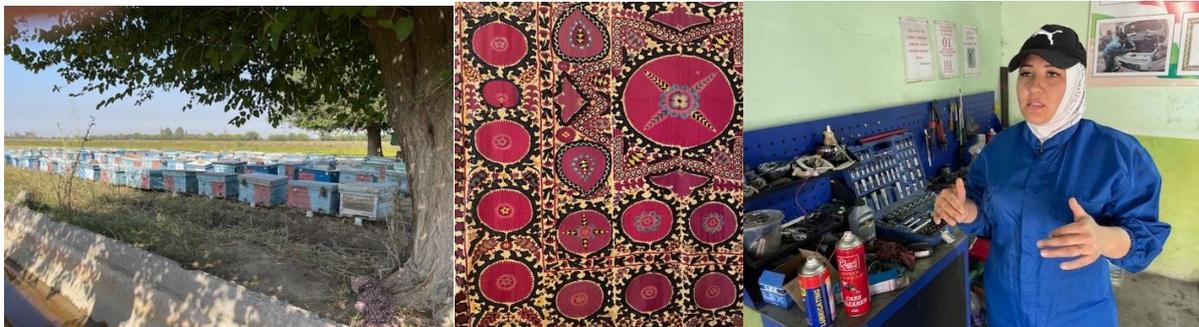**Final Report**

Evaluation of the Project "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley"

Tajikistan: Sughd Region, Districts: Khujand, *Buston, Guliston, B.Gafurov, Dj.Rasulov, Spitamen, Isfara, Devashtich, Konibodom, Asht, and Maschoh*.

December, 2023

Prepared by Alexander GRUSHEVSKIY and Jovidsho JURAEV

Project Information	
Project title	"Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" (RTC)
Atlas ID	123995
Corporate outcome and output	**Outcome 2.** People in Tajikistan benefit from equitable and sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment, stable energy supply, improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and more favourable business environment especially for entrepreneurs and farmers. **CPD Output 2.1.** National and sub-national systems and institutions enabled to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and employment and livelihood intensive.
Country	Tajikistan
Region	Sughd Region
Date project document signed	Dec. 17, 2020

Project dates	Start	End
	Jan. 01, 2021	December 31, 2023

Total committed budget	Total: 2,195,800.00 USD
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	1,439,955.83
Funding source	TFD: 2,000,000 USD UNDP Contribution: 275,000 USD Government, private sector and community contribution (in-kind and in-cash): 195,800 USD
Implementing party	United Nations Development Programme (DIM)

SDGs supported by the Project: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 17

Evaluation information	
Evaluation type (project/outcome/ thematic/country programme, etc.)	Project Evaluation
Final/midterm review/ other	Final

Period under evaluation	Start	End
	Jan. 01, 2021	November 30, 2023

Evaluators	Independent Consultants	
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Evaluation dates	Start	Completion
	Sep. 20, 2023	November 30, 2023

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APR	Annual progress report
AWP	Annual work plan
BAIC	Business Advisory and Information Center
B2B	Business to Business
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Region
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CWFA	Committee for Women and Family Affairs
CYSA	Governmental Committee on Youth and Sport Affairs
DIM	Direct implementation modality
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EBSP	Executive Body of State Power
EQ	Evaluation Question
FDE	State Agency "Formation and Development of Entrepreneurship"
FE	Final Evaluation
FSSC	Food Safety System Certification
GI	Group interview
GNI	Gross National Income
GoT	Government of Tajikistan
G2B	Government to Business
HQ	Headquarters
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	Inception Report
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KI	Key informant
KII	Key informant interview
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LOA	Letter of Agreement
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEDT	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
MIP	Multiannual Indicative Programme
MoLME	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment
MoM	Minutes of meeting
MT	Metric ton
MtDP	Mid-term Development Program
MSME	Micro, small and medium enterprises
NDS	National Development Strategy
PLIV	People living with HIV/AIDS
PM	Project Manager
PMT	Project management team
PO	Public Organization
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWD	Persons with disabilities
RTC	Project: "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley"

RTF	RF-UNDP Trust Fund for Development
SD	Secondary data
SED	Sustainable Economic Development Cluster
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and medium enterprises
TA	Technical assistance
TEI	Team Europe Initiatives
TFD	Trust for Development
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNSF	United Nations Strategic Framework
USAID	United State Agency for International Development
VTI	Vocational Training Institution
WB	World Bank

Executive Summary

The project "*Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley*" (further – *RTC, project*) was launched in January 2021 with an overall goal to mitigate anticipated adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable social groups in Tajikistan, including women, youth and returned migrants, and to support socio-economic development in the Sughd region through employable skills development, support to micro-, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), public sector institutions, and regional trade promotion. The following outcomes and outputs were envisaged to be achieved by the project:

Outcome: Regional and local governments, MSMEs and people effectively adapt their business and livelihoods strategies to withstand the social and economic challenges triggered by COVID-19 and other economic risks.
Output 1: Enhanced opportunities to reskill and upskill targeting unemployed young women and men, returned migrants and people from vulnerable households;
Output 2: Innovations for stimulation of entrepreneurship and income-generation for vulnerable communities in bordering areas;
Output 3: Promoting startup platforms and development of trade potential across Ferghana Valley.

Initiated in 2021, the project was implemented in 2022 – 2023 – this substantial delay was related mainly to the pandemic mitigation measures limiting people's movement and contacts in Tajikistan in 2021. RTC was implemented in 11 administrative districts and cities of the Sughd region in close coordination with the relevant national Ministries, specifically, with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment, as well as with Sughd Regional Administration and administrations in the 10 target districts.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the results of the RTC project, including its implementation approaches, progress made, and challenges encountered, to identify and document the lessons learnt, and make recommendations for future course of actions.

The evaluation supposed to be final (RTC planned to be completed in June 2023) but the project activities were extended to December 31, 2023, so some RTC activities were still under implementation during work of the evaluation team. In the TOR, the scope of evaluation was identified as follows:

- The full implementation period (January 2022 – June 2023; extended to the end of 2023);
- All the activities, outputs, and contribution to the outcome foreseen by the Project documents;
- The key stakeholders and direct beneficiaries – at the national and subnational levels (in the capital city – Dushanbe and in the Sughd region and its assisted districts).

The evaluation was organized around 27 evaluation questions targeting 7 OECD DAC criteria, namely *relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability, impact, and human rights, including gender equality and social inclusion*.

The evaluation consisted of three major stages:
- Desk study of RTC documents and progress reports, and of secondary data – national and UNDP strategies and policies, as well as assessments and analytical reports of key international organizations;
- In-country data collection, and
- Analysis of collected information and reporting.

Methodologically, the study has non-experimental descriptive design and applied mixed method of data collection. The evaluators applied the following approaches to data collection:
- Desk review of the project documents and secondary sources
- Individual and group semi-structured interviews conducted in person with:
  - Key informants (KI), representing Project's stakeholders and direct beneficiaries, including representatives of governmental Agencies, subnational authorities, MSME supporting organizations, subject matter experts, private sector organizations, assisted MSMEs, etc.;
  - Experts/civil society organizations focused on inclusive growth, support to business, involved into skills development, providing support to the vulnerable social groups, women and youth empowerment in Tajikistan, and
  - Representatives of UNDP Country Team and Project Management Team (PMT).
- On-site observations to verify data collected during desk review and to examine achieved results at the local level, to assess sustainability of provided technical assistance, and to collect evidence of contribution to the outputs and outcome; and
- Mini survey of two groups of RTC beneficiaries: trainees – youth graduated from the Project capacity building program and supported further with provision of equipment allowing to launch productive activity; and SMEs (women- and youth-owned) benefitted from the affordable credit to expand existing business activity.

All semi-structured interviews and group discussions were organized around detailed questionnaires/data collection tools, which correspond to the evaluation questions. Each questionnaire, designed for the specific groups of interviewees, included both common questions, as well as questions specific to each group. Such an approach allowed evaluators to not only obtain a full range of opinions regarding the project's implementation and its results but also ensured that data are comparable across all the groups of respondents. A specific short questionnaire was designed for a mini survey conducted via mobile network.

For the sampling, the study used non-probability, purposive, maximum variation sampling technique to ensure wider representation of project beneficiaries and a stronger validity of study findings. Specifically, the following criteria have been applied to select study participants:

- Diversity of study participants by type of assistance provided (training, coaching, support to start-ups, etc.)
- Diversity of study participants by locations of the technical assistance provided, and
- Diversity by gender.

The respondents for interviews, were preliminarily identified based on analysis of the project's documents and additional consultations with key stakeholders and partners. Evaluators also conducted interviews with the available PMT members, experts and organizations, which participated in the project's implementation, and representatives of key national and subnational stakeholders.

Overall, the evaluators interviewed 51 KIs in the capital city – Dushanbe and in the target Sughd region. For the mini-survey, the evaluation team approached 30 respondents and received 27 filled questionnaires (with the response rate equal to 90%).

The evaluators applied key methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis to process the collected data, to answer the evaluation questions, to identify contributions to the anticipated outcomes, to formulate findings, conclusions and recommendations in line with TOR requirements.

At the analysis stage, the evaluators considered the cross-cutting issues such as: social inclusion, gender equality, youth empowerment.

To ensure a sufficient level of validity and reliability, the evaluators applied data triangulation (using Project documents, secondary data sources and primary interviews) and substantiation (verifying and confirming findings with respondents with different backgrounds, qualifications, experience, and knowledge). All these mutually complementary data collection and analysis methods, while used together, allowed to produce specific and concise evaluation findings and recommendations based on facts, evidence, and data, which are presented in this evaluation Final Report.

The key *findings and conclusions*, organized along OECD-DAC criteria, may be summarized as follows:

1. *Relevance:* According to analysis of the project documents triangulated with data collected during the interviews, the objectives of project activities were in line with national development priorities and UNPD development approaches and consistent with the needs of the beneficiaries. Through all its activities, the RTC was specifically focused on the needs of vulnerable social groups, enhancing gender equality, women's and youth empowerment, and social inclusion. Although the real impacts of COVID-19 pandemic were less dramatic than anticipated during elaboration of the RTC design, the project addressed new needs, which emerged during the pandemic, mainly related to the return of labour migrants.

2. *Effectiveness:* Despite the delay with scaling up the project's implementation, RTC may be considered as an effective intervention, which addressed empowerment of vulnerable social groups, provided needed support through skills development, transfer of equipment, facilitation of access to financing, and elaborated and tested approaches and modalities, applicable for the future interventions. RTC extension till December 31, 2023 provided additional opportunity to increase project's effectiveness. Strong local presence, inclusion of stakeholders in the activities' design, pro-active two ways communication during RTC implementation with the stakeholders and beneficiaries contributed to the overall effectiveness of the project. Close cooperation of the RTC Project Management Team (PMT) with national and local "agents of change" from public, civic and private sectors also supported RTC effectiveness. Effectiveness of the RTC project was hindered to a certain degree by the COVID-19 lockdown measures; difficulties with the selection of personnel for the RTC implementation, and łack of qualified personnel to timely complete required procurement procedures. Bigger attention paid to the adoption by the beneficiaries of decent job principles and of environmental, health and safety (EHS) standards could increase further RTC effectiveness.

3. *Coherence:* RTC may be considered coherent with other donor-funded initiatives targeting socio-economic development at the subnational level and cross-border cooperation, including women and youth empowerment and social and economic inclusion. The project was built upon approaches and results of the UNDP cross-border "Aid-for Trade" programme, and was in coherence with such UNDP initiatives as: "Youth for Business and Innovation in Tajikistan", "Youth Empowerment through Skills Development and Promotion of Innovations", "Improved Access to Public Services", "Support to COVID-19 Rapid Response Initiatives", "Health System Strengthening", "Promotion of Digital Solutions, Low-touch Technologies and Skills for Adaptation to COVID-19 Crisis and More Sustainable Livelihood", etc. The evaluators also

found evidence of coherence with initiatives funded by other donors, such as USAID, GIZ and others addressing similar set of issues.

4. *Efficiency:* According to the collected data, RTC was implemented in a cost-effective way applying efficient modalities, which foresaw involvement of mainly national experts, thorough assessment of local needs and their prioritization with consideration of budget limitations, and selection of beneficiaries in a competitive manner. Efficiency of the project was further supported by a strong RTC presence on the sub-national level, and well-established working relations with representatives of public, private and civic sectors in the Sughd region.

5. *Sustainability:* RTC sustainability perspectives were supported by a series of PMT approaches, including relevant selection of the target beneficiaries; detailed identification of the beneficiaries' needs and feasibility analysis of the proposed technical solutions; incorporation into RTC activities' design and implementation of representative of the Government of Tajikistan (GoT) at various levels and private sector, such as local banks and microfinance institutions. Working contacts of the project beneficiaries with local consultants and NGOs established during the RTC implementation also contributed to the sustainability of the project's results. At the same time, their sustainability may be undermined by insufficient internal resources and skills, as well as by high personnel turnover, including labour and family emigration. The sustainability of the RTC results also may be negatively affected by the insufficient attention paid by the assisted micro and small enterprises to the environmental, health and safety (EHS) aspects of operations, as well as to the decent work principles, resulting in a high personnel turnover and therefore in deterioration of quality of labour.

6. *Impact:* In the opinion of Evaluation Team (ET), the impact of RTC assistance may be assessed over a certain time after the project completion. However, during the field-stage of data collection, the evaluators collected a proof of economic and social change already occurring at the assisted organizations, MSMEs and households, including improvement of social conditions of prime target groups of the RTC – women, youth and returned migrants, due to the increased productivity, decreased production costs, creation of additional jobs and strengthening of social capital.

7. *Human rights, gender equality and social inclusion:* Conducted evaluation proved that the project was designed and implemented with a special focus on vulnerable groups – mainly women, youth, and returned migrants in the target districts of Sughd region and on mainstreaming human rights, gender equality and social inclusion at the national and subnational levels. The collected data confirmed already noticeable contribution of the RTC to the improved human and social capital of the project's beneficiaries, including improved social status of vulnerable groups, increased employment, generation of income.

Based upon analysis of the data, collected during the RTC evaluation, the ET formulated the following *recommendations*:

1. When implementing sub-national/local area development projects, UNDP should ensure a strong local presence for effective, two-way communication with sub-national stakeholders and beneficiaries, and a proactive monitoring of activities under implementation.

2. To enhance an effective implementation of the planned activities and to increase sustainability of their results, project design should foresee an active involvement of the GoT at all relevant levels into programmatic activities' planning and implementation, with a special

attention paid to support from the public and private sectors to be provided after the completion of UNDP assistance.

3. For the future interventions addressing vulnerable social groups, side by side with women and youth, other groups may be considered, including refugees, PWD, PLHIV and others, depending on the pre-project needs assessment, while the indicators need to be disaggregated accordingly.

4. To support institutional memory strengthening at the assisted entities, and to ensure sustainability of results, the project's design should address an issue of personnel turnover through institutionalization of the recommended change: assistance should include development and adoption of relevant policies, manuals, guidance, and "how to" instructions to ensure continuity of capacity building at the target organizations.

5. To ensure relevant targeting of the activity's beneficiaries, gender equality and inclusion, as well as to speed up the transfer of technical assistance to them, it is advisable to use existing business associations and key civic sector organizations with proved record of transparent and efficient cooperation with UNDP and donor-funded initiatives in Tajikistan as one of the key channels of the TA provision.

6. To increase effectiveness of programming and to support sustainability of results, the project's design should consider further provision of assistance to beneficiaries using corporately available tools, including transfer of equipment, as well as facilitation of access to subsidized loans, followed with additional support in a form of coaching, technical advice, linkages to the markets, etc. This approach is specifically recommended to support of women, youth, and vulnerable social groups.

7. For activities targeting business and trade development, the designers of the project should foresee an active involvement of international and regional experts to support familiarization of the stakeholders and target beneficiaries with the best international practice of doing business, required standards and procedures, and wider international opportunities for access to financing and markets.

8. In cases, when project activities include a transfer of equipment to target beneficiaries, the project workplan should reserve sufficient time and resources to conduct a proper due diligence of its anticipated use; to analyze an ownership structure to ensure compliance with the beneficiary selection criteria, and to foresee time and resources to carry on monitoring during the implementation, including a post-transfer inspection to verify results of the due diligence and to identify emerging need for further assistance.

9. All the projects targeting development of production base and creation of new jobs, as well as initiatives supporting capacity-strengthening of VTI and professional training institutions, should foresee activities promoting principles of decent job and environmental sustainability; relevant assessments are needed at the project inception stage in line with UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure.

10. In case of the project extension, to continue monitoring of the use of transferred equipment with the purpose to address any issues outstanding. As part of the exit strategy the RTC should implement a "road map" for the post-assistance stage, with a focus on provision of additional support in form of equipment and tools to the graduates of capacity building activities to reach relevant indicators, identified in the Project Document.

Introduction

The project **"*Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley*"** (later – Project, RTC) was designed and launched with the aim to strengthen livelihood and resilience potential of people living in the Tajik part of Ferghana Valley and to contribute to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact. It was also supposed to support a social cohesion in the cross-border areas. The project was implemented by UNDP in direct modality (DIM) in cooperation with the Government of Tajikistan (both at the national and sub-national levels), private sector, civil society organizations (CSO's) and development partners.

The key Development Goal of the project was identified as follows: "to restore and improve livelihoods, promote productive and decent employment and increase income generation opportunities through innovation for sustainable enterprise development and cross-border trade promotion in Ferghana Valley in Tajikistan".1 It was anticipated that the RTC should reinforce and complement the results of the past and on-going projects of the UNDP Sustainable Economic Development Cluster in communities' empowerment and inclusive economic development. To meet national development goals, UNDAF objectives, and to support localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the RTC paid special attention to the gender and youth aspects of programmatic activities targeting side by side with increased employment and generated income, an inclusive growth promotion. The project was expected to lessen gender imbalances, improve women's and youth employment and income generation opportunity, enhance skills of the target groups and empower them economically and socially.

Project Document was signed on December 17, 2020, the RTC launched in January 2022 and planned to be completed on June 30, 2023 but was extended till the end of December 2023.

In line with UNPD policies, this evaluation was conducted with overarching purpose to assess the achieved results of the project, its implementation modalities, progress made, project's strengths and challenges encountered; to identify and document the lessons learnt and good practices, and make specific recommendations for future course of actions.

The purpose of evaluation is two-fold: 1/ to inform project's stakeholders about project's results with consideration of specific objectives mentioned in the TOR, and 2/ to support informed decision-making for UNDP programming in the future.

The primary audience of the evaluation findings include:

UNDP i*nternal stakeholders:*

- Programme/project managers and technical personnel at UNDP - Tajikistan;
- Programme and technical staff in UNDP Istanbul Regional Center; and
- UNDP Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Team.

External Stakeholders include*:*

- Partner Ministries and Agencies at the Government of Tajikistan, implementing partners, CSOs and contractors, and local actors in countries whose work intersects with UNDP economic development/local area-based development programming; and

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1 / Annual Work Plan for 2023. Tajikistan, UNDP, p. 1

- RTC Donor – The RF-UNDP Trust for Development.

Following the UNDP evaluation guidelines, this final report covers the following sections:
- Description of the Intervention
- Evaluation Scope and Objectives
- Evaluation Approaches and Methods
- Findings
- Conclusions
- Recommendation
- Lessons Learned.

The narrative part of evaluation is supported with additional materials describing approaches to- and implementation of the RTC evaluation (for more details, please refer to the *Annexes*).

Description of the Intervention

Building on the national development goals and strategic priorities of UNDP in Tajikistan, the RTC project was designed and launched with the aim to provide response to the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic through the strengthening of livelihoods and resilience potential of people living in the Tajik part of Ferghana Valley, and through support to a social cohesion in the cross-border areas. Therefore, the key Development Goal of the project was identified as follows: "to restore and improve livelihoods, promote productive and decent employment and increase income generation opportunities through innovation for sustainable enterprise development and cross-border trade promotion in Ferghana Valley in Tajikistan".[2] It was anticipated that the RTC should reinforce and complement the results of the past and on-going projects of the UNDP Sustainable Economic Development Cluster (SED) in communities' empowerment and inclusive economic development. For these purposes, RTC paid a special attention to the needs of women, youth and vulnerable social groups including returned migrants.

In the Project Document, logic of assistance is formulated as follows:

Box 1. Theory of Change

"If vulnerable people and communities affected by COVID-19 pandemic get additional opportunities to maintain their livelihoods and employment, **then**, they will be more resilient to withstand the economic and social impact of COVID-19 pandemic, will be able to maintain decent living standards for their household members and remain resistant to social tensions triggered by difficult geo-political and economic context.

And

If small and medium enterprises, including farmers and cross-border traders, get business stimulation support, access to affordable finance and assistance for introducing innovative and greener ways of doing businesses, **then** they will be enabled to uphold their business, retain employees, adapt to new market demands and potentially create new job opportunities".[3]

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[2] Annual Work Plan for 2023. Tajikistan, UNDP, p. 1

[3] Project Document "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley", UNDP-TJ, July 2019, p. 11

Within the RTC framework, the following areas of technical assistance (TA) were addressed:
- Promotion of employment and income generation for more productive activities and improved standards of living and livelihood;
- Strengthening potential of educational institutions in the assisted geographic area, including Vocational Training Institutions (VTI);
- Enhancing capacities of MSMEs in business planning, operations, marketing and sales;
- Facilitation of MSMEs' access to finance;
- Optimization of efficiency and connectivity of business processes in public institutions in Sughd region.

The project specifically targeted the following groups in Sughd province, which live and work in rural districts bordering with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan [4], considering their vulnerability to unemployment, social exclusion, and social tensions in border areas**:**

1) Female and male youth aged between 15 and 30 through employment promotion services, on-the-job training, apprenticeships and skill training opportunities leading to sustainable employment;
2) Female and male citizens, current job seekers, members of rural communities living in economically disadvantaged areas, members of households affected by COVID-19 by the way of assisting them in better accessing productive employment, decent work and income opportunities and through minimization of their unemployment insecurities, income inequality and social exclusion;
3) Women and men who own and/or manage MSMEs by increasing income, employment and participation in the selected value chains;
4) Women and men, including youth, who work in MSMEs as paid or unpaid employees or workers that benefit from value chain interventions;
5) Returned migrants lacking job opportunities in their locations;
6) SMEs, private entrepreneurs, farmers and merchants involved in agricultural value chains and trade at the local and regional level, whose businesses were affected by COVID-19 pandemic and its spill-over effects, and who could benefit from more effective cross-border trade cooperation.
7) Local government authorities involved in local economic development planning and managing employment and economic development processes.

In the assessment of evaluators, the structure of RTC interventions is comprehensive and responded to the purpose and objectives reflected in the key Project documents. It determined a system of outputs to be achieved as a result of activities implemented with over-arching goal to contribute to the Project outcome. It effectively linked together inputs (activities), outputs and outcome; each element of this system had different time horizon and anticipated impact.

Cross-cutting issues of human rights, gender and social inclusion were adequately considered in the project design. Gender equality, women and youth empowerment, and needs of vulnerable social groups, including returned labour migrants were incorporated into RCT programmatic activities with an aim to lessen gender and social imbalances, improve employment and income generation opportunity for vulnerable populations, enhance their skills and empower them economically and socially.

