Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks

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Prepared by
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADBI</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>Asian Highway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBIN</td>
<td>Bangladesh Bhutan India Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCIM</td>
<td>Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIMSTEC</td>
<td>Bangladesh India Myanmar Sri Lanka Thailand Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAREC</td>
<td>Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESA</td>
<td>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EATL</td>
<td>Europe-Asia Transport Link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>United Nations Economic Commission for Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO</td>
<td>Economic Cooperation Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECTS</td>
<td>Electronic Container Tracking System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSWA</td>
<td>Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia of ESCAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDB</td>
<td>Islamic Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTC</td>
<td>International North-South Transport Corridor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITI</td>
<td>Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITI-DKD-Y</td>
<td>Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-Yangon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least developed country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LLDC</td>
<td>Landlocked developing country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSJD</td>
<td>Organization for Cooperation of Railways</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFID</td>
<td>Radio Frequency Identification Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECI</td>
<td>Regional Economic Cooperation Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDG</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SME</td>
<td>Small and Medium Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPECA</td>
<td>Special Programme for Economic Cooperation in Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAR</td>
<td>Trans-Asian Railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIP1-BM</td>
<td>Turkey-Iran (Islamic Republic of)-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRACECA</td>
<td>Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Development Account Project, *Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link with subregional and regional transport and Trade networks*. The evaluation was carried out from 25 February to 25 April 2018 by Dr. Syed Nuruzzaman, an independent evaluator, based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The purposes of the evaluation were to: promote accountability and learning; support results-based management; analyze achievement of project results at the level of objectives and expected accomplishments; and make an assessment of the design, strategy and implementation of the project to deduce meaningful conclusions and recommendations. The evaluative data and evidences were collected through review of documents, consultations with project staff and partners, interviews with governments and other stakeholders and administration of an online feedback survey.

The project was implemented by the Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia (SSWA) of ESCAP from July 2014 to June 2018 in cooperation with ESCAP’s Transport Division and the Sustainable Transport Division of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The project sought to enhance the capacities of stakeholders in South Asia and Central Asia - particularly the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and the least developed countries (LDCs) in these two subregions – to strengthen their links through two trunk transport corridors identified and promoted by the project, namely TIPY-BM (Turkey-Iran [Islamic Republic of]-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar) Road Corridor along the Asian Highway (AH) network and ITI-DKD-Y (Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-Yangon) Container Cargo Corridor along the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) network.

Overall, the evaluation concluded that the project made a significant contribution in re-energizing ESCAP’s flagship transport connectivity initiatives in South and South-West Asia and operationalizing important segments of the two transport corridors.

**Effectiveness:** The project effectively facilitated the launching of the first ever cross-border container train service between India and Bangladesh in April 2018. The success of the train service was expected to expand container rail movement along other presently disconnected segments of the ITI-DKD-Y corridor. The launching followed the adoption by the Ministry of Railways, Government of India of the ITI-DKD corridor proposal in its annual Railway Business Plan for 2017-2018. The ITI-DKD proposal was formulated with support from the project and presented at an Expert Group Meeting organized by the project. The contribution of ESCAP through this project was acknowledged by the Government of India.

The online survey also confirmed the effectiveness of the project. Some 96.2 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed¹ that the project was effective in enhancing awareness of government officials, regional groupings and financial institutions on

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¹ Based on a response rate of 18.3 percent (26 responses out of 142)
connectivity options and opportunities along the AH and TAR corridors and their economic and social benefits. Furthermore, some 84.6 percent survey respondents stated that the project was effective in increasing the skills to develop and implement measures to enhance subregional/regional connectivity policies and programmes. Interviews with stakeholders also confirmed that their negotiating skills were positively impacted by the project.

**Relevance:** The relevance of the project was ensured through national studies and consultations with participating governments to ascertain their needs and priorities and required technical support from the project. The results of the studies and consultations were further discussed through policy dialogues and workshops to seek mutual interest and forge regional consensus on key transport connectivity issues. The online survey found some 92 percent of the respondents who agreed/strongly agreed that the activities and outputs of the project were highly relevant to the work of their organizations and countries in promoting transport connectivity. Also, some 92 percent reported that the project outputs, e.g., meetings, publications, reports etc. were useful for the participants’ organizations/countries as inputs into their decision making process as well as in other forums and platforms. The project was designed and implemented in consultation and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders.

**Efficiency:** The project was implemented efficiently and managed to deliver all its outputs with an extension of six months. The project delivered all its activities with limited human resources, highlighting the need for increased and dedicated staff resources for a priority project of this nature. The project was able to harness partnership opportunities from several subregional organizations, funds and programmes and succeeded in exploiting the synergies in promoting connectivity in the subregions. For example, in addition to partnering with ECE, it secured the participation of SAARC, ECO, BIMSTEC, TRACECA, World Bank, ADB and IDB as implementation partners who contributed in-kind expert services in the project’s activities which led to significant cost savings. The project experienced some headwinds in the timely implementation of two activities due to circumstances beyond the control of the project team and encountered some interagency challenges that impacted negatively on the full utilization of its financial resources.

**Sustainability:** The evaluation revealed the continuing need for ESCAP-SSWA engagement to take the results forward as regional connectivity is a public good which no single country can deliver in isolation. ESCAP with its convening power was in a unique position to act as a neutral platform to exchange views and information and forge consensus and support concrete actions in promoting transport connectivity in the region.

**Gender and human rights:** The project incorporated gender concerns in its design quite well but could not deliver on this promise during its implementation phase. The downstream results generated by increased connectivity could attenuate this drawback by empowering women and promoting their greater participation in the economic and social benefits of improved transport connectivity.
Drawing from the above findings and conclusions, the evaluation report offers seven recommendations for ESCAP to consider:

1. ESCAP should strengthen its efforts in mobilizing political commitment to this kind of connectivity project for exploiting its full potential.

2. ESCAP should formulate and adopt an integrated approach through an Integrated Regional Transport Master Plan

3. ESCAP should strengthen engagement of the private sector and other trade associations and bodies in future discussions and negotiations on the development of the transport corridors

4. ESCAP should incorporate gender and human rights issues in the design of follow-up projects

5. ESCAP should prioritize and/or devote staff resources to support future activates on transport connectivity

6. ESCAP should continue capacity development support at the country level

7. ESCAP should expand interagency cooperation and collaboration
1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of the evaluation, and the evaluation purpose, objectives, outputs and scope of the evaluation.

This is the final evaluation report of the Development Account project, “Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks”. The evaluation was carried out from 25 February to 25 April 2018. The evaluation was conducted by Mr. Syed Nuruzzaman, an independent evaluator. Total budget of the project was US$ 632,000 with implementation period from 01 July 2014 to 31 December 2017. An extension of the project was granted on an exceptional basis to 30 June 2018 to facilitate a thorough evaluation of the project which was completed in early 2018.

1.1 Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

As outlined in the Terms of Reference of the Evaluation of the project, the purposes of the evaluation were to promote accountability and learning, support results-based management, analyze the level of achievement of project results at the level of objectives and expected accomplishments by examining the results framework, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria. The Evaluation also aimed to assess the design, strategy and implementation of the project to deduce meaningful conclusions and recommendations which can contribute to improved programming and implementation of capacity building projects in the future.

The key objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the results and achievements of the project;
- Assess the performance of the project against evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, and mainstreaming of gender and human rights; and
- Formulate specific and action-oriented recommendations, based on the findings and conclusions reached by the evaluation, to inform management decision-making and improve future capacity development project design and implementation.

1.2 Scope of the evaluation

The approved project document and any subsequent amendments/extensions have been used to define the geographical scope of the evaluation; namely the targeted beneficiary countries in South Asia and Central Asia, and direct and indirect stakeholders including collaborating organizations, agencies, funds and programmes. The evaluation included examination of project design process, stakeholder
consultation and participation, roles and responsibilities of the project management team, and the extent to which targeted policy makers were involved in implementing the project. The application of knowledge products and training materials produced by the project in developing national transport and trade facilitation measures were evaluated, based on relevant and available documents, data and information.

The evaluation was conducted in line with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines. Apart from the direct and indirect stakeholders (see the matrix, Stakeholder analysis and capacity assessment in the project document, pages 12 and 13, for an enumeration of range of stakeholders targeted by the project), it was expected that other target groups using the results would include the UN General Assembly as the donor of the project, the Development Account Fund Manager at the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), and ESCAP management and staff.

2. OBJECT OF EVALUATION DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

2.1 Object and context

In cooperation with the Transport Division of ESCAP and the Sustainable Transport Division of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia (SSWA) of ESCAP implemented the project from July 2014 to June 2018. The project sought to enhance the capacities of stakeholders in South Asia and Central Asia particularly the landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and the least developed countries (LDCs) in these two subregions – to strengthen their links with regional and subregional trade and transport corridors and frameworks such as the Asian Highway network (AH), the Trans-Asian Railway network (TAR) and the Europe-Asia Transport Linkages (EATL). In achieving this broad objective, the project explored the possibilities and opportunities in (i) “linking the existing and proposed subregional road and railway networks along the Asian Highway and the Trans-Asian Railway routes and the Euro-Asia Transport Linkages (EATL) corridors based on minimal investments; (ii) facilitating the movement of goods along these corridors in a mutually beneficial manner, especially for the benefit of the landlocked and least developed countries (LLDCs and LDCs) in these subregions, and (iii) facilitating trade and investment through the promotion of paperless trade and the creation of economic corridors at the border crossings that could be of particular interest to the LLDCs and countries emerging from conflict such as Afghanistan”.

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3 Target beneficiary countries are: South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, Pakistan and Turkey; and Central Asia: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

4 Development Account Project DA09-1415AP, pages 3 and 4.
The project sought to build the **capacities** of key stakeholders of Southern Asia and Central Asia, especially in LLDCs and LDCs of these two subregions, to strengthen connectivity within the subregional and regional transport and trade networks\(^5\). The project **identified two trunk corridors** for promoting intra- and inter-regional connectivity and linking to markets internally as well as with Central Asia and Europe. These corridors are: TIPI-BM (Turkey-Iran [Islamic Republic of]-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar) Road Corridor along the Asian Highway network and ITI-DKD-Y (Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-Yangon) Container Cargo Corridor along the Trans-Asian Railway network. It sought to create **awareness** about the interfaces and synergies of ITI-DKD-Y and TIPI-BM corridors with other important subregional connectivity projects and programmes, such as the corridors proposed by BIMSTEC, ECO and SAARC. It organized workshops and policy dialogues to disseminate the results of analytical studies, data and information on the identified corridors and their linkages with other proposed corridors and conducted training activities on several ESCAP transport facilitation models namely, Secure Cross Border Transport Model, Efficient Cross Border Transport Model, Model on Integrated Controls at Border Crossings, Electronic Cargo Tracking Systems, Models for Harmonization of Transport Documents, and Cross-border Paperless Trade facilitation and Single Window Systems.

### 2.2 Goals and objectives of the project

The goals and objectives of the project required interventions at different levels and in multifaceted forms “to strengthen the capacities of member States in South and Central Asia, particularly LLDCs and landlocked countries, to plan and implement measures to enhance intra and interregional connectivity and to harness its economic potential for inclusive and sustainable development”\(^6\). The project intended to achieve these goals and objectives through two accomplishments:

- **Expected accomplishment 1**: enhanced awareness of the government officials, regional groupings and financial institutions about the possible connectivity options and their economic and social benefits including existing interregional trade opportunities; and

- **Expected accomplishment 2**: increased skills of government officials, regional groupings and financial institutions to develop and implement measures, including coordination in policies and plans that incorporate gender dimensions, to enhance connectivity in the region through application of standards and best practices for trade and transport facilitation at the border crossings and along the main economic corridors identified.\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Evaluation Terms of Reference, Annex II.


\(^7\) Ibid
2.3 Key activities under the project

Key activities undertaken by the project\(^8\) could be clustered around three broad groups:

- The project identified two key potential road and rail corridors along the AH and TAR networks and EATL corridors in the Southern and Central Asian subregions, and highlighted the challenges for development of the selected corridors in terms of infrastructure deficiencies and trade and transport facilitation issues, and develop proposals for implementation;

- It examined the available legal instruments (multilateral, regional and bilateral agreements) and international arrangements for transport and trade facilitation along the identified road and rail corridors; and

- It organized regional and subregional capacity-building policy dialogues and workshops, using a mix of knowledge products generated by the project and existing training materials and guides. Those events also generated draft action plans to enhance connectivity in the subregions, with active participation of Governments of two subregions, their development partners and subregional organizations and programmes.

2.4 Implementation of the project activities

Desk review of the latest progress report of the project, project outputs, and financial resources utilized, results of the activity-based questionnaire, responses from the online survey and discussions with selected participants and members of the ESCAP-SSWA/ECE project team indicated a significantly high level of achievement of intended results/accomplishments, completion of planned activities and utilization of financial resources. All the planned activities were completed by end 2017 except for one workshop and a policy dialogue which were held from 6 to 8 February 2018 in Bangkok. With the timely delivery of this workshop and policy dialogue, the project succeeded in delivering all its activities and outputs by early February 2018. The preparation of the final evaluation of the project was completed in May 2018.

3. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overall approach

A transparent and participatory approach combined with triangulation of available data and information was used in conducting a forward-looking evaluation. The methodology used sought to achieve the primary objectives of peer learning and accountability and to conform to the five evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and mainstreaming of gender and human rights dimensions.

