the project leveraged external partnerships effectively to support delivery, particularly through collaboration with beneficiary institutions, consultants and international port actors, which enhanced technical quality. Strong engagement with focal points in countries such as Mauritius and Morocco facilitated stakeholder coordination and data collection, contributing positively to implementation efficiency. However, the more limited and uneven use of internal UN partnerships, including UN country teams and RCOs, as well regional organisations suggests that there were missed opportunities to further enhance efficiency through better coordination, knowledge sharing and wider dissemination **(Related to Findings #13 and #14).**

Sustainability

The evaluation concludes that the project incorporated several mechanisms to promote sustainability, notably through capacity building, country-owned matrix of recommendations/roadmaps, and stronger stakeholder coordination. There is also early evidence of institutional uptake and demand for follow-up and replication. However, the sustainability of results will depend on continued implementation support, resource availability, and the completion use and continued maintenance of the online SSP platform beyond the lifetime of the project **(Related to Findings #15 and #16).**

Cross-cutting issues

The evaluation concludes that cross-cutting issues were moderately well integrated into the project, though with the limited resources, integrating too many areas may have diluted efforts in other areas. Environmental sustainability was fully integrated, as it formed the project's core objective. By contrast, gender equality, disability inclusion and the principle of leaving no one behind were addressed more indirectly, mainly through efforts to encourage broad participation in project activities. While women were represented in project events, there is limited evidence that gender or wider inclusion considerations were systematically integrated into the project's methodology, outputs or results **(Related to Finding #17).**

7. Recommendations

The recommendations build on the key findings and conclusions of the evaluation and are presented as practical actions to guide future programming and potential follow-up phases of SSP-related interventions.

Recommendation 1: Project conceptualization should be preceded by planning consultations with key national stakeholders and UN country offices to establish synergies and minimize implementation risks **(Related to Findings #9, #11, #13 and #14)**.

The project design was informed by a short country-level assessment of potential beneficiary countries. While this provided a useful basis for project formulation, implementation experience showed that important differences in stakeholder configurations and political and some institutional context only became fully apparent during execution. In Ghana, for example, institutional and political changes had a more disruptive effect than anticipated. Planning consultations at the design stage would help validate assumptions, identify country-specific risks and opportunities, and support a more realistic sequencing of activities. To support consistency across interventions, the UNCTAD Technical Cooperation Section (TCS) could also develop a standardised country readiness checklist for use by project managers. This would not be intended as a definitive assessment of implementation conditions, but as an early screening and planning tool covering dimensions such as political context, institutional arrangements, stakeholder availability and any coordination risks. The checklist could then be complemented during the inception phase by a more detailed data collection plan, prepared in consultation with national counterparts and refined during implementation.

Responsible party	Priority	Estimated resource requirements
UNCTAD (Lead implementing agency)	High	Medium

Recommendation 2: Project management arrangements for future multi-country interventions should be strengthened through improved planning of staff time, use of short-term support during peak workload periods and greater flexibility in the use of project funds to recruit short-term staff support during periods of peak workload and unforeseen circumstances, as well as to support project key functions, and the proportionate use of coordination tools **(Related to Findings #10 and #12)**.

The limited cumulative staff time available for the project and constrained capacity to allocate additional personnel, which required a small number of staff to manage multiple technical, operational and administrative workstreams across three countries. This created pressure during peak implementation periods and affected the timeliness of follow-up activities in some contexts. Stakeholder consultations further indicate that greater frontloading of certain activities could have improved efficiency. In future interventions of a similar scope, staffing levels should be better aligned with the complexity of delivery, while practical management tools such as Monday.com, Microsoft tools such as Planner and Trello among others, should be introduced to strengthen oversight and internal communication.

Responsible party	Priority	Estimated resource requirements
UNCTAD Management (Lead implementing agency)	High	Medium

Recommendation 3: Stronger and more systematic engagement with UN system partners and regional organisations, including port associations and development finance institutions, should be established from the design stage to enhance coordination, support scaling and strengthen follow-up to implementation of SSP roadmaps **(Related to Findings #13, #14, #15 and #16)**.

The evaluation found that the project leveraged some useful partnerships, particularly with beneficiary institutions, focal points and selected technical partners. However, collaboration with actors in the United Nations system and regional organisations remained uneven and, in some cases, limited. Earlier and more structured engagement with entities such as Resident Coordinator Offices, relevant United Nations agencies, regional port or maritime organisations and development finance institutions could have improved alignment with related initiatives, broadened outreach beyond the initial beneficiaries, and facilitated links with development partners for future implementation support. In particular, development finance institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) could be engaged more systematically throughout implementation to explore potential financing pathways. Such involvement would help align SSP recommendations with existing investment pipelines and increase the prospects for post-project implementation support.

Responsible party	Priority	Estimated resource requirements
UNCTAD (Lead implementing agency)	High	Low

Recommendation 4: The design and management of data collection processes should be strengthened, including through clearer communication of their purpose, early engagement and preparation of stakeholders, and more streamlined information requirements **(Related to Findings #9 and #10)**.

The project required extensive data collection to support the SSP assessments, and this proved more demanding than initially anticipated. Stakeholder consultations indicate that, in some cases, participating organisations perceived the exercise as burdensome or interpreted it as an audit rather than a diagnostic and planning tool. This affected responsiveness and slowed implementation. In addition, where stakeholders were not already familiar with the SSP concept, the complexity of the data requests created further delays. Future projects should therefore devote more attention to the design of data collection processes by clarifying expectations early through a stakeholder engagement meeting to communicate the purpose and intended use of the data, and by reviewing the scope and sequencing of information requests to ensure that they are manageable.

Responsible party	Priority	Estimated resource requirements
UNCTAD (Lead implementing agency)	High	Medium

Recommendation 5: Clear arrangements should be established for the post-project maintenance, dissemination and use of the online SSP platform (**Related to Findings #15**).

