



***Final Evaluation of the project  
" Gender mainstreaming advisory services to the North  
Macedonian administration at central level /  
Gender Equality Facility - GEF Project***

September 2023

<b>Project information</b>		
Project/outcome title	<b>Gender mainstreaming advisory services to the North Macedonian administration at central level / Gender Equality Facility - GEF</b>	
Project number	<b>00125502</b>	
Donor reference	<b>12372 01</b>	
UN Women Strategic Areas	<b>Global norms, policies &amp; standards Governance and national planning</b>	
Overall objective and specific objectives	<p>The overall objective of the project is to support the Government of North Macedonia in transposing the EU Gender Equality acquis.</p> <p>Output 1: SEA, IPA Units, Sector Working Groups, and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession have the knowledge and skills to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation of IPA programmes.</p> <p>Output 2: National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department and related Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) have the administrative capacities to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes and implement EU Gender Equality legislation and policy, in line with EU regulations and international obligations</p>	
Region and Countries covered	<b>Region: Western Balkans Country: North Macedonia</b>	
Project Dates	<b>Start</b>	<b>Planned End Date</b>
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Evaluation Information		
Evaluation type (project/outcome/thematic/country program, etc.)	<b>Programme Evaluation</b>	
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	<b>15 December 2020</b>	<b>30 September 2023</b>
Evaluators	<b>Mr. Tomislav Novović, Team Leader- Senior Evaluation Expert</b>	
	<b>Ms. Rajna Cemerska, Senior Evaluation Expert</b>	
Evaluation Dates	<b>Start</b>	<b>Completion</b>
	<b>July 2023</b>	<b>September 2023</b>

## Executive summary

### Background-

The "Gender Mainstreaming Advisory Services to the North Macedonian Administration at Central Level" project, commonly known as the Gender Equality Facility (GEF) Project, was established with the principal aim of fortifying North Macedonia's governmental capacity for gender equality in alignment with the EU Gender Equality Acquis. The GEF Project strategically bifurcated its approach into two outputs. The first output focused on enhancing the capacity of key governmental bodies related to the EU accession. The second output zeroed in on the National Gender Mechanisms, primarily the Equal Opportunities Department, offering them extensive training, resources, and institutional support. The resultant overarching outcome was a deeper alignment of key Government personnel with global gender equality standards, enabling them to execute the EU Gender Equality acquis conscientiously.

The Project, planned from December 2020 to December 2022 and extended until September 2023, had a budget of SEK 16,403.188.18, funded by Sida, Sweden. The UN Women Programme Office in North Macedonia, supported by the UN Women's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, managed the Project. A GEF Steering Committee was constituted to maintain transparent communication, holding regular meetings and evaluations.

### Final Evaluation- approach, objectives and methodology

The final evaluation of the Project was conducted between July and September 2023, aiming to assess the Project's effectiveness, impact, efficiency, sustainability, and alignment with gender equality and human rights. The overarching goal of the evaluation was to be gender-responsive, promote human rights, and incorporate both systems thinking and feminist theory. In execution, a theory-based evaluation approach was employed, harnessing the Project's Theory of Change (ToC) to delve into dimensions such as relevance, efficiency, and impact. This approach was complemented by empirical data and insights gleaned from the Project's monitoring system.

The Evaluation Team (ET) crafted an evaluation matrix to capture key questions and the OECD/ DAC Criteria, making room for cross-cutting criteria like gender mainstreaming and the "leave no one behind" principle. A mixed-method approach, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative means, was the bedrock of this process. This approach highlighted inclusivity and empowerment and relied heavily on data sources ranging from national strategic documents to open-source publications. Techniques such as key informant interviews, group discussions, and reflection workshops were integral. Remarkably, 27 key informant interviews were conducted in the respondents' native languages, ensuring authenticity and candour in the feedback. Further, literature reviews were centred around the external factors influencing the Project's execution and recorded experiences in gender mainstreaming.

The targeted users for the evaluation include UN Women and UN Women staff in North Macedonia, as well as other UN Women's offices- primarily, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA RO). In addition, the Government of North Macedonia, civil society organizations and other national stakeholders would benefit from this report. In addition, UN Country Team in North Macedonia will benefit from the results of this evaluation, especially concerning the analysis of planning and programming related to gender mainstreaming and recommendations for improvements.

### Evaluation findings

#### Relevance:

The Gender Equality Facility (GEF) Project in North Macedonia is demand-driven initiative that showcased robust alignment with internationally recognized standards on gender equality, particularly those set by the CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. This commitment is evident in their proactive response to GREVIO's recommendations, adopting innovative approaches that challenge societal stereotypes and enhance gender equality across diverse sectors. By actively bolstering the national machinery for gender mainstreaming and promoting women's participation, the Project resonates deeply with CEDAW Committee Recommendations. Further, its efforts to reinforce gender data collection play a pivotal role in policy-making, and by translating EU legislative standards into North Macedonia's societal landscape, it echoes the objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In terms of contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the GEF Project's emphasis on gender equality significantly furthers the realization of SDGs, notably SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). By collaborating with national bodies for gender-sensitive policy making and the effective implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027, the Project establishes a direct alignment with these goals. The Project's endeavours also resonate with SDG 10, focusing on the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups, ensuring reduced inequalities.

On the aspect of disability inclusion, the GEF Project stands out for its commitment to human rights and Gender Equality and the Women's Empowerment (GEWE), catering to the nuanced needs of marginalized women groups, including those with disabilities. The creation of the Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) tool is a testament to this dedication, offering a comprehensive analysis that encompasses the empowerment of vulnerable groups. Collaborative efforts with the State Statistical Office (SSO) have birthed invaluable insights into gender equality trends. Additionally, by championing enhanced data collection focusing on disabilities and ensuring alignment with globally revered human rights instruments, the Project demonstrates its unwavering commitment to diversity and inclusion.

#### **Coherence:**

Internally, the Project showcased a well-constructed framework synchronizing with international commitments, including the EU Gender Action Plan and North Macedonia's National Strategy on Gender Equality. It aimed to integrate gender equality principles into EU accession processes and socio-economic development, with a focus on adapting national gender policies. The Project's design involved enhancing gender skills in governmental institutions and improving the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms. Despite this clear logic, areas for improvement were identified, including the potential for better component integration, strategic engagement, and a more comprehensive data collection approaches.

The Project harnesses UN Women's triple mandate, focusing on women's participation in decision-making and advocacy for gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutions. Its approach has been enriched by regional experiences from countries like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, which provided valuable insights into gender equality and EU accession mechanisms. Yet, while the regional approach is commendable, the Project maintained a balance that accommodates nationally specific focuses.

Additionally, the GEF Project established strong synergies with UN Women's larger portfolios, especially in gender-responsive budgeting.

