



DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION:

Promoting Renewable Energy Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development.

Period: January 2015- December 2017

CASE STUDY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Final report

May 2018

Nadia BECHRAOUI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the final report of the assessment of the DA project on “Promoting Renewable Energy Investments for Climate Change Mitigation and Sustainable Development” implemented by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in collaboration with United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). In terms of budget, 41% of the \$ 632,000 of the project budget was directly managed by ECE.

This evaluation, commissioned by ESCWA to an independent international evaluator, covers the entire lifetime of the project from January 2015 to December 2017 and focuses on knowledge production, the engagement of stakeholders and partnerships and strategy (visioning and planning for policy influence).

The evaluation mainly assessed ESCWA’s performance across the three DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness and sustainability, based on a set of specific questions defined in the TORs intended to guide the evaluation exercise. ECE’s performance was reflected from the global perspective of the project and to the extent that it had an impact on the overall activities and member countries.

The findings are based on an in-depth review of all the literature related to the project, key informant interviews (13 respondents of which 4 females) over telephone/skype and face-to-face meetings in the three countries visited (Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia), and during the participation of the Evaluator to the project closing workshop that took place in Beirut 13-14 December 2017. Methods of analysis included a reconstructed theory of change to underline the project strategy to contribute to the transformational changes expected at various levels, ESCWA’s contribution analysis to the project objective and the use of evaluation questions. The draft report was submitted to ESCWA for review and feedback. Comments received were incorporated in this final version.

Conclusions

The project is found to be highly relevant to the needs of both the ESCWA and ECE regions, both at the regional and national levels. It fits into the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development as well as into ESCWA’s mandate to promote integrated natural resources management for sustainable development in its member countries and ECE’s mandate to improve access to affordable and clean energy for all and to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint of the energy sector in the region. It also builds upon work previously done by ESCWA in relation to energy issues.

The project effectiveness is found satisfactory because, at its completion date, most of its expected outputs had been produced: a series of high quality and of international-standard knowledge products and tools were made available to member countries, the project enabled stakeholders to learn from each other and to share knowledge within the region and with ECE countries, and feasibility studies were prepared for renewable energy projects. At the same time, the project business plans are not yet available nor their financing. Seeking financing for the projects was not part of the project design, however, the evaluator considers that it should have been addressed well in advance before the project closure to ensure sustainability of results. In addition, at the time of the project evaluation, no evidence was yet available of policies and measures having been adopted by any of the member countries concerned to improve opportunities for banks and commercial companies to invest in renewable energy projects through the development of new financing mechanisms.

The project has successfully planted the seeds for the promotion of renewable energy investments in both regions. It has borne fruit with regard to building the capacities of the various stakeholders

involved in the field of renewable energy but the second stage of its objective, that is “to attract investments in renewable energy projects”, is yet to be addressed.

The project tends to be of a technical nature, which could explain why its design appears to be gender and human-rights blind. Some attempts were made to select pilot initiatives that would benefit the population, and women in particular, and to include sex-disaggregated data on women participation in its progress reports.

The project is found to be moderately sustainable due to the weaknesses that remain at the policy level. These have yet to be addressed in some of the countries concerned and this is due, in particular, to the absence of follow-up in the implementation of the recommendations that emanated from the case studies and from the expert debates. Another factor, which is the matter of the financial constraints faced by the majority of the project developers, potentially preventing the implementation of the renewable energy projects, could be used as a showcase to convince the decision-makers to proceed with putting in place a renewable energy investment-friendly environment.

The project impact or likely impact is difficult to assess due to the fact that the project was only recently completed. Its main focus was on capacity building, which is, by definition, an intermediate state, necessary but not sufficient to produce impacts. In addition, the number of individuals involved were too limited to generate changes at either the national or the regional level. Had there been successful results in the field, these would have been helpful to advocate and push for policy decision-making, and to follow-up on the implementation of the recommendations from the policy case-studies produced during the project. In the case of Sudan, some early positive signs can already be observed where the project has generated successful and promising results. The impact will be possible if the dynamics generated by the project are allowed to carry on and if the remaining obstacles are removed.

Finally, a good project design and approach, a good ownership, especially by the project developers and good cooperation between the two commissions and with other regional partners have been factors that positively influenced the project performance. The development of more relevant indicators and a proper monitoring system would have helped to further strengthen the project management.

Key recommendations:

At the strategic level:

1. ESCWA should explore at the earliest possible opportunity alternative options for a follow up project to build on the momentum created by the project through the high-quality tools and technical support provided to the different member countries to develop policies that promote renewable energy investments and make it possible to achieve the remaining tasks (such as the verification and confirmation of the technical details of the feasibility studies for the renewable energy projects, and the preparation of the business plans and of the grant applications) and to consolidate the results that have already been achieved (follow-up on the implementation of the policy recommendations, support for the identification and mobilization of sources of funding, and the training of trainers at the institutional level to build the necessary critical mass which will generate changes in terms of capacity building at the country level).
2. Given the heterogeneity of the Arab region in terms of level of development and resources endowment of its member countries, ESCWA should continue, for its future projects, to adopt the approach followed by the project that is to consider the various situations of the countries

according to the sub-regions they belong to in order to optimize its support and to maximize its contribution to an expected impact.

3. In order to maximize its impact in terms of capacity building, ESCWA should opt for the training of trainers with a focus on institutional rather than individual capacity building for a higher critical mass or should build partnerships with relevant dedicated training institutions or academics who will take over.
4. Thanks to its excellent convening power, ESCWA should offer its support to countries with sourcing financing opportunities, and international funding in particular, by helping them to become familiar with international funding procedures and helping them to build the skills required for funding applications.

At the operational level:

1. In addition to the logframe, ESCWA could use the Theory of Change approach in the design of its future projects to enable to define more realistic expected accomplishments and better adapted SMART indicators (both outcome and performance indicators).
2. A result-based M&E system involving the national counterparts who could do the follow-up on the ground should be set-up, to be used as an effective management tool that would enable the organization to better measure its actual impact.
3. The project team should raise the profile and further disseminate the concepts of gender equality and human rights during planning and implementing future projects and to aim further than simply reporting sex-disaggregated data.
4. Means of fostering the sustainability of project achievements should be included in an exit strategy, available before project's completion, and ready for taking over by another project or partner.

Lessons learnt:

- Pilot initiatives on the ground play a critical role towards reinforcing the policy dimension of a project which is why their implementation should be secured well in advance, with adequate funding, for an increased effectiveness.
- Addressing development issues of member countries by sub-regions in a region that comprises heterogeneous countries in terms of level of development and capacities is a good means to increase effectiveness and impact of the organization and the ownership by the countries which feel more concerned.
- Lessons drawn from past projects (ex: the DA project on Energy Efficiency) give the opportunity to highlight the key success factors and the constraints and limitations that can emerge from them and thus improve the conditions of effectiveness of future projects.