The online SSP platform is intended to be an important mechanism for sustaining and scaling the project's knowledge products beyond the implementation period. To maximize its contribution to sustainability, clear arrangements should be established for its completion, maintenance, periodic updating and dissemination after project closure. This should include clarification of institutional responsibility and resources within UNCTAD for maintaining the platform, as well as how it could be used in future training, technical assistance and outreach activities.

Responsible party	Priority	Estimated resource requirements
UNCTAD in collaboration with relevant partners (Lead implementing agency)	High	Medium

Recommendation 6: Future interventions should integrate gender equality, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind more systematically into project design, methodology, implementation and results monitoring (**Related to Finding #17**).

While some project outputs included references to gender inclusivity, particularly in relation to capacity-building and access to emerging green jobs, these dimensions were not systematically embedded in the project's methodology, results framework, or monitoring approach. Future interventions should therefore include clearer entry points for gender and inclusion analysis, identify practical measures to promote participation of underrepresented groups where feasible, and include indicators or qualitative markers to track how these issues are addressed during implementation.

Responsible party	Priority	Estimated resource requirements
UNCTAD (Lead implementing agency)	High	Low

8. Lessons learned and good practices

8.1 Lessons learned

The lessons learned from the project will be useful for future similar interventions and/or another phase of project implementation. The key lessons of the project are as follows:

- 1. The project development phase needs to be reliably informed by a detailed assessment of risk and the contextual situation in the countries of intervention focus.**

Project design should be informed by a situational assessment of the target countries to ensure implementation reflects country-specific institutional realities and political risks. This approach supports more realistic planning, stronger complementarity and the establishment of more appropriate mitigation measures.

2. Multi-country projects require stronger coordination mechanisms and adequate staffing for improving efficiency.

The effective delivery of technically complex activities across several countries requires sufficient human resources, clear coordination arrangements, flexibility in project budget use and implementation, and practical project management tools. These elements are necessary to support oversight, communication, quality control and timely follow-up.

3. The design and implementation approach of data collection processes is critical to the timely implementation of technical assessments such as the SSP assessment.

Data-intensive projects require streamlined and well-communicated data collection approaches. Clear communication of purpose, proportionate information requests, and early stakeholder preparation can improve cooperation and reduce delays.

4. Budget formulation should better reflect the likely resource intensity of technical and analytical outputs.

Future projects should apply more realistic costing to technically demanding outputs, particularly assessments, specialized expertise and knowledge products, while maintaining flexibility to reallocate resources as implementation needs evolve.

8.2 Good practices

Several good practices emerged during implementation of the project:

1. Use of focal points and locally-based consultants

The engagement of focal points in lead beneficiary institutions, as well as that of locally based consultants, supported communication, coordination, and continuity during implementation.

2. Use of international expertise and peer learning

The inclusion of external expertise and international operational experience strengthened the technical quality of activities and supported practical knowledge exchange.

3. Tailoring of activities to the country context

Adapting activities to varying levels of readiness and national priorities strengthened the intervention's relevance across beneficiary countries, facilitating uptake of the outputs.

4. Regional workshops and online e-learning and repository SSP platform:

The use of regional workshops and the development of the repository and upcoming e-learning platform are expected to support wider dissemination of project results and engagement beyond the direct beneficiaries. This approach contributes to a multiplier effect by facilitating knowledge-sharing and enabling broader uptake of project outputs.

Annex 1: Evaluation Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Independent Evaluation of Development Account Project 2225E
“Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to “recover better” from COVID-19”

Introduction and Purpose

This document outlines the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the independent final evaluation of the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) funded project: *“Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to “recover better” from COVID-19”*. The evaluation will provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD's member States, with whom the final evaluation report will be shared.

The evaluation will provide assessments that are credible and useful. Specifically, it will systematically and objectively assess project design, project management, implementation, overall results, and the mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues such as gender and environmental sustainability." Based on these assessments, the evaluation will formulate practical and constructive recommendations to project stakeholders, particularly UNCTAD and the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, including on operational and administrative aspects, with the aim of optimizing the results of future projects.

Project background

Persistent challenges posed by disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted the way transport and port operations function. In turn, relevant response measures have included the implementation of a global COVID-19 recovery plan that promoted environmentally conscious strategies and investments. This has consisted of scaling up investment to support clean energy and sustainable transport systems, boosting green projects and encouraging the deployment of technology-based solutions.

Together, these priorities helped unlock the potential of ports to emerge as Sustainable Smart Ports, which in turn supported efforts to build back better and meet the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and global climate action targets. Sustainable Smart Ports are defined as ports that leverage the energy transition and technology-based solutions to improve port operational efficiency through energy efficiency, whilst harnessing the ability to use, produce and distribute clean and renewable energy to support sustainable development.

With a budget of **USD 600,000**, this project, implemented from 2022 to 2026, aimed to strengthen the capacities of selected countries in Africa, including Small Island Developing States, in building Sustainable Smart Ports. The three beneficiary countries were Morocco, Ghana and Mauritius.

Project Objectives, Outcomes and Outputs

Objectives and Intended Outcomes

Objective: Strengthen the capacities of selected African countries (including SIDS) in building Sustainable Smart Ports (SSPs) that promote sustainable energy and technology-driven solutions, supporting COVID-19 recovery and SDGs achievement.

The project aimed to deliver two key outcomes.

Outcome 1: Enhanced knowledge of stakeholders in selected African countries on:

- The potential of national ports to become Sustainable Smart Ports.
- Cross-sectoral policies and measures supporting SSP principles.

Outputs:

- OP1.1: SSP assessment methodology developed.
- OP1.2: Expert meeting (2 days, Geneva) to refine methodology.
- OP1.3: Online SSP platform with guidance and training materials.
- OP1.4: Two online regional/sub-regional workshops in Africa to raise awareness, share experiences, gather feedback, and endorse the methodology.

Outcome 2: Improved capacity of policymakers in selected African countries to formulate and implement **SSP roadmaps/action plans** enabling ports to meet SSP status.