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\(^8\) Project Document, pages 20-21
methological approach was primed to gather evidence in detecting changes brought about by the project. It involved the participation of male and female stakeholders including development partners and target beneficiaries in all key stages of evaluation tasks. Data was segregated by sex and other occupational groups where possible. The evaluation adopted a mixed method in which qualitative as well as quantitative data and information from different sources were triangulated, facilitated by the proven knowledge and expertise of the project team and the Evaluation Reference Group, in assessing the results and achievements of the project. Tables, charts, figures and boxes have been used to illustrate key data, information, and important results. Data analysis was calibrated to verify evidence-based advocacy and yield useful and operational conclusions and recommendations.

**Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions**

Table 1 illustrates the five evaluation criteria and the associated questions that have been used in evaluating the results and achievements of the project and draw conclusions and frame recommendations.

Table 1: Evaluation criteria and questions to assess the results of the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>• What are the results and achievements of the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The extent to which the project objective and expected accomplishments have been achieved. A project is considered effective when its activities produce the desired results.</em></td>
<td>• What were the key factors that contributed to the achievement or non-achievement of project results?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What could have been done better to improve the effectiveness of the project in achieving its results?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td>• What evidence exists to demonstrate that the project’s products and services were used by the target countries?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The extent to which the project results are in line with the priorities and policies of the target groups. Relevance assesses the usefulness of activities and outputs delivered to the target group.</em></td>
<td>• How were the needs and requirements of the target groups assessed or identified?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What are/will be the key obstacles for the target groups to utilize the project’s products and services?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficiency</strong></td>
<td>• Were the resources (human and financial) effectively utilized to deliver outputs and achieve results?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The extent to which human and financial resources were used in the best possible way to implement activities, deliver outputs and achieve objectives/outcomes.</em></td>
<td>• How was the project managed in terms of timeliness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Were synergies gained from partnership with other organizations resulted in cost-efficiency and savings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>• To what extent can results of the project be continued without ESCAP's further involvement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The likelihood that the benefits of the project will continue in the</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender and human rights mainstreaming

This criterion assesses the extent to which gender considerations have been incorporated in the project design and implementation.

To what extent were gender and human rights integrated into the design and implementation of the project?

Source: Terms of Reference of the Evaluation, Annex II

3.2 Methods of data collection and analysis

A mixed method was adopted in collecting and analyzing data. Multiple sources and methods have been used to collect data and information, leading to triangulation of results, i.e., verification of expected results using multiple data and information sources. The overall approach consisted of the following components:

- **Desk review:** The evaluator carried out an in-depth review of (a) the project document, approved progress reports, and approved terminal report to obtain information on activities completed, outputs delivered and financial resources utilized; (b) reports of training workshops and policy dialogues, and media reviews; (c) data and information generated by activity-wise questionnaires; (d) written requests from government officials and other stakeholders; and (d) knowledge products such as technical background papers, policy notes, and analytical studies prepared under the project.

- **Focus group meetings:** The evaluator visited ESCAP office in Bangkok and the Subregional Office for South and South West Asia in New Delhi to gather information on various aspects of the project including project-related documents and conduct face-to-face interviews and discussions. Focus group meetings with key male and female members of the project team and Evaluation Reference Group were also held, with special reference to project design, implementation process, delivery of outputs, identification of key results, evaluation criteria, evaluation questions, indicators, data sources and key assumptions and risks and implementation challenges. Data and information obtained through activity-based performance evaluation questionnaires were discussed and findings and conclusions collated.

- **Stakeholder interviews and consultations:** The evaluator participated in the Workshop on Road Transport Facilitation along the Asian Highway Corridors in Southern Asia, held on 6 February 2018 and the Regional Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Transport Connectivity in Southern and Central Asia, held on 7-8 February 2018. During these two events, he listened to all the presentations made and held meetings with several participants from selected participating countries and partner agencies to gain first-hand impression about the project.
design, implementation process, project activities and results achieved. Official missions were undertaken to Bangladesh, India and Nepal to interview selected participants and stakeholders and seek their views about the results of the project. The evaluator visited the Subregional Office for South and West Asia of ESCAP during his mission to India and met and discussed various aspects of the project with the project team. The evaluator met and interviewed some 28 members of the project team and the Evaluation Reference Group, government officials, representatives of subregional organizations, international agencies, private sector, civil society organizations and experts from think tanks.

- **Online project evaluation survey of country participants and other stakeholders:** An online survey questionnaire was developed and circulated for use by those government participants and other stakeholders who could not be contacted directly. Some 26 senior to mid-level male and female participants out of 201 participants (12.94 percent) took part in the online survey with India, Bangladesh and Nepal reporting 24 percent, 20 percent and 16 percent response rate, respectively. Incidentally, these were the only three countries which were visited by the evaluator, perhaps indicating the importance of field visits during the evaluation phase. Of the respondents, 89 percent were male and 12 percent were female. Government officials represented 65 percent of the respondents, followed by 19 percent trade associations, media and others, 12 percent non-governmental organizations, and 4 percent UN organizations. The survey yielded data and information on project’s effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability.

### 3.3 Gender and human rights mainstreaming approach

The evaluation addressed gender perspectives and human rights issues to the maximum possible. Sex disaggregated data and information was collected by appropriately designed activity-based questionnaires and on-line project evaluation survey questionnaire and selecting the respondents. Assessment was made of the training materials and facilitation tools using gender and human rights perspectives. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators of gender and human rights concerns were sought to assess the results at the outcome levels. Gender and human rights issues were mainstreamed in data analysis and took place at three levels: project design, project implementation, and project outcomes.

### 3.4 Limitations

The evaluation was subject to several risks and limitations inherent in this type of assessment. To mitigate some of these risks and limitations, data and information from different sources were triangulated to assess as objectively as possible the achievements and results of the project. Limited time and budgetary resources allowed the evaluator to visit only 3 countries namely, Bangladesh, India and Nepal, out of 14 beneficiary countries under the project. Online project evaluation survey was used to ascertain the views of as many stakeholders as possible to overcome this limitation.
Most of the discussions and the online survey relied on the memory of the respondents for answers and should be treated as such. Although activity-based questionnaires yielded good responses, the online survey was able to secure 26 responses out of 142 participants to whom the survey was sent. The survey results should therefore be treated with some caution. The project document and other documents (e.g., invitation letters, information notes) highlighted the need for mainstreaming gender concerns and requested nomination of women candidates in the capacity development activities and policy dialogues. However, gender parity in capacity development activities and policy dialogues could not be ensured as selection of participants by the governments and other stakeholders was beyond the control of the project team.

4. FINDINGS

This chapter provides the findings of the evaluation in accordance with the evaluation criteria and evaluation questions, as illustrated in Table 1.

4.1 Overview

The project was highly effective in delivering all outputs and services and producing significant results. The project was highly relevant to transport development policies and strategies and connectivity needs of the participating countries in South Asia and Central Asia. The project’s human and financial resources were efficiently used and properly accounted for, and despite some initial delay in starting the implementation of the project and scaling down of several activities due to interagency challenges, the project managed to achieve a 72\(^9\) percent delivery rate. Skills and knowledge of participants in implementing national transport policies and strategies were significantly enhanced. It fostered effective partnerships across a broad range of stakeholders and, by and large, succeeded in ensuring ownership of the project by participating countries, thereby increasing the prospects for long-term sustainability of project outcomes. The project document highlighted the need for mainstreaming gender and human rights issues in its activities and results. However, there was limited evidence to suggest that the project’s outputs and services explicitly incorporated gender and human rights issues, although the results and achievements generated by the project were expected to have significant positive impact on gender empowerment and promotion of human rights.

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\(^9\) See Appendix V Table 6 for a detailed breakdown of the expenditure.
4.2 Performance Assessment

4.2.1 Effectiveness

Finding 1. The project was highly effective in enhancing awareness on connectivity options and their economic and social benefits

The project has been highly effective in achieving the project objectives and accomplishments. It significantly enhanced awareness of government officials, regional groupings and financial institutions about the possible connectivity options and their economic and social benefits including existing inter-regional trade opportunities. Some 96.2 percent (Appendix V Table 3) respondents participating in the project evaluation survey agreed/strongly agreed that the project was effective in enhancing awareness on connectivity options and their economic and social benefits. For example, the Expert Group Meeting on “Strengthening Railways Transport Connectivity in South and South-West Asia”, held on 15-16 March 2017 succeeded in bringing together senior rail transport officials from eight participating countries which discussed the operational aspects of the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-Yangon (ITI-DKD-Y) rail cargo corridor, one of the key transport networks with which the project intended to promote the connectivity of the participating countries. As a concrete outcome of this initiative’s success in raising awareness, the Ministry of Railways, Government of India formally adopted a plan to support the ITI-DKD initiative (Appendix V Box 1).

The contribution of the project in raising awareness has been acknowledged by several intergovernmental processes as well. For example, the Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (RECI) in Asia and the Pacific, held from 21 to 24 November 2017 in Bangkok, acknowledged in the Conference outcome document, endorsed by the Ministers, the project’s on-going initiatives and reaffirmed its commitment to “developing seamless connectivity across the region”. Another example of the project’s contribution towards awareness creation is illustrated by discussions on the modalities of a BIMSTEC Master Plan on Transport Connectivity in its workshops and policy dialogues. The implementation of the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA), supported by the project, received significant traction due to the project activities and provided another instance of positive contribution to the formulation of national policies, programmes and strategies in promoting transport connectivity in South Asia.

The knowledge products presented and discussed in the workshops and policy dialogues also generated considerable media coverage in several participating countries, leading to increased awareness about the potential benefits of the connectivity options not only among policy makers and professional experts but also among the civil society groups and citizens at large. The evaluator was of the view that an increased number of policy makers and technical staff were sensitized to the
importance of incorporating environmental, gender and human rights dimensions in their transport and connectivity policies and projects, including transport facilitation measures as a consequence of discussions on these issues in the project’s workshops and policy dialogues.

Several interviewees pointed out that, if all participating countries had attended the project’s activities at senior policy level, the effectiveness of the results produced by the project could be further enhanced.

**Finding 2. The project was highly effective in improving skills in developing and implementing measures to enhance regional/subregional connectivity**

“The project succeeded in imparting a whole range of skills: knowledge about new options, new thinking, and new approaches”, said one private sector participant from Pakistan.

“I have used the knowledge and skills in designing programmes and projects”, said a participant from Nepal.

The project organized seven workshops and policy dialogues (Appendix V Table 1) and produced six knowledge products (Appendix V Table 2), all leading to the generation of concrete results in improving the knowledge and skills of policy makers and other stakeholders in strengthening connectivity in the participating countries. The project trained some 201 senior to mid-level government officials, experts, civil society representatives and private sector participants, of which 63 percent were government officials, 13 percent officials of intergovernmental organizations, 14 percent representatives of civil society organizations and think tanks, and another 14 percent media and private sector representatives (Annex V Figure 1). Of the total participants, 86 percent were male and 14 percent were female participants (Appendix V Figure 2).

Discussions held with government officials and other stakeholders responsible for formulating and implementing transport connectivity policies and strategies indicated that, as a result of their participation in project activities, they acquired relevant skills in implementing cross-border connectivity projects. This finding was supported by the online project evaluation survey results, indicating that some 84.6 percent (Appendix V Table 3) respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the project was effective in increasing their skills to develop and implement measures to enhance sub-regional/regional connectivity. The same survey also revealed that the participants/representatives of organizations/countries became highly knowledgeable about the key transport frameworks promoted and supported by ESCAP and ECE and other collaborating agencies such as SAARC, ECO, OSJD, SPECA, ADB, ADBI and WB, including the Asian Highway Network (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway Network (TAR). Complex negotiations between Bangladesh and India, India and Nepal, and Bangladesh and Nepal, spread over several years, also began to bear fruits as the project approached its completion stage.

A concrete result in subregional cooperation was the first ever test run of the containerized freight train between India (Kolkata) to Bangladesh (Archana) to boost cross-border trade which took place on 3 April 2018 (Appendix V Box 1). From there,
the train then proceeded to Bangabandhu Bridge West Railway Station on 4 April 2018. This segment forms part of the ITI-DKD-Y Container Cargo Corridor along the Trans-Asian Railway network which was identified and advocated by the project for promoting greater connectivity in the region. This pioneering introduction of the containerized freight train was expected to significantly boost trade between India and Bangladesh. Efforts were on-going to start a containerized freight train between Akhaura in the east bank of the river Padma and Agartala in Tripura, and then to other adjoining states in India. The railway infrastructure already exists to make this connectivity a reality. Once the railway connectivity, stretching all the way to Delhi on the western side and to Agartala and then to north-eastern states in India is established, it could significantly boost trade and investment between these countries. The launching of container trucks using RFID between Kolkata and Birgunj, and the commencement of passenger bus service between Dhaka and Kathmandu, both in April 2018 are some of the additional concrete examples which provide growing evidence of the skills of concerned officials, experts and private sector in undertaking and implementing cross-border connectivity projects. Government officials also indicated that they were able to forge greater coordination and cooperation between Ministries/Departments at the national level by citing the economic and social benefits discussed in the knowledge products delivered by the project.