The activities implemented by the project were in line with the national development priorities, relevant sectoral national policies, strategies and the National Gender Plan (2021-2025). The *National*

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[4] 10 districts - *Buston, Guliston, B.Gafurov, Dj.Rasulov, Spitamen, Isfara, Devashtich, Konibodom, Asht, and Maschoh, and Khujand city*

Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan (NDS) covering 2016-2030, has the major goal of improving living standards through sustainable economic development based on the achievement of a number of key objectives, including food security and access to good quality nutrition, as well as productive employment. The NDS is implemented through three Medium-term Development Programmes (MtDP), the last two of which - MtDP 2021-2025 and MtDP 2026- 2030 emphasize the need of effective use of national human capital, diversification of the economy and strengthening of the country's institutions. [5]

The RTC also supported localization of a series of SDGs, namely: 1 (*No Poverty*), 2 (*No Hunger*), 3 (*Good Health and well-Being*), 4 (*Quality Education*), 5 (*Gender equality*), 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*), 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*), and 17 (*Partnership for Goals*).

Evaluation Scope and Objectives

The *purpose* of this evaluation was two-fold:

1/ to inform project's stakeholders about project's results with consideration of specific objectives mentioned in the TOR, and

2/ to support informed decision-making for UNDP programming in the future.

The *scope* of this Final Evaluation is identified as follows:

- The full implementation period – from January 2022 till June 2023 with consideration of extension till December 31, 2023;
- All the activities, outputs, and contribution to the outcome foreseen by the Project documents;
- The key stakeholders and direct beneficiaries – at the national and subnational levels (in the capital city – Dushanbe and in the Sughd region and its assisted districts).

The **specific objectives of evaluation** are formulated in the Terms of Reference (TOR) in the following way:

- To assess the effectiveness of the livelihood enhancement support provided to people living in the Tajik part of Ferghana Valley, contributing to recovery from COVID-19 impact and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas is to strengthen livelihood and resilience potential

- To assess the effectiveness of technical support provided by project to improve the local productive infrastructure and services that improve the living standards of population, and benefit the target communities in terms of decent jobs and income-generation opportunities

- To access the effectiveness of promotion digital solutions for stronger engagement and collaboration of public and private sectors and strengthening efficiency of public services to local communities.

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[5] Republic of Tajikistan. Multi-annual Indicative Programme 2021-2027. EU-Tajikistan Partnership. 2021 https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9315-tajikistan-annex_en.pdf

- To assess the usefulness of the socio-technical support provided by the project, the effectiveness of provision with the employment opportunities in the target districts of Sughd region targeting to enable the unemployed population and job seekers to strengthen their economic livelihoods opportunities through additional knowledge, skills and jobs created.
- To assess the effectiveness of the livelihood support provided to vulnerable people to respond to the impact of COVID-19 (in the framework of project-supported initiatives).
- To assess engagement of the national government stakeholders and local authorities in the project, and their understanding, including financial and other commitment for sustainability of activities.
- To assess effectiveness of cooperation with and engagement of private sector and civil society organizations in the project results and their role in sustainability of the project results.
- To assess the effectiveness of the action taken for creating new niches for income generation, employment and self-employment for farmers and vulnerable rural communities.
- To evaluate the project activities on local development planning and its effectiveness.
- To assess effectiveness of gender-sensitive approach applied by the project to reach out to most vulnerable groups of women and girls.
- To assess effectiveness of engagement of experts, intuitions, and partner organizations in implementation of the project.
- To propose concrete recommendations to UNDP on continuation of activities on livelihood improvement and area-based development.
- To document best practices as a results of project implementation process.

The evaluation was organized around **seven evaluation criteria** and twenty eight **evaluation questions**, formulated in the TOR for this assignment (*please see Annex 1*). The evaluation criteria suggested in the TOR are in compliance with the OECD-DAC evaluation approach and current UNDP evaluation policy. The evaluation questions effectively support the data collection and analysis, and allow to meet objectives of evaluation, and to formulate findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Some of the evaluation questions from the TOR were reviewed during the inception stage to better reflect specific development conditions (for more details about evaluation questions revision, please refer to the Inception Report for this assignment); the edited version of them is presented in the Box 2 below:

Box 2. Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Relevance	- To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs? - How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context? To what extent the project was able to address the needs of the target groups in the changed context? - To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemics?
Effectiveness	- Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas? - To what extend the management structure of the project was effective and operational? Could a work-flow be optimized? What may be changed to increase effectiveness?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
	• What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?
	• Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?
	• In which areas has the project had greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?
	• What were the reasons for implementation delays (if any) and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate them?
	• How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?
	• What were the main contributing and hindering factors to the achievement of results?
	• How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?
Coherence	• What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?
	• To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?
	• External coherence: To what extent is the intervention consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?
Efficiency	• To what extend the RTC implementation strategy and its implementation were efficient in generating the expected results? How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve planned results in a timely manner?
	• Which factors supported the cost-effectiveness of RTC interventions (*RTC management structure, implementation modality, cooperation with national counterparts, etc.*)?
	• Which changes (in planning, coordination, implementation modalities, partnerships, selection of locations etc.) could lead to the higher cost-effectiveness in in the future.
Sustainability	• Which RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?
	• What are the approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?
	• Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences?
	• What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?
Impact	• What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement?
Human rights/Gender equality/	• In what specific ways were women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations included in the RTC programming? What are the best practices for targeting and engaging women,

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Social inclusion	youth, and other underrepresented populations within the context of future shocks and stresses?
	• What is the evidence of RTC's achieved results in gender equality and inclusiveness of socially vulnerable populations? What did work well and what challenges did emerge?
	• What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?
	• What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Evaluation Approaches and Methods

Overall, the study applied non-experimental, descriptive design and used both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The evaluation of the RTC Project was implemented in line with requirements formulated in the TOR, in full conformity with the principles outlined in the UNEG "Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation", and in line with the "OECD/DAC (2010) Quality Standards for Development Evaluation".

It includes the following phases:

1. Desk Study and Inception Report drafting, including detailed Work Plan development;
2. In-country data collection, and
3. Exit presentation preparation and drafting of the Evaluation Report.

At each of these phases the evaluators communicated with the UNDP country team, and addressed all the comments and suggestions to the deliverables.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection started at the *Inception phase*, when the project documents were identified and reviewed with consideration of availability and quality of data, as well as sufficiency of information to evaluate the project (Theory of Change, Logic Model, performance management framework and related documentation). Institutional and general development context also were considered as part of the Inception Report drafting, based upon project documents and analysis of the secondary sources (*please refer to Annex 4*).

In preparation to the in-country data collection, evaluators in cooperation with the PMT conducted stakeholders and beneficiaries mapping and planned one by one and group interviews with representatives of key groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries using mainly purposeful approach (for more details please *see Annex 2-a*).

Overall, the evaluators applied the *following approaches to data collection*:
- Desk review of the project documents and external documents, including relevant national development policy and strategy documents, as well as secondary data and background documents describing overall development context, development challenges and priorities.
- Individual and group semi-structured interviews conducted in person or remotely with:
  - ○ KIs, representing Project's stakeholders and direct beneficiaries, including representatives of governmental Agencies, subnational authorities, MSME supporting

organizations, subject matter experts, private sector organizations, assisted MSMEs, etc.;

- o Experts/civil society organizations focusing on inclusive growth, support to business, involved into skills development, providing support to the vulnerable social groups, women and youth empowerment in Tajikistan, and
- o Representatives of UNDT Country Team and Project Management Team (PMT).

- On-site observations to verify data collected during desk review and to examine achieved results at the local level, to assess sustainability of provided technical assistance, and to collect evidence of contribution to the outputs and outcome; and
- Mini survey of two groups of RTC beneficiaries: trainees – youth graduated from the Project capacity building program and supported further with equipment and tools allowing to launch productive activity; and SMEs (women and youth owned) benefitted from the affordable credit to expand existing business activity.

All semi-structured interviews and group discussions were organized around **detailed questionnaires/data collection instruments (***please see Annex 2-c),* which correspond to the evaluation questions/sub-questions. Each questionnaire, designed for the specific groups of interviewees, included both common questions, as well as questions specific for each group. Such approach allowed evaluators to obtain a full range of opinions regarding the project's implementation and its results but also ensured that data are comparable across all the groups of respondents.

All the interviews and group interviews were conducted in-person.

To enrich further the collected data, evaluators used on-line / telephone mini-survey targeting larger number of RTC beneficiaries (*please refer to the Annex 2-d* containing mini-survey questionnaire). Overall, 30 beneficiaries were approached by the evaluation team (15 - for trainees supported with grants and 15 - for SMEs received affordable credit). 27 responses were collected (12 trainees, including 6 females; and 15 SMEs, including 7 females owned, total 48% of female respondents), with overall response rate 90%. The generalized approach to the data collection is reflected in the Evaluation Matrix presented in *Annex 2-b.*

The evaluators used mostly purposeful approach but also "snowball" technique for sampling of KIs. The respondents for interviews, were preliminarily identified based on analysis of the project's documents and additional consultations with key stakeholders and partners. Data collection in Dushanbe and Khujand was combined with a series of interviews in the assisted rural districts of Sughd province. Evaluators also conducted interviews with the available PMT members, experts and organizations, which participated in the project's implementation, and representatives of key national and subnational stakeholders (for the list of conducted interviews/group interviews please refer to *Annex 3-a*)

Data Analysis

The data analysis took place on a continuous basis, during all the phases of evaluation. The evaluators applied key methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis to process the collected data, to answer the evaluation questions, to identify contributions to the anticipated outcomes, to formulate findings, conclusions and recommendations, and to draft lessons learned in line with TOR requirements. The key data analysis methods included:

- Theory of change;
- Contribution analysis;

- Direct attribution, and when the measurement of direct attribution is not possible - casual linkages;
- Standard statistical analysis package (frequency distribution, measuring central tendency and variations, correlation analysis);
- Various types of qualitative analysis of narrative information, including documentation, categorization, examining relationships and displaying data, authentication conclusions;
- Gap analysis;
- Process mapping and visualization.

At the data collection and analysis stages, the evaluators considered the cross-cutting issues such as: social inclusion, gender equality, youth empowerment.

To ensure a sufficient level of validity and reliability, the evaluators applied data triangulation (using Project documents, secondary data sources and primary interviews) and substantiation (verifying and confirming findings with respondents with different backgrounds, qualifications, experience, and knowledge).

All these mutually complementary data collection and analysis methods, while used together, allowed to produce specific and concise evaluation findings and recommendations based on facts, evidence, and data, which are presented below.

Major Risks and Limitations

The following *risks* and possible mitigation measure were considered by evaluation team to obtain reliable evaluation results:

1. ***Potential limited availability of direct beneficiaries for interviews and group discussion*** due to the high personnel turnover in the governmental organizations and difficulties in reaching remote geographic locations during limited in time in-country mission.

This risk was mitigated during in-country mission planning stage to ensure availability of key groups of stakeholders involved into RTC implementation.

2. ***Recall bias –*** some stakeholders may not recall in full details the project's contribution.

This risk was mitigated in direct communication with representatives of stakeholders by clarifying the list of activities conducted by RTC and by a use of complementary data collection tools.

3. ***Resistance to evaluation*** - reluctance of key informants to have one-to-one interviews and/or participate in group discussions.

To mitigate this resistance, the evaluation team shared in advance the evaluation questionnaire with the potential respondents; explained and confirmed the principle of confidentiality, and followed clauses in the consent form - an introductory part of each data collection protocol.

4. **External validity (generalizability) of findings –** usually associated with studies that have non-representative sampling, so the findings can hardly be generalized to entire study population.

To strengthen external validity, the study used triangulation principle and purposive, maximum variation sampling technique that ensures participation of those who have desired characteristics and better represented the entire population.

Evaluation ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG "Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation". The basic principles of respect, confidentiality and non-discrimination of study participants were applied. The evaluation team made every effort to assure that cultural norms and codes of conduct are respected throughout the process. The team made sure that respondents understood the purpose of the assessment and its limitations. Respondents have answered questions on a voluntary basis only and have not received any direct or indirect material benefit from their contribution, nor would they suffer any onus or retaliation should they decline to participate.

Findings

Evaluation Criteria 1: Relevance

Evaluation Questions:

- **EQ 1.1: To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?**

F. 1.1.1: According to analysis of the project documents triangulated with data collected during the interviews with key RTC stakeholders from public sector, objectives of the project's activities were in line with national development priorities and UNPD development approaches.

The focus of the RTC on a socio-economic development through support to jobs creation and income generation (including facilitation of access to the labour market, rehabilitation of TVET system, skills development, technological update and digitalization) is in line with tasks and priorities identified in the NDS up to 2030. The evaluation showed that the project interventions were consistent with- and contributed to- the overall goal of National Strategy - Improving the living standards of population, based on sustainable economic development, and that the RTC followed the priorities designed to achieve the goals of NDS. Specifically, the project interventions contributed to development objective (d) of NDS-2030 – "Expansion of Productive Employment". The RTC contribute to M-TDP for the period of 2021-2025, particularly, to the section 2 "Productive Employment", section 4 "Investment Climate", section 9 "Ensuring Decent :iving Conditions", section 8 "Balanced Development of the Regions of the Country" and cross-cutting topics such as youth development and gender equality. The project was also aligned with subnational – regional and districts development plans.

The RTC design considered also the United Nations Development Assistance Framework's (UNDAF) – currently called UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, and UNDP Strategic Plan's approaches to the improvement of socio-economic situation in the country. Specifically, the RTC followed the UNDP Strategic Plan key directions of systemic change, such as:

"Structural transformation: including green, inclusive and digital transitions: working with countries to effect change in systems and structures that shape a country's sustainable development;

Leaving no-one behind: a rights-based approach centered on empowerment, inclusion, equity, human agency and human development;

Building resilience: strengthening countries and institutions to prevent, mitigate and respond to crisis, conflict, natural disasters, climate and social and economic shocks."[6]

RTC addressed a series of SDGs, including *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 17.*

Overall, the designers of RTC project targeted the UNDAF development priorities formulated in **Outcome 2: "**People in Tajikistan benefit from equitable and sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment; stable energy supply; improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and a more favourable business environment, especially for entrepreneurs and farmers".[7]

[*17 KIs out of 17 representing GoT at various levels; 13 of 13 IPs, 1 out 1 from PMT; RTC Project Document and progress reports; secondary sources – National and UNDP policy and strategy documents*].

F. 1.1.2: Almost all RTC activities were specifically focused on supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as social and economic inclusion of vulnerable social groups, with exception of assistance provided to the public sector institutions servicing all groups of the citizen of Tajikistan, such as assisted central hospitals in the Sughd region. As women face more discrimination in economic activities and have fewer opportunities for paid activities, particularly in rural areas, the project was provided varied assistance to this group. Such approach is in full compliance with UNDP policies, Sustainable Development Agenda and the Tajikistan NDS for 2016 – 2030. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are central to the mandate of UNDP and a pathway to contribute to the SDGs' achievement.

[*51 KIs from all groups of respondents; RTC Project Document and progress reports*].

F. 1.1.3: The interviewed respondents mentioned that the project has addressed needs which emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Side-by-side with women and youth, specific target group of the project was represented by the labour migrants who returned to Tajikistan due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Although negative impacts of the pandemic in Tajikistan were less severe than initially anticipated, restrictions on labor mobility and economic activity at home and abroad resulted in fewer remittances, weaker consumer demand, and reduced investments. During the first six months of 2020, remittances decreased by nearly 15 percent (USD 195 million) compared to the first six months of 2019.[8] Overall, the growth of Tajikistan's economy dropped from 7.5 percent in 2019 to 4.5 percent in 2020.[9] The challenges related to a slower growth were addressed by the RTC mainly through the employable and business skills development, technological upgrade, facilitation of access to finance. An important component of the RTC foresaw a support to the development of digital nation-wide platform bringing together employers and job-seekers, and the prototypes of such platform were designed and may be further elaborated under condition of obtaining sufficient funding.

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[6] "United Nations Development Programme Strategic Plan 2022-2025", 2020, p. 8

[7] "United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016 – 2021 for Tajikistan with Amended Results and Resources Framework Agreed by UN and the Government of Tajikistan", 2019, p. 2

[8] https://www.usaid.gov/tajikistan/economic-growth-and-trade

[9] https://www.adb.org/projects/54111-008/main#project-pds

[1*7 KIs from GoT at various levels; 9 from IPs, 1 from PMT; RTC Project Document and progress reports; secondary sources*].

- **EQ 1.2: How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context? To what extent the project was able to address the needs of the target groups in the changed context?**

F. 1.2.1. KIs and analysis of the RTC Prodoc, secondary sources and project's reports confirmed the relevance of the project's design and approaches to the local development context. KIs underlined that relevance of the RTC design to the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries was ensured by the well-established working contacts of UNDP with public, civic and private sectors at the national and sub-national level, specifically in the Sughd region.

[*17 KIs from GoT at various levels; 13 from IPs, 1 from PMT; 18 out of 18 beneficiaries; RTC Project Document and progress reports; secondary sources*].

F. 1.2.2. Overall, the RTC addressed the development needs, which existed in the target region. However, a limited scale and length of the project allowed to support only a limited number of beneficiaries, leaving unaddressed bigger demand for the assistance. In a certain degree this demand may be met by continuation of the activities launched by RTC through the "agents of change", including those who contributed to the project implementation, such as consulting companies and banking and micro-finance institutions. Financial institutions-RTC partners, for instance, are supposed to keep issuing subsidized loans to the local MSMEs for a year and a half after the project completion. The existing and emerging needs of the RTC beneficiaries were also addressed by the assisted TVET institutions and local business incubators. In the opinion of some respondents, a bigger emphasis on cooperation with well-established business associations and NGOs could lead to the effective scaling up of RTC approaches in the changing development context.

[*11 KIs from GoT at various levels; 12 from IPs, 1 from PMT; 12 from direct beneficiaries; mini-survey; RTC Project Document and progress reports; secondary sources*].

- **EQ 1.3: To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemics?**

F. 1.3.1: The ET found evidence that the project implementation was planned with consideration of the needs of the target groups under conditions of pandemic at the moment, when the full impact of COVID-19 has not been clear yet. This fact explains targeting by the RTC designers of varied areas of assistance with an overarching goal to support beneficiaries' absorptive and adaptive capacities in response to the shock pandemic. In the observations of the evaluation team, although the real effect of COVID-19 was less severe than initially anticipated, the RTC project contributed to the strengthening of beneficiaries' capacities to respond to the external shocks. Interviews with all the groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries, including the representatives of the RTC target groups (women, youth, returned migrants) confirmed that their needs were addressed by the RTC. For example, the mini-survey conducted among the project direct beneficiaries (N=27), demonstrated that around 90% of respondents considered the trainings and support provided by the RTC consistent with their needs. All the interviewed beneficiaries suggested the further continuation and scaling-up of RTC interventions to support socio-economic development in the country.

[*17 KIs from GoT at various levels; 13 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 18 from beneficiaries; RTC Project Document and progress reports*].

Evaluation Criteria 2: Effectiveness

- **EQ 2.1: Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?**

F. 2.1.1: Due to the extension of the RTC till the end of December 2023, the project continues its assistance to the target groups of beneficiaries in Sughd region, which should contribute further to the achievement of RTC results.

Interviewed stakeholders, implementing partners and beneficiaries mentioned that the activities results were overall achieved with mixed results in some activities (caused by pandemic-related restrictions, delays in formation of the PMT and other contractual issues, as well as by the complicated inter-state relations, negatively affecting cross-border trade and cooperation).

For example, with respect to the **Output 1: "Enhanced opportunities to reskill and upskill targeting unemployed young women and men, returned migrants and people from vulnerable households"**, under *Activity 1.1. "Design and implement competency-based training and self/employment support programs for unemployed men and women in selected priority sectors,"* RTC overperformed in the support to modernization of training equipment and training modules for the professional and vocational training institutions - instead of assistance to 6 organization, 12 institutions were modernized – 200% increase. At the same time, by the end of evaluators' field mission, the RTC did not reach anticipated number of VTI graduates supported with matching grants for their professional activities (20 graduates have received grants instead of planned 30 – 67%), as well as did not reach anticipated number of students covered by vocational and employable skills training (a little more than 700 students were trained instead of planned 900 – more than 80% of target number). The similar finding is applicable to other activities, including *Activity 1.2. "Promote a regional collaborative platform for youth labour skills development", and Activity 1.3. "Promote digital solutions for employment services to connect employers and job seekers in target districts"*. Instead of 4 digital tools to be developed to promote employable skills and employment, the RTC supported development of 5 tools (125% increase), and instead of planned 200 young people and job seekers reporting use of innovative digital platforms for employment and job seeking, 288 the e-platform for registration as unemployed (145% increase). At the same instant, digital platforms, which supposed to promote employable skills and employment during the evaluation's in-country mission still were in the testing regime. With respect to such indicator as "number of young apprentices (% women) get on-the job training and increased professional skills", the RTC provided assistance to 72 young people instead of planned 80 (90%) although was able to reach higher number of females (instead of planned 30%, 60% of participants were females).

Results under **Output 2: "Innovations for stimulation of entrepreneurship and income-generation for vulnerable communities in bordering areas"** were achieved (100%), including such indicators as "gender-sensitive assessments/research conducted in partnership with Russian research institutes" (1); "number of local stakeholders and community members (30% women) with improved knowledge on sustainable management of local resources" (250, 42% women), and "number of gender-responsive local economic and development infrastructure projects supported to improve local productive capacities" (15). The project has outperformed in the assistance provided to the public institutions in Sughd region with a focus of improved capacities for telecommuting and business continuity: 13 public sector institutions were supported instead of planned 7 (129% increase).

Results under **Output 3: "Promoting startup platforms and development of trade potential across Ferghana Valley"** demonstrated overall positive dynamics, despite negative impact by the conflict

between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the Isfara district. The project provided assistance to the Sughd regional administration, regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, regional MSMEs in establishing and developing trade relations through participation in trade fairs, regional and international expositions, etc. For instance, 61 MSMEs from Sughd region participated in 2 web-based business development sessions organized in April and May 2023; 8 companies participated in the international food exhibition "PRODEXPO-2023" in Moscow, Russian Federation, 30 producers were presented at the international forum of exporters "Bokhtar Food-2023", etc. As a result of participation at the Expo Sughd 2022-2023 and Bokhtar Food 2023, regional MSMEs signed 77 memorandums of understanding and trade agreements. *RTC provided also consulting and capacity building* support to the International Trade Fair "Sughd-2023", including an investment forum "Opportunities for trade and investment and prospects for cooperation".

Detailed information about the RTC results achieved by the October 2023 organized along the Project documents indicators is provided in the Summary Table in Annex 6. Meanwhile, the evaluation team understands that after the RTC extension, the PMT continues implementation of the planned activities with the purpose to mitigate identified shortcomings and to achieve results foreseen by the Project Document.

[*17 KIs from GoT at various levels; 13 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 18 from beneficiaries; mini-survey; RTC Project document; RTC progress reports*].

F. 2.1.2: A series of interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries confirmed that the respondents were satisfied with the quality of provided assistance, and that they would be interested in continuation of partnership with UNDP in the future. According to the mini-survey conducted among project beneficiaries, 95% of them found useful trainings and assistance provided by the RTC.

[*17 KIs from GoT; 18 from beneficiaries; mini-survey*].