Outputs:

- OP2.1: Stakeholder meetings (virtual/face-to-face) to apply SSP assessment methodology and determine SSP status of target ports.
- OP2.2: SSP Assessment Report for each target country with recommendations and action plan/roadmap.
- OP2.3: National validation workshop (2–3 days) in each target country (or online if needed) to validate findings/recommendations/action plan.
- OP2.4: At least two national capacity-building/training workshops (3–5 days) to support delivery of one priority action from roadmap (encouraging women's participation).
- OP2.5: One online regional webinar to disseminate findings, scale up results, and promote regional exchange of experiences.

Link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The project directly contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by advancing **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth), particularly Target 8.4, through promoting resource efficiency and sustainable production in port operations. It also supports **SDG 9** (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) by developing methodologies, strengthening capacity, and fostering regional cooperation. In doing so, it advances Target 9.1 on building resilient infrastructure and Target 9.4 on upgrading infrastructure with clean technologies, positioning ports as drivers of sustainable industrialization and innovation.

In addition, the project aligns with **SDG 13** (Climate Action), especially Target 13.2, by integrating climate considerations into national port strategies and action plans. Through the development of Sustainable Smart Ports, the initiative reduces emissions, promotes clean energy use, and enhances climate resilience, thereby ensuring ports contribute to sustainable recovery from COVID-19 while accelerating progress towards long-term low-carbon and climate-resilient development.

Evaluation scope, objectives and questions

The objective of the final independent evaluation is to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of a project in light of its goals, objectives and accomplishments. In addition to serving accountability requirements, the evaluation will provide feedback to UNCTAD and its stakeholders on results attained, as well as on project design, management, implementation, the mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues, and the identification of good practices and lessons for future implementation of similar projects.

The evaluation will cover the duration of the project from February 2022 to March 2026.

It is expected to address the following questions under the criteria below (to be further refined in the inception report, as appropriate):

Relevance

- 1) To what extent were the project design, choice of activities and deliverables aligned with the objectives of UNCTAD and the UN Development Account?
- 2) To what extent did the project reflect and address the development needs and priorities of beneficiary countries?
- 3) What unique value did UNCTAD bring to the project? Has the work of the project been complementary to initiatives by other UN and non-UN actors in the target countries?

Efficiency

- 4) To what extent was the project management adequate in ensuring the coordination, planning, execution, and monitoring the project within the defined scope and timeline?
- 5) How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources?
- 6) To what extent did the project leverage internal and external partnerships to deliver the project's activities?

Effectiveness (including impact)

- 7) Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document, including the SDG targets identified? Is there any evidence of (intended or unintended) outcomes?
- 8) What are key enabling and limiting factors with respect to the achievement of the project's results?

Sustainability

- 9) What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?
- 10) To what extent have project participants from each beneficiary country utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and SSP roadmaps/action plans developed through the project's activities?

Mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues

- 11) To what extent were UN cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and the principles of leaving no one behind) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project? Can results be identified in this regard?

Methodology

The evaluation will be a transparent and participatory process involving the project team and key stakeholders. It will adopt a theory-driven, utilization-focused approach, guided by the project-results framework. It will use both qualitative as well as quantitative data gathering and analysis as the basis for a triangulation exercise of all available data to draw objective conclusions and findings. Methods for data gathering for this evaluation will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Desk review of project documents and relevant materials.
- Both virtual and in-person interviews with relevant UNCTAD staff, and with a balanced sample of project participants, project partners and other relevant stakeholders.
- Focus group discussions.
- Online surveys of beneficiaries of the project, and other stakeholders, as appropriate; and
- Collection and analysis of relevant web and social media metrics related to the outputs of the project.

As part of the desk review, which will lead to an Inception Report, the evaluator will use the project document as well as additional documents such as mission reports, progress reports, financial reports, publications and studies (both produced under the project as well as received from national

and regional counterparts). A list of project beneficiaries as well as other partners and counterparts involved in the project will be provided to the evaluator.

The evaluator will further elaborate on the evaluation methodology in the Inception Report, determining thereby the exact focus and approach for the exercise, including developing tailor-made questions that target different stakeholders (based on a stakeholder analysis), and developing the sampling strategy and identifying the sources and methods for data collection.

The evaluator is required to submit a separate final list of those interviewed in an Annex to the evaluation report. The evaluator is to ensure a wide representation of stakeholders, bearing in mind the need to include those in a disadvantaged or minority position as appropriate.

Organization of the evaluation

Deliverables and Expected Outputs

The evaluation, on the basis of its findings and assessments made on the above criteria, should draw conclusions, make recommendations and identify lessons learned from the implementation of the project. More specifically, the evaluation should:

- Highlight what has been successful and can be replicated elsewhere;
- Highlight, as appropriate, any specific achievements that provide additional value for money and/or relevant multiplier effects;
- Indicate shortcomings and constraints in the implementation of the project while, at the same time, identifying the remaining challenges, gaps and needs for future courses of action;
- Make pragmatic recommendations to suggest how work in this area can be further strengthened in order to address beneficiaries' needs and create synergies through collaboration with other UNCTAD divisions, international organizations and development partners, and other international forums;
- Draw lessons of wider application for the replication of the experience gained in this project in other projects/countries;
- Review exit strategies if any, how well it has been tailored to the needs of the member States and the implementing entities.

All assessments must be supported by facts and findings, direct or indirect evidence, and well-substantiated logic. Proposed recommendations must be supported by the findings and be relevant, specific, practical, actionable, and time bound.

Three deliverables are expected out of this evaluation:

- a) Output 1: An inception report³⁰;
- b) Output 2: A draft evaluation report; and
- c) Output 3: The final evaluation report³¹

The inception report should summarize the desk review and specify the evaluation methodology, determining thereby the exact focus and scope of the exercise, including the evaluation matrix, the sampling strategy, stakeholder mapping analysis and the data collection instruments.

The final report of the evaluation must be composed of the following key elements:

- Executive summary.
- Introduction of the evaluation.