Finding 3. Several country policies, programmes and activities were improved because of the project

The online evaluation survey revealed that several countries have improved or implemented specific policies, programmes and activities as a direct result of the project. For example, work has contributed to revive (?) restart the operation of ITI (Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad) train line and a new tariff has been prepared. Initiatives have been taken to introduce paperless trade, cross-border trade facilitation measures and single window practices. Another country highlighted the successful trial run of the container train between Kolkata (India) and Dhaka (Bangladesh). Similarly, BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement was cited as another example of a regional initiative being positively affected by the project. The Ministry of Railways in India have taken several initiatives for strengthening transport connectivity with Bangladesh and Nepal and new rail links/connectivity have been planned with other neighboring countries. The project also highlighted that Afghanistan could become the land bridge between Central Asia and South Asia, that ESCAP’s project and activities improved regional connectivity and that the project added to their own efforts in this regard. An NGO representative reported that it has been propagating UN and ESCAP programmes/activities in connectivity through its quarterly journal since 1997.
Finding 4. The project was designed and implemented in consultation with the stakeholders in a participatory manner, contributing to achievement of project results

The project organized two pre-launch policy dialogues, one in New Delhi on 19-20 November 2014 and another in Tehran on 20-21 December 2015, to seek the views of selected countries and other stakeholders on transport connectivity issues, opportunities and challenges particularly about the two corridors subsequently proposed by the project. Both these events were organized outside the project's budgetary resources. The outcomes of these two high-level policy dialogues fed into developing the terms of reference (TORs) for the project studies, designing the formats and scope of the workshops and policy dialogues and formulating the overall implementation plan that was adopted in executing the project. However, several interviewees felt that formulating a comprehensive implementation plan should have been an integral part of the project.

After every activity, a questionnaire was administered to gather the views and opinions of the male and female participants on the implementation process including on the effectiveness of the project, efficiency of resources used, relevance of the issues and priorities discussed, and how the results generated by the project could be sustained. These views and opinions were used where relevant to improve/reorient the project's implementation process. A strong internal monitoring and evaluation system ensured wide interdivisional consultation in designing the project and progress reports were periodically submitted to intergovernmental bodies including the Commission and feedback and guidance sought through reporting of results, achievements and challenges faced by the project.

Finding 5. The project was firmly anchored around UN mandates and frameworks ratified by member States, thereby ensuring high-level policy attention in the participating countries

The project was designed within the scope and priorities of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 and in response to several UN resolutions and outcomes of high-level meetings including Ministerial Meetings on transport development, connectivity and United Nations programmes for the LDCs and LLDCs.

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10 The TIPI-BM road corridor and the ITI-DKD rail corridor were first proposed as early as in 2012. See ESCAP/SSWA, Regional Cooperation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development: South and South-West Asia Development Report 2012-13, Box 5.3 and Box 5.4 for discussions on these two corridors.


12 United Nations, ESCAP Resolutions 68/3 and 69/27

In South Asia and Central Asia, all participating countries are members of AH and TAR. A review of national transport development strategies, policies and programmes revealed that almost all the participating countries have incorporated AH and TAR frameworks in their development strategies, policies and programmes. The two corridors proposed by the project to run along the AH and TAR namely, ITI-DKDY container rail corridor and the ITI-DK road corridor, have received wide policy attention due to the project’s activities and generated extensive media coverage at the country level. Many interviewees felt that these achievements could be further strengthened if high-level, and continued, political commitment could be ensured by the countries to advance regional transport connectivity.

**Finding 6. A partnership approach ensured its success**

A key factor contributing to the success of the project was partnership approach adopted by ESCAP-SSWA. The project team held extensive consultations with other UN, regional and subregional organizations, funds and programmers on a continuous basis, both in designing the project as well as in its implementation. Apart from ECE, other entities such as SAARC, ECO, BIMSTEC, TRACECA, ADB, IDB and WB have participated and actively contributed to various project activities. ECE organized two capacity development activities and produced two analytical studies which are under the process of publication. The project team also forged close working relationships with several transport Ministries and Departments and worked closely with the private sector, think tanks and the media, contributing to the success of the project.

**Finding 7. Effective use of ESCAP’s convening power**

The project was successful in articulating the public good nature of transport connectivity in the region and highlighted the key role of ESCAP as the sole UN regional entity with the convening power to bring member States together. Countries also recognized the pivotal role of ESCAP in promoting regional/subregional connectivity and enthusiastically participated in all its activities. The project succeeded in reaching out to other stakeholders such as the private sector, NGOs and media, using ESCAP’s unique convening role as a neutral platform to discuss and deliberate on critical issues in transport connectivity and take the regional agenda forward.

**What could have been done to improve the effectiveness of the project in achieving its results?**

**Finding 8. Ensuring high level participation**

One of the observations made by several interviewees was often the absence of high-level participation from several countries in the project’s activities which possibly reduced their effectiveness. At times, some countries failed to send senior officials.

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14 United Nations, General Assembly Resolution 58/201 on the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of the Landlocked Developing Countries
project team was fully aware of the need to ensure high level and continuous participation in all its activities but that was not always possible due to circumstances beyond their control.

**Finding 9. Minimize delays in project implementation, especially during start up**

As discussed earlier, the project’s effectiveness could be further improved if delays particularly at the initial phase could be avoided. But this was compensated by the pre-launch consultations organized by the project team which ensured a high level of buy-in of the project and ensured its subsequent success. Perhaps a better strategy could be advanced planning anticipating possible delays, given the complex nature of the project and the subregions in which it was being implemented.

**4.2.2 Relevance**

**What evidence exists to demonstrate that the project’s products and services were used by the target countries?**

**Finding 10. The project’s products and services were used by the target countries as these were highly relevant to their work in enhancing regional, subregional and inter-subregional cooperation in transport connectivity**

“Hugely useful and relevant project. It has revitalized the Southern Corridor”, commented a senior Government official from India.

“This project has breathed new life into AH and TAR”, observed a Government official from Bangladesh.

The project significantly contributed to re-energize ESCAP’s flagship transport initiatives in South and South-West Asia: the SOUTHERN CORRIDORS of the Asian Highway network and the Trans-Asian Railway network and succeeded in drawing policy attention – often at very high level -- to the connectivity opportunities along these networks such as the TIPI-BM (Turkey-Iran (Islamic Republic of)-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar Road Corridor along the Asian Highway network and ITI-DKD-Y (Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-Yangon) Container Cargo Corridor along the Trans-Asian Railway network. These two corridors form the trunk routes of the Southern Corridor as part of the AH and TAR networks. The container rail provides multimodal transport links and connects with INSTC, CAREC, BIMSTEC, SAARC, BCIM and other subregional corridors. It also requires minimal investment in improving and connecting the missing links.

Under these two corridors, the project analyzed/ cited/promoted several connectivity initiatives through its knowledge products, workshops and policy dialogues which were either operational or could be undertaken in line with the national and subregional connectivity priorities and policies of target countries and their development
partners. As a result, it succeeded in creating and enhancing awareness about their relevance in promoting transport connectivity in the region. For instance:

- Afghanistan’s eight functional dry ports including those located in Kabul, Jalalabad and Kandahar which could be connected with the Chabahar port in the Islamic Republic of Iran. A 218 km road link will connect Delaram (India) with Zaranj (Afghanistan), which is adjacent to the border of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

- Bangladesh which has rail connections with India at five points is planning another rail connectivity at Badarpur (India) and Bhairab (Bangladesh). Two passenger busses left Dhaka on 23 April 2018 for an 1,100 km journey to Kathmandu, carrying a 44-member delegation comprising of officials from Bangladesh, Nepal, India and the Asian Development Bank as part of the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement (BBIN). The delegation was to attend a tri-nation meeting in Kathmandu on 27 April 2018 to examine the possibility of establishing regular passenger bus service between Bangladesh, India and Nepal. Under BBIN, Bangladesh would open four routes to India and Nepal.

- The Indian Railway Business Plan 2017-18 has endorsed the ITI-DKD-Y container rail corridor. India is building the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor to meet the capacity needs of the corridor running from Geed (Bangladesh border) to Atari near Pakistan border through Delhi.

- Islamic Republic of Iran’s Chahaba port when completed will link it to Afghanistan and Central Asia, vastly reducing time and distance in connecting with markets in Central Asia and beyond.

- In Nepal, Bargen-Rexall-Kolkata has been identified as the TAR route which, in due course, could move traffic to New Delhi and then to Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Turkey. The first electronic container tracking system (ECTS) was launched on 19 April 2018 between Kolkata (India) and Birgunj (Nepal) under which the containers were fitted with a radio frequency identification device (RFID) as part of a three-month pilot project. Nepal is also accelerating its transport connectivity with China under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

- On Pakistan’s west side, the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad link is already operational. On the other side, rail connectivity with India runs through two points: Attari-Wagah-Munabao which is active only for passengers and Attari-Wagah which is active for freight only. TAR has identified Attari-Wagah-Mirzaveh-Zahedan as the potential link.

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The evaluator found that some 92.3 percent of the online survey respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the project was relevant to the work of target groups’ organizations/countries in promoting national/subregional/regional transport and trade connectivity (Appendix V Table 4). One respondent suggested that ESCAP initiates/sponsors two specific case studies on: (i) India-Pakistan-Afghanistan-Central Asia trade and economic cooperation (prospects and challenges); and (ii) India-Central Asia overland Trade and Transport Linkage through the historic Ladakh-Yarkand route, again demonstrating the relevance of the project to the beneficiary countries.

Finding 11. Countries have used the knowledge gained and support provided by the project in various other ways

The online survey and in-depth discussions conducted as part of the evaluation revealed several other benefits of the project. The knowledge gained and support provided by the project was used by the participants in various ways. The publications, reports and documents generated by the project were used by the participants as reference materials in various other seminars, meetings and conferences and constituted valuable inputs/information for developing appropriate national guidelines. Knowledge acquired was also disseminated to other colleagues when participants returned to their countries. In one instance, the participant representing the freight forwarders’ association disseminated the knowledge he acquired to members of the association, who in turn used the knowledge and skills in negotiating with government agencies. Participants gained greater insights and better understanding about the role of connectivity in fostering increased bilateral trade and realizing unexplored trade potentials. Information provided by the project was very useful in learning about other countries in the region and their experiences in policy development. The participants came to know about international good practices in connectivity including several facilitation measures such as single window practices and paperless customs procedures. Information provided by the project on the TAR in establishing seamless rail transport along the corridor was used in planning the railway system in a participant’s country.

How were the needs and requirements of the target groups assessed or identified?

Finding 12. The project successfully assessed the relevant needs and requirements of the target groups in transport connectivity

Several studies were conducted under the project to assess the relevant connectivity needs and requirements of countries in South and Central Asia (Appendix V Table 1) and the findings discussed in workshops and policy dialogues (Appendix V Table 2). In conducting these studies, the project used secondary sources of information including existing ESCAP publications and country information, data and analyses. In several instances, field visits were conducted to gather first-hand information on the needs and requirements of the countries and the challenges they faced in promoting transport
connectivity. The project studies, policy dialogues and training workshops brought out the commonalities of interests and forged regional consensus on key transport connectivity issues, including the transport and transit barriers faced by the participating countries.

While the project outputs generally succeeded in assessing/identifying the needs and requirements of the target groups during its implementation phase, only 45.9 percent respondents agreed/strongly agreed that ESCAP consulted their organizations in the design and implementation of the project (Appendix V Table 4). This result is not surprising given the regional nature of the project (as distinct from a country project), leaving out a large number of participants who subsequently took part in the project activities, leaving out a large number of participants who subsequently took part in the project activities. The project team tried to overcome this gap by organizing several pre-launch events where the views and suggestions of the participants were incorporated in implementing the activities. Few improvisations had to be made during the implementation phase as well. For instance, the venue for several meetings under the project had to be changed at a late stage owing to exigencies of time and several connectivity trial runs were supported by the project’s technical assistance which were not in the project document.

The project outputs provided evidence about the lost opportunities in boosting growth and expanding trade and investment in South Asia and Central Asia due to lack of transport connectivity. Estimates presented in these studies indicated that better connectivity could boost economic growth and spur trade, which in turn could make significant contribution to employment generation, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development and poverty reduction in the subregions. Intra-regional trade costs – of which transport cost was dominant - was estimated to be 114 percent of the domestic value of goods exported from South Asia. Logistics costs in South Asia ranged from 13 to 14 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) compared to the international norm of 8 to 9 percent. With improved connectivity, potential exports from South and South-West Asia could rise to US$354 billion in 2020 from US$64 billion in 2016.

The knowledge products delivered under the project demonstrated that, despite these potential benefits of strengthened transport connectivity, the extent of cooperation between South Asia and Central Asia in utilizing these potentials has been limited with missed opportunities in fostering accelerated development and raising the living standards of their people. The LDCs and LLDCs with limited domestic markets and high transport costs to reach distant markets have suffered the most due to lack of such connectivity options and have seen their production structures and exports becoming more and more concentrated in few products and markets with attendant lack of diversification and product innovation.

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16 Appendix V Box 2, Lack of Cross-border Connectivity Imposes Huge Trade Costs in Southern and Central Asian Subregions

17 Gupta, A., Strengthening Transport Connectivity in South and South-West Asia, Draft Report, January 2018, ESCAP SSWA
The analytical studies and papers prepared under the project were therefore able to present evidence that economic complementary existing between these countries could be significantly exploited by improving their links with existing transport and trade networks and corridors, such as the AH and TAR with minimal investments. These studies also articulated the development strategies, priorities and requirements of countries in South and Central Asia. The project made the singular contribution of concretizing the TIPI-BM (Turkey-Iran (Islamic Republic of)-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar Road Corridor along the Asian Highway network and ITI-DKD-Y (Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-/-Yangon) Container Cargo Corridor along the Trans-Asian Railway network and there was evidence to suggest that participants became aware of these corridors due to the project activities. Studies conducted by the project and by ESCAP-SSWA also showed that they could significantly boost the growth and trade prospects of the participating countries. In fact, TIPI-BM and ITI-DKD-Y has the potential to become brand names in transport connectivity which ESCAP can claim as its own due to the implementation of this project.

In interviews with the evaluator, almost all of the interviewees strongly agreed that the project outputs (meetings, publications, reports, etc.) were relevant and useful for their organizations/countries. Similar findings were reported through the online survey where some 92.3 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the project outputs were useful for the respondents’ organizations/countries (Appendix V Table 4).