It collaborates effectively with other UN agencies in North Macedonia that are active in gender mainstreaming and in complementary governance areas. However, stakeholders identified a need for more strategic coordination and communication among UN agencies to avoid overlaps and ensure a unified approach to promoting and ensuring gender mainstreaming.

A crucial advantage of the GEF Project in North Macedonia is its association with UN Women. Their comprehensive, innovative approach to gender equality, combined with expertise and commitment, has been invaluable. UN Women's unique integrative perspective, connecting various policy domains, has facilitated the crafting of a multifaceted response to gender challenges. Despite the successes, stakeholders believe that UN Women can further harness its authority to counteract negative trends affecting gender equality.

#### **Effectiveness:**

The GEF has made commendable progress in promoting gender equality, with tangible improvements under its outputs. Primarily focused on transposing the EU Gender Equality acquis and fostering socio-economic development for all genders, the Project's multifaceted approach has paved the way for a more gender-inclusive society. Central to its success is its collaborative spirit, partnering with the main national stakeholders, notably the SEA and MLSP. These alliances bolstered national gender policy and the country's EU integration journey.

A standout feature of the Project is its emphasis on collaborative endeavours, resulting in strategic alliances with key players involved in the EU integration process. Through a holistic strategy, it addressed gender mainstreaming in diverse sectors, from transport to the environment as required in the EU accession process. This comprehensive effort was supported by the Project's guidance to national entities in crafting

sector-specific strategies. Furthermore, the creation of the Country Gender Equality Profile for North Macedonia offers a foundational reference, spotlighting both accomplishments and areas of concern.

The GEF Project's influence is augmented by its training initiatives, targeting public administration staff to imbue them with gender perspective skills. This educational push strengthened both their expertise and the local embrace of gender mainstreaming efforts. Moreover, recognizing the evolving dynamics, especially reforms in the SEA and shifts in the SWGs, the Project responded with more versatile training modules supported by a select group of gender mainstreaming specialists.

Broadening its reach, the Project engaged in training efforts and implemented a robust communication strategy, emphasizing its dedication to gender equality in sync with EU values. The Project's work has fortified the operational capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, notably the Equal Opportunities Department and Gender Focal Points, ensuring gender-centered focus in NPAA planning. This expansive effort, directed by Output 2, integrated gender perspectives across varied sectors, from public administration to regional collaborations.

Although the GEF Project has achieved much, it hasn't been without challenges: limited operational capacities, high staff attrition, societal biases, anti-gender sentiments, and coordination complications. Yet, its agility and innovative approach to confronting these hurdles while staying aligned with EU norms showcase its resilience. With its expertise and inclusive approach, the Project provides a roadmap for future gender equality efforts in diverse regions.

### **Efficiency:**

The Project was strategically executed, aligning efficiently with national gender equality and human rights priorities. Initially spanning two years, the Project was extended by nine months due to its intricate design to enhance institutional capacities for the EU accession process and the EU Gender Equality acquis. The funds were allocated for tangible impacts, covering areas like gender mainstreaming in sports and anti-discrimination policies. While assessing its cost-effectiveness remains early, preliminary signs indicate smart resource allocation and promising progress. Moreover, the Project showcased adaptability, particularly during the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Regarding leadership and management, the GEF Project Team's effective coordination ensured that set targets were achieved within the budget. With the Head of Office playing a pivotal role alongside the Project Manager, the Project built trust and fortified partnerships with national institutions. The team produced detailed analytical documents, with one significant study charting gender equality progress in North Macedonia from 2000 to 2021. Despite the Project's multifaceted nature, it was adeptly managed, aligning seamlessly with EU reform priorities. This was further supported by result-driven annual and monthly work plans, ensuring congruence with national necessities.

Key mechanisms like the Steering Committee guaranteed the Project's successful implementation, steering it towards broader objectives.

With an impressive knowledge generation mechanism in place, the GEF Project generated insightful reports (such as Women and Men 2023), prepared the Country Gender Equality Profile, disseminated information and leveraged digital technology- created videos and on-line content- for broader access to information in North Macedonia.

### **Sustainability**

The Project's results hold potential for sustainability, yet they are not without challenges, particularly in policy enforcement and the slow pace of civil service restructuring. Despite these challenges, North Macedonia's commitment to international standards and the EU accession process offers a supportive environment for gender equality initiatives.

The GEF has significantly developed the capacities of stakeholders, emphasizing the administrative capabilities of key National Gender Mechanisms. This fortification ensures continued efforts in gender equality, further reflected in critical national documents like the National Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027. Furthermore, the Project's focus on data-driven insights paves the way for evidence-based policymaking in the future. A notable achievement of the GEF Project is the nurtured sense of ownership in gender-related processes among stakeholders, characterized by active engagement and alignment with national objectives. While the Project has made remarkable strides in stakeholder ownership, national

leadership in gender equality remains an area for improvement. The sustainability of results hinges on continued involvement and support from all stakeholders, underlying the need for ongoing funding and political backing.

Looking ahead, the GEF Project's successes present ample opportunities for expansion and replication across sectors. The Project's methodologies, such as integrating gender considerations into policy-making and mainstreaming gender in IPA programming, provide stable and long-lasting frameworks for future initiatives. The Project also explored non-traditional domains like sports, emphasizing the versatility of gender equality initiatives. The approach towards gendered anti-corruption offers potential for universal applicability, highlighting the global relevance of the Project's methodologies.

### **Impact**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia has been pivotal in instituting transformative changes, spanning policy reforms to grassroots empowerment, to address gender inequalities. On a systemic level, the Project became instrumental in reshaping laws and policies in line with the EU gender acquis. This was especially prominent in sectors like sports, which traditionally witnessed severe gender disparities. Using comprehensive analyses such as the policy paper "Women and Men in North Macedonia", the Project highlighted disparities. Subsequently, it championed legislative changes, including the new Law on Sports and amendments to the Criminal Code. In addition, the Project supported the national Disability Strategy and provided gender mainstreaming inputs in the Strategy for Reform of Public Administration.

Beyond policy, the Project's holistic approach was evident in its endeavours to place women as contributors and leaders across sectors. Practical tools and guidance notes were introduced to sectors like transport and health, while campaigns and data-driven tools empowered women to make informed choices. Furthermore, partnerships with ministries, including Defense and Foreign Affairs, aimed to integrate women in predominantly male domains. Initiatives like the Southeast Europe Good Governance and Anti-corruption Women Forum allowed women to participate in wider regional discourses.

Lastly, the Project's innovative strategies disrupted long-standing power dynamics in North Macedonia by weaving gender perspectives into the EU integration process and bolstering national gender mechanisms. This comprehensive, multifaceted effort by the GEF Project signifies a significant step towards a more gender-inclusive future for the nation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **R1. Enhancing Continuity & Adaptability (UN Women Office | Priority: High):**

The GEF Project should ensure technical assistance is flexible, tailored, and demand-driven for the long term. This means:

- Designing interventions based on ground-up identification of gender challenges.
- Aligning closely with national gender equality frameworks and evolving policies.
- Expanding inclusive outreach, especially towards marginalized women.
- Introducing a Rapid Experts Support Platform, leveraging academic expertise and the Gender Resource Center.