³⁰ The quality of the inception report should meet those standards set out in UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Terms of Reference and Inception Reports: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=608

³¹ The quality of the evaluation report should meet those standards set out in UNEG Quality Checklist for Evaluation Reports: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607>

- A brief description of the project, including project objectives, expected accomplishments, strategies and key activities.
- A clear description of the evaluation objectives, scope, and questions as well as evaluation methodology used.
- Findings and assessments according to the criteria listed in Section IV of this ToR, with a comparison of planned and implemented project activities and outputs; and
- Conclusions and recommendations drawn from the assessments.
- Annexes including a list of documents consulted, interviewed stakeholders, survey templates and this TOR.

Description of Duties

The evaluation will be undertaken by an independent evaluator and facilitated by the UNCTAD Independent Evaluation (IEU) in close collaboration with the Project Team from UNCTAD. The evaluator reports to the Chief of the UNCTAD Evaluation Unit. S/he will undertake the evaluation exercise under the guidance of IEU and in coordination with the project managers for UNCTAD. The evaluator is responsible for the evaluation design, data collection, analysis and reporting as provided in this TOR.

The evaluator shall act independently, in line with United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and in her/his private capacities and not as a representative of any government or organization that may present a conflict of interest. S/he will have no previous experience of working with the project or of working in any capacity linked with it.

The evaluator should observe UNEG guidelines, including the Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN system³², as well as UNCTAD's Evaluation Policy³³, in the conduct of this assignment. The evaluator needs to integrate human rights, gender equality and disability perspectives in evaluations to the extent possible.³⁴ The evaluator needs to ensure a complete, fair, engaging, unreserved, and unbiased assessment. In case of difficulties, uncertainties or concerns in the conduct of the evaluation, the evaluator needs to report immediately to the Chief of Independent Evaluation Unit to seek guidance or clarification.

The project team will support the evaluation by providing desk review documents, contact details of project stakeholders as well as any additional documents that the evaluator requests. It is the responsibility of the project managers to ensure senior management engagement throughout the evaluation and timely feedback in the quality assurance and factual clarification process coordinated by IEU. The project team will review and provide comments on the inception, draft and final reports, and formulate a management response to the recommendations of the evaluation report.

The UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit endorses the TOR and approves the selection of the proposed evaluator. It reviews the evaluation methodology, clears the draft report, performs quality assurance of the final report and participates in disseminating the final report. The Independent Evaluation Unit engages the project team throughout the evaluation process in supporting the evaluation and validating the reports.

Timetable

The evaluation will take place over the period 1 December 2025 to 30 June 2026.

³² "Norms and Standards for Evaluation" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2016):

<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

³³ "Evaluation Policy" of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), June 2023.

https://unctad.org/system/files/information-document/osg_evaluationpolicy2023_en.pdf

³⁴ "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2014): <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1616>. The UNEG Handbook on "Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations: Towards UNEG Guidance" by UNEG, UNEG Guidance Document (2011): <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980>.

Monitoring and Progress Control

The evaluator must keep the UNCTAD Independent Evaluation Unit informed of the progress made in the evaluation on a regular basis.

Effective working time of the consultant: 30 days

- Place of work: Home based
- Name of project officer: Nishta Keeble

The contract concludes upon satisfactory receipt of the final report.

Qualifications and Experience³⁵

Education: Advanced university degree in economics, trade, development, public administration, or related field.

Experience: At least 7 years of experience in conducting or managing evaluations, or in programme management, preferably on interventions in the areas of trade-related technical assistance and capacity building. Solid understanding of the UN context and the SDGs. Experience conducting public policy and/or development programme evaluations. Solid understanding of gender responsive and equity-focused evaluation design, data collection and analysis methods. Ability to develop clear, realistic, feasible recommendations.

Language: Fluency in oral and written English.

Conditions of Service

The evaluator will serve under a consultancy contract as detailed in the applicable United Nations rules and regulations. The evaluator will not be considered as staff member or official of the United Nations but shall abide by the relevant standards of conduct. The United Nations is entitled to all intellectual property and other proprietary rights deriving from this exercise.

Evaluation communication and dissemination plan

The final evaluation report and key findings will be disseminated widely to all relevant stakeholders including through the following channels:

- A copy of the final evaluation report and management response will be made available publicly on the UNCTAD website;
- A summary of the key evaluation findings, highlighting the results of the project in particular, and lessons learned, will be shared with UNCTAD member States as part of the annual reporting on evaluation activities; and
- Other communication briefs and products as appropriate.

³⁵ The United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

Annex 2. Project logical framework

Intervention logic	Indicators of achievement	Means of verification
Objective: To strengthen the capacities of selected countries in Africa, including SIDS, in building Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP) that promote sustainable energy and technology-driven solutions for a better and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of the SDGs.		
Outcome – OC1 Enhanced knowledge of relevant stakeholders in selected countries in Africa of: (i) the potential of national ports to emerge as Sustainable Smart Ports (SSP); and (ii) cross-sectoral policies and measures that promote the realization of this potential	IA 1.1 80 per cent of stakeholders participating in the regional/sub-regional online workshops report better understanding of the concept of Sustainable Smart Port (SSP), its relevance, as well as of cross-sectoral policies and measures that promote the SSP principles.	Evaluation forms from participants to regional/subregional workshops
	IA 1.2 80 per cent of stakeholders participating in the regional/subregional online workshops endorse the UNCTAD SSP assessment methodology developed by the project.	- Evaluation forms from participants to regional/subregional workshops reflect this endorsement. - Reports of substantive discussions from the expert meeting and workshops enable identification of areas of further methodological refinement and priority consideration for the application of the methodology in the 3 countries.
Output OP1.1. Methodology developed to assess the Sustainable Smart Port (SSP) status of ports (based on the existing UNCTAD Sustainable Freight Transport Framework and tools). This would entail also discussing and consulting with relevant stakeholders and organizations, attending relevant workshops/conferences and collecting information. UNCTAD will develop this methodology with the support of an external consultant.		
OP1.2. One Expert meeting (2 days) held in Geneva/UNCTAD to discuss and further refine UNCTAD SSP methodology, prior to endorsement at regional/sub-regional online workshops and its application in the three beneficiary countries. UNCTAD will organize this meeting and invite experts - approximately 9 (consist of experts in the field of ports/shipping/digitalization/green energy) including from potential project target countries.		
OP1.3. Online SSP platform and relevant guidance and training material developed (including SSP methodology guidebook, case studies/best practices relating to the SSP principles/concept, training modules) and made available on the platform. The platform will build on existing UNCTAD SFT platform. The platform will be constantly updated with relevant information related to project activities. UNCTAD will develop this with the support of an external consultant. The platform foresees a flexible approach to learning (offering a self-paced option to learn asynchronously) while maintaining the requirement to undertake exercises and evaluation to obtain certificates.		