F. 2.1.3: According to the respondents, although the project was officially launched in January 2021, its implementation was *de facto* postponed for almost one year due to the COVID-19 related restriction on people movement and contacts but also because of encountered difficulties in mobilizing national expertise needed for the project implementation, and specifically for a work in the target districts of Sughd region.

[*6 KIs from IPs; 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports*].

- **EQ 2.2: To what extend the management structure of the project was effective and operational? Could a work-flow be optimized? What may be changed to increase effectiveness?**

F. 2.2.1: Information collected during evaluation proved that the management arrangements of the RTC were overall effective and operational.

Location of the PMT in Khujand in a geographic proximity to the target districts supported effective coordination and cooperation with regional stakeholders and beneficiaries. Needed contacts with national stakeholders were conducted remotely or in person by the PMT members and/or by the CO representatives. Use for the project implementation of mainly national consultants, who are familiar both with the best international practice and specific local conditions, helped RTC provide relevant and well-targeted advice.

However, in the observations of evaluators, the higher effectiveness of the project could be enhanced by a bigger allocation of resources to the on-going monitoring of the activities under implementation, as well as to the post-assistance assessments of occurred changes and further needs' identification.

In some cases, like for example, "Isfara Shoes" or fruit packaging company "Donai Almos", an operationalization of the equipment provided with RTC support required additional technical advice and assistance; bakery in Isfara, assisted with the modern equipment could be further supported with technological advice, etc. Timely monitoring of implementation of this RTC component would ensure planning and execution of correction measures by the PMT.

Similarly, as the RTC included a significant procurement component, this specific function of the PMT should be strengthen with relevant engineering expertise to assist in timely identification of new technical solutions and related modern equipment to support the technological innovation. Such technical expertise could also ensure effectiveness of the pre-procurement due diligence. For instance, in case of Matchod professional school, a qualified pre-assistance due diligence would identify exact amount and type of equipment to be provided for training purposes, ensuring timely implementation of this specific intervention.

[*6 KIs from IPs; 1 from PMT; RTC Project document and progress reports*].

- **EQ: 2.3: What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?**

F. 2.3.1: Site visits, interviews with stakeholders and beneficiaries, and analysis of project indicators achieved by the time of in-country data collection, demonstrated that RTC assistance contributed to:

- Increased capacities of the assisted organizations, including MoLME, TVET institutions, Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry, central hospitals in the target administrative districts (through knowledge building, introduction of digitalized tools and platforms, and equipment provision);
- Strengthened individual adaptive capacities of the target groups of beneficiaries (through support to entrepreneurship, marketable labour skills development, technological update, and facilitation of access to finance);
- Improved well-being and social capital building of the most vulnerable groups (though skills development and support to job creation and income generation);
- Support to innovation, including introduction of digital tools and platforms;
- Applied knowledge and skills obtained during the project;
- Capacity strengthening of the RTC implementing partners – local "agents of change" (through the update of technical knowledge and expansion of their client base).

[*17 KIs from GoT; 13 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 18 from beneficiaries; mini-survey; RTC progress reports*].

- **EQ 2.4: Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?**

F. 2.4.1: Interviewed respondents did not provide information about unintended results of the project, mentioning that the RTC outcome covers a wide range anticipated changes. At the same time, in observation of evaluators, the following unintended results may be considered:
  - Increased contribution of the civic and private sectors to the public services' delivery, for example through support to development of digitalized tools and platforms ("New Algorithm" methodological and organizational contribution or participation of local telecommunication companies in digitalization of health services in the hospitals assisted by the project); and
  - Strengthened capacities of the RTC implementation partners as a result of participation in the project through obtaining new professional knowledge and expanding client base.

[*7 KIs from IPs; RTC progress reports; site visits' observations*]

Box 3. RTC Supports Input of Youth to Digitalization

With support of RTC, the "New Algorithm" – organization focused on promotion of information technology and communication skills among youth in Khujand and Sughd region – has organized in 2023 a competition focused on a development of digital solutions for support of employment. Sixty participants of two age groups (15-17 and 18-30) were selected for the final stage of this competition out of ninety applicants. As a result, the prototype of a platform with artificial intelligence component bringing together employers and job seekers, developed by a group of students was selected as a winner. Finalization of this prototype requires some administrative support – this group of students has no legal form to be assisted, as well as additional financing needed for the prototype finalization.

- **EQ 2.5: In which areas the project had greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?**

F. 2.5.1: Relatively small scale and short lifespan of the RTC interventions put understandable limits on the depth of a change occurred as a result of the project. However, the KIs responses confirmed also by the analysis of the project progress reports, revealed that the most tangible results are related to:

- Technological upgrade of local MSMEs, which led to increased productivity, decreased operational costs, creation of additional jobs in Khujand city and assisted districts;
- Improvement of the technical base of the supported TVET institutions and update of their methodological approaches;
- Facilitation of access to finance by the local MSMEs through the subsidized revolving credit with contribution from participating bank "Arvand" and micro-finance institution "Hemyuri";
- Women and youth empowerment through technical and business skills development supported with the transfer of equipment needed for a launch of productive activities;
- Introduction of a digital system of ambulances' management it central hospital of Khujand city.

[*9 KIs from GoT; 13 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 18 from beneficiaries; RTC progress reports*]

F. 2.5.2: Collected data demonstrated that the strengthening of telecommunication capacities at central hospitals of the assisted administrative districts created a basis for a building of e-health system in the region; however, the current technical issues with mobile network and Internet services in Sughd (which are beyond the project's scope and capacity), substantially limit this opportunity.

RTC activities addressing trade cross-border cooperation and trade promotion faced some limitations related to the tensions in relations between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, but also linked to the similarity of the production base on both side of the border. Such a similarity does not provide strong stimulus for the cross-border trade. Land-locked position of Tajikistan, substantial distance from the potential international markers and complicated logistics create additional barriers to the trade expansion and diversification. Despite these challenges, the PMT was able to organize in April 2023 two on-line sessions for 61 MSMEs from border areas; 30 producers from Sughd region participated in the international exporters' forum "Bokhtar Food-2023", an investment forum "Opportunities for Trade and Investment and Prospects for Cooperation" was held on June 2023 in Khujand as part of the IX International Trade Fair "Sughd-2023"; 8 companies from Sughd region attended international food exhibition "PRODEXPO-2023" in Moscow, Russian Federation. RTC provided support to the international trade fairs "Sughd-2022" and Sughd – 2023, and more than 70 memorandums of understanding were signed by regional companies during these events.

[*4 KIs from GoT; 8 from IPs; 3 from beneficiaries; RTC progress reports; site visits' observations*]

F. 2.5.3: In the observations of evaluation team, implementation of the RTC demonstrated some shortcomings, mainly related to the limited time for the project implementation and insufficient human resources. For example, lack of specific engineering expertise at the PMT in some cases negatively impacted the transfer of equipment to the assisted MSMEs and TVET institutions. During in-country data collection, one of the machines, provided to the "Isfara Shoes" company, was not operational as the company management could not purchase and install a software package needed for the machine's operations. The washing machine supplied to "Donai Almos" food packaging company in Khujand, was not in use at the moment of evaluators' visit because this enterprise did not have needed drying equipment in its packaging line. Proper feasibility assessment conducted during the selection stage and/or the post-assistance monitoring of evolving needs of the RTC beneficiaries, could help to avoid such issues. The following consultations with the PMT revealed that the needed correction measures will be undertaken prior the project's completion.

Site visits revealed that consideration of requirements of the UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure[10] with respect to assisted MSMEs, would increase effectiveness of the RTC implementation. Additional expertise provided by social expert and environmental, health and safety (EHS) specialist, could support introduction of the decent work approach, including equal pay for men and women at the assisted MSMEs, as well as mitigation of negative environmental and health impacts of operations of the supported businesses. From these perspectives, pyrolysis production line at "Taj Eco" looks like the most problematic case.

[*Site visits' observations*]

- **EQ 2.6: What were the reasons for implementation delays (if any) and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate them?**

F. 2.6.1: According to the collected data, the major delays with RTC implementation were related mainly to:

- Introduction of COVID-19 mitigating measures;
- Difficulties in hiring the appropriate expertise needed for the RTC implementation, including members of the PMT, and
- Limited time for implementation of very varied activities targeting different groups of beneficiaries.
- Some delays in the project results' delivery are related with certain difficulties in procurement of equipment and tools for the professional and vocational training organizations, VTI graduates and assisted MSMEs.

With the introduction of the new quantum platform in early 2023, the procurement process became more complicated and time-consuming both for PMT and for bidders, including vendor creation and registration; tender announcement through the platform, contract awarding and PO issuance – all these steps took longer time than was anticipated in the annual work plan and negatively impacted the procurement planned for the beginning of 2023.

The project targeted introduction of innovative solutions and new technologies into a series of varied sectors; under these conditions, the evaluation of tender propositions took longer time than was initially anticipated. As a result, for some tenders announced in 2022, the contracts have been

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[10] https://www.undp.org/publications/undps-social-and-environmental-screening-procedure-sesp

awarded only in February 2023; and in several cases, tenders should be re-announced in 2023 to meet technological requirements. Some types of laboratory equipment for mining institute (radiological, water quality) was procured in Ukraine and it was not delivered under conditions of on-going war.

The PMT response to these challenges was adequate, including introduction of remote project management tools during the pandemic restrictions, proactive search of needed national expertise, identification of potential suppliers of required equipment, etc. However, these limitations were not fully mitigated and PMT had chronic issues with availability of certain specialists, for example, qualified engineers and MSME experts focused on MSME management and development.

[*1 KI from PMT; 3 from IPs; RTC progress reports; site visits' observations*].

- **EQ 2.7: How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?**

F. 2.7.1: The evaluation team collected proves of RTC's contribution to the strengthening of national capacity targeting support to inclusive and innovative socio-economic growth. An important role in this process belongs to the national "agents of change" in public, private and civic sectors. Through inclusion of representatives of the GoT at various levels, private companies and NGOs into project activities' design and implementation, the PMT enhanced both – the national ownership and the national capacities strengthening. In the observations of evaluators, such organizations as "MIR" (focused on women empowerment and social inclusion); "New Algorithm" (promoting digitalization); "MIS - Quality Management Center", "SOF – Strengthening Capacities of Local Producers", Micro-finance Fund "Hemyori" and other organizations participating in the RTC implementation already have a proven record of successful support to the inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development.

[*1 KI from PMT; 9 from IPs; 7 – from beneficiaries; RTC progress reports; site visits' observations*]

- **EQ 2.8: What were the main contributing and hindering factors to the achievement of results?**

F. 2.8.1: Data collected by evaluators during desk study and in-country data collection demonstrated that the following factors contributed to the RTC achievement of results:

a/ Thorough *planning* of the project's activities based upon assessment of current needs and capacities of each specific group of beneficiaries;

b/ *Feasibility assessment* of anticipated interventions with consideration of beneficiary's capacities and resources; project budget and other limitations affecting procurement and delivery of goods and services by the PMT;

c/ Well-organized *targeting* and thorough *selection* of partners and beneficiaries to be addressed by the RTC activities with contribution from the local partners in civic, private and public sectors;

d/ *High quality expertise* recruited by the PMT and provision by the RTC implementing partners of technical solutions relevant to the needs and resources of the target beneficiaries;

e/ Strengthening of capacities of target beneficiaries through *a series of mutually complimentary activities* such as business skills development training followed by the grant supporting business idea of training graduate and additional coaching, addressing emerging issues or provision of VTE institution with equipment for professional training supported with relevant training module;

f/ *Commitment and contribution* of RTC partners and beneficiaries, which are prerequisite for any effective assistance delivery;

g/ *Local presence* of PMT in the assisted area allowing easy access to the target groups of beneficiaries, implementing partners and key RTC stakeholders;

h/ Established *working relations* of the PMT with public, private and civic sectors at the national level (with the partner Ministries and Agencies) but also in the Sughd region and its administrative districts;

i/ *Effective two-ways communication* of PMT with the RTC stakeholders and beneficiaries, which ensured achievement of relevant and lasting results of the project interventions;

j/ Involvement of *national expertise*, familiar with both – local development context and good international practice;

k/ *Regular monitoring* by the PMT of activities under implementation, assessment of achievements and shortcomings, evolving needs and required resources; and

L/ *Length of the assistance* – longer assistance proved its contribution to the project's effectiveness as it provides more time for adoption by the beneficiaries of new skills and qualifications.

[*13 KIs from GoT; 13 from IPs; 6 from beneficiaries; 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports; secondary site visits' observations*]

F. 2.8.2: Respondents mentioned negative impact of the following factors:

a/ Lack of proper, technically sound *due diligence* during assessment of beneficiary's needs;

b/ *Lack of post-assistance monitoring and follow up* procedures to identify and address additional needs emerged after the provision of RTC assistance (training, skills development, transfer of equipment, etc.);

c/ *Insufficient time* for introduction and adoption of the approaches and tools, recommended by the project, which is especially relevant to the activities targeting organizational change, including introduction of digital tools in platforms in complicated systems, such as governance, linkages to the labour market, e-health, etc.;

d/ Lack of *resources* to support post-assistance operations of the target entities – organizations, companies, and households;

e/ staff turnover and understaffed UNDP regional office to provide full and timely and continuous oversight and technical support to Project partners.

[*13 KIs from GoT; 13 from IPs; 6 from beneficiaries; 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports; secondary site visits' observations*]

- **EQ 2.9: How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?**

F. 2.9.1: In the opinion of the KIs shared by the evaluators, the RTC approaches, tools and results may contribute to the future UNDP interventions, focused on the national resilience capacities strengthening and on the empowerment of vulnerable social groups. The key RTC approach, which foresaw a use of mutually complementary activities targeting major sources of resilience, including building of social capital, development of marketable labour skills, income and production base diversification, support to technological upgrade, facilitation of access to financing, and strengthening

linkages to the markers, proved its effectiveness and may be recommended for UNDP activities in Tajikistan.

The results achieved by the RTC, as well as a data-base of assisted beneficiaries from the various target groups, may be used as an "entry point" for the new interventions in Sughd region. In this case, the further support may be focused on the additional strengthening of local capacities and scaling up of the RTC results: the entities successfully assisted by the project may be approached by the UNDP as "agents of change" or "model" for a wider audience of new stakeholders and beneficiaries.

An important role in the further UNDP activities may belong to the implementing partners selected by the RTC, which already proved their effectiveness and contribution to impact.

In the opinion of respondents, the project's managerial strengths, including involvement of RTC stakeholders into activities design and implementation, strong local presence, and effective communication with project's stakeholders and beneficiaries should be recommended to other interventions across UNDP portfolio.

[*3 KIs from GoT; 1 from PMT; 7 from IPs; RTC progress reports; site visits' observations*]

Evaluation Criteria 3: Coherence

Evaluation Questions:

- **EQ 3.1: What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?**

F. 3.1.1: Interviews with key stakeholders and analysis of secondary sources (mainly web-based information about UNDP projects in Tajikistan and initiatives, financed by other donors), revealed that the development priorities addressed by the RTC are also considered by other previous and current UNDP activities, as well as by interventions of key donors and international financial institutions. Built upon results, approaches and tools tested by the UNDP "Aid for Trade" programme, and such UNDP initiatives as "Youth for Business and Innovation" and "Strengthening Communities in Khatlon Region and Rasht Valley of Tajikistan", the RTC project complements assistance provided by the international donor community.

The most coherent recent initiatives financed by international donors include the projects launched by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), European Union (EU), German development agency GIZ, Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), World Bank (WB) and other key international development actors, which work closely with the GoT. Assistance to Tajikistan is provided on a by-lateral basis but also within a framework of the regional development efforts, covering the whole Central Asia (for more details about major projects and programmes, please refer to the *Annex 8*). However, in understanding of the evaluators, despite a large number of development initiatives funded by other donors which target the similar goals as RTC, the project was implemented independently, without coordination with other donor-funded interventions.

[*10 KIs from the public sector; 11 from IPs; 1 from PMT; secondary sources*]

- **EQ 3.2: To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?**

F.3.2.1: Data collected through desk study and KIIs provide evidence that RTC is compatible with other donors' interventions: it pursuits the coherent goals, applies the similar theory of change and use compatible development approaches and tools, comprising individual and institutional capacities building, employable skills development, facilitation of access to financing, support to technological upgrade, and strengthening linkages to the market. Similarly to the other initiatives mentioned above, the RTC put in the center of assistance vulnerable social groups and contributes to the women empowerment, youth and returned labour migrants employment and self-employment. In the opinion of respondents though, RTC differs from assistance funded by other donors in scale and length: it is a relatively short initiative implemented with relatively small budget.

[*6 KIs from the public sector; 7 from IPs; 3 from direct beneficiaries, 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports*]

F. 3.2.2: According to some KIs, beneficiaries of the project may mobilize additional funds, based on the achieved results and having strengthened capacities, and working with other donor-funded interventions directly or through the network of local consultants, business associations and NGOs. However, during in-country data collection the evaluators did not find strong evidence of cooperation with other donors' interventions, which could contribute to the additional funds' mobilization.

[*3 KIs from the public sector; 4 from IPs; 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports*]

F. 3.2.3: Respondents mentioned, that there is always a room for improvement in the area of international development efforts, and international donor community recognizes the need for more effective donor coordination to support socio-economic transformation in Tajikistan. At the project level, establishment of working relations with key donors, international financial institutions (IFIs) and donor-funded projects may contribute to the more effective way of using development resources and capacities.

[*3 KIs from the public sector; 6 from IPs; RTC progress reports*]

- **EQ 3.3: External coherence: To what extent is the intervention consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?**

F.3.3.1: According to the KIs from the public sector, implementing partners and PMT, supported further with an analysis of RTC project document, work plans and progress reports, as well as with a review of relevant policies and safeguards of key international donors and IFIs, activities of the RTC were in line with good international practice in this area. Project was designed and implemented with consideration of needs of vulnerable social groups, including women, youth, unemployed, returned labour migrants, etc. Inclusive approaches were applied to the beneficiaries' mapping and selection, to the training and consulting provided. At the same time, in some cases, the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries were eased to reach a larger audience. For instance, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) term "youth" covers persons aged 15 to 25 years, and RTC moved the upper boundary to 35 years. Another example, some of the assisted MSME, presented to the RTC as "women-owned" or "youth-own" in the evaluators' observation, belong to- and managed by the older men.

[*3 KIs from the public sector; 4 from IPs; 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports; secondary sources; site visit observations*]

Evaluation Criteria 4: Efficiency

Evaluation Questions:

- **EQ 4.1: To what extend the RTC implementation strategy and its implementation were efficient in generating the expected results? How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve planned results in a timely manner?**

F.4.1.1: Interviews with RTC stakeholders and beneficiaries and review of the project's work plans and budgets provide evidence, that it was implemented overall in efficient way, using allocated human, material and financial resources with consideration of cost-effectiveness.

[*6 KIs from IPs, 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports; secondary sources*]

F.4.1.2: The collected information confirms, that the delay with implementation of RTC activities was caused mainly by the restrictions to the peoples' movement related to the COVID-19 mitigation measures and it did not have substantial impact on the efficiency of the planned activities. At the same time, in the opinion of PMT, the RTC timely delivery of results was also negatively affected by the lack of sufficient human resources for fast procurement of equipment to be distributed to the RTC graduates, assisted MSMEs, TVET and public sector institutions.

[*3 KIs from IPs, 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports*]

- **EQ 4.2: Which factors supported the cost-effectiveness of RTC interventions (*RTC management structure, implementation modality, cooperation with national counterparts, etc.*)?**

F.4.2.1: Information collected during the desk study of RTC documents, reports and assessments, as well during the field stage, including interviews and observations, provides evidence, that side by side with a clear targeting of the RTC activities and groups to be assisted, the cost effectiveness of the project was enhanced by:

- Consideration of the cost effectiveness by the PMT through the project design and implementation; the RTC management paid attention to the efficient use of allocated resources at all stages of the project;

- Extensive use of local expertise for the project design and implementation;

- Well-established professional relations and active communication with key stakeholders and implementing partners, what allowed to use resources allocated for specific tasks in efficient way, saving time on needs assessments, beneficiaries' mapping, and technical assistance provision;

- Placement of PMT in the assisted geographic location: close proximity to the main stakeholders, implementing partners, and beneficiaries reinforced proactive RTC implementation and allowed to provide a quick response to a changing development context;

- Cost sharing of certain interventions with private and public sectors, such as subsidized loans for women-owned MSMEs and equipment provision to the TVET institutions (when the assisted entities invested into renovation of premises where equipment should be placed); cooperation with private sector in supporting telecommunication capacities of assisted hospitals, etc.

- **EQ 4.3: Which changes (in planning, coordination, implementation modalities, partnerships, selection of locations etc.) could lead to the higher cost-effectiveness in in the future?**

F.4.3.1: According to the respondents, the higher cost-effectiveness of similar interventions in the future could be enhanced by:

- Thorough planning with assessments of all types of risks for the project implementation (from internal limitations related to the availability of qualified personnel to the resilience to the external shocks and stresses);

- Continuing, multi-layered, mutually complementary assistance addressing adaptive and transformative capacities of the beneficiaries over the life-time of the project;

- Further capacity strengthening of already existing "agents of change" in public, civic and private sectors, which include central Ministries/Agencies and their sub-national divisions; public higher education and TVET institutions; national experts, consultants and trainers; micro-finance institutions and banks; NGOs supporting women, youth and underrepresented populations' empowerment, etc.;

- Reinforcement of the role of implementing partners, such as local business associations and non-governmental organizations, in the potential beneficiaries mapping, as well as in a technical assistance delivery, including transfer of the equipment, post-assistance monitoring and reporting;

- Proactive coordination with other development partners within and outside the UN system in sharing database of available development and subject matter experts and organizations; in promotion of the best development industry's practices; in helping programmes' graduates and beneficiaries to mobilize additional resources needed for sustainable operations and further development, etc.;

In the opinion of some respondents, under conditions of quickly changing development context, a bigger degree of flexibility in a use of available resources by the PMT may contribute to the higher efficiency of assistance. With respect to the implementation modalities, locations selected, and the established partnerships to deliver anticipated results - they were adequate to the RTC goals and objectives.

[*4 KIs from IPs, 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports; secondary sources*]

Evaluation Criteria 5: Sustainability

Evaluation Questions:

- **EQ 5.1: Which RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?**

F. 5.1.1: According to the KIIs, results achieved by RTC have strong sustainability perspectives in almost all areas of the project's assistance. This sustainability is often enhanced by the mutually complementary activities. For instance, business skills development of the target beneficiaries from the vulnerable social groups are supported with the transfer of equipment needed for a start-up of income generating activity (green-house, sewing machines, beehives, mechanical tools); modern equipment provision to the TVET institutions is strengthened with development of appropriate training models and contribution of the regional/district authorities by the way of renovation of TVET premises; establishment of telecommunication equipment at the central hospitals in assisted districts

for teleconferencing and remote medical services provision was done in parallel with technical support and training, and foresaw a contribution from the local telecommunication company, etc.