#### **R2. Refinement of Operational Framework (UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia s | Priority: High):**

The GEF Project's framework should be coherent with national and international goals while maximizing stakeholder participation. This includes:

- Merging diverse project components for synergy.
- Engaging with a broader spectrum of stakeholders, including UN agencies.
- Bolstering UN Women's presence in North Macedonia.
- Harnessing UN Women's expertise in collaboration for leadership in gender equality initiatives.

#### **R3. Embedding Gender Norms & Addressing Capacity Limitations (UN Women Regional Office/ UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia s | Priority: High):**

The GEF Project should prioritize consistent gender norms while addressing challenges of limited capacities. Recommendations include:

- Sustainable strategies for regular training to maintain gender perspectives.
- Extensive outreach programs targeting societal norms.
- Enhancing collaborations with a wider array of stakeholders.
- Implementing a robust communication strategy to highlight successes and tackle opposition.

**R4. Strategic Resource Allocation & Management (UN Women Regional Office/ UN Women Offices | Priority: Medium):**

The GEF Project should align its interventions with national gender equality and human rights objectives. This requires:

- Enhancing coordination, planning, and stakeholder processes.
- Collaborating with tech entities for innovative knowledge platforms.
- Regular review mechanisms for consistent alignment with national requirements.

**R5. Addressing Sustainability Challenges (UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia | Priority: Medium):**

The GEF Project must mitigate potential disruptions to the sustainability of results. Measures include:

- Vigilant monitoring and strategic responses to policy enforcement delays.
- Strengthening of National Gender Mechanisms for robust gender-responsive policymaking.
- Advocating for long-term funding and ensuring gender-responsive budgeting.
- Systematic documentation of successful methodologies for wider replication.

**R6. Amplifying Efforts & Addressing Gaps (UN Women Regional Office | Priority: High):**

The GEF Project should enhance its efforts by consolidating advancements and addressing existing gaps. Recommendations involve:

- Partnering with educational institutions for integrating gender studies.
- Strengthening collaborations with regional and international organizations.
- Expanding the project's scope to previously unaddressed areas.
- Regularly reviewing policies to ensure adaptability to changing norms.

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## List of abbreviations

ADRF	Albanian Disability Rights Foundation
AWEN	Albania Women's Empowerment Network
BiH	Bosnia Herzegovina
CA	Contribution Analysis
CEDAW	Convention/Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Child, early and forced marriage
CLIC	Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives
CLWG	Counselling Line for Women and Girls
CoE	Council of Europe
COMBI	Communication for Behavioral Impact
CPD	Country Program Document
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSP	Civil Society Strengthening Platform
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CVSV	Centre for victims of sexual violence
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DoA	Description of Action
DV	Domestic violence
DVCM	Domestic violence coordination mechanisms
EC	European Commission
ECA	Europe and Central Asia (region referenced by UN Women)
ECA RO	Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (UN Women)
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ER	Evaluation Report
ET	Evaluation Team
EU	European Union
EU Delegation	Delegation of the European Union to the respective country/organization
FE	Final Evaluation
FLA	Free legal aid
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCC	Groups for Coordination and Cooperation
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic violence
IC	Istanbul Convention
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
IR	Inception report
KGSC	Kosovo Gender Studies Centre
KII	Key Informants Interviews
KWN	Kosovo Women's Network
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/gender diverse, and intersex
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MWL	Montenegrin Women's Lobby
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NRAEWOK	Network of Roma Ashkali and Egyptian Women Organizations in Kosovo
NSGE	National Strategy for Gender Equality
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OVI	Objectively Verifiable Indicator
PM	Programme Manager
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
Prodoc	Programme document

PSC	Programme Steering Committee
PT	Programme Team
RO	Regional Office
ROM Mission	Results-oriented monitoring mission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific Measurable Accepted Realistic Timely
SoV	Sources of Verification
TC	Technical Coordinator
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDC	United Nations Development System
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNJP	United Nations Joint Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WAVE	Women Against Violence Europe
WWP EN	The European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence

# 1 Background and evaluation context

## 1.1 North Macedonia: overview of gender equality and gender mainstreaming

The Republic of North Macedonia has made significant strides towards gender equality and women empowerment, having committed to EU Accession process and international agreements, including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UN Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the Istanbul Convention.

*Table 1 Key indicators for North Macedonia*

Key development indicators	North Macedonia
Population total 2021 <sup>1</sup>	2,065,092
Life expectancy at birth 2020, years <sup>2</sup>	75.69
Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (PPP \$) 2021 <sup>2</sup>	17,410
Human Development Index score 2020 <sup>3</sup>	0.770
Democracy Index score <sup>4</sup>	6.03
Democracy Index category <sup>3</sup>	Flawed democracy
Corruption Perception Index ranking 2021 <sup>5</sup>	87/180
Global Freedom Index <sup>6</sup>	67 partly free
World press freedom index rank 2022 <sup>7</sup>	57/180
World Bank classification by income <sup>8</sup>	Upper-middle income
Income inequality – Gini coefficient <sup>9</sup>	33.0

The Istanbul Convention<sup>10</sup> is the main European normative framework to combat violence against women and it has been ratified in North Macedonia<sup>11</sup>. The implementation of the Istanbul Convention is independently monitored by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic violence (GREVIO)<sup>12</sup>, which evaluates and reports on legislative and other measures, including specialized services for victims, taken by the States Parties to give effect to the provisions of the Convention<sup>13</sup>. In this context, in April 2022, North Macedonia took a significant step by presenting its initial report to GREVIO. The Criminal Code has undergone significant amendments, made possible through the support of UN Women, to strengthen its stance on the criminalization of various forms of violence. These changes encompass critical issues such as femicide, female genital mutilation, stalking, and sexual harassment.

The European normative framework is important for shaping overall policy and legislative framework and reforms in North Macedonia, given that country is in the process of EU accession. The EU also supports the

<sup>1</sup> World Bank (n. d. – b).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UNDP (n. d.).

<sup>4</sup> Economic Intelligence Unit (2020).

<sup>5</sup> Transparency International index measures perception from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) (Transparency International, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Freedom House (n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> Reporters Without Borders (2022).

<sup>8</sup> Hamadeh, N., Van Rompaey, C., Metreau, E., & Eapen, Sh. G. (2021).

<sup>9</sup> World Bank (n.d. – a).

<sup>10</sup> Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), 11/05/2011, CETS No.210, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210> (entered into force 01/08/2014).