OP1.4. Two online regional/sub-regional workshops (half day each) organized in Africa to raise awareness on SSP principles/concept, share experience, gather feedback and input and endorse the UNCTAD SSP methodology. The online workshops will include target countries (3) as well as other selected African countries. Two regional/sub-regional webinars are planned to accommodate an acceptable number of participants by workshop and allow time for discussions. UNCTAD will organize this with the support of regional partners.		
Outcome - OC2 Improved capacity of policy makers in selected countries in Africa to formulate and implement roadmaps/action plans that enable ports to meet the SSP status.	IA 2.1 A national Sustainable Smart Port (SSP) roadmap/action plan is developed and validated/endorsed by policymakers in each of the three beneficiary countries.	- Information about the SSP roadmap/action plan on websites of relevant stakeholders including ministry (e.g., ministry of transport) or port authority, official press releases, and UNCTAD website/news items. - Report of the validation workshop.
	IA 2.2 Each of the three project beneficiary countries has initiated at least one action for implementation of the roadmap/action plan.	- Information about implementation of the roadmap/ action on the websites of relevant ministry (e.g., ministry of transport) or port authority, official press releases. - Number of national capacity building activities conducted under the project.
Output OP2.1 Stakeholders' meetings (virtual and one face to face) to present the methodology, collect information, apply the UNCTAD SSP assessment methodology and determine the SSP status of targeted ports. Alternatively, if the epidemiological situation does not permit organizing in-person meetings, the relevant information and data will be collected via online surveys, online interviews/meetings and with the support of a national consultant.		
OP 2.2 An SSP Assessment Report drafted for each target country and its port(s) which will include recommendations and action plan/roadmap to be discussed and validated at national workshop. Actions targeting vulnerable groups and women will be considered in the recommendations and the action plan/roadmap.		
OP2.3. One national validation workshop (2-3 days) organized with relevant stakeholders in each target country (3 countries) to discuss the SSP Assessment Report carried out and validate its findings/recommendations/action plan/roadmap and discuss implementation. Gender related issues will be mainstreamed in the recommendations and the action plan/roadmap. If the epidemiological situation does not permit organizing in-person meetings, the validation will be conducted via an online meeting.		
OP2.4. At least two capacity building and training workshops (3-5 days) to support in the delivery of one priority action from the action plan/roadmap. Women's participation will be encouraged in the workshops.		
OP2.5. One online regional webinar organized to disseminate project findings and lessons learned with a broad regional audience, scale up project results and promote exchange of experience.		

Annex 3: Target Beneficiaries

Non-UN Stakeholders listed in order of level of involvement in the project	Type and level of involvement in the project	Capacity assets	Capacity Gaps	Desired future outcomes	Incentives
Entity responsible for the policy and decision making, management and operation of the port (Port authority)	Primary target audience/focal point for project implementation Facilitator of transition towards SSP	Responsible for the development and improvement of the port area related to port operations, ranging from infrastructure development and maintenance to the marketing and management of port facilities, as well as coordinating private companies operating in the port area	Difficulty in designing, implementing and evaluating actions to mainstream sustainability considerations in port operations Difficulty in scaling up digitalization and automation.	Increased awareness of sustainability/green and smart issues in ports and increased capacity to identify challenges and potential and to design and implement actions to improve sustainability performance Increased collaboration between public and private stakeholders	Transition to sustainable energy and enhancing digitalization of business processes can help the port, and the supply chain, become more efficient and generate business opportunities.
Private actors offering services at the port (terminal operators, rail operators, trucking companies, logistics providers, bunkering services providers)	Secondary audience (will contribute indirectly to the project through participation in the project activities)	Knowledge of the private actors regarding the operational and competitive environment for service providers will contribute to explore feasibility of adopting and enhancing the implementation of sustainability standards and interoperable digital systems	Difficulty in collaborating with other stakeholders for systemic improvements due to the fragmentation of some activities in the supply chain	Increased awareness of benefits from industry/sectoral collaboration in connection with implementation of the SSP concept provides impetus to participation in maritime clusters and related consultative mechanisms	Interested in understanding potential changes in the operating environment that may affect their profitability. Interested in developing resilience, namely ensuring business continuity (in the event of disruption) with economic efficiencies.
Other Policy makers (transport, energy, municipal development, environmental protection, economic planning and infrastructure development)	Primary audience	Knowledge on policy and regulatory frameworks in connection with initiatives and local needs pertaining to different policy spheres to transition to SSP	(In some instances) non-systematized framework for coordination pertaining to policy issues affecting the development of the SSP	Increased awareness of policy linkages between different policy spheres to implement the SSP concept	Possibility to influence policy outcomes in areas linked to SSP, that relate to their institutional strategies and operative plans.