[*4 KIs from the public sector; 9 from IPs; 12 from direct beneficiaries; 1 from PMT; RTC progress reports*]

F. 5.1.2: Data, collected by evaluators provide evidence of the strong sustainability perspectives of initiatives, which combine a contribution from the beneficiaries with the input from public and private sectors aimed to the support of post-assistance operations. Contribution of the local telecommunication company to the operations of central station of medical emergency in Khujand may be a good example of such an approach. Overall, initiatives based upon clearly identified needs, low-key solutions relevant to the existing capacities and available resources, and assistance provided to the entities capable to raise additional funds and bring expertise needed for continuation and expansion of operations have the strongest perspectives of becoming sustainable.

Among sustainable RTC activities the following could be mentioned:

- *Activity 1.1. Design and implement competency-based training and self/employment support programs for unemployed men and women in selected priority sectors.*
- *Activity 2.2. Improvement of local productive infrastructure and services that improve living standard of population and benefit the target communities in terms of decent jobs and income-generation opportunities.*
- *Activity 2.3. Support local producers and merchants at the border areas to enhance their capacities for sustainable production as well as product placement, branding and packaging, marketing, logistics, business matching and access to finance.*

Initiatives targeting cross-border trade and economic cooperation substantially depend on the political situation in the Fergana Valley, what affects their sustainability. For instance, at the time of evaluation, there were no trade contacts between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Unreliable Internet in the geographic locations targeted by the project undermines sustainability of the digital solutions promoted by the RTC.

[*4 KIs from the public sector; 9 from IPs; 1 form PMT; 10 from beneficiaries; RTC progress reports*]

- **EQ 5.2: What are the approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?**

F. 5.2.1: According to the KIs from the public sector and expert community, the key stakeholders from the GoT at various levels and direct beneficiaries are satisfied with the obtained results and are interested in bringing additional funds and expertise to ensure sustainability of results achieved by the project. In some cases, they rely on budget support (application of digital solutions for facilitation of access to the labour market or further strengthening of TVET system), in others – on contribution from the private sector (operations of the telecommunication systems installed at the Sughd region's hospitals). Local expert community also contributes to the sustainability of RTC results through continuation of activities based on market approach or within framework of other donor-funded initiatives.

[*4 KIs from the public sector; 8 from IPs; secondary sources*]

- **EQ 5.3: Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results?**

F. 5.3.1: Data collected during the interviews with various groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries, and supported further with the analysis of the RTC progress reports and conducted assessments,

provide evidence that mobilization of resources for continuing operations is among the most critical factors of sustainability. To be sustainable in a long-run, approaches and tools developed within framework of RTC, should be further supported with relevant funds and expertise, which may be provided by another donor, state budget, or generated as a result of sales of goods and services produced by beneficiaries.

[*4 KIs from the public sector; 11 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 10 from beneficiaries; secondary sources*]

F. 5.3.2: Among the key hindering factors, mentioned by KIs and observed by evaluators during site visits, the following groups should be mentioned:

a/ *Insufficient financial resources and skills* needed for further operations in line with MSMEs' development approaches and practices suggested by the RTC experts. In observations of evaluators, the assisted MSMEs and graduates of capacity building programs, especially representatives of the vulnerable social groups, often operate with very limited retained earnings and face difficulties in obtaining debt capital, what limits their ability to support and expand their businesses and to bring qualified personnel to ensure consistent quality of production, support required sales level and ensure reasonable financial management;

b/ *Insufficient attention paid to the EHS aspects of MSME's operations*, undermining longer-term perspectives of the assisted start-ups and established businesses;

c/ *Lack of interventions promoting decent job principles* at the assisted entities leading to the high personnel turnover and lost institutional memory.

[*4 KIs from the public sector; 11 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 10 from beneficiaries; secondary sources*]

- **EQ 5.4: What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?**

F. 5.4.1: The majority of respondents have suggested continuation of the activities launched by RTC, foreseeing both – their expansion to the new geographic locations and continuation of support to the participants of the RTC activities (in a form of coaching and advice).

[*12 KIs from the public sector; 10 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 14 from beneficiaries*]

F. 5.4.2: Interviewed KIs from various target groups mentioned the following approaches, which may contribute to the RTC exit strategy supporting sustainability of achieved results:

a/ Scaling up of the tools and approaches applied by the RTC during its implementation, with a special focus on the well-targeted support to:

- Labour skills development through support to professional and vocational training institutions;
- Start-up businesses of graduates of the training programmes;
- Existing MSMS and self-employed initiatives.

b/ Strengthening of established linkages of the RTC beneficiaries with local financial institutions and consulting companies for continuation of access to their services.

c/ Increased coherence with other UNDP and donor-funded initiatives addressing area-based socio-economic development in Tajikistan, as well as women, youth, and other vulnerable social groups' empowerment.

d/ To ensure sustainability of RTC results, the road map may be developed for further assistance with contribution from key project stakeholders and national expert community.

e/ Continuation of alignment with the local development planning activities including the District Development Programmes, which, largely with UNDP assistance, became an effective tool of local planning, coordination of efforts, alignment of local planning with national development agenda.

[*4 KIs from the public sector; 11 from IPs; 1 from PMT; 10 from beneficiaries; secondary sources*]

F. 5.4.3: According to the respondents, increased national ownership, contribution from a side of central and sub-national authorities to the strengthening of the higher and VTI education; to the dissemination of digital knowledge and skills, improvement of quality of Internet network in the country, combined with the support to entrepreneurship development based upon decent job concept should strengthen sustainability perspectives of the results of RTC project.

[*2 KIs from the public sector; 4 from IPs; 1 from PMT; secondary sources*]

Evaluation Criteria 6: Impact

Evaluation Questions:

- **EQ 6.1: What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement?**

F. 6.1.1: According to the Prodoc, RTC activities should be aimed at the following outcome: "Regional and local governments, MSMEs and people effectively adapt their business and livelihoods strategies to withstand the social and economic challenges triggered by COVID-19 and other economic risks". KIs confirmed that the project's interventions overall contributed to the capacity-strengthening of the assisted governmental institutions, communities and livelihoods by addressing such sources of resilience as:
- *Improved governance* - through the support to digitalization and better public services delivery, including access to health services due to introduction of e-medicine and tele-conference tools in the central hospitals of the assisted districts of Sughd region, enhanced medical emergency services in Khujand and Isfara; as well as to the support to digitalized access to labour markets.
- *Strengthened TVET system* – through the equipment update at 12 institutions of Sughd region and development of eight training modules relevant to the modern demands in the labour market.
- *Strengthened capacities of private sector* with a special focus on MSME owned by women, youth, returned migrants – through business skills development, technological upgrade, familiarization with regional and international quality standards, assistance in establishing linkages with the national, regional and international markets and facilitation of access to finance.
- *Building of the technical skills* for employment and self-employment, supported with equipment for start-up initiatives.
- *Job creation and income generation* in the assisted communities, including vulnerable social groups, through support to start-ups and MSMEs.
- *Empowered women and youth* through technical and business skills development and distribution of equipment for income generation contributing to the social capital building.
- Enriched and *strengthened capacities of local* "*agents of change"* in public, civic and private sectors, which could scale-up their support to the socio-economic development and well-being of the citizens of Tajikistan, including vulnerable social groups.

Therefore, the RTC activities contributed to the achievement such SDGs as:

> *1 – No poverty;*
> *2 – Zero hunger;*

3 - Good health and well-being;
4 – Quality education;
5 – Gender equality;
8 – Decent work and economic growth;
9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure;
11 – Sustainable cities and communities;
17 – Partnerships for the goals.

At the same time, in observations of ET, to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the UNDP interventions, sustainability of their results and contribution to the outcome, the project designers and implementers should allocate more efforts and resources to the promotion of "decent work" concept (*SDG 8*) and to the support of environmental sustainability, including rapid assessment of EHS aspects of the technical solutions supported by the UNDP projects (*SDG 11*). As mentioned above, more efforts aimed at the partnerships' building, coordination and cooperation of development efforts with key actors in the international donor community should support development outcomes' and SDGs' achievement.

[*9 KIs from IPs, 1 from PMT; mini-survey; RTC progress reports; secondary sources*]

Evaluation Criteria 7: Human Rights/Gender Equality/ Social Inclusion

Evaluation Questions:

- **EQ 7.1: In what specific ways were women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations included in the RTC programming? What are the best practices for targeting and engaging women, youth, and other underrepresented populations within the context of future shocks and stresses?**

F.7.1.1: The Project has demonstrated good models for women and youth socio-economic empowerment through skills trainings and tailored micro business activities. Cooperation with experienced non-governmental organizations were instrumental in reaching the target groups and at the same time strengthening the role of CSOs in development practice at local level. While the project made emphasis on socio-economic inclusion of women and youth, it could also target other vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, PLHIV, refugees and other groups.

[*17 KIs from the public sector; 13 from IPs, 1 from PMT; mini-survey; RTC progress reports; secondary sources*]

F. 7.1.2: The analysis of the project documentation, KIIs and the observations demonstrated that the RTC has a specific focus on three groups: women, youth and returned migrants. The target population have been engaged through targeted reskilling and upskilling programmes provided through TVET schools, NGOs and individual experts. The groups have also been supported either with grants or subsidized loans to start small business initiatives, participated in the competitions (Hakaton) and accessed part time or full-time jobs. The following interventions can be considered as a good practice:

- Matching funds to female VTI graduates to start professional activities.
- Support to SME to expand existing business
- Access to marketable vocational skills training for youth.

[*14 KIs from the public sector; 13 from IPs, 1 from PMT; mini-survey; RTC progress reports; secondary sources; site visits' observations*]

- **EQ 7.2: What is the evidence of RTC's achieved results in gender equality and inclusiveness of socially vulnerable populations? What did work well and what challenges did emerge?**

F. 7.2.1: The project made progress in achieving its targets in relation to gender equality. In the majority of activities, the results related with women empowerment and gender equality are matched or exceeded the targets. For example, out of 20 VTI graduates that received matching funds, 15 were young women and girls, 52 % of the beneficiaries of the capacity building program for young producers were women, 60% of young people benefited from on-the-job training component were also young women and girls, approximately 40% of the users of the platform for job search were women and girls as well. Overall, RTC promised that at least 30% of the beneficiaries would be women and girls. While the ProDoc does not provide a total number of project beneficiaries, based on the analysis of 11 indicators that are disaggregated by gender, it can be estimated that the RTC envisaged to reach around 1000 women. However, the actual numbers exceed the target (see *Annex 7. Status of Gender-sensitive indicators* for more details). Limited evidence available on the level of engagement of other vulnerable groups as the level of disaggregation of the indicators are limited to two categories, such as women and youth. It is difficult to track the number of returned migrants or other vulnerable groups benefited from the project, while during the field mission, these groups have been observed.

[*11 KIs from the public sector*; *13 from IPs, 1 from PMT; mini-survey; RTC progress reports; site visits' observations*]

- **EQ 7.3: What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?**

F. 7.3.1: The study showed that the RTC has brought different level of changes in the lives of targeted groups, depending on a type of interventions engaged. The interviews and the mini-survey conducted, demonstrated that grants for VTI graduates, support for small scale business initiatives for empowerment have resulted in both improvement of livelihoods and social functioning. Mini-survey revealed that more than 70% of those who received grants and other support to start a business, have confirmed increase in their income, while 80% mentioned application of gained knowledge in their work.

[*17 KIs from the public sector; 13 from IPs, 1 from PMT; mini-survey; RTC progress reports*]

- **EQ 7.4: What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?**

F. 7.4.1: While the focus of RTC on women and youth are well-established and justified, the RTC could also target other vulnerable social groups such as: persons with disabilities (PWD), people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV), refugees, etc. It is also important to have in the project documents disaggregated data not only by gender, but also by age, socio-economic status and other characteristics to better track the coverage and implications on vulnerable populations. It is important to include more specific inclusion criteria in the Prodoc and reflect them in the project indicators.

[*11 KIs from the public sector*; *10 from IPs, 1 from PMT; mini-survey; RTC progress reports*]

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented above, the evaluators formulated to following conclusions, organized along the evaluation criteria:

Evaluation Criteria 1: Relevance

C. 1.1: Collected data proves that the project activities were in line with national development priorities and UNPD development strategy and SDGs, including *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 17*. The RTC activities were specifically targeting gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as social and economic inclusion of vulnerable social groups [F.1.1.1, 1.1.2].

C. 1.2: In line with the project goal, the RTC addressed needs related to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly through job creation and income generation and social capital building, including employable technical and business skills' development, technological upgrade, facilitation of access to finance. An important component of the RTC was related to digitalization of access to nation-wide labour market for both – job-seekers and employers [F. 1.1.3].

C. 1.3: Project's design, approaches and tools were relevant to the current development context and needs emerged in the target geographic area as a result of COVOD-19 impact; they were properly addressing absorptive and adaptive resilience capacities, enhancing ability to respond to external shocks in the future [F. 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 1.3.1].

Evaluation Criteria 2: Effectiveness

C. 2.1: Although the RTC continues its implementation, results achieved by the time of evaluation allowed to conclude that the project was overall effective; the stakeholders and beneficiaries were satisfied with the provided assistance, and the majority of activities' results were achieved despite a substantial initial delay with implementation caused mainly by the COVID-19-related restrictions and by the difficulties in mobilizing national expertise to support RTC needs [F.2.1.2 - 2.1.3].

C. 2.2: The management structure of the project was effective and operational, enhanced by the strong regional presence and effective communication with stakeholders and beneficiaries. However, reinforcement of monitoring and procurement functions, and incorporation of technical engineering expertise into PMT could contribute to the higher effectiveness of the project [F. 2.2.1].

C. 2.3: The effectiveness of RTC was confirmed by the increased capacities of the assisted organizations and individuals; increased productivity and competitiveness of MSMEs; supported well-being and social capital of women, youth and returned migrants. Among positive RTC results, the evaluation also identified improved capacities and expanded client base of the project's national implementation partners [F. 2.3.1, 2.4.1; 2.7.1].

C. 2.4: The evaluators concluded that the most tangible RTC achievements were registered in such areas as: technological upgrade of MSMEs and improvement of training base of TVET institutions; facilitation of access to finance for local businesses through subsidized credit, and empowerment of women, youth and returned migrants [F. 2.5.1].

C. 2.5: Less effective were RTC interventions addressing cross-border trade promotion and digital tools/platforms development because of reasons beyond the PMT control, such as limited technical capacities for the mobile and Internet communication in Sughd region and complicated inter-state relations with neighboring Kyrgyzstan [F. 2.5.2].

C. 2.6: Timely implementation of the project was undermined by the introduction of lockdown measures aimed at mitigation of the COVID-19 spread. The PMT also faced difficulties in identification and contracting of relevant national consultants to implement RTC in Sughd region, what led to

additional implementation delays. The overall effectiveness of the PMT was affected by the lack of engineering, EHS and procurement expertise [F. 2.5.3, 2.6.1].

C. 2.7: Certain shortcomings in the project's implementation were caused by insufficient time and resources to support adoption of organizational and social change promoted by the RTC, as well by the technical gaps in pre-assistance assessment of beneficiaries needs and limited post-assistance monitoring of results and emerging additional needs [F. 2.8.2].

C. 2.8: Despite these limitations in allocated capacities and shortcomings in design, the RTC effectiveness was supported by application of good practice and approaches to project management, including: thorough planning based on detailed needs assessment; well-organized selection of implementing partners and beneficiaries; effective two-ways communication of the PMT with stakeholders and beneficiaries, and the stakeholders' contribution to the design and implementation of the project's activities; use of mutually complementary activities to achieve planned results [F. 2.8.1].

C. 2.9: RTC experience and implementation modalities, as well as contacts with key national and regional stakeholders, database of beneficiaries and implementing partners could be used for the further UNDP interventions. RTC approaches to the project management, which proved their efficiency, including strong local presence, and effective communication with project's stakeholders and beneficiaries should be recommended to other UNDP initiatives {F. 2.9.1}.

Evaluation Criteria 3: Coherence

C. 3.1: The project was built upon approaches and results of the UNDP cross-border "Aid-for Trade" programme, and was in coherence with other UNDP initiatives targeting inclusive growth. RTC may be considered coherent with other donor-funded initiatives targeting socio-economic development at the subnational level and cross-border cooperation, including women and youth empowerment and social and economic inclusion, funded by key actors in international development in Tajikistan. The coherence is confirmed by proximity of the assistance goals, applied theory of change, major implementation approaches and tools but also by the focus of international TA on empowerment of vulnerable groups, including women, youth and underrepresented populations. PMT's approaches to the project design and implementation were in line with international practice of ensuring participation and promotion of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups [F. 3.1.1, 3.2.1, 3.3.1].

C. 3.2: Under conditions of existing coherence with other donor-funded initiatives, an improved inter-donor coordination would support project effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability as it may enhance the efforts of project's stakeholders and beneficiaries in mobilization of funds and expertise needed for institutionalization and scaling up of the RTC results [F. 3.2.2, 3.2.3].

Evaluation Criteria 4: Efficiency

C. 4.1: Collected and analyzed data allow to conclude that RTC used human, material and financial resources in efficient way with consideration of cost-effectiveness of the project's activities. Postponed implementation, caused by the CIVID-19 outbreak and related mitigation measures, did not have a substantial impact on the achieved results and related budgets; more stress on the RTC efficiency was put by the insufficient expertise in the area of engineering and change in procurement

procedures leading to delays in transfer of equipment to the RTC graduates, assisted MSMEs, TVET and public sector institutions [F. 4.1.1, 4.1.2].

C. 4.2: Overall effectiveness of the project was enhanced by consideration of the cost effectiveness by PMT across all project's activities; use of mainly national expertise for the project design and implementation; well-established professional relations and effective communication with stakeholders and implementing partners; cost sharing of certain interventions with stakeholders in private and public sectors. Strong presence of the PMT in Sughd also supported effectiveness of the project. Other approaches may contribute to the increased efficiency of TA in the future, such as lasting, multi-layered, mutually complementary assistance addressing adaptive and transformative capacities of the beneficiaries; incorporation into project design of capacity strengthening activities targeting already existing "agents of change" in public, civic and private sector; inclusion into project's design of national/local civil society organizations and professional associations in a capacity of partners to facilitate assistance, including transfer of knowledge, equipment, facilitation of access to finance, etc. Design of interventions targeting mitigation of negative impacts of external shock with unclear consequences should foresee a certain degree of flexibility of PMT in allocation of available resources to ensure an opportunity to provide a quick response under conditions of changing development context [F. 4.2.1, 4.3.1].

Evaluation Criteria 5: Sustainability

C. 5.1: RTC results have strong perspectives of being sustainable in almost all areas of the project's assistance, and especially with respect to: *Activity 1.1. Design and implement competency-based training and self/employment support programs for unemployed men and women in selected priority sectors; Activity 2.2. Improvement of local productive infrastructure and services that improve living standard of population and benefit the target communities in terms of decent jobs and income-generation opportunities, and Activity 2.3. Support local producers and merchants at the border areas to enhance their capacities for sustainable production as well as product placement, branding and packaging, marketing, logistics, business matching and access to finance.* Future of initiatives targeting cross-border trade and economic cooperation substantially depends on the political situation in the Fergana Valley region. Institutionalization and operations of digital tools/platforms for facilitation of access to labour market are the subject of availability of required budget support, which is out of the PMT control [F. 5.1.1, 5.1.2].

C. 5.2: Sustainability of project's results in a large degree depends on ability to mobilize additional resources and skills needed for continuation of initiatives introduced by the PTC. Such support may be provided by another donor, through state budget, or as a result of profit-generating activity of the project's beneficiaries. Local expert community also may contribute to the sustainability of RTC results through continuation of activities based on a market approach or within framework of other donor-funded initiatives. To support sustainability of the RTC in a long-run, the project's stakeholders and beneficiaries should adopt principles of decent job and basic EHS standards [F. 5.1.2, 5.2.1, 5.3.1, 5.3.2].

C. 5.3: The RTC exit strategy may include links to the future activities foreseeing: a/scaling up of the project's approaches with a special focus on the skills development through further support to TVET institutions and entrepreneurship development, including initiatives targeting vulnerable social groups; b/ strengthening of linkages with local financial institutions and consulting companies for

continuation of access to their services; and c/ increased coherence with other UNDP and donor-funded initiatives [F. 5.4.1, 5.4.2, 5.4.3].

Evaluation Criteria 6: Impact

C. 6.1: The evidence collected during evaluation proves that the project has strong potential for contributing to the RTC Outcome and the target SDGs through the improved governance tools, including digitalized solutions and platforms; strengthened TVET system and MSME capacities; supported employable and business skills, leading to job creation and income generation; and inclusion of the vulnerable groups into economic growth and social capital building. Strengthening of coordination and cooperation with other key actors in the field of international development in Tajikistan will reinforce this contribution to impact [F. 6.1.1].

Evaluation Criteria 7: Human Rights/Gender Equality/ Social Inclusion

C. 7.1: Data collected by ET confirmed already noticeable contribution of the RTC to improved human and social capital of the project's beneficiaries. RTC was designed and implemented with a special focus on the vulnerable groups – mainly women, youth, and returned migrants in the target districts of Sughd region, and on mainstreaming of human rights, gender equality and social inclusion at the national and subnational levels. Especially successful were multi-layered interventions addressing major sources of vulnerability through the skills development and support to entrepreneurial activity leading to the job creation and income generation, including provision of a seed capital and equipment for successful graduates form the RTC programmes. At the same time, the evaluators concluded that the project should allocate more resources to support introduction and adoption of the "decent job" concept and an emphasis on the "equal pay" approach. While the project made specific focus on women and youth, it could also cover other vulnerable groups of the population and better track its implication on vulnerable groups. [F. 7.1.1 – 7.4.1].

Recommendations

Based upon analysis of the data, collected during the RTC evaluation, reflected in finding and conclusions above, the ET formulated the following recommendations:

1. When implementing sub-national/local area development projects, UNDP should ensure a strong local presence for effective, two-way communication with sub-national stakeholders and beneficiaries, and a proactive monitoring of activities under implementation.

2. To enhance an effective implementation of the planned activities and to increase sustainability of their results, project design should foresee an active involvement of the GoT at all relevant levels into programmatic activities' planning and implementation, with a special attention paid to support from the public and private sectors to be provided after the completion of UNDP assistance.

3. For the future interventions addressing vulnerable social groups, side by side with women and youth, other groups may be considered, including refugees, PWD, PLHIV and others, depending on the pre-project needs assessment, while the indicators need to be disaggregated accordingly.

4. To support institutional memory strengthening at the assisted entities, and to ensure sustainability of results, the project's design should address an issue of personnel turnover through institutionalization of the recommended change: assistance should include development and adoption of relevant policies, manuals, guidance, and "how to" instructions to ensure continuity of capacity building at the target organizations.

5. To ensure relevant targeting of the activity's beneficiaries, gender equality and inclusion, as well as to speed up the transfer of technical assistance to them, it is advisable to use existing business associations and key civic sector organizations with proved record of transparent and efficient cooperation with UNDP and donor-funded initiatives in Tajikistan as one of the key channels of the TA provision.

11. To increase effectiveness of programming and to support sustainability of results, the project's design should consider further provision of assistance to beneficiaries using corporately available tools, including transfer of equipment, as well as facilitation of access to subsidized loans, followed with additional support in a form of coaching, technical advice, linkages to the markets, etc. This approach is specifically recommended to support of women, youth, and vulnerable social groups.

6. For activities targeting business and trade development, the designers of the project should foresee an active involvement of international and regional experts to support familiarization of the stakeholders and target beneficiaries with the best international practice of doing business, required standards and procedures, and wider international opportunities for access to financing and markets.