<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe [https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures?p\\_auth=OsjS3KEo](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures?p_auth=OsjS3KEo)

<sup>12</sup> Information on GREVIO recommendations to States Parties is included in the following sub-section Council of Europe, About GREVIO; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

<sup>13</sup> North Macedonia has reservations to articles 30 (compensation to victims) and 44 (territorial jurisdiction), and also reservations to articles 35 (criminalisation of physical violence), 55 (ex parte and ex officio proceedings) and 59 (residence status).

advancement of gender equality by integrating a gender mainstreaming perspective into all relevant Projects funded through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). The EU influences the policy and legislative frameworks in North Macedonia, as the country is in the process of EU accession. The European Parliament has noted that the EU accession process has positively impacted gender equality in North Macedonia because the country has largely adopted and amended relevant legislation in line with the highest EU and international standards<sup>14</sup>.

The country progressed in creating a normative framework in line with the Istanbul Convention and a policy framework incorporating gender perspectives, aligning it with EU gender equality legislation. Adopting the 2021-2026 National Strategy for Gender Equality represents a critical milestone in gender mainstreaming. The Strategy aims to set up an effective system for gender mainstreaming. In 2021, in line with the Istanbul Convention the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and associated implementing regulations enabling the effective enforcement of the new Law have been adopted. However, the gender equality draft law is yet to be approved. In addition, EU funding programs, like the IPA, support gender equality advancement by integrating a gender mainstreaming perspective. Annual Progress Reports monitor reforms and alignment with EU standards<sup>15</sup>.

The Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) work collaboratively to transpose the EU Gender Acquis at both regulatory and policy levels in North Macedonia. The SEA plays a crucial role in coordinating and aligning national policies with EU regulations and standards. In the context of transposing the EU Gender Acquis, SEA is leading efforts to ensure that North Macedonia's laws, regulations, and policies align with the EU's gender equality standards. Part of these efforts include coordinating with different governmental bodies, facilitating dialogue between national and EU institutions, and overseeing the implementation of measures that promote gender equality as part of the EU accession process. The MLSP practically applies gender equality principles in areas like employment, social protection, and education; these efforts include creating and implementing policies that align with EU standards, such as those aimed at reducing the gender pay gap, promoting women's participation in the workforce, and ensuring non-discrimination based on gender.

In March 2022, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy opened a gender-responsive policy-making and budgeting resource centre to enhance public administration's ability to implement the EU Directive 2006/54/EC. This directive promotes equal opportunities and treatment of men and women in employment and occupation and encourages gender mainstreaming in institutional planning, programming, and actions. However, there is a need to provide appropriate tools for gender-strategic planning and budgeting, to enhance gender mainstreaming in policy-making and integration of gender perspective in sector discussions and public finance management. The work on gender-segregated data across sectors must continue as a prerequisite for developing evidence-based policies and measures. The first National Gender Equality Index was published in 2019, while work on updating it started in July 2023. To collect and analyze gender statistics, institutions' capacities need to be enhanced, and better institutional coordination is required.

Despite progress, gender equality remains a low priority, and gender gaps and stereotypes persist in public and political spheres. Women experience limited labor market access, economic insecurity, and a higher risk of violence. The EU progress report for North Macedonia highlights remaining challenges in advancing gender equality and empowering women, including addressing violence against women and implementing related laws effectively.

**Table 2 Key national mechanism, laws and policies for gender equality**

Structure	Legal framework	Policy framework
Department for Equal Opportunities within	Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men <sup>16</sup>	National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2026 <sup>18</sup> National strategy for equality and non-discrimination 2016-2020

<sup>14</sup> European Parliament, Women in the Western Balkans: Gender equality in the EU accession process, briefing, p: 3; [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS\\_BRI\(2018\)625139](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2018)625139)

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/enhanced-eu-engagement-western-balkans\\_en\\_or](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/enhanced-eu-engagement-western-balkans_en_or).

<sup>16</sup> "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 6/2012.

<sup>18</sup> On 28 July 2022, the Government proposed, and the Parliament adopted the new national Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2026.

the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	(Prepared draft Law for gender equality in progress <sup>17</sup> )	Strategy for Gender Equality for the period 2021-2030 <sup>19</sup> Strategy for prevention and fight against gender-based violence and family violence for 2021-2025 <sup>20</sup>
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Gender equality is promoted through overarching strategies and action plans, and North Macedonia has adopted separate strategies or plans for tackling violence against women and domestic violence. However, gender equality policy commitments have recently declined<sup>21</sup>. Amendments to gender equity and anti-discrimination laws often stall (for example, postponements, withdrawal, and slow enactment of new Law on Gender Equality in North Macedonia during 2016-2021). Due to the lack of bylaws, monitoring mechanisms, and weak rule of law, laws and policies are rarely enforced.

Gender equality mechanisms create networks of gender equality focal points in line ministries to improve horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms, but there is no systematic evidence of their effectiveness. In North Macedonia, specialized institutions of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality oversee equal opportunities and non-discrimination.

In addition, part of this gender equality mechanism relevant for the GEF Project included IPA Units and Sectoral Working Group (SWG).

IPA units, situated within various line ministries, bear the responsibility for programming, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of EU IPA funds. These specialized units serve a vital function in guaranteeing that EU funds are designated and utilized effectively, conforming to the protocols of the EU accession process. The document highlights the coordination role of IPA units, detailing their interaction and information exchange with national gender mechanisms such as Equal Opportunity Coordinators. This collaboration is central to the implementation of the EU Gender Equality acquis within the accession framework. In addition, the SWGs are established as coordination structures actively engaged in the EU accession process. Comprising relevant stakeholders from diverse sectors, SWGs are entrusted with the coordination and supervision of reforms and policies that align with EU integration objectives. Their critical role in mainstreaming gender equality extends across various functions including programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of EU IPA programs. SWGs strive to integrate gender perspectives throughout these processes, thereby ensuring that gender equality is systematically addressed and promoted in alignment with EU standards and goals.

Amid these challenges, UN Women is instrumental, working alongside the North Macedonian government, civil society organizations, and other partners to advance gender equality.

## 1.2 Introduction to the "Gender Mainstreaming Advisory Services to the North Macedonian Administration at Central Level" Project

The primary objective of the "Gender Mainstreaming Advisory Services to the North Macedonian Administration at Central Level" project, also known as the Gender Equality Facility (GEF) Project, was to bolster the Government of North Macedonia's capacity and commitment towards realizing the EU Gender Equality Acquis. It aimed at ensuring the integration of gender mainstreaming throughout the EU accession processes and substantially contributed to achieving gender equality and promoting gender parity.

The GEF Project actualized this lofty objective through two strategically designed and interconnected outputs that led to a holistic outcome:

**Output 1:** The Project placed significant emphasis on the capacity enhancement of key governmental bodies involved in EU accession, including the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), IPA Units, Sector Working Groups (SWG), among others. The goal was to equip these entities with the knowledge and skills to

<sup>17</sup> Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP for the Republic of North Macedonia

<sup>19</sup> "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No. 103.

<sup>20</sup> "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia", No 47 10. May 2021.