Non-UN Stakeholders listed in order of level of involvement in the project	Type and level of involvement in the project	Capacity assets	Capacity Gaps	Desired future outcomes	Incentives
Other private actors (Shipping associations energy/environment technology sectors)	Secondary audience	Can contribute to strengthening of relevant industrial clusters associated with the maritime supply chain to facilitate transition to SSP	(In some instances) non-systematized framework for policy reflection and for providing policy inputs involving such private actors.	Increased awareness of sustainability issues in ports and of areas where local private or regional actors can contribute with solutions.	Enhanced awareness of SSP opportunities that can represent potential future business opportunities.
Academia	Secondary audience. However, a few selected institutes would be direct contributors as local partners in the countries.	Will enrich the project through research and evidence-based inputs related to formulation of policy recommendations during the design of the methodology and discussion of implementation modalities for action plans	(In some instances), disconnect between research and its empirical application to real policy dilemmas.	Use of research inputs for local and regional policy-making processes.	Interested in developing their capacity to contribute with research findings to policy debates and testing research findings in real policy scenarios.
Regional/subregional maritime and port organizations	Primary audience	These organizations have deeper understanding of port related challenges facing their member countries across the region.	Need to enhance understanding of challenges in designing and implementing the port SSP concept.	Develop a deeper understanding of the policy interface and regional synergies for greater intra-regional cohesion regarding SSP development.	Advancing regional agendas to develop trade logistics capabilities to enhance trade prospects.
Financiers (Multilateral development banks such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, IsDB and other donors)	Financiers may consider engaging with follow-up projects to foster SSP development, and therefore, developing their awareness and understanding of the project is critical.	Financiers have funds that can be deployed efficiently to the follow-up SSP development projects.	Need to enhance understanding of challenges in designing and implementing the port SSP concept.	Develop a deeper understanding of SSP development in the region.	Opportunities to invest in sustainable freight transport projects.

Source: Project Document

Annex 4: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Key Issue	Judgement Criteria	Means of Verification (source/method)
1) To what extent were the project design, choice of activities and deliverables aligned with the objectives of UNCTAD and the UN Development Account?	Relevance	None expected	- Alignment of activities/deliverables with UNCTAD and UNDA objectives	- Review of documents provided by UNCTAD - Beneficiary countries' policy documents - Key informant interviews with UNCTAD staff, other UN partners, non-UN actors, beneficiaries - Survey results
2) To what extent did the project reflect and address the development needs and priorities of beneficiary countries?		None expected	- Responsiveness to beneficiary country development needs and priorities	
3) What unique value did UNCTAD bring to the project? Has the work of the project been complementary to initiatives by other UN and non-UN actors in the target countries?	Coherence	None expected	- Evidence of clear value-add as well as complementarity and synergies with existing projects	- Key informant interviews with UNCTAD staff, other UN partners, non-UN actors, beneficiaries - Survey results - Review of information available online on activities by other non-UN actors
4) To what extent was the project management adequate in ensuring the coordination, planning, execution, and monitoring the project within the defined scope and timeline?	Efficiency	- None expected	- Adequacy of project management - Disbursement rates in line with budgets - Implementation timeline followed - Meaningful partner engagements and contributions	- Annual Progress Reports - Financial Reports - Key Informant Interviews with UNCTAD staff, other UN partners, non-UN actors, beneficiaries
5) How efficient was the project in utilizing project resources?		- None expected		

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Key Issue	Judgement Criteria	Means of Verification (source/method)
6) To what extent did the project leverage internal and external partnerships to deliver the project's activities?		- Depends on information obtained from partners		
7) Have the activities achieved, or are likely to achieve, planned objectives as enunciated in the project document, including the SDG targets identified? Is there any evidence of (intended or unintended) outcomes? 8) What are the key enabling and limiting factors with respect to the achievement of the project's results?	Effectiveness (including impact, if any)	- Premature to assess project's long-term impact, especially on SDG targets. The evaluation will instead assess likelihood of impact on these targets.	- Achievement of outputs and outcomes as planned	- Review of documents provided by UNCTAD - Key informant interviews with UNCTAD staff, other UN partners, non-UN actors, beneficiaries - Survey results
9) What measures have been built in to promote the sustainability of the outcomes? 10) To what extent have project participants from each beneficiary country utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and SSP roadmaps/action plans developed and their implementation through the project's activities?	Sustainability	None expected	- Clear exit strategies - Mechanisms for continuation of results beyond project completion - Ownership of roadmaps/action plans by local institutions	- Review of documents provided by UNCTAD - Key informant interviews with UNCTAD staff, other UN partners, non-UN actors, beneficiaries - Survey results

Evaluation Questions	Criteria	Key Issue	Judgement Criteria	Means of Verification (source/method)
11) To what extent were UN cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and the principles of leaving no one behind) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project? Can results be identified in this regard?	Mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues	- Potential lack of specific, disaggregated data, such as gender-disaggregated participation rates or disability inclusion metrics	- Consideration of cross-cutting issues in design and implementation - Examination of cross-cutting issues within UNCTAD's own governance structures	- Review of documents provided by UNCTAD - Beneficiary countries policy documents - Key informant interviews with UNCTAD staff, other UN partners, non-UN actors, beneficiaries - Survey results