7. In cases, when project activities include a transfer of equipment to target beneficiaries, the project workplan should reserve sufficient time and resources to conduct a proper due diligence of its anticipated use; to analyze an ownership structure to ensure compliance with the beneficiary selection criteria, and to foresee time and resources to carry on monitoring during the implementation, including a post-transfer inspection to verify results of the due diligence and to identify emerging need for further assistance.

8. All the projects targeting development of production base and creation of new jobs, as well as initiatives supporting capacity-strengthening of VTI and professional training institutions, should foresee activities promoting principles of decent job and environmental sustainability; relevant assessments are needed at the project inception stage in line with UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure.

9. In case of the project extension, to continue monitoring of the use of transferred equipment with the purpose to address any issues outstanding. As part of the exit strategy the RTC should implement a "road map" for the post-assistance stage, with a focus on provision of additional grants in form of equipment and tools to the graduates of capacity building activities to reach relevant indicators, identified in the Project Document.

Lessons Learned

As appropriate and/or if requested in the TOR, the report should include discussion of lessons learned from the evaluation, that is, new knowledge gained from the particular circumstance (intervention, context, outcomes, even evaluation methods) that are applicable to a similar context.

Lessons should be concise and based on specific evidence presented in the report. Gender equality and women's empowerment, disability and other cross-cutting issues should also be considered.

Lessons learned presented in this section are related mainly to the RTC project management organization and selected modalities for the delivery of RTC results; some of them are reflected further in the recommendations made by the evaluators as a result of this assignment.

1. Strong presence of the TRC PMT in the Sughd region had a significant positive impact on the RTC implementation.

2. Proactive involvement of the Government into design and implementation of project activities substantially contributed to the relevance, effectiveness and perspectives of sustainability of the RTC results.

3. Effective two-way communication with the stakeholders at all stages of project design and implementation supports effective achievement of anticipated results.

4. In case of short/mid-term project planning horizon, an ambitious targeting of a large number of sometimes loosely related areas of assistance may lead to the dispersion of limited project's resources and to the decreased effectiveness and efficiency of interventions.

5. To support business development of the target MSME and to enhance trade expansion, an involvement of regional and international consultants is helpful in bringing wider international perspectives and in enriching understanding of international business environment.

6. Close cooperation of the RTC PMT with local "agents of change" (in public, private and civic sectors), actively involved into economic and social development of the target geographic region and possessing a good understanding of the local needs, opportunities and constrains, as well as knowing well the audience targeted by the project, proved its effectiveness and efficiency. Involvement of local civic sector is especially effective when addressing specific needs of vulnerable social groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, etc.

7. Mutually complementary assistance provided to the target group of beneficiaries contributes to the effectiveness of the provided assistance (supply of equipment supported with the improved business planning, marketing, introduction of principles of the decent job, environmental and health safety aspects, etc.).

Annexes

Барномаи Рушди Созмони Милали

Муттаҳид

TERMS OF REFERENCE
FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT "ACCELERATING POST COVID-19
ECONOMIC RECOVERY THROUGH IMPROVED LIVELIHOOD, EMPLOYABILITY,
AND REGIONAL COOPERATION IN FERGHANA VALLEY"

Country:	Tajikistan
Description of the assignment:	International Consultant for conducting final evaluation of the UNDP "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" project.
Duty station:	Homebased (30 working days within April –June 2023) with one in-country mission for 14 working days to Dushanbe, Khujand, Buston, Guliston, Isfara, B.Gafurov, Konibodom, Spitamen, Dj.Rasulov, Devashtich, Asht and Maschoh distctricts of Sughd region, Tajikistan. Transportation to field zones will be arranged by UNDP.
Type of Contract:	Individual Consultant (IC)
Project name:	UNDP "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" project
Period of assignment/services:	90 calendar days from 01 April to 30 June 2023 (contract duration period)

Background
1. **Background and Context**

UNDP through its Sustainable Economic Development (SED) Cluster and its projects has defined a set of strategies The "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" project is focused on strengthening livelihood and resilience potential of people living in the Tajik part of Ferghana Valley, contributing to recovery from COVID-19 impact and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas. The project is implemented in close cooperation with the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan, Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, Administration of Sughd region and other governmental and civil society organizations. The key Development Goal of the project is to restore and improve livelihoods, promote productive and decent employment and increase income generation opportunities through innovation for sustainable enterprise development and cross-border trade promotion in Ferghana Valley in Tajikistan. The Project will target vulnerable women and men, youth, retuned migrants and SMEs in Sughd province, living and working in rural districts bordering with Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, considering their vulnerability to unemployment, social exclusion, social tensions

in border areas. A special focus will be on activation of young men and women, who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET). The project will apply a gender-sensitive approach to reach girls and women, to equip them with employable knowledge and modern skills, and empower them to engage more actively in economic activities.

The following outcomes and outputs are envisaged to be achieved by the project:

> **Outcome:** Regional and local governments, MSMEs and people effectively adapt their business and livelihoods strategies to withstand the social and economic challenges triggered by COVID-19 and other economic risks.
>
> **Output 1:** Enhanced opportunities to reskill and upskill targeting unemployed young women and men, returned migrants and people from vulnerable households;
>
> **Output 2:** Innovations for stimulation of entrepreneurship and income-generation for vulnerable communities in bordering areas;
>
> **Output 3:** Promoting startup platforms and development of trade potential across Ferghana Valley

The project is in line with national and local development priorities, which, in their turn, contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Among 17 Goals, the project will be contributing directly and indirectly in implementation of the Goals # 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 17 covering issues of no poverty, quality education, gender equality, decent work and economic growth, sustainable cities and communities as well as partnership building with various sectors of society in the context of local and regional development.

The project targets the following groups:
1) Female and male youth aged between 15 and 30 through employment promotion services, on-the-job training, apprenticeships and skill training opportunities leading to sustainable employment;
2) Female and male citizens, current job seekers, members of rural communities living in economically disadvantaged areas, members of households affected by COVID-19 by assisting them in better accessing productive employment, decent work and income opportunities as a way to lift their well-being and minimize their unemployment insecurities, income inequality and social exclusion;
3) Women and men who own and/or manage Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including farmers by increasing income from and employment in the selected value chains;
4) Women and men, including youth, who work in MSMEs as paid or unpaid employees or workers that benefit from value chain interventions;
5) Returned migrants lacking job opportunities in their locations.
6) SMEs, private entrepreneurs, farmers and merchants involved in agricultural value chains and trade at the local and regional level, whose businesses were affected by COVID-19 and its consequences, and who could benefit from more effective cross-border trade cooperation.
7) Local government authorities involved in local economic development planning and managing employment and economic development processes.

UNDP within its "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" project plans to engage international and national consultants to conduct project final evaluation.

The project information is summarized in below table.

Project/outcome title	Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley

Atlas ID	00123995, **Output ID**: 00119061
Corporate outcome and output	**Outcome 2.** People in Tajikistan benefit from equitable and sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment, stable energy supply, improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and more favourable business environment especially for entrepreneurs and farmers. **CPD Output 2.1.** National and sub-national systems and institutions enabled to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and employment and livelihood intensive.
Country	Tajikistan
Region	Sughd region, Tajikistan
Date project document signed	December, 2020

Project dates	**Start date**	**End date**
	January 1, 2021	June 30, 2023

Project budget	2,000,000.00 USD
Project expenditure as of December 31,2022	815,907.34 USD
Funding source	Russian Federation – UNDP Trust Fund for Development
Implementing party	UNDP Tajikistan (DIM)
Working district	**Sughd region**: Dushanbe, Khujand, Buston, Guliston, B.Gafurov, Dj.Rasulov, Spitamen, Isfara, Devashtich, Konibodom, Asht, Maschoh districts;

2. Evaluation purpose, scope and objectives

UNDP within its "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" project plans to conduct final evaluation of the project.

The purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the results of the project in the one output area. The final evaluation should assess the **implementation approaches, progress made**, and **challenges encountered**, **identify,** and **document the lessons learnt** and **good practices**, and **make specific recommendations for future course of actions**.

The specific objectives are:

- To assess the effectiveness of the livelihood enhancement support provided to people living in the Tajik part of Ferghana Valley, contributing to recovery from COVID-19 impact and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas is to strengthen livelihood and resilience potential

- To assess the effectiveness of technical support provided by project to improve the local productive infrastructure and services that improve the living standards of population, and benefit the target communities in terms of decent jobs and income-generation opportunities

- To access the effectiveness of promotion digital solutions for stronger engagement and collaboration of public and private sectors and strengthening efficiency of public services to local communities.

- To assess the usefulness of the socio-technical support provided by the project, the effectiveness of provision with the employment opportunities in the target districts of

Sughd region targeting to enable the unemployed population and job seekers to strengthen their economic livelihoods opportunities through additional knowledge, skills and jobs created.

- To assess the effectiveness of the livelihood support provided to vulnerable people to respond to the impact of COVID-19 (in the framework of project-supported initiatives).
- To assess engagement of the national government stakeholders and local authorities in the project, and their understanding, including financial and other commitment for sustainability of activities.
- To assess effectiveness of cooperation with and engagement of private sector and civil society organizations in the project results and their role in sustainability of the project results.
- To assess the effectiveness of the action taken for creating new niches for income generation, employment and self-employment for farmers and vulnerable rural communities.
- To evaluate the project activities on local development planning and its effectiveness.
- To assess effectiveness of gender-sensitive approach applied by the project to reach out to most vulnerable groups of women and girls.
- To assess effectiveness of engagement of experts, intuitions, and partner organizations in implementation of the project.
- To propose concrete recommendations to UNDP on continuation of activities on livelihood improvement and area-based development.
- To document best practices as a results of project implementation process.

Scope of Work:
The final evaluation should look into the relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the support provided by the project. In addition, the evaluation should indicate if the produced results are in the right direction towards facilitating the efforts of the Government of Tajikistan in terms of promoting livelihood of rural population and sustainable local development in the project areas. Particularly, the evaluation should cover at least the following areas.

- **Relevance of the project:** review the progress against its purpose, objectives, outputs and indicators, as per the project documents and its components, such as the Theory of Change, Results and Resources Framework, M&E framework, and ascertain whether assumptions and risks were valid and the risk mitigation measures applied by the project were relevant;
- **Effectiveness and efficiency** of implementation approaches: review project's technical as well as operational approaches and deliverables, quality of results and their impact, alignment with national priorities and responding to the needs of the stakeholders;
- **Review** the project's approaches, in general and with regards to mainstreaming of gender equality and social inclusion, with particular focus on women and marginalized groups;
- **Review and assess** the risks and opportunities (in terms of resource mobilization, synergy and areas of interventions) related to future interventions;
- **Review** external factors beyond the control of the project that have affected it negatively or positively;
- **Review** planning, management and quality assurance mechanisms for the delivery of the project interventions;
- **Review** coordination and communication processes and mechanisms with the stakeholders.

Main duties and deliverables to be achieved by the international consultant:

- Study the RTC project related documents (i.e. relevant national documents, project documents, progress reports, etc.) to evaluate project effective and efficient implementation of outputs and their contribution to project outcomes and impact.
- Inception report detailing the reviewer's understanding of what is being evaluated, why it is being evaluated, and how (methodology) it will be evaluated. The inception report should also include a proposed schedule of tasks, evaluation tools, activities, and deliverables.
- Prepare the evaluation matrix that includes key criteria, indicators, and questions to capture and assess them.
- Conduct interviews, meetings, workshops, etc. with project stakeholders, national counterpart, project team to collect data and analyse the extent of RTC and overall UNDP contribution in improving economic and trade development in Ferghana region, the effectiveness of the livelihood support provided to vulnerable people to respond to the impact of COVID-19 (in the framework of project-supported initiatives), the effectiveness of provision with the employment opportunities in the project target districts.
- Evaluation debriefing- immediately after completion of data collection, the evaluator should provide preliminary debriefing and findings to the UNDP/Project team.
- An exit presentation on findings and recommendations.
- Draft Evaluation report covering overall impact of UNDP engagement with the specific focus on the recent RTC project, including project achievements against set targets and objectives, key lessons learned, sustainability of provided inputs, conclusions, and related recommendations for review and comments.
- Evaluation Audit Trail – The comments on the draft report and changes by the evaluator in response to them should be retained by the consultant team to show how they have addressed comments.
- Final report within stipulated timeline with sufficient detail and quality by incorporating feedback from the concerned parties.
- Evaluation Audit Trail – The comments on the draft report and changes by the evaluator in response to them should be retained by the consultant team to show how they have addressed comments.
- Final report within stipulated timeline with sufficient detail and quality by incorporating feedback from the concerned parties.
-

3. Evaluation Criteria and guiding questions

The evaluation will follow the OECD-DAC's revised evaluation criteria - Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. Human Rights, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion will be added as cross-cutting criteria. The guiding questions outlined below should be further refined by the consultant and agreed with UNDP.

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Relevance	• To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs? • How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project? • To what extent the project was able to address the needs of the target groups in the changed context?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
	• To what extent are the objectives of the project design (inputs, activities, outputs and their indicators) and its theory of change logical and coherent? Does the project contribute to the outcome and output of the CPD?
	• To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups (including tackling the gender equality and social inclusion aspects) in terms of creating enable environment for inclusive, affordable, and people-centered reconstruction policies and actions?
Effectiveness	• What have been the key results and changes attained for men, women and vulnerable groups?
	• In which areas has the project had greatest achievements? Why and what have been the supporting factors? How can the project build on or expand these achievements?
	• To what extent the project activities were delivered effectively in terms of quality, quantity, and timing?
	• What factors have contributed to achieving or not achieving the intended outputs?
	• What were the lessons and how were feedback/learning incorporated in the subsequent process of planning and implementation?
	• How effective has the project been in enhancing the capacity of the communities and local governments to create enabling environment for inclusive youth economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?
Coherence	• To what extent is this intervention coherent with other interventions which have similar objectives?
	• **Internal coherence:** To what extent is the intervention coherent with the country's policies?
	• **External coherence:** To what extent is the intervention consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?
Efficiency	• How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve the above results in a timely manner?
	• To what extent was the existing project management structure appropriate and efficient in generating the expected results?
	• To what extent has the project implementation strategy and its execution been efficient and cost-effective?
	• To what extent were the resources used to address inequalities in general, and gender issues in particular?
Sustainability	• To what extent did the project interventions contribute towards sustaining the results achieved by the project?
	• What are the plans or approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?
	• What could be potential new areas of work and innovative measures for sustaining the results?
	• To what extent have lessons learned been documented by the project on a continual basis to inform the project for needful change?
	• What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?
Impact	• To what extent the project initiatives indicate that intended impact will be achieved in the future?
	• To what extent does the intervention contribute to achieving the SDGs?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Human rights	• To what extent have rural people, NEET, physically challenged, women and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefitted from the work of the project and with what impact?
Gender equality and social inclusion	• To what extent the project approach was effective in promoting gender equality and social inclusion - particularly focusing on the marginalized and the poor through knowledge transfer, livelihood action, planning and training? • To what extent has the project promoted positive changes of women and marginalized group? Were there any unintended effects?

4. Methodology

The evaluation methods provided here are indicative only. The evaluator should review the methodology and propose the final methods and data collection tools as part of the inception report. The methods and tools should adequately address the issues of gender equality and social inclusion.

The evaluation should include a mix of qualitative and quantitative processes and methodologies. The evaluator must provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable, and useful. The evaluator is expected to follow a participatory and consultative approach ensuring close engagement with government counterparts, project team, UNDP Country Office, and other key stakeholders, including project participants. Therefore, the evaluator will work closely with the UNDP Country Office team to undertake the evaluation adopting at least the following methods:

- **Document review:** review of project document/proposals, project's interim progress report, project modification document, Steering Committee minutes, progress reports, other relevant documents.
- **Consultations** with UNDP programme and project staff, officials of Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan and other government partners, local authorities of the project areas at the district and jamoat levels.
- **Consultations** with other project partners, including private sector and CSOs, from Tajikistan and Russia as applicable.
- **Field observations, interactions** (structured, semi-structured) and consultations with the beneficiaries (youth trained, project grantees, microfinance recipients, and livelihood supported communities), plus beneficiary local authorities.
- **Briefing and debriefing sessions** with UNDP and Project team as well as with other partners will be organized. The evaluator should ensure triangulation of the various data sources to maximize the validity and reliability of data.

The process/steps mentioned above should ensure that the most appropriate and relevant data are gathered for the above-mentioned objectives. Based on the analysis and findings, the recommendations should be provided for future direction of the initiatives.

The consultant will have to submit the final full report in English led by international evaluator. The structure and content of the report should meet the requirements of the UNDP Evaluation Guideline.

The final methodological approach including interview schedule, field visits, evaluation matrix and data to be used in the evaluation should be clearly outlined in the inception report and fully discussed and agreed with UNDP. The evaluator should select the respondents using an appropriate sampling technique. While selecting the respondents, the evaluator team should ensure gender balance.

5. Key Deliverables

The evaluator should submit the following deliverables:

Key Deliverables / Evaluation Products	Timeline	Remarks
Inception report detailing the reviewer's understanding of what is being evaluated, why it is being evaluated, and how (methodology) it will be evaluated. The inception report should also include a proposed schedule of tasks, evaluation tools, activities, and deliverables	3 weeks upon signature of contract	Evaluation Manager should approve the inception report along with evaluation matrix
Evaluation matrix that includes key criteria, indicators, and questions to capture and assess them		
Evaluation debriefing- immediately after completion of data collection, the evaluator should provide preliminary debriefing and findings to the UNDP/Project team	After completion of the data collection and in-country mission 5 weeks upon signature of contract	
An exit presentation on findings and recommendations	6 weeks upon signature of contract	
Draft Evaluation Report for review and comments	7 weeks upon signature of contract	
Evaluation Audit Trail – The comments on the draft report and changes by the evaluator in response to them should be retained by the consultant team to show how they have addressed comments	8 weeks upon signature of contract	
Final Report incorporating the addressed comments and final list of recommendations indicating the due dates and responsible units for implementation of the recommendations as well as management response from UNDP CO	10 weeks after the start of the evaluation (final evaluation report with the management response from UNDP CO should be submitted not later than on 30 June 2023)	

6. Team composition and required competencies

An individual international consultant/evaluator is envisaged to undertake this final evaluation with the involvement of one national consultant. The person involved in any way in the design, management or implementation or advising any aspect of the intervention that is the subject of the evaluation will not be qualified. The lead evaluator and national consultants (as needed) will be selected by UNDP CO.
Duty Station: Home based with at least 14 calendar days trip to project implementation sites.
Working days: 30 days during the period from April to June 2023
Contract period: 90 days during the period from April to June 2023

7. Evaluation Ethics

"This evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the UNEG 'Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation'. The consultants must safeguard the rights and confidentiality of information providers, interviewees, and stakeholders through measures to

ensure compliance with legal and other relevant codes governing collection of data and reporting on data. The consultant must also ensure security of collected information before and after the evaluation and protocols to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of sources of information where that is expected. The information knowledge and data gathered in the evaluation process must also be solely used for the evaluation and not for other uses without the express authorization of UNDP and partners."

Consultants will be held to the highest ethical standards and are required to sign a Code of Conduct upon acceptance of the assignment.

8. Management and Implementation Arrangements

The principal responsibility for managing this evaluation resides with the UNDP CO in Tajikistan. The UNDP CO will contract the consultant and ensure the timely implementation of the evaluation. The International Evaluation Consultant will directly report to Evaluation Manager i.e. the UNDP Team Leader on Sustainable Economic Development Cluster in this case. The Evaluation Manager will assure smooth, quality and independent implementation of the evaluation with needful guidance from UNDP's Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst and Senior Management. The Evaluation Manager will clear the deliverables of the assignment, including an Inception report and final evaluation report. The Evaluation Manager will also ensure response to evaluation recommendations by providing management responses and key actions to all recommendations provided. The UNDP CO Monitoring and Evaluation Analyst will support the Evaluation Manager in all the steps of the evaluation process and will provide oversight and quality assurance of the evaluation deliverables.

The project team will provide required information for evaluation under the leadership of the Team Leader of the Sustainable Economic Development Cluster. The project team will arrange all the field visits, stakeholder consultations and interviews as needed.

The International consultant will maintain all the communication through the Evaluation Manager. The Evaluation Manager should clear each step of the evaluation. The final evaluation report will be signed off by the Resident Representative. The International consultant will be briefed by UNDP upon arrival on the objectives, purpose and scope of the Final evaluation.

The evaluation will remain fully independent. A mission wrap-up meeting during which comments from participants will be noted for incorporation in the final report.

Responsibility for Expenses and their Reimbursement:

- The International consultant will be responsible for all personal local travel, living and accommodation, and these expenses are included in the total amount offered by the contract.

Duration, Monitoring and Reporting:

- The assignment is scheduled to begin no later than April 2023. The successful candidate will report to the UNDP Team Leader on Sustainable Economic Development Cluster. Reporting will be based on deliverables specified in the above.

Payment

- Payments are based upon output, i.e. upon delivery of the services specified in the TOR that contribute to the overall project deliverables as state above under "Expected Deliverables".

9. Time frame for the evaluation process

The evaluation is expected to start in April 2023 for an estimated contract duration of 90 calendar days, and only 30 working day are envisage for the assigned tasks. This will include desk reviews, primary information collection, field work, and report writing.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TENTATIVE DAYS
The Project evaluation is expected to be carried out in the period from 01 April- 30 June 2023. **Final evaluation report with the management response from UNDP CO should be submitted by 30 June 2023.**		
a. Desk review of the contextual and project-related documentation	International Consultant	3 weeks upon signature of contract
b. Inception report detailing the reviewer's understanding of what is being evaluated, why it is being evaluated, and how (methodology) it will be evaluated. The inception report should also include a proposed schedule of tasks, evaluation tools, activities, and deliverables		
c. 14-day in-country mission and presentation of findings at the end of the mission	International Consultant	After completion of the data collection 5 weeks upon signature of contract
d. An exit presentation on findings and recommendations	International Consultant	6 weeks upon signature of contract
e. First draft of the Project Evaluation report submitted within 2 weeks after the mission	International Consultant	7 weeks upon signature of contract
f. Final Project Evaluation report with the strategic and feasible recommendations in a form and substance satisfactory to UNDP, submitted within 2 weeks after the receipt of final comments from UNDP	International Consultant	10 weeks upon signature of contract
Total		**30 working days**

The exact delivery and sequence of the products will be determined in discussion with the UNDP Team Leader on Sustainable Economic Development Cluster.

10. Annexes

Please add relevant, e.g.
- Intervention results framework and theory of change.

- Key stakeholders and partners.

- Documents to be reviewed and consulted.

- Evaluation matrix template.

- Outline of the evaluation report format.

- Pledge of ethical conduct forms.

UNDP Evaluation Guidelines, highlighting
- Inception report template (section 4)

- Evaluation report template and expected content (Section 4)

- Quality Assessment process (Section 6)

Annex 2. Methodology-related Documents

Annex 2-a. Evaluation Methodology

Overview of the Approach to the FE

The final evaluation of the RTC was conducted in line with requirements formulated in the TOR, in full conformity with the principles outlined in the UNEG "Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation", and in line with the "OECD/DAC (2010) Quality Standards for Development Evaluation" and current best practices.