[https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index?gclid=CjoKCOjwk7ugBhDIARIsAGuvGpZ5KJvjrZ8hXWxm-Xyu6t\\_JoQXOnxVIAfcnjtfgxMUqZw1Tw1!M4poaAm2BEALw\\_wcB#/indicies/GII](https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index?gclid=CjoKCOjwk7ugBhDIARIsAGuvGpZ5KJvjrZ8hXWxm-Xyu6t_JoQXOnxVIAfcnjtfgxMUqZw1Tw1!M4poaAm2BEALw_wcB#/indicies/GII) UNDP (2022).

European Commission, *Türkiye 2022 Report*, <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/T%C3%BCrkiye%20Report%202022.pdf> and European Commission, *North Macedonia 2022 Report* <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf> pp 43

incorporate a gender perspective into IPA programming, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation.

A comprehensive array of capacity-building activities, such as workshops, seminars, and training sessions, along with the creation of robust guidance materials and tools, were at the heart of this output. In addition, an in-depth assessment of these bodies' capacity for gender mainstreaming was conducted, leading to the identification and subsequent filling of any discerned gaps.

**Output 2:** The Project concurrently focused on strengthening the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, specifically the Equal Opportunities Department and associated Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points. Their capacity enhancement was seen as pivotal for gender mainstreaming in the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) planning processes and the effective implementation of EU Gender Equality legislation and policy.

This output encompassed providing tailored training and support, facilitating the exchange of experiences, augmenting resources (human, financial, and technical), and promoting the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming within these entities.

Collectively, these two outputs led to the overarching **project outcome:** *key Government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality increasingly aligned with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment and implemented the EU Gender Equality acquis assiduously.*

The GEF was intrinsically rooted in and reflective of the broader national strategies and international commitments made by North Macedonia. It upheld the country's international obligations on gender equality and women's rights, such as CEDAW, Beijing PfA, SDG 5, ICPD agenda, EU GAP 2021-2025, and EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. This allowed for the further harmonization of the country's strategic gender equality documents with these international norms.

Moreover, the GEF Project aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021-2025) and leveraged UN Women's capabilities and comparative advantages. This alignment was evident in the Project's work, whether in facilitating inter-sectorial and inter-institutional coordination, supporting change management, providing a regional perspective for Western Balkan countries on their EU accession path, or delivering high-quality Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and Gender Mainstreaming (GM) technical support.

Ultimately, the GEF Project aimed to make government decisions increasingly reflective and responsive to women's and girls' rights, needs, and entitlements. These results ensured benefits for women and girls and empowered them to contribute meaningfully to post-COVID-19 recovery and socio-economic resilience, producing a far-reaching societal impact. The Project's efforts contribute to a more equitable society in North Macedonia.

### 1.2.1 Target groups and beneficiaries

The ET ensured the inclusive participation of stakeholders, proactively engaging those directly impacted or involved in the GEF project - stakeholders at the various levels who have participated in and benefited from the activities. The ET adopted a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), embodying principles of transparency, equality, and non-discrimination.

In carrying out the stakeholder analysis, the ET has identified duty bearers, rights holders, and development actors accountable for the interventions. This thorough analysis blended HRBA and development actor perspectives, allowing the team to distinguish the following primary stakeholder categories.

- **Duty bearers who have decision-making authority over the intervention**

The ET identified that this stakeholder group involved various governance structures. The Government of North Macedonia and its ministries were crucial stakeholders, as they were (and still are) responsible for creating and implementing policies and legislation aligned with international standards on gender equality and leading on the EU accession process. This group included the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of governance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially considering the importance of foreign policy and EU standards on gender equality and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) with its Equal Opportunities Department,

In addition, this group included the SWGs from the line ministries (under the IPA structures) and the authorities from the local level. The gender-related coordination mechanisms- the National Gender Machinery institutions (from various governance structures) belongs to this group

- **Duty bearers who have direct responsibility for the intervention**

UN Women, the foremost authority on gender equality and women's empowerment, oversaw the GEF Project in North Macedonia. This initiative collaborated with various implementing partners, each designated for specific project components. The SEA, a principal initiator, played a pivotal role in incorporating gender equality and mainstreaming into North Macedonia's EU accession processes. Its Training Center actively assessed training needs and rolled out a program on gender mainstreaming, training representatives from multiple sectors.

Concurrently, the MLSP, through its Department for Equal Opportunities, endorsed initiatives that fortified the National Gender Mechanism, leading to the incorporation of gender mainstreaming in several laws. Additionally, the GEF Project enhanced the capabilities of the SSO. A significant outcome was the inaugural Gender Equality Index in 2019, along with a publication that showcased gender-disaggregated data<sup>22</sup>. These efforts aimed to refine evidence-based policies and measures and were complemented by campaigns that elevated public awareness of gender statistics.

- **Secondary duty bearers**

The Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA) backs the Project, marking its pivotal role as a stakeholder. Collaboration with UN Women is fortified by UN agencies like UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF, which possess specific gender mainstreaming and equality expertise and offer insights from their North Macedonian engagements. The European Commission's Delegation to North Macedonia, which consistently monitors and reports on the nation's reforms, including gender equality, is also integral to this collaboration. Additionally, various consultancy services and partners, such as the University of Skopje and CSOs active in North Macedonia's gender mainstreaming efforts, have been recognized within this collaborative network.

- **Rights holders who are the intended and unintended beneficiaries of the intervention**

Within a human rights-based framework, a wide range of societal actors in North Macedonia, from institutional entities to civil society organizations, benefited from the GEF Project. Notably, the National Council for Sustainable Development, women's CSOs, and tertiary institutions with public administration programs saw advances from the project. Both the Club of Women Members of Parliament and the Parliamentary Equal Opportunities Commission received augmented support, building on prior initiatives by UN Women. Essentially, the project spurred significant gender-equal governance reforms and improved service delivery. Consequently, every citizen in North Macedonia, especially the most marginalized, benefited, especially with the project's impact on pivotal reforms like Public Administration, Economic Governance, and EU IPA II/III Sector Budget Support.

### **1.2.2 Project Budget, Geographical Scope, and Timeframe**

The GEF Project ran from 15 December 2020 until 14 December 2022, with an extended non-cost Donor Agreement until 30 September 2023. The total project budget was SEK 16,403.188.18 (USD 1,825,416.00), funded by Sida, Sweden. The Project implemented its activities in North Macedonia while sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences with regional and international initiatives.

### **1.2.3 Project Management**

The UN Women Programme Presence Office in North Macedonia held comprehensive managerial and administrative oversight for the project, receiving technical aid from the UN Women's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul. Their management team included roles such as a Project Manager, Output Coordinators, and various assistants. With guidance from the Head of the UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia, the team's deep understanding of government operations allowed them to adeptly navigate potential GEF implementation hurdles.