What are/will be the key obstacles for the target groups to utilize the project’s products and services?

Finding 13. Countries continued to face some skills gaps and challenges in utilizing the project outputs and services

An analysis of the workshop and policy dialogue reports and discussions with key stakeholders revealed that some participating countries faced several obstacles in utilizing project’s products and services. Lack of political will and/or bureaucratic inertia have been noted quite widely. For instance, on the southern corridor of TAR, container trains are running only between Pakistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Turkey under the ECO initiative on Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) route. But traffic

18 Ibid

19 See Finding 3, under Effectiveness, pages 20-21

20 Gupta, A., Strengthening Transport Connectivity in South and South-West Asia, Draft Report, January 2018, ESCAP SSWA; and ESCAP SSWA, Regional Cooperation for Inclusive and Sustainable Development: South and South-West Asia Development Report 2012-13. See Boxes 5.3 and 5.4 for discussions on these two corridors.
remains low, making the link less economically viable. To increase the volume, one option could be to extend ITI beyond Pakistan to Dhaka through Delhi and Kolkata which would complete the ITI-DKD rail corridor and make it a highly profitable link. Several countries continue to face skills gap in implementing mega transport projects, relying on external expertise to close the gaps. Cross-border transport barriers remain major constraints which are further complicated by lack of technical skills in the line Ministries/Departments to implement some of the cutting edge transport facilitation tools and measures. As the countries are in different stages of development, not all countries were able to or had the capacity to utilize the project outputs and services uniformly, including due to a lack of technological readiness to adopt some of the latest technological breakthroughs and innovations in transport facilitation such as eSeal, and RFID. Lack of inter-Ministerial/Departmental cooperation and coordination also hinders implementation and/or adoption of the project’s products and services. Overlapping responsibilities and proliferation of agencies and entities dealing with transport connectivity issues also complicated matters in adopting transport facilitation measures recommended by the project, highlighting the need for ESCAP’s continued engagement with these countries in improving their internal capacities and achieving better coordination and policy coherence.

**Finding 14. Needs and requirements still unmet: an integrated approach required**

The online project evaluation survey and the activity-based evaluation surveys have revealed that the needs and requirements for policy advocacy and capacity building for fostering transport connectivity in the subregions still remained unmet. Majority of the respondents have called for continuation of the project activities, including policy dialogues and workshops, highlighting the relevance of the project. Conclusions reached in these dialogues and workshops were found to be useful, providing a platform for interaction with other countries for sharing information. Participants of the final Regional Policy Dialogue, held in February 2018 in Bangkok under the project, unanimously “...recognized the need for continuation of awareness generation and capacity building exercises by intergovernmental organizations such as UNESCAP.”

The Policy Dialogue also endorsed a proposal for formulating a ‘Transport Connectivity Master Plan’ for the subregions, to be led by ESCAP. It also urged ESCAP to constitute working groups for formulating the Master Plan. Online survey results indicated widespread support for such a Master Plan. “Development of the Master Plan and its adoption by the involved countries would go a long way in making the project successful. Partnership with multilateral development banks to assist with funding and with the Operations Protocols as developed by OSJD was essential,” observed one respondent. Several studies and proposals have also been undertaken by other subregional organizations, highlighting the need for greater interagency cooperation

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22 Ibid.
and coordination in this field. The Master Plan endorsed by the project would have to integrate these subregional transport corridors being proposed and developed. This would help in prioritization of investments in transport connectivity in the subregion. It would also contribute in developing better and uniform standards in the transport connectivity sector.

4.2.3 Efficiency

**Were the resources (human and financial) effectively utilized to deliver outputs and achieve results?**

**Finding 15: Project’s financial and human resources effectively utilized**

The final progress report submitted by ESCAP-SSWA to ESCAP Strategic Programme Management Division (SPMD) indicated that 72 percent (Appendix V Table 6) of approved budget has been spent with 83.9 percent for the ESCAP component and 36.6 percent for the ECE component. The project was also able to mobilize additional in-kind resource from other sources to promote greater ownership of the project as well as complement some of its planned activities. An analysis of budget-line wise expenditure shows that it adhered to the expenditure plan as spelt out in the project document (Appendix V Table 6). It is highly commendable that a very small team of professional staff – only one of them on a continuous basis - managed to deliver the project’s outputs and achieve results in a most efficient and effective way.

The project was designed to deliver two workshops, two expert group meetings and one policy dialogue (Annex V Box 3). The project organized seven such capacity development activities instead of five, apart from two pre-launch events not funded by the project. Funds were also spent in producing six analytical/research reports, highlighting the connectivity needs and requirements of the participating countries and providing firm empirical evidence of economic and social benefits that could be realized by promoting subregional and inter-subregional transport connectivity including by operationalizing the two transport corridors identified by ESCAP SSWA. In producing these knowledge products and organizing the capacity development activities, the project spent less than 60 percent of allocated resources, indicating a high level of efficient use of budgetary resources.

**How was the project managed in terms of timeliness?**

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23 The BIMSTEC Master Plan Study on Connectivity was expected to be completed in 2018. BIMSTEC was also working on agreements on Trade Facilitation, Customs Cooperation, Motor Vehicle, Coastal Shipping, Grid Connections etc. Similarly, the SAARC Regional Multi-modal Transport Study was completed, followed by BTILS which was being updated as the BIMSTEC Transport Connectivity Master Plan.
Finding 16. The project encountered some headwinds to implement some of its activities on time

Several challenges were encountered during the project’s implementation, leading to some loss in the efficient and timely delivery of outputs. Although the funds were allocated in a timely manner, the project did not commence its implementation activities immediately as the project team decided to organize two events (outside the project’s planned activities) to disseminate the project’s intended goals and objectives more widely and promote greater buy-in amongst the participating countries. This strategy ultimately paid off as the project was able to secure strong support from participating governments and other stakeholders. But it led to some delay in completing its activities on time.

A more serious challenge was faced by the project owing to circumstances beyond its control. It was planned that a policy dialogue would be held during the 19th SAARC Summit in November 2016 in Islamabad. As the Summit got postponed, the momentum generated by the project was seriously disrupted. It was also a serious setback as the Summit was expected to consider and adopt two very important agreements namely, the SAARC Rail Agreement and the SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement, two connectivity instruments strongly advocated by the project. As a result, the project team had to explore alternative venues and considered first Tehran and then Istanbul to hold the policy dialogue. But that too did not materialize, causing further delay in completing this activity. The major earthquake in Nepal in April 2015 also posed some challenges in organizing another activity due to take place in that location. All these events led the project team to reassess and reorient some of the project activities, and much to their credit, they were by and large able to regain the lost time by accelerating the implementation rate. ECE had to cancel their planned activities, scheduled to be held in Tehran and Islamabad due to circumstances beyond their control. It managed to deliver its allocated activities on time but on a smaller scale, leading to under-utilization of budgetary resources earmarked for them, causing a dip in the overall utilization of financial resources.

As mentioned above, very limited staff resources were allocated to implement the project. Despite that, the project succeeded in delivering all its outputs and activities with an extension which was primarily required by the postponement of several meetings due to circumstances beyond the control of the project team. The experience in implementing the project highlighted the need for allocating sufficient and dedicated human resources for the timely delivery of activities and outputs. It also demonstrated the project’s high degree of dependencies on external trends and events: a project being implemented in a complex economic and political environment with multi-dimensional impacts and consequences, working with a large number of stakeholders who often have divergent objectives and interests. Given all these constraints, the project managed to deliver its intended outputs and activities in the most efficient ways.
Finding 17. **The project succeeded in gaining synergies from partnerships with other organizations, resulting in cost-savings and more efficient use of resources**

The implementation strategy pursued by the project put great emphasis on partnership arrangements to achieve its goals and objectives. It was formulated jointly by ESCAP-SSWA in cooperation with the respective Divisions and other Subregional Offices of ESCAP and ECE. The project was coordinated and implemented by ESCAP-SSWA in close partnership with ESCAP’s Transport Division, Subregional Office for North and Central Asia, Trade and Investment Division, and the Sustainable Transport Division of ECE, leading to significant cost savings and efficient use of limited human and financial resources. The Subregional Offices also played a key role in engaging the stakeholders at the national level.

The project built upon and leveraged the tangible outcomes from ESCAP’s and ECE’s existing work in transport and trade facilitation and used the transport facilitation tools already developed by ESCAP and ECE including training materials and guidelines for business process analysis, and simplification and automation of trade and transport documents, gaining from cooperation and collaboration from entities within and outside ESCAP. Other regional organizations, development agencies and development financial institutions namely, ADB, BIMSTEC, ECO, IDB, OSJD, SAARC, TRACECA, and World Bank contributed through the provision of expert services in implementing the capacity development activities of the project which led to significant financial savings. In the absence of such expert services, the project would have to fund the sourcing of such expertise from its own resources. This led to significant cost savings.

4.2.4 **Sustainability**

Finding 18. **Test runs recommended by the project have been completed, laying the foundation for the project results to be sustained**

The successful test runs of cargo train between Kolkata and Dhaka and cargo trucks between Kolkata and Birgunj have demonstrated that results generated by the project could be sustained, provided high level political commitment could be ensured. Similarly, the recent trial runs under the BBIN also demonstrated that the project’s results have high degree of possibility of being sustained over time. These outcomes have generated a new sense of optimism in the participating countries and need to be encouraged so that others have the confidence in initiating their own cross-country test
runs. Several interviewees felt that these success stories needed to be sustained and replicated so that all the stakeholders particularly the private sector could see the concrete economic and social benefits of regional connectivity. More pilots would be needed to sustain the process. The participation of the private sector would have to be strengthened so that they come forward to utilize the connectivity options and make them economically viable and socially rewarding.

**Finding 19. Important partnerships have been developed to sustain the results**

By partnering with several cooperation arrangements and subregional groupings, the project has increased the likelihood of its results being continued in the future. The project has sought and secured the partnership of SAARC, BIMSTEC, ECO, SPECA, CAREC, World Bank and other development agencies and organizations in implementing the project activities and have built strong networks in the process particularly with SAARC, BIMSTEC and ECO (Appendix V Box 4). It has resulted in strong buy-in of the project’s two main connectivity proposals: ITI-DKD-Y and TIP1-BM by some of these partner organizations. For example, ESCAP and SAARC agreed to explore possibilities for scaling up the activities of the project with a proposal being developed to secure financial support from the SAARC Development Fund. The project also contributed to increased understanding about the synergies that existed between these two corridors and those that have been proposed by other organizations and helped in identifying common approaches which augured well in sustaining and expanding the project’s results.

**Finding 20. Countries contemplating follow-up actions to sustain project results**

Several respondents participating in the online survey and in discussions with the evaluator either requested or indicated specific follow-up actions to sustain the results and benefits of the project. One participant observed that ESCAP SSWA should actively try and have container train trials between India and Pakistan with the active involvement of shippers, trade organizations and freight forward companies to sustain the results of the project. Another participant reported that his/her organization has started a paperless project with digital signature. Bangladesh needed technical assistance in conducting legal and technical readiness assessments on cross-border paperless trade. It also sought ESCAP’s support in organizing national consultations on the Framework Agreement and its expert services regarding legal review of the Framework Agreement vis-à-vis domestic laws. One participant reported that his/her country was engaged in speeding up the implementation of Jogbani-Biratnagar, Jaynagar-Bijalpura, and Agartala-Akhaura railway projects. A respondent from Nepal expressed willingness to work with ESCAP in railway development in Nepal. An NGO representative reported that her/his organization was working on strengthening regional economic and transport linkages between India and Nepal.

**Finding 21. Just the beginning: strong role for ESCAP SSWA to sustain the project results**

Almost all the interviewees, survey respondents and policy/workshop reports emphasized the role of ESCAP SSWA to take the pioneering work done under the project forward. Only 23 percent of the respondents thought that the results of the project
could be continued without ESCAP future involvement (Appendix V Table 5) and another 73.1 percent thought the chances were low to medium. If the respondents answering “none” is added, the proportion of respondents expressing their doubt rises to 76.9 percent.

These results are not surprising given the nature of the project and regional connectivity being a “public good”. Although the project was highly effective in creating awareness about the benefits of the identified rail and road corridors and succeeded in enhancing the skills of government officials and other stakeholders in the formulation of transport development policies and strategies, all the interviewees observed that much remained to be done to sustain the results and ESCAP SSWA engagement was vitally needed to take this important initiative forward. The project activities also needed to be scaled up. As regional transport connectivity involved many complex technical, economic, environmental, gender and human rights issues, ESCAP with its convening power was in a unique position to bring the countries together and generate concrete actions to sustain the project’s results. The evaluator found wide support amongst the participating governments and other stakeholders for ESCAP SSWA to formulate and implement a comprehensive multi-modal regional master plan to consolidate the results of the project and ensure their sustainability. ESCAP SSWA on their part would have to ensure the commitment of their senior management to transport connectivity in South Asia and Central Asia as a long-term process and allocate sufficient human and financial resources for all follow-up activities (Appendix V Box 4).

4.2.5 Gender and human rights mainstreaming

Finding 22. More could be done to mainstream gender and human rights

The project incorporated gender dimensions in the design phase but was not sufficiently successful in ensuring mainstreaming gender considerations throughout its implementation. As stated earlier, of the 201 participants trained by the project, only 28 were women, representing just 14 percent of the total participants. Some 26 participants responded to the online questionnaire, of which only 3 were women. Of the 28 participants met and interviewed, only 2 were woman. In the project team of 5 (including the former Director and a Senior Research Assistant), 2 were female. In the Evaluation Reference Group of 6, only 1 was a female.