The evaluation included the following key phases:

1. Desk Study and Inception Report drafting
2. In-country data collection, and
3. Drafting the Final Evaluation Report and Exit Presentation of findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned.

At each of these phases the evaluators communicated with the UNDP country team, and addressed all the feedback, comments and suggestions to the deliverables. An implementation of each next phase was adjusted to the results of the previous phase.

In line with TOR, the evaluation considered 7 criteria OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, which included *relevance* of the RTC activities within a wider context of support to the inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Tajikistan; *effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability* of the Project's results; *impact; human rights, gender equality and social inclusion.* Specific attention was paid to the cross-cutting themes of *gender equality, youth empowerment and social inclusion*.

The evaluation questions for the evaluation was organized around criteria mentioned above. They effectively supported the data collection and analysis, and allowed to meet objectives of evaluation, and to formulate findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Some of the evaluation questions from the TOR were reviewed during the inception stage to better reflect specific development conditions (for more details about evaluation questions revision, please refer to the Inception Report for this assignment); the edited version of them is presented in the Table 1 below:

*Table 1. **Evaluation Criteria and Evaluation Questions***

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Relevance	• To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs? • How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context? To what extent the project was able to address the needs of the target groups in the changed context? • To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemics?
Effectiveness	• Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
	• To what extend the management structure of the project was effective and operational? Could a work-flow be optimized? What may be changed to increase effectiveness?
	• What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?
	• Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?
	• In which areas has the project had greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?
	• What were the reasons for implementation delays (if any) and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate them?
	• How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?
	• What were the main contributing and hindering factors to the achievement of results?
	• How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?
Coherence	• What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?
	• To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?
	• External coherence: To what extent is the intervention consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?
Efficiency	• To what extend the RTC implementation strategy and its implementation were efficient in generating the expected results? How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve planned results in a timely manner?
	• Which factors supported the cost-effectiveness of RTC interventions (*RTC management structure, implementation modality, cooperation with national counterparts, etc.*)?
	• Which changes (in planning, coordination, implementation modalities, partnerships, selection of locations etc.) could lead to the higher cost-effectiveness in in the future.
Sustainability	• Which RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?
	• What are the approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?
	• Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences?
	• What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?
Impact	• What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement?

Criteria	Evaluation Questions
Human rights/Gender equality/ Social inclusion	• In what specific ways were women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations included in the RTC programming? What are the best practices for targeting and engaging women, youth, and other underrepresented populations within the context of future shocks and stresses? • What is the evidence of RTC's achieved results in gender equality and inclusiveness of socially vulnerable populations? What did work well and what challenges did emerge? • What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project? • What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Overall, the final evaluation was designed around these evaluation questions presented in the Box1 and was conducted *in a participatory manner* by engaging various groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The evaluation used a *mix of qualitative and quantitative methods* (with an emphasis made on the latter type); qualitative data which was disaggregated by gender to the extent possible.

The evaluators reviewed all available project-related documents and secondary data reflecting overall development context in Tajikistan, and specifically in Sughd region, and collected data in course of interviews/group interviews with RTC stakeholders and beneficiaries, mini-survey of the Project's direct beneficiaries and site visits' observations.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection started at the *Inception phase*, when the project documents were identified and reviewed with consideration of availability and quality of data, as well as sufficiency of information to evaluate the project (Theory of Change, Logic Model, performance management framework and related documentation).

Institutional and general development context also were considered as part of the Inception Report drafting, based upon project documents and secondary data review and analysis of the secondary data (please refer to Annex 4).

In preparation to the in-country data collection, evaluators in cooperation with the PMT conducted stakeholders and beneficiaries mapping and planned one by one and group interviews with representatives of key groups of stakeholders and beneficiaries using mainly purposeful approach.

Overall, the evaluators applied the *following approaches to data collection*:
- Desk review of the project documents and external documents, including relevant national development policy and strategy documents, as well as secondary data and background documents describing overall development context, development challenges and priorities.
- Individual and group semi-structured interviews conducted in person or remotely with:
  - KIs, representing Project's stakeholders and direct beneficiaries, including representatives of governmental Agencies, subnational authorities, MSME supporting organizations, subject matter experts, private sector organizations, assisted MSMEs, etc.;
  - Experts/civil society organizations focusing on inclusive growth, support to business, involved into skills development, providing support to the vulnerable social groups, women and youth empowerment in Tajikistan; and

       o   Representatives of UNDT Country Team and Project Management Team (PMT).
- On-site observations to verify data collected during desk review and to examine achieved results at the local level, to assess sustainability of provided technical assistance, and to collect evidence of contribution to the outputs and outcome; and
- Mini survey of two groups of RTC beneficiaries: trainees – youth graduated from the Project capacity building program and supported further with grants allowing to launch productive activity; and SMEs (women and youth owned) benefitted from the affordable credit to expand existing business activity.

All semi-structured interviews and group discussions were organized around **detailed questionnaires/data collection tools** (please see **Annex 2-c**), which correspond to the evaluation questions/sub-questions. Each questionnaire, designed for the specific groups of interviewees, included both common questions, as well as questions specific for each group. Such approach allowed evaluators to obtain a full range of opinions regarding the project's implementation and its results but also ensured that data are comparable across all the groups of respondents.

All the planned one by one interviews and group interviews were conducted in-person.

To enrich further the collected data, evaluators used on-line / telephone mini-survey targeting larger number of RTC beneficiaries (please refer to the **Annex 2-d**, containing mini-survey questionnaire and data collection framework). Overall, 30 beneficiaries were approached by the evaluation team (12 - for trainees supported with equipment and tools, and 15 - for SMEs received affordable credit). 27 responses were collected (12 trainees, including females; and 15 SMEs, including female owned), with overall response rate 90%.

The generalized approach to the data collection is reflected in the Evaluation Evidence Matrix presented in Annex 2-b.

Sampling Methodology

The evaluators use mostly purposeful approach but also "snowball" technique for sampling of KIs. The purposive selection of KIs for data collection considered the following:

- Various types of assistance provided (training, coaching, support to start-ups, etc.), and
- Various geographic locations of the technical assistance provided.

The respondents for interviews, were preliminarily identified based on analysis of the project's documents and additional consultations with key stakeholders and partners. Data collection in Dushanbe and Khujand was combined with a series of interviews in the assisted rural districts of Sughd province. Evaluators also conducted interviews with the available PMT members, experts and organizations, which participated in the project's implementation, and representatives of key national and subnational stakeholders (for the list of conducted interviews/group interviews please refer to Annex 3-a.)

Sampling Frame for the evaluation is presented below:

*Table 2. **RTC Sampling Frame***

Sampling Frame	Sample Composition	Methodology Linkage	Sample Size
UNDP-TJ (Implementing Agency)	UNDP CO	KII	4 KIs (briefing and debriefing); 1 - KII
RTC Donor	Embassy of the RF	KII	2 (interviews with Donor)
Partner Government / Responsible Parties / Public Sector Organizations at the National and Sub-national Levels	Ministry of Economic Development and Trade (MEDT)	KII / GI	17 KIs
	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment (MLME)	KII / GI	
	Executive body of State Power of Sughd Region	KII / GI	
	Investment Department of Sughd region	KII / GI	
	Department of the Agency of Employment in Sughd region	KII / GI	
	Consultative Council on Improving Investment Climate under Chairman of Sughd region	KII / GI	
	Regional Branch of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Sughd Region (*semi-governmental organization*)	KII / GI	
	Executive bodies of power in the target districts (11)	KII / GI	
Experts / Services' Providers / SMEs Development / Trade Support Institutions / Consulting Companies / Professional Associations at the National and Sub-national Levels	Association of Dekhan Farms (ADF)	KII / GI	
	Business Advisory and Information Center (BAIC), Sughd region	KII / GI	
	PO MIS, Sughd region	KII / GI	
	PO MIR, Sughd region	KII / GI	
	Association of Entrepreneurs of Sughd region (AESR), Sughd region	KII / GI	

	PE Haydarov, Sughd region	KII / GI	13 KIs
	Union of Professional Consultants of Tajikistan, Dushanbe	KII / GI	
	Expert on fruits and vegetables, Sughd region	KII / GI	
	Trade promotion expert, Sughd region	KII / GI	
	Expert on IT, Sughd region	KII / GI	
Direct Beneficiaries, Sughd Region	Graduates / Grantees: 20 persons	KII / GI	18 KIs
	SME /Access to Finance: 25 MSMEs	KII / GI	
	Youth Mentorship: 4 persons	KII / GI	
	SME, Quality Standards: 5 SMEs	KII / GI	
	Equipment Provision: 10 SME	KII / GI	
	Support to Public Services: 6 organizations	KII / GI	
International Partners (when applicable)	USAID	SD	Secondary sources of 6 organizations
	EU	SD	
	GIZ	SD	
	ADB	SD	
	EBDR	SD	
	WB	SD	

Data Analysis, Findings and Recommendations

The evaluators applied key methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis to process the collected data, to answer the FE questions, to identify contributions to the anticipated outcomes, to formulate findings, conclusions and recommendations, and to draft lessons learned in line with TOR requirements. The key data analysis methods included:

- Theory of change;
- Contribution analysis;
- Direct attribution, and when the measurement of direct attribution is not possible - casual linkages;
- Standard statistical analysis package (frequency distribution, measuring central tendency and variations, correlation analysis);
- Various types of qualitative analysis of narrative information, including documentation, categorization, examining relationships and displaying data, authentication conclusions;
- Gap analysis;

- Process mapping and visualization.

At the analysis stage, the evaluators considered the cross-cutting issues such as: social inclusion, gender equality, youth empowerment.

To ensure a sufficient level of validity and reliability, the evaluators applied data triangulation (using Project documents, secondary data sources and primary interviews) and substantiation (verifying and confirming findings with respondents with different backgrounds, qualifications, experience, and knowledge).

All these mutually complementary data collection and analysis methods, while used together, allowed to produce specific and concise evaluation findings and recommendations based on facts, evidence, and data, which are presented in this evaluation Final Report.

Major Risks and Limitations

The following *risks* and possible mitigation measure were considered by evaluation team to obtain reliable evaluation results:

- ***Potential limited availability of direct beneficiaries for interviews and group discussion*** due to the high personnel turnover in the governmental organizations and difficulties in reaching remote geographic locations during limited in time in-country mission.

This risk was mitigated during in-country mission planning stage to ensure availability of key groups of stakeholders involved into RTC implementation.

- ***Recall bias –*** some stakeholders may not recall in full details the project's contribution.

This risk was mitigated in direct communication with representatives of stakeholders by clarifying the list of activities conducted by RTC and by a use of complementary data collection tools.

- ***Resistance to evaluation*** - reluctance of key informants to have one-to-one interviews and/or participate in group discussions.

To mitigate this resistance, the evaluation team shared in advance the evaluation questionnaire with the potential respondents; explained and confirmed the principle of confidentiality, and followed clauses in the consent form - an introductory part of each data collection protocol.

Annex 2-b. Evaluation Matrix

EQs/ Sub-questions	Data	Sources	Methods	Types of Respondents				
				UNDP-TJ	Donor	GoT / Public Sector	Experts / Services; Providers	Direct Beneficiaries
EQ 1: To what extent did RTC respond to the development needs and priorities of Tajikistan?								
1.1. To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities and policies, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?	Alignment with GoT policies, strategies & plans; UNDAF and SDGs	NDS UNDAF Pr. Doc. KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Doc. Review Semi-structured KII/GI					
1.2. To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?	Alignment with identified national/sub-national needs Opinions expressed by stakeholders	Pr. Doc. KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Doc. Review Semi-structured KII/GI					
1.3. How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context?	Alignment of the RTC design with GoT priorities and emerging needs	NDS UNDAF Pr. Doc. KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
EQ 2: To what extend RTC was effective?								
2.1. Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?	Activity results indicators Assessment of the project based on analysis of the progress towards results	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
2.2. To what extend the management structure of the project was effective and operational? Could a work-flow be optimized? What might be changed to increase effectiveness?	Assessment of the project based on analysis of the progress towards results Opinions expressed by stakeholders	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
2.3. What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?	General/ gender disaggregated activity results indicators Assessment of stakeholders and beneficiaries	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
2.4. Are there unintended results, either positive or	Presence of positive/ negative	KIs Site visits	Analysis of:					

negative? How did these unintended results happen?	results, outputs and impacts		Semi-structured KII/GI Site visits					
2.5. In which areas did the project has its greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?	General/ gender disaggregated activity results indicators Assessment by the stakeholders and beneficiaries	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
2.6. What were the reasons for implementation delays (if any) and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate them?	AWPs General/ gender disaggregated activity results indicators	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
2.7. How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?	Alignment of results framework with Project Document and AWPs Assessment by stakeholders	Pr. Doc. KIs Secondary sources Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
2.8. What were the main contributing and hindering factors to the achievement of results?	Alignment of the result framework with the Prodoc and AWPs Assessment by stakeholders	Pr. Doc. KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
2.9. How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?	Alignment of RTC outputs with UNFAD and SDGs Assessment by stakeholders	KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Semi-structured KII/GI Doc. review					
EQ3: To what extend RTC was coherent?								
3.1. To what extent is the RTC consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?	Alignment of the RTC strategy and implementation with international norms	Pr. Doc. KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
3.2. What other interventions could	Compatibility of RTC with	Review of donor-	Analysis of:					

be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?	international donors' portfolio in TJ	funded activities in TJ KIs Secondary sources	Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
3.3. To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?	Compatibility of RTC with international donors' portfolio in TJ	Review of donor-funded activities in TJ KIs Secondary sources	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
EQ 4. To what extent RTC interventions were cost-effective?								
4.1. To what extend the RTC implementation strategy and its implementation were efficient in generating the expected results? How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve planned results in a timely manner?	Dynamic of execution of project budget; amendments (if any) Stakeholders' perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of RTC activities	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
4.2. Which factors supported the cost-effectiveness of RTC interventions (*RTC management structure, implementation modality, cooperation with national counterparts, etc.*)?	Assessment of the RTC results based on analysis of the progress towards results and associated costs	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Pr. Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
4.3. Which changes (in planning, coordination, implementation modalities, partnerships, selection of locations etc.) could lead to the higher cost-effectiveness in in the future?	Analysis of the RTC implementatio n costs Stakeholders' perceptions	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Pr. Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
EQ 5. How sustainable are the RTC results?								
5.1. Which RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?	RTC Activity Results indicators (including gender disintegratd)	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
5.2. What are the approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?	Potential sources of national budgeting to support sustainability of RTC results	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
5.3. Which factors are contributing to	Alignment of the RTC	Pr. Doc.	Analysis of:					

or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?	strategy and approaches to implementation with development context Stakeholders' perceptions	KIs	Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
EQ 6. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to the CPD outcome and to the SDGs achievement?								
6.1. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement?	Assessment of the project based on analysis of the progress towards results General/ gender disaggregated indicators	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
EQ 7. In what ways did the RTC address the needs of women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations?								
7.1. In what specific ways were women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations included in the RTC programming? What are the best practices for targeting and engaging women, youth, and other underrepresented populations within the context of future shocks and stresses?	Coverage of gender issues in the project strategy and its implementation	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
7.2. What is the evidence of RTC's achieved results in gender equality and inclusiveness of socially vulnerable populations? What did work well and what challenges did emerg?	Gender disaggregated indicators in the Results Framework	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					
7.3. What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?	Gender disaggregated indicators in the Results Framework	Pr. Doc. KIs Site visits	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI Observations					
7.4. What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?	Assessment of stakeholders and beneficiaries	Pr. Doc. KIs	Analysis of: Doc. review Semi-structured KII/GI					

Annex 2-c. Data-collection Instruments

Consent statement for ALL KIIs / GIs

Hello, I am _____, an independent consultant contracted by UNDP-TJ to conduct final evaluation of the project "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" (RTC).

The purpose of this final evaluation is to inform stakeholders of the results achieved by RTC, its strengths and weaknesses to support an informed decision about similar projects to be designed and implemented in the future to enhance economic and social development of Tajikistan.

This interview is voluntary; you can withdraw at any time, either before or during the interview. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear your thoughts, based on your experience and your involvement with the project. The interview should not take more than 60 minutes to complete. Following the interview, we may want to contact you again in a few days to confirm or clarify some of the information you have given us.

The information you provide us will be important to understand the achievements of the RTC and we may wish to cite this discussion in support of our findings. However, if you would like to remain anonymous, you may inform us of this now or at any time in the next week following this interview. If so, we will not attribute any information that we receive to you, either in any report, transcript or notes from this discussion, or any conversations that we may have with persons outside of our evaluation team.

Does the respondent wish to remain anonymous?   **Yes ☐ No ☐**

If you have no objection, we would like to record this discussion, but wish to assure you that all recordings and notes will remain confidential and will be kept in a safe place. The recordings will be used for analysis purposes only.

Do you have any other questions about the study or this interview?

Date of interview:	_____ **2023**
Place of interview	Country: Tajikistan City/town:
Name (s) of person (s) interviewed *(to be asked all respondents)*	
Sex *(to be asked all respondents)*	● Male ● Female ● Prefer not to answer
Organization (s) *(to be asked all respondents)*	
Position (s) *(to be asked all respondents)*	

Can you describe what interactions your organization and you yourself have had with RTC? *(to be asked all respondents)*

A. Protocol for PMT - UNDP

EQ 1. To what extent did RTC respond to the development needs and priorities of Tajikistan / partner region?

1.1. To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities and policies, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?

1.2. To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?
1.3. 1.3. How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context?

EQ 2. To what extent RTC was effective?

2.1. Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?
2.2. To what extend the management structure of the project was effective and operational? Could a work-flow be optimized? What might be changed to increase effectiveness?
2.3. What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?
2.4. Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?
2.5. In which areas did the project has its greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?
2.6. What were the reasons for implementation delays (if any) and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate them?
2.7. How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?
2.8. What were the main contributing and hindering factors to the achievement of results?
2.9. How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?

EQ 3. To what extent RTC was coherent?

3.1. To what extent is the RTC consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?
3.2. What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?
3.3. To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?

EQ 4. To what extent RTC interventions were cost-effective?

4.1. To what extend the RTC implementation strategy and its implementation were efficient in generating the expected results? How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve planned results in a timely manner?
4.2. Which factors supported the cost-effectiveness of EDGE interventions (*RTC management structure, implementation modality, cooperation with national counterparts, etc.*)?
4.3. Which changes (in planning, coordination, implementation modalities, partnerships, selection of locations etc.) could lead to the higher cost-effectiveness in in the future?

EQ 5. How sustainable are the RTC results?

5.1. Which RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?
5.2. What are the approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?
5.3. Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?

EQ 6. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to the CPD outcome and to the SDGs achievement?

6.1. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement in terms of:
- *Sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment, stable energy supply, improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and more favourable business environment;*
- *Strengthened livelihood and resilience potential, contribution to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact; support a social cohesion in the cross-border areas;*
- **SDGs:** 1 (*No Poverty*), 2 (*No Hunger*), 3 (*Good Health and well-Being*), 4 (*Quality Education*), 5 (*Gender equality*), 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*), 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*), and 17 (*Partnership for Goals*).

EQ 7. In what ways did the RTC address the needs of women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations?

7.1. In what specific ways were women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations included in the RTC programming? What are the best practices for targeting and engaging women, youth, and other underrepresented populations within the context of future shocks and stresses?
7.2. What is the evidence of RTC's achieved results in gender equality and inclusiveness of socially vulnerable populations? What did work well and what challenges did emerge?
7.3. What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?
7.4. What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Lessons Learned

Sub-questions:
1. Looking back, what major lessons learned could be mentioned (when you think about improved relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability)?

2. Were the lessons learned documented and taken into consideration for the programming amendments (if needed)?

3. Based on the RTC experience, what could be changed in the project design, organizational arrangements, implementation modalities, etc.?

B. Protocol – Donor

EQ 1. To what extent did RTC respond to the development needs and priorities of Tajikistan / partner region?

1.1. To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities and policies, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?

1.2. To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?
1.3. 1.3. How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context?

EQ 2. To what extent RTC was effective?

2.1. Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?
2.3. What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?
2.4. Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?
2.5. In which areas did the project has its greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?
2.7. How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?
2.9. How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?

EQ 3. To what extent RTC was coherent?

3.1. To what extent is the RTC consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?
3.2. What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?
3.3. To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?

EQ 6. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to the CPD outcome and to the SDGs achievement?

6.1. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement in terms of:
- *Sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment, stable energy supply, improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and more favourable business environment;*
- *Strengthened livelihood and resilience potential, contribution to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact; support a social cohesion in the cross-border areas;*
- **SDGs:** 1 (*No Poverty*), 2 (*No Hunger*), 3 (*Good Health and well-Being*), 4 (*Quality Education*), 5 (*Gender equality*), 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*), 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*), and 17 (*Partnership for Goals*).

EQ 7. In what ways did the RTC address the needs of women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations?

7.3. What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?
7.4. What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Lessons Learned

Sub-questions:
1. Looking back, what major lessons learned could be mentioned?

2. Based on the RTC experience, what could be changed in the project design, organizational arrangements, implementation modalities, etc.?

C. Partner Governmental Organizations

How familiar are you with RTC activities and results? What was your role in the RTC implementation?

EQ 1. To what extent did RTC respond to the development needs and priorities of Tajikistan / partner region?

1.1. To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities and policies, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?
1.1.1   Completely in line
1.1.2   Partially in line
1.1.3   Mostly not in line
1.1.4   Don't know

1.2. To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?
1.3.1 RTC was able to adapt to all needs of the target groups
1.3.2 RTC was able to adapt but only partially
1.3.3 RTC missed the needs of some target groups, please explain
1.3.4 Don't know

1.3. How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context?
1.4.1 RTC design was 100% relevant
1.4.2 RTC design could be improved (please explain how)
1.4.3 Don't know

EQ 2. To what extent RTC was effective?

2.1. Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?

In your knowledge,

Did RTC achieved its results in a timely manner?

    2.1.1   Yes

    2.1.2   No - please explain the reasons of delay(s)

    2.1.3   Don't know

Did RTC deliver the promised assistance (quantity wise?)

    2.1.4   Yes

    2.1.5   No – please explain what is missing

    2.1.6   Don't know

Are you satisfied with the quality of the RTC results?

    2.1.7   Yes

    2.1.8   No – please explain, what went wrong

    2.1.9   Don't know

2.3. What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?

2.4. Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?

2.5. In which areas did the project has its greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?

Achievements / Problematic:
2.5.1 Local productive infrastructure and services improvement: A / P
2.5.2 Livelihoods strengthening: A / P
2.5.3 Skills development: A / P
2.5.4 Facilitation of access to finance: A / P
2.5.5 Capacity building of local institutions: A / P
2.5.6 Collaboration with national public and private sectors: A / P
2.5.7 Other, please explain
2.5.8 Don't know

2.7. How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?

2.7.1 Very effective (please explain how)
2.7.2 Effectiveness could be improved (please explain how)
2.7.3 Don't know

2.9. How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?

EQ 3. To what extent RTC was coherent?

3.2. What other donor-funded interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?

3.3. To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?

3.3.1 They complement each other
3.3.2 There is not effective cooperation among them
3.3.3 Don't know

EQ 5. How sustainable are the RTC results?