Annex 5: List of documents reviewed

No	Document
Project Documents	
1	Project Document
2	Annual Progress Report for 2022
3	Annual Progress Report for 2023
4	Annual Progress Report for 2024
5	2225E_Plan of Action & Expenditure Milestones
6	2225E_2023 Progress Report Annex- Financial Tables_Final
7	2225E_2024 Progress Report Annex - Financial Tables_Final
8	Mauritius Mission Report_May 2025
9	Morocco Mission Reports_September and November 2025
10	Ghana Mission Report – December 2025
Project Outputs	
11	OP 1.1 SSP Methodology 2023_Final
12	OP 1.2 Expert Meeting_Concept Note and Program_2023
13	OP 1.4 Regional Webinar1_2023_Report
14	OP1.4 Regional Webinar2_2024_Report
15	OP 2.1+2.2+2.3 SSPAssessment1_Mauritius
16	OP2.4 Capacity Building2024_All3ports_Energy Efficiency
17	OP2.4 Capacity Building2025_MauritiusOnly_Electrification
18	OP2.4 Capacity Building2025_TangerMedOnly_Strategy&KPIs
19	OP2.4_CapacityBuilding2025_GhanaOnly
Stakeholder Contact Lists	
20	OP 1.2_Expert Meeting_Methodology Review_List of Invitees
21	OP 1.4_Webinar1_Registered Participants
22	OP 1.4_Webinar2_Registered Participants
23	OP2.1_SSPGhana_StakeholdersMetOnline_Oct2025
24	OP2.1_SSPMauritius_StakeholderList_met-MissionJun2024
25	OP2.1_SSPTangerMed_StakeholderList-mer-MissionSep2025
26	OP2.3_SSPMauritius_AttendanceList_Validation_27May
27	OP2.3+2.4_SSPTangerMed_Participants List_25-27Nov
28	OP2.4_CapacityBuilding_ISO-Energy Efficiency_Attendance_participants_29+30Oct
29	OP2.4_CapacityBuilding_MauritiusSSP_AttendanceList_28-30May
30	SSPGhana_Preliminary Stakeholder Mapping
31	SSPTangerMed_Preliminary Stakeholder Mapping
32	SSPGhana_Stakeholders who attended the Validation session and Capacity building_Dec.2025
Workshop Feedback	
33	OP1.4_RegionalWebinar1_Feedback_7Dec2023
34	OP1.4_RegionalWebinar2_Feedback_23May2024
35	OP2.4_Evaluation feedback UNCTAD-ISO Training
36	OP 2.4_MauritiusCB_EvaluationAnalysis
37	Email chain from Tanger Med Port Authority (TC1) - Morocco
38	Email chain from Tanger Med Port Authority - Morocco
39	Email chain from Ports and Maritime Public Domain Department - Morocco
40	Email chain from Institute of Technical Education and Technology - Mauritius
41	Email chain from Mauritius Ports Authority_1
42	Email chain from Mauritius Ports Authority_2
43	Follow-up letter from UNCTAD to Mauritius Ports Authority (MPA)
44	Response letter from MPA to UNCTAD
45	Annex 1 Letter to UNCTAD: Concept Paper Green Port Strategy for Port-Louis
46	Annex 2 Letter to UNCTAD: MPA Application form for JICA
Other Documents	
47	Cross-cutting issues – UNCTAD Guidance: Disability Inclusion, Gender Mainstreaming, Human Rights and Environment
48	UNCTAD Inception Report Template
49	Evaluation Terms of Reference

Annex 6: Semi-structured interview guides

UNCTAD is carrying out an independent final evaluation of United Nations Development Account (UNDA) funded project: “Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to “recover better” from COVID-19”.

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD's member States, with whom the final evaluation report will be shared, and to identify lessons learned for future interventions.

I am serving as the external independent evaluator for the project.

Please note that this interview is confidential and all information received will be anonymized. No individual will be quoted nor will the organization they represent be identified in the evaluation report. The data collected will only be used for evaluation purposes. Your participation in the interview is voluntary, and you may withdraw from it at any moment.

Interview Questionnaire for Project Staff

A. Relevance

1. To what extent did the project design align with UNCTAD’s mandate and the objectives of the UN Development Account?
2. Were the activities chosen and the deliverables appropriate for achieving the stated project objectives?
3. How were the needs and priorities of beneficiaries considered in the design stage?
4. Looking back at the project design (objectives, activities, country selection and assumptions), what aspects would you recommend revising or strengthening at the design stage for future projects of this type?

B. Coherence

5. Who were the project’s key internal and external partners? to what extent were these partnerships appropriate and sufficient? (to probe on missed opportunities for collaboration)
6. From your perspective, what is the main value that UNCTAD has added through this project? Are there any changes, initiatives or discussions that were triggered by the project that would likely not have happened without UNCTAD’s involvement?
7. Can you provide information on how the work undertaken in this project has been complementary to initiatives by other UN agencies or non-UN actors in the target countries?

C. Efficiency

8. From a project management perspective, how well did the arrangements in place support coordination, planning, delivery and monitoring of the project within the agreed scope and timeline? Are there any changes you would suggest to strengthen project management in future projects of this type?
9. According to you, were the financial and human resources allocated to the project used efficiently to deliver the planned outputs and outcomes? What improvements would you suggest for future projects?
10. Were there any external constraints that affected efficiency? How were these managed?
11. To what extent did the project leverage internal and external partnerships to deliver the project’s activities?

D. Effectiveness

12. Based on the activities carried out so far, to what extent do you think the project achieved or is likely to achieve all planned outputs and outcomes as well as the SDG targets? [The SDG targets are SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources)]
13. Is there evidence of any unintended outcomes, whether positive or negative?
14. What have been the key enabling or limiting factors with respect to achieving the planned results?
15. What changes would you propose to address the limiting factors or to improve the achievement of results for such projects?

E. Sustainability

16. What features were included in the design stage to ensure sustainability of the project beyond UNCTAD support?
17. What measures have been taken during implementation to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?
18. To what extent have project participants from each beneficiary country utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and SSP roadmaps/action plans developed and their implementation through the project's activities?
19. Have the SSP roadmaps/action plans developed for Morocco, Ghana, and Mauritius included financial strategies or identify future funding sources to implement the priority actions?
20. Would you have any recommendations to further enhance sustainability of such projects?

F. Mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues

21. To what extent were UN cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and the principles of leaving no one behind) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project? Can you identify specific results in this regard?
22. Would you have any suggestions on how to better integrate these cross-cutting issues for future projects?

Interview Questionnaire for Partners

A. Relevance

1. From your perspective, were the activities chosen and the deliverables appropriate for achieving the stated project objectives?
2. To what extent, did the project objectives and activities align with the needs and priorities of the beneficiary countries?
3. Looking back at the project design (objectives, activities, country selection), what aspects would you recommend revising or strengthening for future projects of this type?