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<sup>22</sup> This publication, in alignment with the Country Gender Profile, served as a foundational document for future interventions in the sector.



A key coordination mechanism was the GEF Steering Committee (SC), established to foster transparent communication on project progress and hurdles. Chaired by SEA and including members like SIDA, EU Delegation Office, and UN Women, the SC convened biannually and when necessary, offering strategic guidance, reviewing plans, and partaking in evaluations. Some meetings also saw attendance from line ministries and government representatives as observer/advisers. The UN Women Programme Presence Office organized these SC meetings, ensuring meeting documentation and timely sharing of progress updates. Periodic review meetings involving key stakeholders, including UN Women, GEF Project Team, SEA, and SIDA, were also conducted to address critical project operations.

## **2 Evaluation purpose, objectives and scope**

### **2.1 Purpose of the final evaluation**

The primary purpose of this final evaluation is to measure the programmatic progression and efficacy of the GEF Project, focusing on its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, organizational efficiency, sustainability and gender equality and human rights. The evaluation will serve three primary purposes: i) accountability to ensure the Project's compliance with its goals and standards; ii) Learning to identify insights and best practices that can enhance future programming and iii) Decision-making to provide evidence-based guidance for strategic planning and policy formulation.

In this comprehensive endeavor, the Evaluation Team (ET) addressed various facets, drawing from the latest results and evidence from both primary and secondary sources. The ET's conclusions promoted organizational learning, bolstered accountability, and offered invaluable instruments for the decision-making process. These insights facilitated data-driven dialogues among policymakers and stakeholders at both central and local tiers, championing gender-responsive policy-making and operational shifts in line with the EU Gender Acquis, with a special focus on empowering rural women.

The ET analyzed achievements and gleaned lessons from both programmatic and coordination viewpoints. Based on these insights and an examination of exemplary practices, the ET furnished specific recommendations regarding priority areas for UN Women North Macedonia and its national collaborators' future endeavors. These proposals illuminated actions needing further backing, suggested novel methods and exemplary practices worth scaling, and detailed how to sequence interventions for optimal impact.

### **2.2 Objectives of the final evaluation**

The ET followed the ToR, organized the process to meet the specific evaluation objectives, and analyzed the relevance and coherence of the project objectives, strategy, and approach at the national and local levels for Government support in complying with national and international gender equality commitments. It also assessed the effectiveness of the project intervention on the target group across the two related outcomes, evaluated organizational efficiency and coordination mechanisms in progressing towards the achievement of the project results, including gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the intervention.

Furthermore, it examined the sustainability of the results and the intervention in advancing gender equality mechanisms for the specified target group, analyzed how a human rights-based approach and gender equality principles were integrated into the project implementation, and assessed how the intervention and its results related to and contributed to the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals.

In addition, the ET identified and documented lessons learned, good practices, innovations, success stories, and challenges within the project to inform the future work of participating UN agencies in the frameworks of gender mainstreaming and good governance. It also identified strategies for replicating and upscaling the project's best practices.

The ET conducted a comprehensive final evaluation in line with the ToR to assess the project's objectives, strategy, and relevance in assisting the North Macedonian Government to meet its gender equality commitments. This encompassed evaluating the effectiveness of interventions, especially concerning key governmental personnel responsible for European Integration and Gender Equality. The assessment further dove into the project's organizational efficiency, understanding how well it coordinated and achieved stipulated outcomes for gender equality and women's empowerment.

The evaluation also measured the sustainability of results, examining the long-term impact on promoting gender equality mechanisms for the designated audience. The integration of a human rights-based approach and gender equality principles within the project was critically reviewed, along with its alignment and contribution to the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Conclusively, the ET documented key lessons, success stories, challenges, and proposed strategies for amplifying the project's most successful practices.

The ET incorporated summative and formative evaluation perspectives. The **summative** perspective assessed the achievements of the objectives and results of the Project. The team envisions that this can be done by answering the evaluation questions pertaining to the effectiveness, impact and efficiency criteria set out in the evaluation matrix. To do that, the ET will map the most-significant change<sup>23</sup> with the help of relevant stakeholders during interviews and discussions. This technique is particularly suitable to map success impact/results stories in complex interventions; in addition, the unintended results of the Project are also expected to emerge. The **formative** approach will focus on identifying lessons learned and best practices during the implementation to inform future programming. To do that, the ET will utilize an appreciative inquiry and positive deviances<sup>24</sup> approach during individual and collective reflections. The technique focuses on identifying strengths at the same time as shortfalls and challenges to implementation

The targeted users for the evaluation include UN Women and UN Women staff in North Macedonia, as well as other UN Women's offices- primarily, UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECA RO). In addition, the Government of North Macedonia, civil society organizations and other national stakeholders would benefit from this report.

In addition, UN Country Team in North Macedonia will benefit from the results of this evaluation, especially concerning the analysis of planning and programming related to gender mainstreaming and recommendations for improvements.

### 2.3 Scope of the final evaluation

An external independent final evaluation of the GEF Project covered the entire project duration from 15 December 2020 until 30 September 2023<sup>25</sup>. The evaluation comprehensively assessed all project activities and achievements under two output.

The evaluation occurred during the final months of the Project (between July and September 2023), and involved data collection mission in North Macedonia (II and III weeks in August 2023). In addition, the ET complemented field mission with on-line meetings and consultations.

## 3 Evaluation approach and methodology

### 3.1 Specific approach to this evaluation

The framework for the Final Evaluation (FE) was defined within the ToR and the ET designed a custom methodology, abiding by its provisions. The core reference for this methodology was the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Evaluation Criteria. In addition, the ET upheld the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards and integrated the UNEG's guidance on incorporating human rights and gender equality in evaluations. The evaluation was designed to be gender-responsive, maintain a human-rights-based approach, and embody both systems thinking and feminist theory.

The ET utilized a theory-based evaluation approach following the directives outlined in the ToR. This included using the Project's Theory of Change (ToC) as a tool to assess its relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability. Furthermore, the ET compared the ToC with empirical data gathered throughout the evaluation process, and information obtained through the Project's monitoring and evaluation system. The collated data provided valuable insights into the logical sequence of the results, the validity of the major

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<sup>23</sup> Rick Davies, Jess Dart (2005) The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use

<sup>24</sup> Better Evaluation (2019). Appreciative Inquiry. [https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/appreciative\\_inquiry](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/appreciative_inquiry)

<sup>25</sup> The Project was originally designed as a 24-month initiative, from 15 December 2020 until 14 December 2022; however, the non-cost extension has been granted, extending it until 30 September 2023.