5.a They already proved good potential for sustainability (please explain)
5.b Sustainability could be improved (please explain how)
5.c Don't know

5.3. Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences?

Supporting:
5.3.1 Support of the central authorities
5.3.2 Support of the regional authorities
5.3.3 Support of the local authorities
5.3.4 Support of the private sector
5.3.5 Applicability of obtained skills
5.3.6 Availability of equipment
5.3.7 Established trade relations
5.3.8 Other (please explain)

Hindering:
5.3.9 Lack of financial resources
5.3.9 Insufficient knowledge of the market
5.3.9 Insufficient demand for skills/products
5.3.10 Low competitiveness
5.3.11 Other (please explain)

5.1. Which specific RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?

5.2-5.3. How do local authorities and beneficiary communities ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends? What else could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?

EQ 6. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to the CPD outcome and to the SDGs achievement?

6.1. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement in terms of:
- *Sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment, stable energy supply, improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and more favourable business environment;*
- *Strengthened livelihood and resilience potential, contribution to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact; support a social cohesion in the cross-border areas;*
- **SDGs:** 1 (*No Poverty*), 2 (*No Hunger*), 3 (*Good Health and well-Being*), 4 (*Quality Education*), 5 (*Gender equality*), 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*), 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*), and 17 (*Partnership for Goals*).

EQ 7. In what ways did the RTC address the needs of women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations?

7.3. What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?
7.3.1 Businesses were established and promoted 7.3.2 People got jobs 7.3.3 Women and youth were empowered 7.3.4 Other (please explain) 7.3.5 Too early to talk about these changes
7.4. What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Lessons Learned

Sub-questions:
1. Looking back, what major lessons learned could be mentioned?

2. Based on the RTC experience, what could be changed in the project design, organizational arrangements, implementation modalities, etc.?

D. Experts / Services Providers

EQ 1. To what extent did RTC respond to the development needs and priorities of Tajikistan / partner region?

1.1. To what extent was the project in line with national development priorities and policies, country programme outputs and outcomes, UNDP Strategic Plan and the SDGs?
1.2. To what extent has the project been able to adapt to the needs of the different target groups in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic?
1.3. 1.3. How relevant were the overall design and approaches of the project to the development context?

EQ 2. To what extent RTC was effective?

2.1. Did RTC achieve the planned results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing) with respect to the recovery from COVID-19 impact, strengthening livelihood and resilience potential, and solidifying social cohesion in cross-border areas?
2.2. To what extend the management structure of the project was effective and operational? Could a work-flow be optimized? What might be changed to increase effectiveness?
2.3. What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?
2.4. Are there unintended results, either positive or negative? How did these unintended results happen?
2.5. In which areas did the project has its greatest achievements (local productive infrastructure and services improvement, livelihoods strengthening, skills development, facilitation of access to finance, capacity building of local institutions, collaboration with national public and private sectors, etc.)? Which may be considered as problematic areas?
2.6. What were the reasons for implementation delays (if any) and was UNDP's response satisfactory to mitigate them?
2.7. How effective has the project been in enhancing the national capacity to create enabling environment for inclusive economic empowerment and promotion of innovative development?
2.8. What were the main contributing and hindering factors to the achievement of results?

2.9. How the Project's achievements may contribute to the future UNDP interventions?

EQ 3. To what extent RTC was coherent?

3.1. To what extent is the RTC consistent with international norms and standards on the participation and promotion of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups?

3.2. What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?

3.3. To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions which have similar objectives (including its complementarity, harmonization, co-ordination and ability to mobilize additional funds)?

EQ 4. To what extent RTC interventions were cost-effective?

4.1. To what extend the RTC implementation strategy and its implementation were efficient in generating the expected results? How efficiently were the resources including human, material and financial resources used to achieve planned results in a timely manner?

4.2. Which factors supported the cost-effectiveness of EDGE interventions (*RTC management structure, implementation modality, cooperation with national counterparts, etc.*)?

4.3. Which changes (in planning, coordination, implementation modalities, partnerships, selection of locations etc.) could lead to the higher cost-effectiveness in in the future?

EQ 5. How sustainable are the RTC results?

5.1. Which RTC initiatives demonstrate strong possibility to be sustainable?

5.2. What are the approaches of the local authorities and beneficiary communities to ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends?

5.3. Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences? What could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?

EQ 6. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to the CPD outcome and to the SDGs achievement?

6.1. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcome and to the SDGs achievement in terms of:
- *Sustainable economic growth through decent and productive employment, stable energy supply, improved access to specialized knowledge and innovation and more favourable business environment;*
- *Strengthened livelihood and resilience potential, contribution to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact; support a social cohesion in the cross-border areas;*
- **SDGs:** 1 (*No Poverty*), 2 (*No Hunger*), 3 (*Good Health and well-Being*), 4 (*Quality Education*), 5 (*Gender equality*), 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*), 9 (*Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure*), 11 (*Sustainable Cities and Communities*), and 17 (*Partnership for Goals*).

EQ 7. In what ways did the RTC address the needs of women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations?

7.1. In what specific ways were women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations included in the RTC programming? What are the best practices for targeting and engaging women, youth, and other underrepresented populations within the context of future shocks and stresses?
7.2. What is the evidence of RTC's achieved results in gender equality and inclusiveness of socially vulnerable populations? What did work well and what challenges did emerge?
7.3. What changes in socio-economic situation of these groups (intended and unintended) did occur as a result of the Project?
7.4. What could be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Lessons Learned

Sub-questions:
1. Looking back, what major lessons learned could be mentioned (when you think about improved relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, sustainability)?

2. Were the lessons learned documented and taken into consideration for the programming amendments (if needed)?

3. Based on the RTC experience, what could be changed in the project design, organizational arrangements, implementation modalities, etc.?

E. Direct Beneficiaries

EQ 1. To what extent did RTC respond to the development needs and priorities of Tajikistan / partner region?

1.3. To what extent has the project been able to respond to your needs /needs of your organization?
1.3.1 RTC was able to respond to all my major needs 1.3.2 RTC was able to address some of my major needs (please, explain) 1.3.3 RTC missed the my major needs (please explain) 1.3.4 Don't know
1.4. How relevant to your needs were the overall design, tools and recommendations of the project?
1.4.1 RTC design was 100% relevant 1.4.2 RTC design could be improved (please explain how) 1.4.3 Don't know

EQ 2. To what extent RTC was effective?

2.1. Did RTC achieve the promised results (in terms of quality, quantity and timing)?

In your experience,

Did RTC achieved its results in a timely manner?

    1.1.1   Yes

    1.1.2   No - please explain the reasons of delay(s)

    1.1.3   Don't know

Did RTC deliver the promised assistance (quantity wise?)

    1.1.4   Yes

    1.1.5   No – please explain what is missing

    1.1.6   Don't know

Are you satisfied with the quality of the RTC results?

    1.1.7   Yes

    1.1.8   No – please explain, what went wrong

Don't know

2.3. What were the most important changes that have occurred as a result of the assistance provided by the RTC?

2.3.1 Skills development
2.3.2 Livelihoods strengthening
2.3.3 Business development – productive base developed
2.3.4 Business development – new contracts obtained
2.5.5 Facilitation of access to finance
2.5.6 Job obtained / improved
2.5.7 Other, please explain

2.5.8 Don't know

EQ 3. To what extent RTC was coherent?

3.2. What other interventions could be mentioned in the sectors / areas supported by the RTC?

3.3. To what extent was RTC compatible with other donors' interventions?

3.3.1 They complement each other, please explain
3.3.2 RTC is more relevant to my needs / needs of my organization, please explain
3.3.3 RTC is less relevant to my needs / needs of my organization, please explain
3.3.4 Don't know, I have no experience of cooperation with other projects

EQ 5. How sustainable are the RTC results?

5.a They already proved good potential for sustainability (please explain)
5.b Sustainability could be improved (please explain how)
5.c Don't know (please explain why)

5.3. Which factors are contributing to or hindering sustainability of the Project's results and how likely are their occurrences?

In your experience, what does support sustainability of result:

5.3.1 Support of the central authorities
5.3.2 Support of the regional authorities
5.3.3 Support of the local authorities
5.3.4 Support of the private sector
5.3.5 Applicability of obtained skills
5.3.6 Availability of equipment
5.3.7 Established trade relations
5.3.8 Other (please explain)

Hindering:
5.3.9 Lack of financial resources
5.3.9 Insufficient knowledge of the market
5.3.9 Insufficient demand for skills/products
5.3.10 Low competitiveness
5.3.11 Other (please explain)

5.2. How do local authorities and beneficiary communities ensure that the initiatives will be continued after the project ends? What else could be done to strengthen exit strategies and sustainability of the project?

EQ 6. What is the evidence of the RTC contribution to anticipated outcomes and to the SDGs' achievement?

6.1. Did RTC help you to change your situation /situation of your organization for better? How, please explain.

6.1.1 Businesses were established and promoted
6.1.2 People got jobs
6.1.3 Women and youth were empowered
6.1.4 Other (please explain)

6.1.5 Too early to talk about these changes

EQ 7. In what ways did the RTC address the needs of women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations?

7.1. How women, youth, and socially vulnerable populations were included in the RTC programming?
7.4. What should be changed in programming to better prepare women, youth, and socially vulnerable groups for future shocks?

Lessons Learned

Sub-questions:

1. Based on the RTC experience, what could be changed in the future in the project design, organizational arrangements, implementation modalities, etc.?

Introduction

Hello, I am _____, an independent consultant contracted by UNDP-TJ to conduct final evaluation of the project "Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley" (RTC).

The purpose of this final evaluation is to inform stakeholders of the results achieved by RTC, its strengths and weaknesses to support an informed decision about similar projects to be designed and implemented in the future to enhance economic and social development of Tajikistan.

I would like to ask you to answer some questions (presented below). There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear your thoughts, based on your experience and your involvement with the project. Participation in this survey is voluntary and anonymous, your name will not be attributed to the provided answers.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

A1. Sex	
Female	1
Male	2

A2. How old are you?	

A3. Please select the type of activity you have participated in	
Business development (provided by SOF)	1
Online counselling and information sharing (provided by Shuhrat)	2
Grant for entrepreneurship support (via NGO Mir)	3
I did not remember	4
I did not participate	5

A4. Did the training or support provided match with your needs and professionals interests?	
Yes	1
No (skip to q A6)	2
Partly	3
I did not remember (skip to A6)	

A5. Did you find the training or support provided useful?	
Yes	1
No	2
Partly	3
I did not remember (skip to A7)	4

A6. What kind of changes have happened as a result of those trainings or support provided?	
I learned new things but I do not use them in my professional life	1
I learned new things and started using them in my work or business	2
What I learned helped me to improve my business / work performance	3
The training was not interesting at all and useless	4
The topic was interesting but the training was very boring	5
It was useless	6

It was very useful and my income has increased	7
I do not remember	8
I do not want to answer	9

A7. Would you recommend these trainings and support provided for other entrepreneurs?	
No	1
Yes	2
Maybe	3
Never (skip to end)	4
I do not want to answer	5

A8. What type of additional support would be most helpful for your business?	
Long term business advisory service, such as legal advice, accounting, admin support	1
Coaching	2
Trainings	3
Access to finance – grants or subsidized loans	4
No need	5
Other, specify_____	6
I do not know	7

A9. Do you have any recommendations to improve such programs in the future?	
TEXT_____-	

Thank you again for your participation!

Annex 3. Lists of Interviewed Respondents and Organizations/Sites Visited

Annex 3-a. Lists of Interviewed Respondents

##	Name	Position
1	Ms. M. Madchonova	MEDT, Head of Dept. of Investment Policy and Regional Development
2	Mr. Deputy Head of Deprtment	MEDT
3	Ms. Bunafsha Asoeva	MOLME
4	Ms Khosiyat Mahmudova	MOLME, Center of Adult Education
5	Umed Murodzoda	MOLME
6	Mr. Oleg Ilyshev	Embassy of the RF, the First Secretary
7	Mr. Alisher Faizaliev	State PPP Center
8	Mr. Karamatulo Makhmudov	State PPP Center
9	Ms. Larisa Kisliakova	Council of Professional Consultants of TJ, Head
10	Mr. Shukhrat Kadyrov	Export promotion consultant
11	Mr. Umed Kolilov	State Business Incubator
12	Mr. Vladimir Oganesov	State Business Incubator
13	Mr. Shavkat Kodirov	Director, Professional Technical School
14.	Ms. Shakhlo Toshmatova	Beneficiary, Farmer
15	Ms. Iroda Bobodzhonova	NGO "MIR", Director
16	Ms. Azuzakhon Nozimova	NGO "MIR", Project Assistant
17.	Mr. Dilshod Kholmatov	State Business Incubator, Director
18.	Mr. Anvar Yakubi	Deputy Chairman of Sughd Region
19.	Mr. Sharifjon Akhmedov	Department for Investment and State Property Management of Sughd Region
20.	Mr. Mukhammadjion Mukhamedjanov	Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sughd Region, General Director
21.	Mr. Mirzoravshan Qobilov	NGO "Center of Quality Management", Director
22.	Mr. Abdudzhabbor Khamidov	NGO "SOF" (Sustainable Agriculture & Farming), Director
23.	Mr. Bakhrom Khaidarov	NGO "SOF", Business Development Specialist
24.	Mr. Shermukhammad Nodiri	State Agency of Labour and Employment of Sughd Region, Director
25.	Mr. Naimzon Tokhirzade	State Agency of Labour and Employment of Sughd Region, Deputy Director
26.	Mr. Marufzon Aliboev	State Agency of Labour and Employment of Sughd Region, Employment Specialist
27.	Mr. Abdurakhmon Khuseinov	Association of Entrepreneurs of Sughd Region, Director
28.	Mr. Andrey Nikolayevitch Varlamov	General Consul of the RF
29.	Ms. Shakhnoz Ikromi	Bank "Arvad", Deputy Director
30.	Mr. Mumindzhon Umarov	Bank "Arvad", St. Financial Specialist
31.	Mr. Owner / General manager	SME "Shireshi Tojik" (construction glue production, credit to purchase laboratory equipment)

32.	Ms. Umeda Pulatova	OOO "Novyj Algoritm" (IT School), Director
33.	Mr. Mirzoasliddin Yakubov	SME "Furniture Production"
34.	Dr. Ibragomov	Guliston Central Hospital, Chief Doctor
35.	Mr. Ravshan Karimov	Programme of Business Continuity, IT Expert
36.	Ms. Jamilya Mirsaidova	UNDP, Area Coordinator
37.	Mr. Bahriddin Sirozhov	"Isfara Shoes", Director
38.	Mr. Farkhod Abdullochenov	"Taj Friut", Director
39.	Ms. Director	"Bakery / Bread Producer"
40.	Mr. Pairav Ashurov	"Shifo Fruit", Owner
41.	Mr. Iskander Kodirov	"Taj Eco" Kanabidam
42.	Mr. Azam Alizoda	Matchoh District Authority, Head
43.	Mr. Zefer Alizoda	Matchoh District Authority, Deaputy Head
44.	Mr. Silo Abdulloyev	Macthoh Professional School, Lead Specialist
45.	Mr. Abduakat Sharipov	Beneficiary, Bee-keeper
46.	Ms. Ozoda Kulova	Fruit Packaging Co "Donai Almos"
47.	Ms. Mavzuna Sanginova	Beneficiary, Private Enterprise, "Auto Repair Shop"
48.	Akmal Abbosov	Youth Craft Center (Traditional Ceramics)
49.	Mr. Muloadham Mulosafarov	Micro-finance Fund "Hamyori", Chairman
50.	Mr. Akrami	Micro-finance Fund "Hamyori", Financial Director
51.	Mr. Alisher Aripov	OOO "Dzharayon Plus" (beneficiary, grant, wire production), Director

Annex 3-b. Data Collection Schedule (Organizations/Sites Visited)

Arrival to Dushanbe on Saturday, 30 September and hotel check-in

Arrival to Dushanbe on Saturday, 30 September and hotel check-in	
Sunday, October 01, 2023, free time	
Day 1: Monday, 02 October 2023	
09:00 – 09:30	- Pick-up at the hotel and drive to the UNDP office
9:30-11:00	Meeting at UNDP Country Office - RR/DRR UNDP TJK CO, M&E Specialist, RTC Project Manager (briefing on evaluation process, mission agenda, etc.)
11:00-12:00	Meeting at the Ministry for Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan (MEDT) *Venue: MEDT*
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00- 14:00	Meeting at the Ministry of Labor and Migration of the Republic of Tajikistan *Venue: MoLM*
14:00 – 15:00	Meeting at the SI "Adult Education Center of Tajikistan" Ministry of Labour, Migration and Employment of Population of the Republic of Tajikistan *Venue: SI Adult Center*
15:00-16:00	E-platform on unemployment registration – Company "Donish Sof"
Day 2: Tuesday, 03 October 2023	
09:00 – 09:30	Pick-up at the hotel and drive to the Embassy of RF
09:30 – 10:30	Meeting with Embassy of Russian Federation
10:30 – 11:15	Meeting with SU Private Public Partnership Centre *Venue: State Committee for Investments and State Property Management of the Republic of Tajikistan*
11:15 – 12:00	Meeting with the Head of the Union of Professional Consultants of Tajikistan
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 14:00	Meeting with Trade Promotion Expert – RTC consultant
14:00 – 15:00	State Institution on Formation and Development of Entrepreneurship (Business Incubator) of Tajikistan (SI FDE-BI) *Venue: SI Business incubator*
Day 3: Wednesday, 04 October 2023	

08:30- 9:00	Pick-up at the hotel and travel by UNDP office car to Khujand
14:00 – 14:40	Visit to the Spitamen Technical School)RTC Beneficiary)
14:40 – 15:20	Visit to the RTC Mentorship Program Beneficiary (Young Woman, Greenhouse, Spitamen District)
17:00	Arrival to Khujand
Day 4: Thursday, 05 October 2023	
09:00-09:40	Meeting with Public Organization "MIR" (Mentorship programme and employment opportunities) *Venue: PO "MIR" office in Khujand*
10:00 – 10:40	Meeting with State Institution on Formation and Development of Entrepreneurship (Business Incubator) in Sughd region *Venue: office of Business incubator in Khujand*
11:00 – 12:00	Meeting with the Deputy Chairman of Executive State Authority of Sughd region And the Head of investment department of Sughd region *Venue: Khukumat of Sughd region*
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:15 – 14:00	Meeting at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Sughd region *Venue: Chamber of commerce and industry of Sughd region*
14:10 – 14:50	Meeting with the PO «Markazi Idorakunii Sifat / Quality Management Center» (Introduction of international quality and food safety standards to SMEs) *Venue: PO "MIS" office in Khujand*
14:50-15:20	Meeting with the PO «SOF» (Strengthening the capacity of local producers for identification of local economic development priorities and needs in Ferghana valley of Tajikistan) *Venue: PO "SOF" office in Khujand*
15:30 – 16:15	Meeting with the Agency on Labor and Employment of Sughd oblast *Venue: Agency on Labor and Employment of Sughd oblast*
16:20 – 17:00	Meeting with Association of Entrepreneurs of Sughd region (AESR), Sughd region *Venue: Association's office*
17:10 – 18:00	Meeting with the RF Consul General *Venue: RF Consulate*
Day 5: Friday, 06 October 2023	
08:30 – 09:00	Pick-up at the hotel and drive to Bank "Arvand"
09:00 - 09:40	Meeting at bank "Arvand" on access to affordable credits *Venue: office of Bank "Arvand"*
10:00 -10:30	Visit to SE "Shireshi Tojik"
10:45 – 11:30	Meeting at the LLC "New Algortitm" – (IT hackaton on digital solution for the employment opportunities) - Ms. Umeda Pulatova, Director *Venue: LLC "New Algoritm" office*
11:40 – 12:00	Visiting the furniture production workshop (support to improve the business infrastructure) - Mr. Mirzoasliddin Yakubov, Director *Venue: Furniture workshop*
12:00-13:00	Lunch
13:00 – 13: 20	Field trip to Guliston
13:20-14:00	Visit to the Central Guliston Hospital (ICT network development; digitalization of health services). *Venue: Guliston Hospital*
14:00 – 14:30	Meeting with IT Expert, Programme of Business Continuity / telecommunication). *Venue: Guliston Hospital*
14:30 – 15:00	Travel back to Khujand
15:00 – 16:30	Meeting with the RTC PMT *Venue: UNDP Regional Office*
Day 6: Saturday, 07 October 2023	
08:30 – 10:00	Field trip to Isfara district (on UNDP vehicle)
10:00 – 10: 40	Visit to the LLC "Isfara Shoes" shoes production company (Equipment recipient)
10:40 – 11:30	Visit to "Taj Fruit" and "Bread Co" (affordable credit)
11:40-12:30	Visit to the private enterprise "Shifo Fruit" (quality standards training)
12:30-13:30	Lunch
13:30-14:30	Field trip to Kanibadam
14:30-15:20	Visit to the LLC "Taj Eco" (waste management and production pyrolysis fuel)

15:20 – 17:00	Travel back to Khujand
Day 7: Sunday, 08 October 2023	
Day 8: Monday, 09 October 2023	
09:00 - 09:45	Travel to Matchoh district, Sughd region (on UNDP vehicle)
09:45 – 10:15	Meeting with the Chairman of the Matchoh district
10:20– 10:45	Visit to Professional School - VTI (bakery workshop)
11:00 – 11:45	Visit to Beekeeper (supported under the Mentorship Programme and provision of equipment)
11:45 -12:45	Lunch
12:45 – 13:45	Travel back to Khujand
14:00-14:45	Visit to LLC "Donai Almos" (food processing company supported with the equipment) *Venue: Free economic zone "Sugd"*
15:15 - 16:00	Visit to beneficiary graduates of VTI (grant of equipment) *Venue: VTI*
16:15 – 17:15	Visit to the Youth Initiative – Traditional Ceramics *Venue: Hujant Fortress*
Day 9: Tuesday, 10 October 2023	
09:00 – 09:30	Visit to the microfinance fund "Hamyori"(component "access to affordable credits")
09:30 – 10:15	Visit to SE "Jarayon Plus" (equipment, grant, wires production)
11:00 – 11:45	Visit to SE "Amiri" (equipment, grant, chairs production)
11:45 – 12:45	Lunch
12:45 – 13:30	Meeting with Expert on Export of Agri-production
15:00 – 15:45	Travel back to Khujand
15:45 -16:30	Revision of the field stage at UNDP Office
16:30 – 16:45	Travel back to hotel
Day 10: Wednesday, 11 October 2023	
09:00 – 09:30	Pick-up at the hotel
09:30 – 13:00	Travel to Dushanbe by car
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch
15:00	Debriefing at UNDP-TJ

Annex 4. List of Supporting Documents Reviewed

1. National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period Up To 2030. Dushanbe, 2016
2. United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2021 for Tajikistan with amended Results and Resources Framework agreed by UN and the Government of Tajikistan, 2019
3. UNDP Gender Mainstreaming Strategy in Tajikistan. UNDP, 2017
4. United Nations Development Programme Strategic Plan for 2020-2025, 2020
5. UNDP Social and Environmental Screening Procedure (SESP). UNDP, January 1, 2021
6. Spotlight Initiative: To eliminate Violence Against Women and Girls. Country Program Document: Tajikistan. 27 November 2019. Revision Submitted to the Government of Tajikistan on 29 September 2020
7. Tajikistan Economic Update, Summer 2023: Focusing on Boosting Private Sector Dynamism in Tajikistan, WB, 2023
8. Tajikistan: Gender Dimensions of Cross-border Trade. WB, 2023
9. Tajikistan Invests in Skills, Striving to Meet the Demands of an Evolving Labour Market. WB, November 21, 2022
10. Tajikistan Country Gender Assessment. WB, December 2021
11. RTC Project Document, including Intervention's logic and Theory of Change (TOC) and Gender Analysis
12. Annual Work Plan for years 2022
13. Annual Work Plan for years 2023
14. RTC Progress Report (Jan. – Dec. 2022), January 2023
15. RTC Semi-annual Narrative and Financial Progress Report (Jan. – Jun. 2022), July 2022
16. RTC Semi-annual Narrative and Financial Progress Report (Jan. – Jun. 2023), July 2023
17. List of RTC Stakeholders and Beneficiaries (as for 2023, including national partners and direct beneficiaries in the Sughd region).
18. Отчет по оценке проекта [UNDP-TJ, 2023]
19. Отчет местного консультанта Шухрата Кодирова [UNDP-TJ, 2023]

Annex 5. Project Results Framework

Intended Outcome as stated in the UNDAF/Country Programme Results and Resource Framework:
People in Tajikistan have their rights protected and benefit from improved access to justice and quality services delivered by accountable, transparent, and gender-responsive legislative, executive and judicial institutions at all levels.

Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Programme [or Global/Regional] Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets:
UNDP Tajikistan CPD Output 2.1: National and sub-national systems and institutions enabled to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable and employment and livelihood intensive.
Indicator 2.1.1: Number of additional full-time equivalent jobs created disaggregated by sex
Baseline: 6,295 (incl. 4,242 women)
Target by 2020: 81,884 (incl. 32,750 women); Data source: Progress reports
Indicator 2.1.2: Number of additional people benefiting from strengthened livelihoods, disaggregated by sex
Baseline: 82,585 (incl. 40,839 women)
Target by 2020: 107,361 (incl. 42,944 women); Data source: Progress reports;
Indicator 2.1.3: Extent to which policies, systems and/or institutional measures are in place at the national and sub-national levels to generate and strengthen employment and livelihoods;
Baseline: Very partially
Target by 2020: Largely; Data source: NDS review.
Indicator 2.1.4: Number of additional schemes which expand and diversify the productive base, based on the use of sustainable production technologies;
Baseline: 15
Target by 2020: 25; Data source: external evaluations

Applicable Output(s) from the UNDP Strategic Plan: 1.1.2 Marginalised groups, particularly the poor, women, people with disabilities and displaced are empowered to gain universal access to basic services and financial and non-financial assets to build productive capacities and benefit from sustainable livelihoods and jobs
Relevant SDG targets: 1.2, 1.4, 4.3, 8.3., 8.5, 8.6, 8.9.

Project title and Atlas Project Number: 00119061 - Accelerating Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery through Improved Livelihood, Employability, and Regional Cooperation in Ferghana Valley

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS[11]	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE		TARGETS (by frequency of data collection)				DATA COLLECTION METHODS & RISKS
			Value	Year	2021	2022	2023	FINAL	
Output 1: **Enhanced opportunities to reskill and upskill targeting**	*Activity 1.1. Design and implement competency-based training and self/employment support programs for unemployed men and women in selected priority sectors.*								

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[11]

It is recommended that projects use output indicators from the Strategic Plan IRRF, as relevant, in addition to project-specific results indicators. Indicators should be disaggregated by sex or for other targeted groups where relevant.

unemployed young women and men, returned migrants and people from vulnerable households.	# of education facilities having stronger potential to provide vocational and employable skills training	Project/partner reports	9 VTIs (LIRP)	2019		3	3	6	
	# of students covered by vocational and employable skills training	VTI reports	0	2020	450	450		900	
	# of VTI graduates received matching funds for their professional activity.	UNDP reports	0	2020	9	12	9	30	
	Activity 1.2. Promote a regional collaborative platform for youth labour skills development *Activity 1.3. Promote digital solutions for employment services to connect employers and job seekers in target districts.*								
	# of digital tools developed to promote employable skills and employment	Partner report	0	2020	2	2		4	
	# of young aprentices (% women) get on-the job training and increased professional skills	Partner report	0	2020	35 (30%)	25 (30%)	20 (30%)	80 (30%)	
	# of young people and job seekers (% women) reporting use of innovative digital platforms for employment and job seekling	Partners reports	0	2020			200 (40%)	200 (40%)	
Output 2: **Innovations for stimulation of entrepreneurship and income-generation for vulnerable communities in bordering areas.**	*Activity 2.1. Assessment and mapping of local niches for sustainable entrepreneurship and income generation*								
	# of gender-sensitive assessments/research conducted in partnership with Russian research institutes	UNDP report	0	2020	1			1	Internal monitoring and reporting of UNDP; Secondary data from partners.
	Activity 2.2. Improvement of local productive infrastructure and public services that improve living standard of population, and benefit the target communities in terms of decent jobs and income-generation opportunities								

	# of local stakeholders and community members (% women) with improved knowledge on sustainable management of local resources	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	40 (30%)	90 (30%)	120 (30%)	250 (30%)	Internal monitoring and reporting of UNDP; Primary data collection from UNDP field office, Secondary data collection from partners. Final evaluation fo the project
	# of gender-responsive local economic and development infrastructure projects supported to improve local productive capacities	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	5	8	2	15	
	# of public institutions in Sughd area , including healthcare facilities and local administrations, with improved capacities for telecommuting and business continuity	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	7			7	
	Activity 2.3. Support local producers and merchants at the border areas to enhance their capacities for sustainable production as well as product placement, branding and packaging, marketing, logistics, business matching and access to finance.								
	# of entrepreneurs (incl. % women-led businesses) benefiting from online counceling and information services	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	300 (30%)			300 (30%)	Internal monitoring and reporting of UNDP; Primary data collection from UNDP field office, Secondary data collection from partners. Final evaluation fo the project Social media reports
	# of MSMEs (% of women-led) with improved capacity for recovery and adaptation	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	55 (30%)	50 (30%)		105 (30%)	
	# of jobs (incl. % jobs for women) maintained by project beneficiaries	Partner /MSMEs reports	0	2020	50 (30%)	100 (30%)		125 (30%)	
	Activity 2.4. Introducing digital and mobile solutions to connect local farmers, producers, distributors, merchants and customers through e-commerce platforms								
	# of innovation digital solutions supported for local value chains development	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020		4		4	Internal monitoring and reporting of UNDP; Primary data collection from UNDP field office, Social media reports
	# of businesses trained on e-commerce and other digital resources	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	60	40		100	

Output 3: Promoting startup platforms and development of trade potential across Ferghana Valley	*Activity 3.1. Coordination across Ferghana Valley to stimulate startups and innovations through digital networks and partnerships*								
	# of feasible innovative projects pitched at regional Choikhona sessions (# of projects ideas proposed by women)	UNDP/partner reports	354	2020	15 (5)	15 (6)		30 (11)	
	# of regional-level events of IT/digital innovation conducted	UNDP/partner reports/social media posts	0	2020	2	2		4	
	Activity 3.2. Promoting cross-border trade across Ferghana valley								
	# of traders and decision makers from CA countries participating in online webinars on cross-border and regional trade (% women participants)	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020	20 (30%)	60 (30%)		80 (30%)	
	# of trade promotion contracts concluded	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020		10		10	
	# of people benefiting from improved infrastructure of cross-border markets	UNDP/partner reports	0	2020		2000 (30% w)		2000 (30% w)	

Annex 6. Summary Table

Activity/ProDoc Indicators	Target in the ProDoc	Achieved	Results	Sources
Output 1: Enhanced opportunities to reskill and upskill targeting unemployed young women and men, returned migrants and people from vulnerable households				
Activity 1.1. Design and implement competency-based training and self/employment support programs for unemployed men and women in selected priority sectors.				
# of education facilities having stronger potential to provide vocational and employable skills training	6	8 – training modules for VTIs across Tajikistan 12 VTIs, colleges and Adult Education centers classes equipped with the modern technical equipment	200%	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); site visits
# of students covered by vocational and employable skills training	900	More than 700	More that 80%. Still in progress	RTC Report 2022
# of VTI graduates received matching funds for their professional activity.	30	20 (15 women) – provided with funds *46 jobs created (including 39 for women)*	67%	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); site visits; consultations with PMT
Activity 1.2. Promote a regional collaborative platform for youth labour skills development *Activity 1.3. Promote digital solutions for employment services to connect employers and job seekers in target districts.*				
# of digital tools developed to promote employable skills and employment	4	1. Pilot electronic database of unemployed and graduates of vocational trainings was developed and tested 2. RTC helped to improve existing HR platform www.kasb.tj, developed and located in the servers of the MLMEP. 3. Hackathon activity was organized in Khujand on establishment of platforms for matching youth with employment and professional education opportunities (60 participants - youth). Prototype of platform bringing	125%	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); consultations with PMT

		together job seekers and employers developed but should be finalized (additional funding is needed) 4. Development of the web platform for Istaravshan college of Folk Art will create opportunity for online and offline trade and e-commerce promotion openings for college students and graduates to generate income and self-employment. Ongoing activity. 5. Creation of digital volunteer platform for community outreach work to engage young people from remote rural areas in employment promotion events and youth empowerment activities in their communities.		
# of young apprentices (% women) get on-the job training and increased professional skills	80 (30% females)	**On-the job training for 72 young people** (60% women) was organized in 2022	90 % (200%)	RTC Annual Report 2022; RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); consultations with PMT
# of young people and job seekers (% women) reporting use of innovative digital platforms for employment and job seeking	200 (40% females)	288 used the e-platform for registration as unemployed	144%	Consultations with PMT
Output 2: Innovations for stimulation of entrepreneurship and income-generation for vulnerable communities in bordering areas				
Activity Result 2.1. Assessment and mapping of local niches for sustainable entrepreneurship and income generation				
# of gender-sensitive assessments/research conducted in partnership with Russian research institutes	1	1	100%	RTC Annual Report 2022
Activity 2.2. Improvement of local productive infrastructure and services that improve living standard of population and benefit the target communities in terms of decent jobs and income-generation opportunities.				
# of local stakeholders and community members (% women) with improved	250 (30%)	250 (42%) representatives of private companies	100%	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); RTC

knowledge on sustainable management of local resources		have been selected for further capacity building activities Needs assessment of 10 local businesses was conducted.		Annual report 2022. Consultations with PMT
# of gender-responsive local economic and development infrastructure projects supported to improve local productive capacities	15	10 Local economic projects supported in 2022. 5 potential gender responsive local economic and development projects selected for further technical assistance in 2023 (35 jobs will be created)	100% (Work in progress)	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); RTC 2022 Annual Report; consultations with PMT
# of public institutions in Sughd region, including healthcare facilities and local administrations, with improved capacities for telecommuting and business continuity	7	13 (Khujand + central hospitals of the cities of Guliston, Isfara, Kanibadam, Mastchoh and B. Gafurov districts + Ambulance Dispatch Centre + 3 Departments of Employment (MLME) in Kanibadam, B.Gafurov and Khujand city) +Investment Department and Chamber of Commerce and industry of Sughd region+ Department of Health	129% (work in progress)	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); RTC 2022 Annual Report; site visits; consultations with PMT
Activity 2.3. Support local producers and merchants at the border areas to enhance their capacities for sustainable production as well as product placement, branding and packaging, marketing, logistics, business matching and access to finance.				
# of entrepreneurs (incl. % women-led businesses) benefiting from online counselling and information services	300 (30%)	379 (66%) Needs assessment conducted by the project consultant on trade promotion among the project stakeholders (SMEs and private sector) and most relevant topics for capacity building identified. In 2023, 218 trained out of them 163 women, in addition to the 4 two-day trainings in pilot districts of the	126%	RTC Report 2023 (semi-annual); consultations with PMT

		project with 161 participants, 84 (52%) of whom were women: I. Trainings on "Sustainable Business Management" were conducted in 4 target districts of Sughd region. 82 entrepreneurs participated in the trainings on "Sustainable Business Management", including 39 (47.5%) women. II. Training on simplified taxation conducted in 4 target districts of Sughd region. A total of 79 entrepreneurs 45 (56.9%) of whom were women participated. III. 6 SMEs were trained in quality standards.		
# of MSMEs (% of women-led) with improved capacity for recovery and adaptation	105 (30%)	276 (30%) 131(30%) in 2023 135 (31%) in 2022	263%	RTC Report 2023; consultations with PMT
# of jobs (incl. % jobs for women) maintained by project beneficiaries	125 (30%)	242 (46,99%) in 2022; for 2023 197 (60%)	More than 190% (assessment is on-going)	RTC 2022 Annual Report; consultations with PMT
Activity Result 2.4. Consultative services and training to local stakeholders on sustainable management and maintenance of infrastructure facilities				
# of innovation digital solutions supported for local value chains development	4	Ongoing works for the selected 3 value chains for introduction of digital solutions	In progress; 75%	RTC 2023 Annual Report; consultations with PMT
# of businesses trained on e-commerce and other digital resources	100	IT equipment to improvement of the E-commerce to the Chamber of Commerce will be provided to further organization of series of workshops on e-commerce. 50 students will be covered with CB on e-commerce in 2023.	In progress	RTC 2023 Annual Report.

Output 3: Promoting startup platforms and development of trade potential across Ferghana Valley				
Activity 3.1. Coordination across Ferghana Valley to stimulate startups and innovations through digital networks and partnerships				
# of feasible innovative projects pitched at regional Choikhona sessions (# of projects ideas proposed by women)	30 (11)	46 (16) By November 2023, 46 start-up ideas pitched, including the projects of 16 participants in 2022 (7 of them -women - 43%)	153%	RTC 2022 Annual Report.
# of regional-level events of IT/digital innovation conducted	4	2 events conducted in September 2023 on HR and digitalization in Guliston and in October on IT - Conference in Ferghana, Uzbekistan	50%	RTC 2023 Annual Report; consultations with PMT
Activity 3.2. Promoting cross-border trade across Ferghana valley				
# of traders and decision makers from CA countries participating in online webinars on cross-border and regional trade (% women participants)	80 (30)	More than 80 persons: 61 MSMEs participated on two online web-based sessions. In April and May 2023 UNDP organized 2 online web-based sessions *30 producers of Sughd region were presented at the expositions within the framework of the international exporters' forum "Bokhtar Food-2023"* Investment forum "Opportunities for trade and investment and prospects for cooperation" was held on June 23 in Khujand as part of the IX International Trade Fair Support to the International Trade Fair "Sughd-2023" 8 companies from Sughd region to participate and visit the international food exhibition "PRODEXPO-2023" in Moscow, Russian Federation	Overperformed	RTC 2023 Annual Report

	10	77 MoUs, Agreements signed during the Expo Sughd 2022-2023 and Bokhtar food 2023	Overperformed	
# of trade promotion contracts concluded				
# of people benefiting from improved infrastructure of cross-border markets	2000 (30%)	Assessment conducted in the border area and the cost estimation for 1 infrastructure works developed. Tender announced.	In progress	RTC 2023 Annual Report.

Annex 7. Status of Gender-sensitive Indicators

Gender sensitive indicators	baseline		Target	Total F.	Actual
	Value	Year			
# of young apprentices (% women) get on-the job training and increased professional skills	0	2020	80 (30%)	**24**	**43**
# of young people and job seekers (% women) reporting use of innovative digital platforms for employment and job seeking	0	2020	200 (40%)	**80**	115
# of gender-sensitive assessments/research conducted in partnership with Russian research institutes	0	2020	1	**100%**	
# of local stakeholders and community members (% women) with improved knowledge on sustainable management of local resources	0	2020	250 (30%)	**75**	105
# of gender-responsive local economic and development infrastructure projects supported to improve local productive capacities	0	2020	15	**100%**	35
# of entrepreneurs (incl. % women-led businesses) benefiting from online counseling and information services	0	2020	300 (30%)	**90**	250
# of MSMEs (% of women-led) with improved capacity for recovery and adaptation	0	2020	105 (30%)	**32**	163
# of jobs (incl. % jobs for women) maintained by project beneficiaries	0	2020	125 (30%)	**38**	231
# of feasible innovative projects pitched at regional Choikhona sessions (# of projects ideas proposed by women)	354	2020	30 (11)	**11**	16
# of traders and decision makers from CA countries participating in online webinars on cross-border and regional trade (% women participants)	0	2020	80 (30%)	**24**	24
# of people benefiting from improved infrastructure of cross-border markets	0	2020	2000 (30%)	**600**	In process
TOTAL female beneficiaries				**974**	982

Annex 8. Other Donors Initiatives in the Areas Addressed by RTC

USAID

Under Agriculture and Food Security sector, **USAID** continues to improve the incomes of smallholder farmers, catalyze women's economic empowerment, and increase the production and consumption of nutritious foods while supporting the diversification of livelihoods for increased household and community resilience to shocks and stresses. USAID food security assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic reached almost half a million Tajiks, of which more than 82 percent were women entrepreneurs, farmers, pregnant women, and mothers of young children. In partnership with local entrepreneurs, Agency established 20 new agricultural businesses including cold-storage, canning, drying, juicing, and animal feed processing facilities, leveraging $1.5 million in private sector investment -- leading to 293 new part-time and seasonal jobs.[12] Under Economic Growth and Trade practice, USAID "supports expanding the private sector within the agriculture, logistics, textile, food processing, tourism, and information technology sectors to improve regional and international competitiveness. Tajikistan's economic development is greatly strengthened by regional trade and its cross-border linkages, which will also result in greater regional stability. USAID is building the capacity of the newly established Tajik Export Agency to connect Tajik agribusinesses with lucrative European markets. Despite the disruption in trade caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID's interventions resulted in the signing of contracts representing $182,770 worth of Tajik exports, and letters of intent valued at more than $1 million. The Agency co-financed a Tajik agro-processor in the Sughd region to introduce innovative packaging, processing equipment, a testing laboratory for dried fruit, and a certification system, giving agro-firms the means to access European markets. This investment increased the firms' processing volumes, bringing in an additional $320,000 in sales, and created about 30 permanent jobs. In response to disrupted import/export transport caused by COVID-19, "USAID established a hotline to help traders and exporters locate the latest information about new import and transit procedures, and launched online portal to bridge the communication gap between traders and exporters".[13] Similarly to the RTC, USAID addresses issues of labor migration "through social, educational, and financial support to former migrant workers, particularly those who are no longer allowed to return to the Russian Federation. USAID programs help them reintegrate into their communities and gain the skills needed to obtain employment or start a business. Overall, in response to the pandemic- related challenges, USAID provided 100 migrant laborers with training and assistance to launch small businesses.[14]

EU

The **EU's cooperation activities** cover the range of areas relevant to the RTC interventions, including human rights and social inclusion and rural development with an overarching "aim to support a sustainable human and socio-economic development of the country and boost regional cooperation between the Central Asian countries, hence contributing to regional stability and enhanced intra-regional connectivity."[15] Under the bilateral Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Tajikistan for the period 2014-2020, the EU supported mainly the rural development, health and education and health sectors in the country. On rural development, the EU provided significant support to improved agricultural production and value-chain strengthening. Building on previous efforts, for the 2021-2024

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[12] https://www.usaid.gov/tajikistan/agriculture-and-food-security

[13] https://www.usaid.gov/tajikistan/economic-growth-and-trade

[14] https://www.usaid.gov/tajikistan/democracy-human-rights-and-governance

[15] https://www.eeas.europa.eu/tajikistan/european-union-and-tajikistan_en?s=228

period, EU is focusing on three priority areas, which were also addressed by the RTC: 1. Inclusive green and digital economy; 2. Human development, and 3. Natural resources management, efficiency, and resilience, including support to the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

At the regional level, the EU cooperates with Tajikistan within the framework of the EU's Strategy for Central Asia, adopted in 2019, which covers more than 40 regional programmes, including those focused on economic development and trade. Tajikistan is also supported through two newly launched Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs) under the new regional MIP, one of which addresses issues of digital connectivity and overall digitalisation – area supported also by the TRC project.

GIZ
GIZ works in Tajikistan on behalf of the German Government and the EU, focusing among others areas on economic development and employment, including expansion of value chains and support to vocational education and training, with the aim to help people to gain qualifications and improve their income and employment situation. The key GIZ projects include:
"Promoting the Local Economy in Tajikistan" (2016 – 2020), which targeted improved competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) through skills development, organisational developmen and procurement of materials and equipment, such as laboratory equipment for food safety.
"Promoting Effective Economic Growth in Tajikistan"
"Improving Employment and Income for Tajik Migrant Workers".

GIZ also implements regional programmes in Central Asia in the fields coherent to RTC such as inclusive growth, trade facilitation and TVET capacity strengthening.[16]
ADB also has coherent activities in its portfolio. Currently Bank is launching "Tajikistan: Resilient Livelihoods and Empowerment of Rural Women Project" to "promote women's role in the agriculture value chain through social entrepreneurship, and (iii) enhance employment readiness of women agricultural workers to improve household incomes".[17] However, the majority of the ADB interventions are implemented within a framework of regional programmes, such as "Supporting Implementation of Strategy 2030 Operational Plan 2 in a Post-COVID-19 Environment - Gender Mainstreaming, which targets "the negative economic and social impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic… (and) will also explore opportunities to include actions relevant to areas of the SDG 5 transformative agenda".[18] Another ADB regional initiative – "Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Skills Development under the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Program" – targets "a stronger regional integration conducive for higher, more inclusive and sustainable economic growth through improvements in the standards and harmonization in Higher Education and TVET and promotion of greater skill mobility while facilitating evidence-based decision-making process".[19]

EBRD

EBRD helps SMEs from many industries in Tajikistan to grow by the way of connecting its clients to local consultants and international advisors, and by facilitating and access to financing – approach used in a smaller scale by the RTC. However, unlike the RTC project, EBRD is able to provide lasting

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[16] https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/382.html

[17] https://www.adb.org/projects/54111-008/main#project-pds

[18] https://www.adb.org/projects/54111-012/main

[19] https://www.adb.org/projects/54234-001/main

assistance, taking its clients through the whole process of organizational change design and implementation, and returns one year after each project to measure impact. Similarly to ADB, EBRD provides technical assistance (TA) also within a framework of regional initiatives, such as "Promoting Gender Equality in the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Region (CAREC)". This TA, involving all 11 CAREC member countries, is "aligned with the following impact: inclusive regional economic growth in CAREC enhanced, and the outcome: gender equality and women's economic empowerment improved in the CAREC region".[20]

World Bank

WB also targets area of assistance coherent with the RTC activities. For instance, one of the development objectives of the WB "Social Protection Modernization and Economic Inclusion Project" is to support the GoT in protecting poor and vulnerable households from shocks and promoting economic inclusion. It foresees the support to unemployed and labour migrants through the strengthening of employment services, enhancing economic inclusion, and capacity building and awareness raising.[21] Other relevant WB interventions include such initiatives as "Rural Economy Development Project" targeting creation of non-agricultural jobs [22] and "Tajikistan Socio-Economic Resilience Strengthening Project", targeting gender, youth employment, jobs creation and social inclusion.[23]

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[20] https://www.adb.org/projects/55121-001/main

[21] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P178878

[22] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P168326

[23] https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P168052