In terms of mainstreaming gender considerations in the knowledge products and training materials, no explicit attempt was made to do so. Understaffing in ESCAP SSWA was one the key obstacles in mainstreaming gender and human rights issues. However, by highlighting the economic and social gains that could be generated through better transport connectivity, the project implicitly recognized the contribution it would make to improve the economic and social status of women through poverty alleviation, SME development and access to safe and sustainable transport connectivity. Recognition of
human rights also came indirectly as the project emphasized access to affordable, safe and sustainable transport as part of its overall strategy to achieve SDGs. Presentations made by the project staff and other resource persons in workshops and policy dialogues emphasized the project's role and contribution in achieving SDGs, particularly in realizing SDG 1, SDGs 6, 7 and 13, and SDG 17.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides the conclusions of the evaluation, based on the data analysis, including general conclusions and conclusions relating to the specific performance and other criteria.

The project delivered a very strong result for ESCAP-SSWA and put the transport connectivity along the AH and TAR firmly in the policy agenda of many participating countries. It forged effective partnerships with other UN and regional and subregional organizations working in the field of transport connectivity. It revived country interest in the Southern Corridor, an area that has been dormant for some time in ESCAP’s support to transport connectivity in South Asia and Central Asia. As the project was nearing completion, several successful connectivity trial runs were made which had been promoted strongly by the project. More specifically, the following conclusions can be drawn from the evaluation:

- **Effectiveness:** The project was highly effective in achieving its objectives and accomplishments. It made a significant contribution in raising awareness of government officials, regional groupings and financial institutions about the connectivity options and opportunities along the AH and TAR corridors and their economic and social benefits. The project activities generated intense media interest, contributing to further awareness creation about the potential benefits and challenges about the ESCAP-promoted two transport corridors among the policy makers, civil society, think tanks and citizens at large. In several instances, governments adopted new plans and programmes as they became more aware of the project’s results. For example, the project effectively facilitated the launching of the first ever cross-border container train service between India and Bangladesh in April 2018. The success of the train service was expected to expand container rail movement along other presently disconnected segments of the ITI-DKD-Y corridor. The launching followed the adoption by the Ministry of Railways, Government of India of the ITI-DKD corridor proposal in its annual Railway Business Plan for 2017-2018. The ITI-DKD proposal was formulated with support from the project and presented at an Expert Group Meeting organized by the project. The contribution of ESCAP through this project was acknowledged by the Government of India.

The project was highly effective in improving the skills and knowledge of the beneficiary participants in developing and implementing connectivity policies and programmes. The online survey also confirmed the effectiveness of the project. Some 96.2 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the
The project was effective in enhancing awareness of government officials, regional groupings and financial institutions on connectivity options and opportunities along the AH and TAR corridors and their economic and social benefits. Furthermore, some 84.6 percent survey respondents stated that the project was effective in increasing the skills to develop and implement measures to enhance subregional/regional connectivity policies and programmes. Interviews with stakeholders also confirmed that their negotiating skills were positively impacted by the project.

There was anecdotal evidence to suggest that the negotiating skills of concerned officials and experts were positively impacted by project activities, leading to several trial runs of cargo trains and trucks as pilots during the completion phase of the project. The project was also effective in improving several policies, programmes and activities at the country level. The project was able to increase its effectiveness by following a multi-track approach in its implementation process which led to better results. Project experience also established that greater political will and commitment could be more effective in generating additional project results in closing some of the connectivity gaps in the region. Several countries continued to face some challenges in utilizing the knowledge products and benefit from project’s other activities due to capacity and skills gaps, highlighting the need for increased level of capacity development activities in future.

• **Relevance:** The project’s outputs were highly relevant to the transport connectivity needs and requirements of the participating countries. Its design and implementation reflected the transport connectivity priorities set by the participating countries in their transport development polices, strategies and programmes. National studies and consultations ensured the relevance of the project to the needs and requirements of the participating countries. The online survey found some 92 percent of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that the activities and outputs of the project were highly relevant to the work of their organizations and countries in promoting transport connectivity. It was designed and implemented in consultation and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders. Although highly relevant, the project results needed to be consolidated through an integrated approach in the form of a regional Master Plan on connectivity and address the unmet needs and requirements of the participating countries.

• **Efficiency:** The project was implemented efficiently and managed to deliver all its outputs with an extension of six months. The project delivered all its activities with very limited human resources, highlighting the need for increased and dedicated staff resources for a priority project of this nature. It followed a clear implementation strategy, although the project could have benefited more if the strategy was front-loaded. It delivered more outputs than stated in the project document without exceeding its approved budgetary resources. It was able to harness partnership opportunities from several subregional organizations, funds and programmes and succeeded in exploiting the synergies.
that were inherent in their activities towards promoting connectivity in the subregions. For example, in addition to partnering with ECE, it secured the participation of SAARC, ECO, BIMSTEC, TRACECA, World Bank, ADB and IDB as implementation partners who contributed in-kind expert services in the project’s activities which led to significant cost savings. The project experienced some headwinds in the timely implementation of two activities owing to circumstances beyond the control of the project team and encountered some interagency challenges that impacted negatively on the full utilization of its financial resources.

- **Sustainability**: Project produced strong results and laid the foundations for increased possibilities for sustaining the results. Firmly anchored around UN mandates and priorities set by the member States, the project’s results can be expected to be sustained over medium to long term. The key issue examined was whether the project results could be sustained without further engagement of ESCAP. The evaluation revealed the continuing need for ESCAP SSWA engagement to take the results forward as regional connectivity is a public good which no single country can deliver. ESCAP with its convening power was in a unique position to act as a neutral platform to exchange views and information and forge consensus and support concrete action in promoting transport connectivity in the region. The partnerships forged by the project also augured well in sustaining the project results which could be further strengthened through country level activities and outreach programmes including greater involvement of the private sector and private trade associations.

- **Gender and human rights**: The project incorporated gender concerns in its design quite well but could not follow through during its implementation phase. The downstream results generated by increased connectivity could be considered positive for empowering women and promoting their greater participation in the economic and social benefits including access to safe and sustainable transport.

### 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides the recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation.

6.1 ESCAP should strengthen its efforts in mobilizing political commitment to this kind of connectivity project for exploiting its full potential.

ESCAP SSWA needs to work closely with member States to ensure continuous and strengthened political will and commitment to sustain the results of the project. Transport connectivity in South Asia and Central Asia was a complex issue encompassing many historical legacies, giving rise to a variety of economic, social, environmental and geopolitical concerns. It also impacted different groups of countries and economic groups differently within those countries. Cross country connectivity was
also a public good that required sustained support from the governments and their development partners including ESCAP.

6.2 ESCAP should formulate and adopt an integrated approach: Integrated Regional Transport Master Plan.

ESCAP-SSWA should formulate an Integrated Multimodal Regional Transport Master Plan in consultation with the relevant government Ministries/Departments/Agencies, regional and subregional organizations, multilateral development banks, and other key stakeholders with a strong focus on the private sector and public-private partnership in taking the results of the project forward. The Master Plan should be integrated with other proposals and corridors promoted by the subregional organizations such as SAARC and BIMSTEC to harness greater synergy and promote interagency cooperation and collaboration. ESCAP should also ensure a strong buy-in by countries of the region for the Master Plan to succeed. As successfully demonstrated by the project, ESCAP should adopt a “building block” or “segmented approach” which could help in attracting and prioritizing investment for infrastructure development along the corridors.

6.3 ESCAP should strengthen engagement of the private sector and other trade associations and bodies in future discussions and negotiations on the development of the transport corridors.

ESCAP SSWA should strengthen the role of the private sector and trade bodies and associations and make those an integral part of all regional and sub-regional transport initiatives. ESCAP SSWA should involve them from the design stage to implementation, monitoring and evaluation and all follow-up activities. ESCAP SSWA should also ensure that the participating countries’ trade organizations, transport and logistics agencies, and relevant government agencies are all connected with the various Ministries/Departments dealing with transport connectivity. A South Asia/Central Asia Regional Freight-Forwarders Association could be established with ESCAP SSWA serving as its secretariat in the initial stage. Such an association could represent their members and act as a single entity to interact and provide support to the governments of the subregions in implementing the transport corridors with assistance from ESCAP SSWA.

6.4 ESCAP should incorporate gender and human rights issues in the design of follow-up projects

ESCAP SSWA needs to mainstream gender and human rights issues during the design phase as well as the implementation and follow-up phases. Incorporation of gender and human rights issues would not only improve the effectiveness and relevance of the project; it would also ensure a wider buy-in and creation of new constituencies of support for better transport connectivity in South Asia and Central Asia and improve its prospects for long-term sustainability. ESCAP SSWA needs to be more attentive to these issues in future connectivity activities including addressing the staffing constraints which have hampered incorporation of gender and human rights issues in implementing this project.
6.5 ESCAP should prioritize and/or devote staff resources to support future activates on transport connectivity.

As ESCAP has limited staff resources, it should prioritize the projects, activities and initiatives it intends to support in line with its mandates and work programs. ESCAP needs to devote more human resources to a project of this nature with high potential returns and concrete outcomes that have far reaching impacts including realization of SDGs. In particular, a dedicated team of professionals should be devoted to promote transport connectivity in South Asia and Central Asia, two subregions which have lagged behind in reaping the economic and social benefits of strong connectivity. A dedicated team of professional staff is also needed to mobilize greater participation of countries and partner organizations in project activities at appropriately high level and maintain regular contact with the governments and other stakeholders to scale up activities and sustain the results of the project.

6.6 ESCAP should continue capacity development support at the country level.

The project delivered a strong outcome with significant implications for a sustained and an invigorated role for ESCAP SSWA in strengthening capacity development activities, scaling up the project, promoting country ownership and forging common approaches. ESCAP SSWA should strengthen its capacity development activities so that countries could develop a critical mass of trained officials and professionals to accede to international frameworks and agreements, adopt international transport standards and exploit more fully the opportunities offered by transport connectivity options and possibilities. As the countries in South Asia and Central Asia were at various stages of economic and social development, ESCAP SSWA should extend customized country specific support and expert advice to promote country ownership and strengthen their capacity including their technological readiness to adopt new generation transport facilitation tools and measures. More national level activities particularly involving the private sector transport associations and the civil society should be organized by ESCAP-SSWA. Visits to border–crossing points could be organized by ESCAP-SSWA in collaboration with relevant national organizations and entities to promote better understanding about the key opportunities as well as challenges in cross-border transport connectivity. National Expert Groups in the participating countries could be established and coordinated by ESCAP SSWA. The key results of the project could be translated in local languages so that a wider array of stakeholders could be informed of the project’s objectives and results. ESCAP SSWA should undertake initiatives to replicate the trial runs already initiated under the project and ensure that the project results are piloted at the country level to demonstrate the benefits of the project and reorient polices, strategies and projects where necessary.

6.7 ESCAP should expand interagency cooperation and collaboration

ESCAP SSWA should devote more managerial efforts to achieve better cooperation and coordination between ESCAP and ECE. Contacts should be maintained with other regional and subregional organizations and initiatives such as SAARC, ECO, BIMSTEC, and ADB which have proposed their own transport corridors on a regular basis to
exploit the synergies and complementarities between the corridors and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts.

7. LESSONS LEARNT

The project was a challenging initiative in pioneering the operationalization of two transport corridors along the AH and TAR and it came up with strong results. It involved the participation of many stakeholders set in a complex historical, geographical, economic and social setting. Several important lessons appear to have been learnt which could be useful in future follow-up activities.

- The lower than expected rate of financial resource utilization could be avoided by achieving better interagency cooperation and collaboration with ECE.
- A more comprehensive implementation plan needed to be in place for efficient execution of a complex project such as this.
- Adequate professional staff resources should have been allocated to a project of this nature and to sustain its results.
- The ESCAP transport facilitation models are generic in nature which could be customized to specific country needs and technology readiness through advisory services and national level activities.
- A key lesson learnt is the usefulness of adopting a multi-track, “segmented” approach as was followed by the project in promoting transport connectivity in South Asia. While the work on the “western” parts of the two corridors did not proceed at the desired pace, the project was able to inject significant traction into the “eastern” parts of the two corridors by following this strategy.
- Data and information gathering techniques in the evaluation of the project faced some expected challenges. Most of the participants and interviewees had to rely on their memory to recall the results of the project; some participants could not be contacted for information as they had left for new assignments.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I. Management Response
Management Response and Follow-up Action Plan

**Title of Evaluation:**
Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks

**Date of completion: May 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Mr. Hongjoo Hahn  
Officer-in-Charge  
ESCAP | [Handwritten Signature] | 10 JUL 2018 |
| Mr. Adnan Aliani  
Director, Strategy and  
Programme Management Division | [Handwritten Signature] | JULY 5, 2018 |
| Ms. Rupa Chanda  
Head, Subregional Office for  
South and South-West Asia | [Handwritten Signature] | JUNE 28, 2018 |

**General Remarks by Management**

Management appreciates the outcome of the above project’s evaluation, which strongly highlights the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of the project in significantly improving the implementation of transport connectivity projects and advancing related policy reforms in Southern and Central Asia. Among other findings, the evaluation underscored the project’s contributions towards facilitation of the first ever cross-border container rail service between India and Bangladesh in April 2018. The project activities promoted the operationalization of key Asian Highway corridors in the subregions for multimodal linkages with the Southern Asian segments of the Trans-Asian Railway networks, by facilitating landlocked countries’ access. It also raised awareness about the usefulness of transport facilitation tools as well as best practices proposed by ESCAP. These have led to significant improvements in the level of awareness and capacity among policy makers in the target countries to implement transport facilitation policies, as documented by the present evaluation report.
Management welcomed the recommendations of the evaluation report, deemed highly useful and relevant for the future work of ESCAP on the topic of cross-border transport connectivity in the Southern and Central Asian subregions. It has taken due note of the recommendations to sustain the efforts and further deepen political commitment for connectivity reforms, formulate a subregional transport connectivity master plan, enhance the participation of the private sector, and mainstream gender and human development perspectives into transport connectivity. Management accepts these recommendations and decides on the following set of actions to address them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report Recommendation</th>
<th>Management Response</th>
<th>Follow-up Action</th>
<th>Lead Unit/Collaborating Units</th>
<th>Expected completion date</th>
<th>Indicator of completion of follow-up action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strengthen efforts to mobilize political commitment to sustain the results of the project.</td>
<td>Management agrees with this recommendation as disagreement and lack of convergence between member States on issues (though unrelated to connectivity) have affected the pace of cross-border connectivity reforms and investments in the Southern Asian subregion. In order to address this issue, the project’s activities have highlighted the vast economic benefits of operationalizing key subregional transport corridors and mobilized support of key stakeholders to pursue connectivity reforms. Respondents of the evaluation survey</td>
<td>SRO-SSWA will publish the economic assessment report on identified subregional transport corridors, prepared as part of the project in the ESCAP SSWA Development Papers series (Forthcoming, No. 1601). Post-publication, the study will be disseminated to key stakeholders, including transport officials and relevant ministries/departments of governments in the concerned subregions.</td>
<td>SRO-SSWA</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
<td>Publication and dissemination of the study report</td>
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1 *This information provides evidence of completion of action. Examples include issuance of an official memo, completion of a study or report, launching of a website, etc.*
### 2. Formulate an Integrated Multimodal Regional Transport Master Plan in consultation with the relevant Government Ministries/Departments/Agencies, regional and subregional organizations, multilateral development banks, and other key stakeholders.