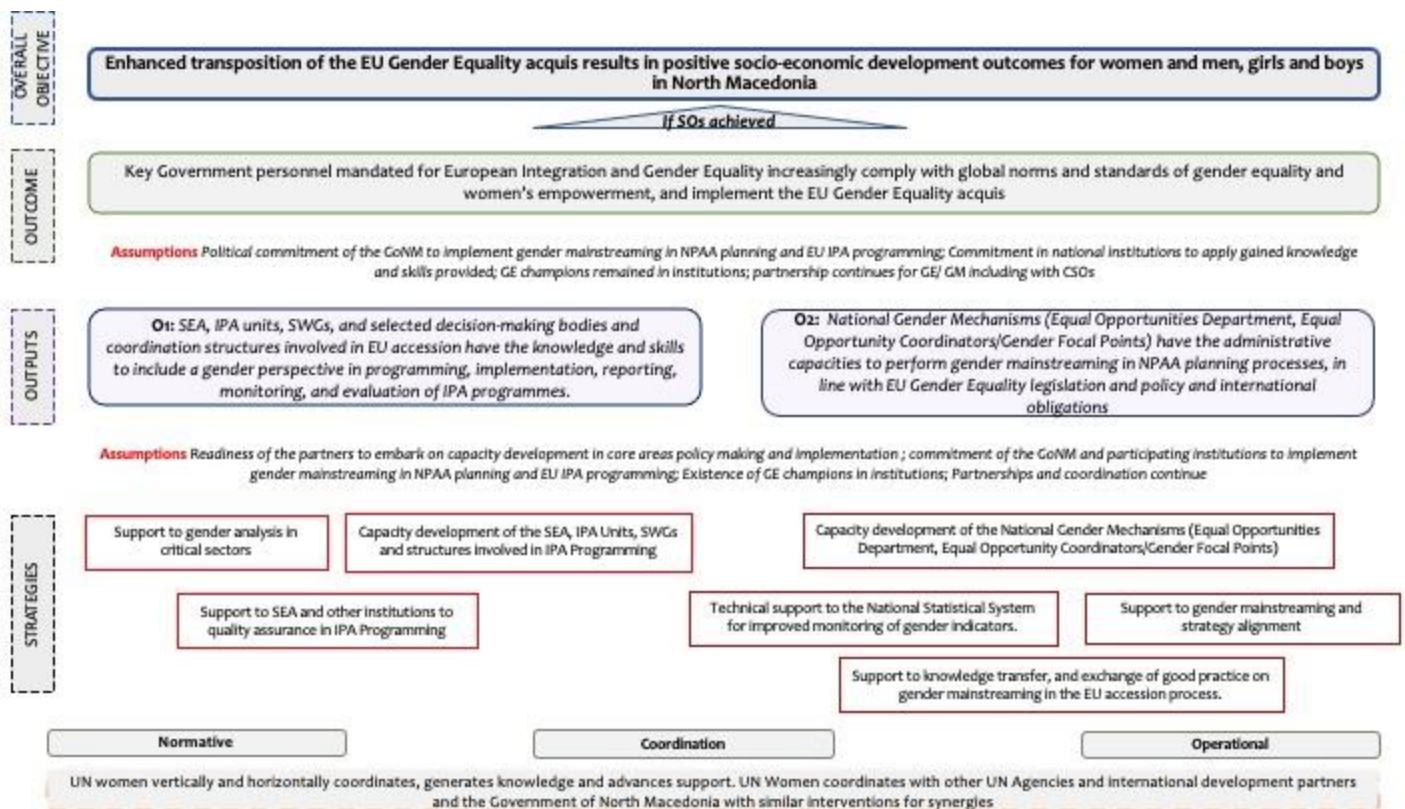
assumptions, the occurrence of expected changes at the outcome level, and the relevance of the chosen indicators.

### 3.2 Analysis of the Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) of the Project aimed to reinforce the North Macedonian government's efforts to integrate gender equality principles within the EU accession process and foster fair socio-economic development outcomes for all individuals. The ToC reflected North Macedonia's international commitments to gender equality and women's rights, also aligning with the objectives of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2022-2027 and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022-2024, particularly in achieving "an effective and efficient system for promoting gender equality at the central and local level" (General objective 1). Two primary efforts embodied distinctive contributions of the Project: first, adapting national gender policy across diverse sectors, laying the foundation for EU Sector Budget Support and IPA programming; second, offering technical assistance for intersectoral governance through IPA structures in collaboration with the national gender equality mechanism. Both components harnessed UN Women's comparative advantage in recognizing and scaling practical programmatic innovations, bolstering organizational capacity, and fostering rights holders' ability to instigate change.

The ToC adopted a rights-based transformative approach, recognizing accurate data and rights-based methodologies as essential tools to ensure accountability and enhance planning and reporting. It emphasized the importance of facilitating lasting change at individual and collective, legislative-political, and societal levels. The Project argued that influencing public policy, systems, and institutions and altering norms through public dialogue and training could help greater gender equality (thus, eradicating discrimination against women and girls).

Figure 1: The GEF Theory of Change



The ToC defined its main goal as "enhancing the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis, with the intended result being positive socio-economic development outcomes for everyone in North Macedonia, regardless of gender." The ToC identified two primary prerequisites that could serve as the basis for this project goal: i) Government institutions and individuals involved in preparing strategic documents possess gender skills and knowledge and have access to gender mainstreaming tools. This group includes the SEA, SWGs, IPA units, and decision-making bodies related to EU accession. ii) National Gender Mechanisms, such

as the Equal Opportunities Department and Equal Opportunities Coordinators in line Ministries, possess the administrative capacities to implement gender mainstreaming in the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) planning processes.

The ToC suggested that if these conditions are met, the core reform outputs (such as national administration and policy reform efforts and IPA programmes) will reflect elements of gender equality and social responsiveness. The ultimate beneficiaries would be all individuals in North Macedonia, particularly the most marginalized groups, who will benefit from improved gender-responsive governance reforms and service delivery.

The ToC also included two interlinked outputs, reflecting the Project's aim to build knowledge, skills, and administrative capacity across different levels of engagement to promote a more integrated, suitable approach to gender mainstreaming.

The first output focused on enhancing the capacity of SEA, IPA units, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies to better integrate a gender perspective in the programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes. The second output aimed to strengthen the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, enabling them to effectively perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes, aligning their activities with EU Gender Equality legislation, policy, and international obligations

Several assumptions underpin these interventions, which include:

- If government stakeholders responsible for policy-making and strategic planning at national and local levels possess the necessary capacities, obligations, and tools, they can integrate gender mainstreaming into their policies and practices effectively.
- Leadership by gender equality machinery at all governance institutions and levels is presumed to streamline the process of implementing and sustaining gender mainstreaming.
- If citizen engagement increases, particularly women voicing their needs and actively participating in governance processes, this will enhance the effectiveness of the gender mainstreaming process. The Project anticipated that women would benefit as their needs are better recognized and addressed within public policies and administration.

However, the ToC acknowledged that specific risks and barriers could impede successful implementation despite thorough planning. These included limited coordination among ministries, uneven progress in reforming sector governance, political instability, economic growth challenges, the politicization of gender equality issues, and the potential neglect of gender sensitivity due to technical and administrative challenges or economic crises.