B. Coherence

4. Can you tell me more about initiatives that your organization works on in the target countries? How was the work undertaken by UNCTAD complementary to the initiatives of your organization?
5. From your perspective, what is the main value that UNCTAD has added through this project? Are there any changes, initiatives or discussions that were triggered by the project that would likely not have happened without UNCTAD's involvement?

C. Efficiency

6. How did your organization work with UNCTAD to deliver the project's activities?
7. From your perspective, how well did the arrangements in place support coordination, planning, delivery and monitoring of the project within the agreed scope and timeline?
8. Were there any external constraints that affected efficiency? How were these managed?

D. Effectiveness

9. Based on your involvement in the project, to what extent do you think the project achieved or is likely to achieve all planned outputs and outcomes as well as the SDG targets? [The SDG targets are SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources)]
10. Is there evidence of any unintended outcomes, whether positive or negative?
11. What have been the key enabling or limiting factors with respect to achieving the planned results?
12. What changes would you propose to address the limiting factors or to improve the achievement of results?

E. Sustainability

13. What features were included in design and implementation to ensure sustainability of the project beyond UNCTAD support?
14. Would you have any recommendations to enhance sustainability of such projects?

G. Mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues

16. To what extent were UN cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and the principles of leaving no one behind) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project? Can you identify specific results in this regard?
17. Would you have any suggestions on how to better integrate these cross-cutting issues for future projects?

Interview Questionnaire for Beneficiaries

A. Relevance

1. To what extent did the project consider the needs and priorities of your country in the design stage?
2. Looking back at the project design (objectives, activities, country selection and assumptions), what aspects would you recommend revising or strengthening at the design stage for future projects of this type?

B. Coherence

3. From your perspective, what is the main value that UNCTAD has added through this project? Are there any changes, initiatives or discussions that were triggered by the project that would likely not have happened without UNCTAD's involvement?
4. Can you provide information on how the work undertaken in this project has been complementary to initiatives by other UN agencies or non-UN actors in your country?

C. Efficiency

5. From a project management perspective, how well did the arrangements in place support coordination, planning, delivery and monitoring of the project within the agreed scope and timeline? Are there any changes you would suggest to strengthen project management in future projects of this type?
6. Were there any external constraints that affected efficiency? How were these managed?
7. To what extent did the project leverage internal and external partnerships to deliver the project's activities?

D. Effectiveness

8. Based on the activities carried out so far, to what extent do you think the project achieved or is likely to achieve all planned outputs and outcomes, as well as the SDG targets? [The SDG targets are SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and

Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources)]

9. Is there evidence of any unintended outcomes, whether positive or negative?
10. What have been the key enabling or limiting factors with respect to achieving the planned results?
11. What changes would you propose to address the limiting factors or to improve the achievement of results for such projects?

E. Sustainability

12. What features were included in the design stage to ensure sustainability of the project beyond UNCTAD support?
13. What measures have been taken during implementation to promote the sustainability of the outcomes?
14. To what extent have you utilized, or intend to utilize, the knowledge and skills gained, and SSP roadmaps/action plans developed and their implementation through the project's activities?
15. Would you have any recommendations to further enhance the sustainability of such projects?

H. Mainstreaming of UN cross-cutting issues

16. To what extent were UN cross-cutting issues (such as gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and the principles of leaving no one behind) incorporated in the design and implementation of the project? Can you identify specific results in this regard?
17. Would you have any suggestions on how to better integrate these cross-cutting issues for future projects?

Annex 7: Online survey design

UNCTAD is carrying out an independent final evaluation of United Nations Development Account (UNDA) funded project: “Sustainable Smart Ports for African countries, including Small Island Developing States, to “recover better” from COVID-19”.

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide accountability to the management of UNCTAD, the Capacity Development Programme Management Office of UN DESA, project stakeholders, as well as UNCTAD's member States, with whom the final evaluation report will be shared, and to identify lessons learned for future interventions.

The survey is being administered by an external independent evaluator (Mr. Paul Baker, International Economics Consulting Ltd). All responses will be treated confidentially and analyzed in an anonymized manner. No individual or organisation will be identified in the evaluation report, and the information collected will be used solely for evaluation purposes.

Your role in relation to the project (select one):

- ☐ Project Staff
- ☐ UN Partner
- ☐ Non-UN Actor
- ☐ Beneficiary (e.g., Port Authority)

Country of residence / operation:

- ☐ Ghana
- ☐ Mauritius
- ☐ Morocco
- ☐ Other:

Q1. The project addressed the specific development needs and priorities of the national port sector.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ I do not know

Additional comments (if any):

Q2. The project complemented other UN or non-UN initiatives (e.g., blue economy strategies, digitalization) in the country or sector, rather than duplicating them.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments (if any):

Q3. What unique value did UNCTAD bring to the project?

Insert your answer

here:

Q4. The project was well managed including timely communication, keeping to deadlines and being relevant and effective?

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments / examples (if any):

Q5. The project successfully leveraged partnerships to deliver the planned activities.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments / examples (if any):

Q6. The project has enhanced understanding of the potential for the national port to become Sustainable Smart Ports, including the cross-sectoral policies and measures needed to support this transition (Project Outcome 1).

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments / examples (if any):

Q7. The project has strengthened the capacity of relevant institutions or policymakers to formulate and/or implement SSP roadmaps or action plans (Project Outcome 2).

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments / examples (if any):

Q8. UN cross-cutting issues, i.e. gender, environmental sustainability, disability inclusion and leaving no one behind, were incorporated into the project design and implementation.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments / examples (if any):

Q9. What measures have been built-in to promote the sustainability of the project beyond UNCTAD support?

Insert your answer

here:

Q10. The knowledge, skills or tools developed through the project (including SSP roadmaps or action plans) have been used, or are intended to be used, by relevant authorities.

☐ Strongly disagree

☐ Disagree

☐ Neither agree nor disagree

☐ Agree

☐ Strongly agree

☐ I do not know

Additional comments / examples (if any):

Q11. What changes or adjustments would you recommend for improving the achievement of results in future projects?

Insert your answer
here.....