Management broadly agrees with this recommendation. Participants of the Policy Dialogue held under the project in February 2018 have endorsed the formulation of a transport connectivity master plan which would integrate various elements of transport infrastructure and facilitation measures. However, it was suggested that such a master plan should address specific capacity building needs of countries, particularly those of landlocked LDCs, and should be formed through working groups mandated for consultations with member States.

Follow-up discussions will be organized between SRO SSWA and the Transport Division to assess the feasibility of adopting a connectivity master plan approach in the subregion. Informal consultations will be held with key stakeholders to assess the requirements of the proposed master plan and to formulate a strategy for its development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SRO SSWA, Transport Division</th>
<th>October 2018</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Concept note and a strategic framework for development of the proposed master plan, following internal discussions and consultations with key stakeholders including focal points from transport departments/ministries of subregional countries and selected subject experts.

### 3. Strengthen engagement of the private sector and A designated role for private sector bodies (for SRO SSWA September 2018 Publication of the study report with
| Other trade associations and bodies in future discussions and negotiations on the development of the transport corridors. | Project activities have highlighted the importance of engaging with the private sector. Throughout the project, key industry bodies have been involved in various activities, including national apex industry associations from various target countries as well as regional industry associations such as the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries. More structured involvement of the private sector, particularly trade and transport service providers, was recommended during the course of the project, in view of the private sector’s facilitative role in planning and implementing cross-border connectivity projects. | ex. freight forwarders, logistics operators, industry chambers, etc.) will be considered in follow-up activities such as any future capacity-building activity and/or research output on transport facilitation as well as subsequent project design on this topic. The final version of the above-cited forthcoming study report under the project will include a section defining private sector’s role as investment facilitator for transport infrastructure projects under various public-private partnership models, and as facilitators of reform proposals, particularly in the fields of transport logistics and simplification of customs procedures. | specific details on private sector’s role in regional connectivity projects. Inclusion of modalities of private sector participation in the concept note for subregional transport connectivity master plan. |

<p>| 4. Incorporate and mainstream gender and human rights issues in the design of follow-up projects. | Management agrees with this recommendation. Among the development dimensions of connectivity, socio economic impacts in terms of empowerment of women and vulnerable groups were discussed during the expert group. | Gender and human rights dimensions of connectivity will be strengthened in the above-cited final study report which is being completed for publication. SRO SSWA has an active research and capacity building programme, being | SRO SSWA September 2018 Publication of the study report with inclusion of gender dimensions of connectivity as a priority for future projects. Outcomes of raising the issue of the |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Implementation Details</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Formulate an Integrated Multimodal Regional Transport Master Plan in consultation with the relevant Government Ministries/Departments/Agencies, regional and subregional organizations, multilateral development banks, and other key stakeholders.</td>
<td>Management broadly agrees with this recommendation. Participants of the Policy Dialogue held under the project in February 2018 have endorsed the formulation of a transport connectivity master plan which would integrate various elements of transport infrastructure and facilitation measures. However, it was suggested that such a master plan should address specific capacity building needs of countries, particularly those of landlocked LDCs, and should be formed through working groups mandated for consultations with member States.</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
<td>Concept note and a strategic framework for development of the proposed master plan, following internal discussions and consultations with key stakeholders including focal points from transport departments/ministries of subregional countries and selected subject experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Strengthen engagement of the private sector and</td>
<td>Management agrees with this recommendation.</td>
<td>A designated role for private sector bodies (for SRO SSWA)</td>
<td>September 2018</td>
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</table>
5. Devote adequate staff resources to support transport activities on the [transport connectivity in the subregion].

Management agrees with this recommendation.

The SRO, SWWA will be assigned at least one of its staff members to act as focal point for all future subregional transport connectivity activities. The focal point will be assigned the responsibility of working with partners and external stakeholders, as well as internal and external resource persons with expertise on this topic.

September 2018

Notes on the results of the internal discussions on this matter between the SRO Transport Division and the Transport Division.

Linkages of trade and transport in appropriate forums such as the SAARC and the Group's proposed project, Mantra Group. Along with the topic of gender perspectives need to be done more systematically in every phase of the project implementation.
| 6. Sustain capacity development support at the country level | Management generally agrees with this recommendation. Though capacity-building efforts are to be aligned with the diverse needs of member States ESCAP faces certain limitations in terms of conducting country-specific activities. However, in planning and implementing multi-country activities aimed at fostering regional cooperation, in accordance with the organization's mandate, efforts will be intensified to identify and address specific challenges of each participating member State. | SRO SSWA will document both infrastructural and policy challenges of participating countries in the above-cited forthcoming study report. Subsequent consultation will be held with national focal points to identify country-level support requirements for connectivity projects. Internal discussions will be held with the Transport Division to explore the feasibility of holding workshops and future activities keeping in mind their diverse support requirements. | SRO SSWA | September 2018 | Publication of the study report with country-specific support requirements of participating countries, to be factored in future projects. |
| 7. Expand interagency cooperation and collaboration | Management agrees with this recommendation. The project activities helped to build networks with various organizations engaged in promoting connectivity in the Southern and Central Asian subregions, particularly drawing | SRO SSWA will keep track of developments in the transport connectivity projects and programmes led by BIMSTEC, ECO and SAARC, as well as developments in initiatives such as BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement. SRO SSWA will hold internal | SRO SSWA, Transport Division | December 2018 | A policy note prepared on key developments in connectivity projects and programmes led by BIMSTEC, ECO, and SAARC. The note will summarize future areas of cooperation and |
| linkages with key corridor development programmes of organizations such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Efforts will be made to sustain and strengthen this network. | discussions with the Transport Division to explore possibilities of providing ESCAP's support to subregional organizations and other relevant agencies in areas and projects of mutual interest. | possibilities of forming partnerships. |
APPENDIX II. Terms of Reference

Strengthening connectivity of countries in South
And Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link
with, sub regional and regional transport and trade networks

1. BACKGROUND

The project aims at building the capacities of key stakeholders in the countries of
Southern and Central Asia, especially in the landlocked and least developed countries, to
strengthen connectivity within the sub regional and regional transport and trade
networks. In order to achieve this broad objective, the project explores the possibilities
of (I) linking these countries to the existing and proposed sub regional surface transport
networks along the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) routes and
Europe-Asia Transport Linkages (EATL) corridors based on minimal investments; (ii)
facilitating the movement of goods along the above-cited corridors in a mutually
beneficial manner, especially for the benefit of landlocked and least developed countries
(LLDCs and LDCs) in these sub regions; and (iii) facilitating trade and investment
through the promotion of paperless trade and the creation of economic corridors at the
border crossings that could be of particular interest to LLDCs and countries emerging
from conflict, such as Afghanistan.

The project envisages knowledge products and capacity building activities to strengthen
the capacities of the beneficiary countries [Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India,
Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Turkey in Southern Asia and Azerbaijan,
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in Central Asia] to
plan and implement regional, subregional and national collaborative solutions to
address the cross-border connectivity barriers in land-based transport and trade. Key
activities planned under the project are:

- Identify key potential road and rail corridors along the AH and TAR networks
  and EATL corridors in the Southern and Central Asian subregions, and identify
  challenges for development of the selected corridors in terms of infrastructure
deficiencies and trade and transport facilitation issues, and develop proposals
  for implementation;

- Examine the available legal instruments (multilateral, regional and bilateral
  agreements) and international arrangements for transport and trade facilitation
  along the identified road and rail corridors;

- Organize subregional capacity-building workshops using training materials and
  guides, and prepare draft action plans to enhance connectivity in the subregions,
  with active participation of Governments and development partners in the
  subregions;
Total budget of the project is US$ 632,000 and the implementation period is from 01 July 2014 to 31 December 2017. An extension of the project was granted on an exceptional basis till June 2018 to facilitate a thorough evaluation of the project to take place in early 2018.

2. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to promote accountability and learning, and support results-based management. It analyses the level of achievement of project results at the level of objectives and expected accomplishments by examining the results framework, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria. It also assesses the design, strategy and implementation of the project to inform future programming and implementation. It is conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines.24 The target users of the evaluation results include UN General Assembly (donor), Development Account Fund Manager at DESA, ESCAP management and staff and target beneficiaries of the project.

2.2 Objectives and scope

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1) Assess the results and achievements of the project in capacity building of target countries;

2) Assess the performance of the project against evaluation criteria: effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and gender and human rights mainstreaming;

3) Formulate specific and action-oriented recommendations to inform management decision-making and improve future project design and implementation.

The evaluation will be undertaken from 25 January 2018 to 25 April 2018, with an estimated 2 work months to complete.

The following evaluation criteria and questions to assess the results of the project will be addressed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
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</table>
| **Effectiveness**                    | • What are the results and achievements of the project?  
• What were the key factors that contributed to the achievement or non-achievement of project results?  
• What could have been done better to improve the effectiveness of the project in achieving its results? |
| **Relevance**                        | • What evidence exists to demonstrate that the project’s products and services were used by the target countries?  
• How were the needs and requirements of the target groups assessed or identified?  
• What are/will be the key obstacles for the target groups to utilize the project’s products and services? |
| **Efficiency**                       | • Were the resources (human and financial) effectively utilized to deliver outputs and achieve results?  
• How was the project managed in terms of timeliness?  
• Were synergies gained from partnership with other organizations resulted in cost-efficiency and savings? |
| **Sustainability**                   | • To what extent can results of the project be continued without ESCAP’s further involvement?                                                       |
| **Gender and human rights mainstreaming** | • To what extent were gender and human rights integrated into the design and implementation of the project?                                           |
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overall approach and data collection

The evaluation will use a mix of data sources collected through multiple methods, with analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Results will be triangulated where possible.

Data collection will include but not be limited to the following:

1. A desk review of relevant documents, including the project document, progress and terminal reports, activity reports, results of survey questionnaires, relevant official correspondences with stakeholders, any strategic documents related to the project;
2. Missions to ESCAP in Bangkok to conduct face-to-face key-informant interviews/focus group discussions with male and female stakeholders;
3. An on-line survey to relevant male and female stakeholders and other relevant groups;
4. Follow-up telephone interviews as may be required to clarify responses provided through the on-line questionnaire;
5. Subject to availability of funds, visits to the participating countries to collect data through interviews and consultations with male and female project/programme beneficiaries and partners subject to the availability of funds.

Data will be disaggregated by sex and other relevant social categories. The evaluation will undertake a transparent and participatory evaluation process that will involve male and female stakeholders identified in the stakeholder analysis, including: the reference group, development partners and target beneficiaries in all key evaluation tasks.

In analyzing the data, the evaluation will use qualitative and quantitative approaches, and provide charts and direct quotations. Using the data to assess evaluation against the selected criteria. Gender and human rights mainstreaming are essential components of data analysis in all ESCAP evaluations and take place on three levels: 1) project design; 2) project conduct; 3) project outcomes. Data analysis will enable useful, evidence-based findings, the conclusions and recommendations.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Evaluation manager

The evaluation will be directly managed by the ESCAP South and South-West Asia Office.

4.2 Reference group

ESCAP uses an evaluation reference group to enhance stakeholder participation. Participants are selected by the evaluation manager and can include stakeholders and peers, internal and external to the project and ESCAP. The group should be gender balanced and have an appropriate mix of skills and perspectives. It provides technical and methodological guidance to the evaluation process; reviews and approves the selection of the consultant, terms of reference and inception report; provides quality
control of the evaluation report and validation of recommendations; and ensures adherence to ESCAP Evaluation Policy and Guidelines and the use of evaluation outputs, including the formulation of the evaluation management response and follow-up action plan.

4.3 Evaluator

The evaluator will assume overall responsibility for carrying out the evaluation. This includes, among other activities, managing the work, ensuring the quality of interviews and data collection, preparing the draft report, presenting the draft report and producing the final report after comments have been received in line with standard templates provided by ESCAP. The evaluator must have:

- Knowledge of the United Nations System; principles, values, goals and approaches, including human rights, gender equality, cultural values, the Sustainable Development Goals and results-based management;
- Professional and technical experience in evaluation (application of evaluation norms, standards and ethical guidelines and the relevant organizational evaluation policy and promotion of evaluation and evidence based learning);
- They should also have a good technical knowledge in the Asia-Pacific region, including major development trends and issues, particularly in the areas of transport connectivity and trade. Knowledge of the South and South-West Asian subregion and/or Central Asia would be an asset.

ESCAP adheres to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct in evaluation and all staff and consultants engaged in evaluation are required to uphold these standards. To this end, ESCAP has developed a Consultants Agreement form that evaluators are required to sign as part of the contracting process.

5. OUTPUTS

The following outputs will be delivered to the project manager at ESCAP:

1. Inception report detailing the approach of the evaluator, work plan and evaluation logical framework (see Annex 1)
2. Results of data collection exercise
3. First draft of evaluation report (see Annex 2)
4. Presentation (ppt) on findings, conclusions and recommendations
5. Final evaluation report
6. An ESCAP evaluation brief
APPENDIX III. List of Documents Reviewed

1. Project Document DA09-1415AP
2. Progress Report for the period 07/2014 – 01/2018
3. Evaluation TOR
4. ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines
6. Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System
7. Strengthening Transport Connectivity in South and South-West Asia: An Assessment of the ITI-DKD-Container Rail Corridor
8. Identifying Potential AH and TAR Corridors for Southern and Central Asian Subregions
9. Challenges and Solutions for Developing Transport Corridors
10. Harmonization of Transport Documentation
11. Regional Electronic Transport Tracking System (ETTS)
APPENDIX IV. List of Interviewees/Participants Met

Bangladesh

1. Mr. Ahmed Murshed, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Railways, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka
2. Mr. Md. Monirul Islam Firozi, Director (Engineering), Bangladesh Railways, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka
3. Mr. Shishir Kanti Routh, Superintendent Engineer, Roads and Highways Department, Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka

India

1. Mr. A.D. James, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India, New Delhi
2. Mr. Manoj Kumar Srivastava, Executive Director, Railway Board, Indian Railways, Government of India, New Delhi
3. Mr. Anil Gupta, Former Chairman of Indian Containers Association, New Delhi
4. Mr. K.L Thapar, Head of Asian Institute of Transport Development, New Delhi
5. Mr. R. Dayal, Asian Institute of Transport Development (AITD), New Delhi
6. Mr. Prabir De, Director, India-ASEAN Centre, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi
7. Prof. S.D. Muni, Distinguished Fellow, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, New Delhi
8. Mr. Kulbhushan Warikoo, Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
9. Mr. Tahseen Khan, UNNEXT Advisory Committee Member, New Delhi

Nepal

1. Mr. Rabi Sainju, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Government of Nepal
2. Mr. Posh Raj Pandey, Chairman, SAWTEE, Kathmandu, Nepal
4. Mr. Bhupendra Bahadur Shrestha, Senior Division Engineer, Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport, Kathmandu, Nepal
5. Mr. Ranjan Sharma, former President, Nepal Freight Forwarders Association, Kathmandu
Pakistan

1. Mr. Muhammad Iqbal Tabish, Chief Executive Officer, Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), Karachi, Pakistan

World Bank

1. Ms. Saroj Ayush, Transport Specialist, World Bank, New Delhi

United Nations ESCAP

1. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Director, Social Development Division
2. Mr. Edgar Dante, Chief, Evaluation Unit, Strategic Programme Management Division
3. Mr. Sandeep Jain, Economic Affairs Officer, Transport Development Division
4. Mr. Sudip Ranjan Bose, Economic Affairs Officer, Countries with Special Needs, Macroeconomic Policy and Finance for Development Division

Subregional Office for South and South-West Asia, UNESCAP

1. Dr. Nagesh Kumar, Former Head, ESCAP SSWA, New Delhi and Director, Social Development Division, ESCAP
2. Mr. Michael Williamson, Former Head, ESCAP SSWA, New Delhi and Chief, Energy Section, Environment and Development Division, ESCAP
3. Mr. Matthew Hammill, former Acting Head and Economic Affairs Officer, ESCAP SSWA, New Delhi
4. Ms. Wanphen Sreshthaputra-Korokti, Social Affairs Officer, ESCAPSSWA, New Delhi
5. Mr. Joseph George, Senior Research Associate, ESCAP SSWA, New Delhi
## Table 1

### Project Activities for Capacity-Building

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Title of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparatory events (Not funded by the Project)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20 Nov 2014</td>
<td>Regional Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Transport Connectivity in Southern Asia, New Delhi [Weblink]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activities under the Project (Funded by the Project)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Dec 2016</td>
<td>Policy Dialogue on Strengthening South Asia – Central Asia Connectivity, Moscow [Weblink]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-16 Feb 2017</td>
<td>Workshop on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and Single Window Systems in Southern and Central Asia, Bangkok [Weblink]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-16 Mar 2017</td>
<td>ESCAP-OSJD Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Railway Connectivity in South and South-West Asia, New Delhi [Weblink]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Sep 2017</td>
<td>Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening the connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, Geneva</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Feb 2018</td>
<td>Regional Workshop on Road Transport Facilitation along the Asian Highway Corridors in Southern Asia, Bangkok [Weblink]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8 Feb 2018</td>
<td>Regional Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity in Southern and Central Asia, Bangkok, 7-8 February 2018. [Weblink]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Project outputs*
### Table 2
**Knowledge Products***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strengthening Transport Connectivity in South and South-West Asia: An Assessment of the ITI-DKD-Container Rail Corridor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Identifying Potential AH and TAR Corridors for Southern and Central Asian Subregions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Challenges and Solutions for Developing Transport Corridors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Implementation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Southern and Central Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Harmonization of Transport Documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Regional Electronic Transport Tracking System (ETTS)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Final drafts of the study reports are under process for publication

**Source:** Project outputs

### Figure 1
**Occupational profile of participants**

![Pie Chart](chart.png)

- Government: 127, 63%
- CSO and Think-tanks: 20, 10%
- Intergovernmental Organisations: 28, 14%
- Private Sector and Media: 26, 13%

**Source:** Project Outputs
Figure 2
Gender profile of participants

Source: Same as Figure 1

Figure 3
Evaluation Survey: Summary of Ratings (Scale of 5 to 0)

Note: No. of respondents 26

Source: ESCAP-SSWA, Online Survey Report for the ESCAP project on strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developing Countries (LDCs), to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks, April 2018, Bangkok
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Rating/ Score (scale of 5)</th>
<th>% of respondents confirming &quot;Agree&quot; /&quot;Strongly Agree&quot; with the statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project was effective in enhancing awareness on connectivity options and their economic and social benefits</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>96.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project was effective in increasing skills to develop and implement measures to enhance subregional/regional connectivity</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>84.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Same as Figure 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Rating/ Score (scale of 5)</th>
<th>% of respondents confirming &quot;Agree&quot; or &quot;Strongly Agree&quot; or the statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project was relevant to the work of my organization/country on subregional/regional transport and trade connectivity</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>92.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project outputs (meetings, publications, reports, etc.) were useful for my organization/country</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>92.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCAP consulted my organization in the design and implementation of the project</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>45.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Same as Figure 3
### Table 5
Survey Responses to Questions on Sustainability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating/Score (scale of 5)</th>
<th>% of respondents rating &quot;High&quot; or &quot;Very High&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent can the results of the project be continued without ESCAP future involvement?</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>23.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Same as Figure 3*

### Table 6
Budgeted to Actual Expenditure
(as of 2 April 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of expenditure</th>
<th>Original Budget/Allotment (USD)</th>
<th>Revised Budget/Allotment (USD)</th>
<th>Total expenditure (USD)</th>
<th>Expenditure difference on budget (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other staff costs</td>
<td>30,000.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>630.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants and experts</td>
<td>247,000.00</td>
<td>237,000.00</td>
<td>175,732.00</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel of staff</td>
<td>48,000.00</td>
<td>36,000.00</td>
<td>28,491.30</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractual services</td>
<td>22,000.00</td>
<td>10,099.30</td>
<td>5,099.30</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General operating expenses</td>
<td>10,800.00</td>
<td>15,162.50</td>
<td>6,831.50</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and equipment</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>602.50</td>
<td>602.50</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop/study tours (Grants and Contributions)</td>
<td>274,200.00</td>
<td>333,135.70</td>
<td>237,147.60</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>632,000.00</td>
<td>632,000.00</td>
<td>454,534.20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ESCAP SSWA, Terminal Report of the ESCAP project on strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developing Countries (LDCs), to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks, April 2018, New Delhi*
The project activities were instrumental in implementing an important component of the ITI-DKD-Y container rail connectivity proposal of ESCAP. Following two of the preparatory Regional Policy Dialogues [New Delhi (December, 2014) and Tehran (December, 2015)], with the participation of the Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR), a subsidiary of Indian Railways, Ministry of Railways of the Government of India entrusted CONCOR with responsibility of establishing container rail connectivity between Kolkata (India) and Dhaka (Bangladesh). In August 2016, upon invitation by CONCOR, the ESCAP project team participated in the Intergovernmental Railway Meeting between Bangladesh and India held during 8-10 August 2016 at Dhaka, followed by site inspection for container rail connectivity. The Intergovernmental Meeting recommended changes in the bilateral Working Agreement between both national railway authorities to facilitate a container train service. It also recommended a MoU to be signed between CONCOR and CCBL (Container Company of Bangladesh Limited) for this purpose. Furthermore, The Meeting proposed that eventual extension of the Kolkata-Dhaka container train along the Southern TAR corridors to be worked out with mutual consultation with concerned ESCA-SSWA member states.

In March 2017, ESCAP held an Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Railway Connectivity in South and South-West Asia at New Delhi, in collaboration with Ministry of Railways of the Government of India. Following the EGM, which was represented by the respective rail transport authorities all the host countries of the proposed ITI-DKD-Y container rail corridor, Ministry of Railways of the Government of India formally adopted the ITI-DKD corridor proposal in its annual Railway Business Plan of 2017-18 published in March 2017, crediting ESCAP for its contributions towards formulation of the proposal. The ITI-DKD proposal also received widespread media coverage across the subregions through this EGM. All participating member states endorsed the proposal and reiterated their commitment towards its implementation.

The collaboration between CONCOR and CCBL resulted in the inauguration of first ever cross-border container train service between Kolkata and Dhaka on 3rd April 2018. The success of the Kolkata-Dhaka segment is expected to inspire container rail movement along other presently disconnected segments of the ITI-DKD-Y corridor.

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25 See the letter to ESCAP SSWA by CONCOR, Project File, ESCAP/SSWA
26 See the Minutes of the Intergovernmental Railway Meeting between Bangladesh and India, 8-10 August 2016, Project File, ESCAP/SSWA
29 See Table 7 below for select media coverage of the ITI-DKD-Y proposal by ESCAP presented at the EGM.
30 See Table 8 below for select Media Coverage of the inauguration of the Bangladesh-India container rail service.
Box 2

Relevance

Cross-border Connectivity Can Reduce Trade Costs in the Southern and Central Asian Subregions

As highlighted by the study report prepared under the project, the trade led development prospects of Southern and Central Asian subregions are found to be obstructed by high trade costs due to lack of adequate, accessible and affordable transport connectivity. For instance, intra-regional trade costs, of which transport costs is a main component, is found to be 114% of the domestic value of goods exported for South Asia, while the corresponding figure for East Asia is only 51%. As a result of internal connectivity deficiency induced trade costs, intra-regional trade is found to be far below its potential levels. South and South-West Asia’s aggregate intra-regional trade volume of about US$ 63.56 billion in 2016 fell short by about 66.5% of the estimated potential of about US$ 190 billion for the same year.

The project activities were designed against this background, taking the urgent need for improving connectivity of the Southern and Central Asia as the project’s fundamental rationale. It has been repeatedly acknowledged during the course of implementation of the project that regional connectivity in South and Central Asia assumes special significance also because of because of the strategic geographic location of the sub-region, besides their own special development requirements being host to more than one-third of world’s poor. It was recognized that without upgrading its internal connectivity, the sub-regions will be unable to capitalize their combined potential to be a land bridge and economic gateway connecting Europe with South-East Asian markets.

Output documents of various project activities have also repeatedly acknowledged that, besides the direct impact on trade and economic growth, transport networks would have several positive externalities, or unintended benefits. Enhanced intraregional connectivity will open up possibilities for production networks and value chains to develop within the sub-region, enhancing the competitiveness of final traded products from the region. Sub-regional value chains would also create interdependence, boost productive capacity in LDCs of the sub-region, foster balanced regional development, and enhance competitiveness for accessing markets across the Eurasian continent. The subregional transport corridors possess the potential to achieve massive efficiency gains and energy savings, thus opening new pathways towards sustainable development.

Source: Project outputs

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31 Based on ESCAP-World Bank Trade Cost Database 2017. See Project Study report by Anil Gupta. Intra-regional trade costs between the four countries - Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka – is taken as the representative figure for South Asia.
32 Ibid
33 See the Project Document for detailed exposition of rationale.
Box 3

Efficiency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budgetary resources used to deliver more than planned activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ESCAP project team has made efforts to utilize the allocated resources to implement more activities than as planned as per the Project Document. The project had planned for a total of 5 advocacy and capacity-building activities, including 2 Workshops, 2 EGMs and a Regional Policy Dialogue. In addition to these activities, funds were also allocated for producing research outputs to identify potential corridors, legal and technical challenges to their implementation, and develop policy tools for overcoming such challenges.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With respect to policy advocacy and capacity-building activities, a total of 6 activities were conducted under the project instead of 5. In addition a total of 6 extensive research reports have been prepared by subject experts appointed as consultants under the study, meeting the research components built into the project. The final drafts of these research reports are currently under review and will be published by ESCAP as a collected volume. The cost of these activities, both advocacy and capacity building events as well as research outputs, were met using less than 60% of the project resources.

Additional project resources were also used also to present the project research outputs at various public forums for greater visibility and outreach. These additional activities were conducted as side-events of important regional events on this topic, at events with high-level participation from programme countries of the project, and also in the form of participation of the project team members as panelists and presenters at relevant public forums held at various venues across the subregion.

Two high-level events organized by ESCAP, which were utilized to show-case the project through side events, are the 3rd session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport held in Moscow (December 2016) and the Second Ministerial Conference on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration (RECI) held in Bangkok (November 2017). In this regard, cancellation of the 19th SAARC Summit scheduled for November 2016 at Islamabad, Pakistan, due to escalation in political tensions in the South Asia, was a lost opportunity as some of the critical activities of the project were being planned in the sidelines of the Summit. The project was especially relevant for the Summit, which was expected to adopt the proposed SAARC Rail Agreement and the SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement, two important policy instruments for regional

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36 See DA09 (1415AP) Project Document. Activities A1.1, A2.1 and A2.3
37 See Tables 1 and 2 above - List of Activities and Research Outputs of the Project DA09 (1415AP).
38 Ibid.
39 Also the activities and research outputs reported in the Annual Progress Report of the project filed in December 2017.
40 See Policy Dialogue on Strengthening South Asia – Central Asia Connectivity, Moscow, 7 December 2016, a side-event organized by the project team. Details available at: http://www.unescap.org/events/policy-dialogue-strengthening-south-asia-central-asia-connectivity
41 See description of this activity in Annual Progress Report of the project filed in December 2017.
connectivity being advocated for through the project. However, in spite of the additional activities and programmes, the project’s overall expenses remained at 72% of the allocated budget.

Another dimension of efficiency evident from the conduct of the project’s activities was its focus on low hanging fruits among its overall policy targets. The project team has made an effort to segment the ITI-DKD proposal to find that the Kolkata (India)-Dhaka (Bangladesh) sector of the corridor faces least infrastructural and policy bottlenecks compared to other presently disconnected sectors of the corridor. More project resources where channelized into implementation of this sector, leading to successful outcomes.\(^\text{42}\)

Source: Project outputs

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**Box 4**

**Sustainability**

**Potentially Bright Prospects for Sustaining the Results of the Project**

The project has been implemented as part of larger programme led by ESCAP to operationalize the Southern Asian segments of the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) and Asian Highway (AH) corridors. ESCAP’s South and South-West Asia Office in collaboration with the Transport Division of ESCAP has been conducting a series of regional policy dialogues to formulate policy consensus in the subregion on this topic. Two of these Policy Dialogues [Regional Policy Dialogues on Strengthening Transport Connectivity at New Delhi (December 2014)\(^\text{43}\) and Tehran (December 2015)\(^\text{44}\)] were conducted with extra-budgetary resources after the initiation of the project and the funds of the project were made available. In fact, the Southern Asian corridors, with multimodal links to Central Asia and other neighboring subregions, promoted under the project were formulated and published by ESCAP as early as 2012.\(^\text{45}\) Following are some of the ways identified by ESCAP through which the unfinished agenda of the project will be pursued after the tenure of the project:

1. Building future activities on implementation of the Southern and Central Asian corridors through regular programme allocation – fund allocation from regular budget for activities is mandated by recommendations of the Regional Policy Dialogues held under the project. Requests from member states, following the inauguration of container rail connectivity between

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\(^\text{42}\) See Box 1 above.


Bangladesh and India, are expected in this regard.

2. Continued usage of other relevant public forums for promoting connectivity – The research outputs of the project and their recommendations will be used for further advocacy and capacity building activities.

3. Collaborations with overlapping subregional intergovernmental organizations active in the area of connectivity – Through the project activities ESCAP has been able to build networks with subregional organizations promoting connectivity, such as BIMSTEC, ECO and SAARC Secretariats. These networks will be used to conduct activities by resource pooling and by synergizing with programmes and activities of other implementing partners.

During the course of implementing the project, ESCAP Secretariat had explored opportunities to scale-up the activities by collaborating with other funding partners, the most prominent being a proposal pursued with the SAARC Development Fund. The enhanced visibility of ESCAP’s activities in this topic, achieved through the project activities, presents better opportunities to form collaborations in the future.

Table 7
Select Media Coverage of the EGM on ‘Strengthening Railway Transport Connectivity in South and South-West Asia’ held by ESCAP during 15-16 March 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media Coverage</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. UN body proposes Istanbul to Dhaka train corridor</td>
<td>15 March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A UN body on Wednesday proposed extension of the Istanbul-Teheran-Islamabad (ITI) train corridor to Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka (DKD) to promote regional cooperation. It maintained that the train corridor has the potential to become an important transport artery for intra-regional trade and an important conduit of Asia’s connectivity with Europe. The meeting was part of ESCAP’s continued advocacy towards operationalising this international rail corridor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Suresh Prabhu pitches for rail connectivity with neighbouring countries</td>
<td>23 March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Suresh Prabhu pitches for rail connectivity with neighbouring countries to boost trade</td>
<td>23 March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Prabhu pitches for rail connectivity with neighboring nations</td>
<td>23 March 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://newsd.in/prabhu-pitches-rail-connectivity-neighboring-nations/">https://newsd.in/prabhu-pitches-rail-connectivity-neighboring-nations/</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Suresh Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations</td>
<td>23 March 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Conference addresses trans-Asia rail connectivity through India, Iran, Turkey

8. Soon, rail connectivity to Kathmandu

9. Rail Connectivity in South and South East Asia a priority, says Prabhu

10. Conference on India-Iran-Turkey railway opens
    http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/03/15/514437/TransAsia-railway-India-Iran-Turkey

11. India to trial run freight train from Dhaka to Istanbul

12. Indian Railways explores transcontinental freight service with Iran and Turkey to boost growth

13. Government working for rail link with South-East Asia, Central Asia

14. Prabhu for Rail Connectivity with Neighbouring Nations

15. Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations
    http://www.arunachaltimes.in/prabhu-for-rail-connectivity-with-neighbouring-nations/

16. Suresh Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations

17. UN body proposes Istanbul to Dhaka train corridor

18. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu

19. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu: Prabhu

20. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu: Prabhu

21. Rail connectivity likely across India, Iran and Turkey

22. Rail connectivity likely across India, Iran and Turkey

23. Pakistan railway not to send official at trans-Asia connectivity meet

24. Pakistan railway not to send official at trans-Asia connectivity meet
25. Conference on India-Iran-Turkey railway opens

26. Conference on India-Iran-Turkey Railway Opens in New Delhi

27. Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations

28. Suresh Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations

29. Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations

30. Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations

32. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu: Prabhu

33. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu: Prabhu

34. Suresh Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations

35. Suresh Prabhu for rail connectivity with neighbouring nations
http://www.iran-daily.com/News/189427.html

36. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu: Prabhu

37. UN body proposes Istanbul to Dhaka train corridor

38. UN body proposes Istanbul to Dhaka train corridor

39. India working on developing connectivity with Kathmandu: Prabhu

40. UN body extends Istanbul train corridor to Dhaka
https://www.myindiandream.in/Global+Inspirations/UN-body-extends-Istanbul-train-corridor-to-Dhaka

41. Indian Railways to cross Indian borders connecting to Iran, Turkey

42. Rail connectivity likely across India, Iran and Turkey

43. Transnational rail links to trigger growth: Prabhu
Table 8
Select Media Coverage of the Inauguration of the First Ever Container Rail Service between Kolkata (India) and Dhaka (Bangladesh)

1. First India-Bangladesh container train flagged off
   *Business Standard, 04 April 2018*
   The trial run of the first container train to run between Kolkata and Dhaka was flagged off 03 April 2018. "The much-awaited demand of the trade is finally being met after a long passing by Container Corporation of India Ltd (CONCOR) and Indian Railways with Bangladesh Railway and other agencies of the two countries,” Harindra Rao, General Manager, Eastern Railways said. While passenger trains and goods train have been running between the two countries, container train service has begun for the first time. It is expected to facilitate trade between India and Bangladesh.

2. Trial run of India-Bangladesh container train service begins
   *The Hindu Business Line, 03 April 2018*
   The first container train, carrying 60 containers (TEUs) with a maximum net weight of 27 tonnes in each TEU, from India to Bangladesh was flagged off on a trial run on Tuesday, 03 April 2018. According to Harindra Rao, general manager of Eastern Railway, the rolling out of container train services will help reduce costs and will also bring down the transportation time. While passenger and goods trains run between the two countries, it is for the first time that container trains will be going to Bangladesh from India.

3. India test runs first container train to Bangladesh
   *The Daily Star, 03 April 2018*
   India today led a test run of the first containerised freight train between Bangladesh and India in order to boost cross-border trade. It is the first time of such a train has moved on trial basis. The train was flagged off from Majherhat railway station of Kolkata of India in the morning by the General Manager, Eastern Railways, Government of India and the CMD of CONCOR. This is pursuant to the signing of a MoU between the Container Corporation of India Limited (CONCOR) and Container Company of Bangladesh Limited (CCBL) for starting the container services between the two countries during the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to India in April 2017.
Appendix VI. Evaluation questionnaire

ESCAP project on
Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and Least Developed Countries, to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks

Evaluation questionnaire

United Nations ESCAP has conducted a series of activities from December 2014 to February 2018 under a project entitled "Strengthening connectivity of countries in South and Central Asia, particularly Landlocked and LDCs, to link with subregional and regional transport and trade networks". The activities were as follows:

1. Regional Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Transport Connectivity in Southern Asia, New Delhi, 19-20 November 2014. [Weblink]
3. Policy Dialogue on Strengthening South Asia – Central Asia Connectivity, Moscow, 7 December 2016. [Weblink]
5. ESCAP-OSJD Expert Group Meeting on Strengthening Railway Connectivity in South and South-West Asia, New Delhi, 15-16 March 2017. [Weblink]
8. Regional Workshop on Road Transport Facilitation along the Asian Highway Corridors in Southern Asia, Bangkok, 6 February 2018. [Weblink]
9. Regional Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Connectivity in Southern and Central Asia, Bangkok, 7-8 February 2018. [Weblink]

The overall objective of this project was to promote certain key cross-border transport corridors which are important for Southern and Central Asian countries, and to support participating countries in implementing the identified corridors through various transport and trade facilitation tools developed by ESCAP.

This survey is part of an independent evaluation of the project to determine the results achieved and improve future work of ESCAP on this topic. You are requested to participate in this survey as a distinguished participant of one or more of the above-mentioned activities. The survey is very brief and will only take 10 minutes to complete. Your feedback would be highly valued and will be treated confidentially.
A. Respondent profile

1. Basic information

- Country: ____________________________
- Gender: [ ] Male                  [ ] Female
- Type of organization:
  [ ] Government           [ ] UN org     [ ] NGO              [ ] Others

2. Indicate the nature of your participation/involvement in the project

- Participated in project policy dialogue, workshop, expert group meeting (see list of project activities above)
- Received and used project knowledge products (publication, reports, guidelines, toolkit, etc.)
- Contributed in project networking activities
- Received advisory services on certain technical issues
- Others (specify: _____________________________________________

B. Effectiveness (Results Achieved)

3. Please rate your agreement of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Neutral (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat agree (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project was effective in enhancing awareness on connectivity options</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>and their economic and social benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>The project is effective in increasing skills to develop and implement</td>
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<tr>
<td>measures to enhance subregional/regional connectivity.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4. Please rate the contribution of the project towards increasing awareness and capacity of your organization/country to support/engage in the following connectivity initiatives?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>None (1)</th>
<th>Low (2)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>High (4)</th>
<th>Very High (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad-Delhi-Kolkata-Dhaka-Yangon (ITI-DKD-Y) rail</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>corridor along the Trans-Asian Railway Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turkey-Iran-Pakistan-India-Bangladesh-Myanmar (TIPI-BM) road corridor</td>
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<td>along the Asian Highway</td>
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<tr>
<td>The interfaces of ITI-DKD-Y and TP-BM corridors with other important</td>
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<tr>
<td>subregional connectivity projects and programmes, such as the BIMSTEC,</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECO and SAARC corridors</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCAP transport facilitation models: Secure Cross Border Transport Model,</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient Cross Border Transport Model, Model on Integrated Controls at</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Border Crossings, electronic cargo tracking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Explain which policies, programmes or activities in your organization/country for improving subregional/regional transport and trade connectivity were developed, improved or implemented because of the project?

| Systems, models for harmonization of transport documents etc. | | | |
| Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation and Single Window Systems | | | |

C. Relevance

6. Please rate your agreement of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Neutral (2)</th>
<th>Somewhat agree (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly agree (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project was relevant to the work of my organization/country on subregional/regional transport and trade connectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The project outputs (meetings, publications, reports, etc.) were useful for my organization/country</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ESCAP consulted my organization in the design and implementation of the project</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7. Explain how you have used the knowledge gained and support provided by the project?

D. Sustainability

8. Please rate the sustainability of the project benefits and results on a scale of 1 to 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>None (1)</th>
<th>Low (2)</th>
<th>Medium (3)</th>
<th>High (4)</th>
<th>Very High (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent can the results of the project be continued without ESCAP future involvement?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Please indicate any follow-up actions that your government would undertake over the next 12 months to sustain the benefits and results of the project?


10. Several policy dialogues and workshops conducted under the project recommended the formulation of a regional integrated transport master plan. What is your view?


11. Please suggest ways for improving the effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the project?


Thank you for your participation.