Therefore, the ET analyzed and evaluated the Programme's contribution to women's empowerment and assessed whether it has supported the gender equality and gender mainstreaming priorities (as those outlined in the Istanbul Convention, EU accession requirements and the national strategic documents).

During the data collection phase, the ET reviewed the ToC with the stakeholders, answering if the ToC was and remained valid and credible. The ET assessed validity and credibility of the ToC through an analysis of the intervention logic, including the hierarchy of objectives, potential gaps in the logic, and the sufficiency of preconditions to reach specific and overall objectives. In addition, the ET analyzed if the ToC is realistic and achievable, assessing if the Programme can achieve its overall objective and ensure impact. The ET analyzed whether the Government of North Macedonia and its ministries, other national institutions and units, CSOs and other partners, including UN Women, have enough capacities and resources to implement the Programme or require additional support. Furthermore, the evaluation assessed whether the scope, expectations, or timeline of the ToC needed any adjustment. The ET presented these findings in the appropriate parts of this report.

### **3.3 Evaluation questions and evaluation matrix**

The ET has prepared the evaluation matrix (Annex 2), which included the main evaluation questions and the criteria that ToR defined– relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The ET provided additional sub-questions to make the evaluation matrix more focused. The final evaluation considered additional cross-cutting criteria, gender mainstreaming and leave no one behind.

The ET ensured that the questions were answerable, all Programme components appropriately addressed, avoiding duplication or undue overlap.

### 3.4 Data collection methods and instruments and data analysis

This evaluation required a careful examination of project documents and materials. The ET developed data collection templates, following the evaluation matrix that outlined the documents that served as sources of information in response to an evaluation question. The ET, using templates based on the evaluation matrix information, recorded insights from all examined documents. Materials for the analysis included critical national strategic and policy documents and reports, including statistics.

The ET utilized a **mixed-methods approach**<sup>26</sup> for this evaluation to derive knowledge from a diverse set of participatory data collection methods. These methods ensured inclusivity, meaningful participation, and empowerment throughout the process. The employed techniques respected the activity and knowledge of project stakeholders, particularly women from diverse backgrounds. Striving for optimal objectivity, the ET incorporated data methods that avoided alienation and consistently contemplated power dynamics between evaluators and subjects. Therefore, the ET predominantly relied on qualitative data collection methods that involved semi-structured, open-ended key informant interviews, group interviews, and reflection workshops; in addition, the quantitative methods mainly through secondary analysis of the Project's monitoring data, enriched data collection. Data triangulation was employed to authenticate findings and detect convergence and divergence.

The **desk review** began with an appraisal of the GEF Project and its deliverables (that UN Women provided), national strategic and policy strategic documents and relevant open-source publications.

Recorded findings from the document reviews were organized using a standardized analytical tool based on the evaluation matrix, questions, and criteria, and then cross-verified with other data sources to produce robust findings. Data from all sources were organized according to key evaluation questions. This approach (and its clarity) was crucial for establishing a solid evidence chain linking the project's objectives, evaluation questions, and the data collection and analysis methods.

The literature review examined academic and grey literature on two main themes: external/contextual factors such as legal, political, security, economic, and societal aspects influencing the Project's implementation, and documented positive experiences in gender mainstreaming in the government policies and practices. The ET assessed secondary data, including national political and economic statistics, gender relations and third-party data about the EU accession process and the changing international norms and standards for women and girls in the country.

**Primary data collection:** The ET employed gender-sensitive and feminist methodologies, involving both men and women stakeholders. This approach was enriched by the principles of transparency, equality, and non-discrimination encapsulated within the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA).

The ET selected key informants from the involved in country-level and regional activities, amassing to a total of 27 key informant interviews (KIIs- 15 female and 12 male). These consultations involved representatives from the Government of Macedonia, with a special focus on the Secretariat for EU Affairs as the primary beneficiary and project partner, along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Their active involvement in the GEF Project underscored their dedication to addressing gender disparities comprehensively. In addition, the ET collaborated with critical institutions such as the State Statistical Office and the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, both playing pivotal roles in data-driven decision-making and transparent governance. The non-governmental sector was represented by the Association of Businesswomen, advocating for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship and other grass-root organizations. Furthermore, the ET held discussions with key development partners that actively support gender mainstreaming, including UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP and the Swedish Embassy.

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<sup>26</sup> Hesse-Biber, S. (2014). Feminist approaches to mixed methods research. In Hesse-Biber, Sharlene-Nagy (Eds.), *Feminist Research Practice: A Primer* (363-388).

### 3.5 Data analysis

The ET analyzed data and employed the qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA, to upload completed data collection instruments, including document review prepared templates, semi-structured interview notes from individual and group meetings, and discussions or reflection reports and briefs. The ET prepared codes and classifications based on the Evaluation Criteria, main questions and sub-questions from the evaluation matrix. Classifications or other attributes, such as duty bearer, rightsholder, and implementation strategy, were added to enable data analysis tailored to the evaluation purpose. This approach facilitated both qualitative content analysis and quantitative analysis. It included i) comparison of responses among respondents of the same category and between categories to identify the number of similar and different responses (trends) and ii) comparison of response with relevant international, regional and national normative standards or strategies.

The ET cross-validated information through triangulation of methods<sup>27</sup>, using MAXQDA to facilitate a comparative analysis between methods, ensuring the accuracy of findings. Practically, the ET synthesized results from interview responses, group discussions, Programme documents, and secondary data (statistical and documental); the ET reviewed these findings against international normative standards and regional priorities. In addition, the ET conducted a triangulation of sources to ensure the internal validity of findings, examining multiple data sources before concluding. This "triangulation" involved verifying and cross-checking major trends from three or more data sources. For instance, the ET examined information from UN Women, EU, CSO implementing partners, government institutions, rights holders, and external experts to identify major trends shared across data sources<sup>28</sup>

### 3.6 Limitations, Risks and Mitigation Measures

The ET navigated through several complexities during the GEF Project evaluation in North Macedonia. Here's a delineation of challenges faced and strategies employed:

Risk and limitation	Mitigation
<b>Data Collection Complexities:</b> Quantitative and qualitative analysis for the project required a harmonized approach. While data provided insight into the project's efficacy, it also emphasized the interplay between environmental and gender concerns.	The ET amalgamated diverse data sources, facilitating a comprehensive and holistic assessment of the project's results.
<b>Unique Context of North Macedonia:</b> The country's individual socio-political and cultural nuances, coupled with its developmental trajectory, influenced project outcomes, often making it a challenge to integrate findings with global or regional standards.	The ET prioritized an in-depth country-specific analysis. This ensured that North Macedonia's unique dynamics were adequately represented in the evaluation.
<b>Challenges to ensure implementation of the Policy Frameworks:</b> Without a cohesive national environmental-gender framework, there were potential alignment challenges in project outcomes and objectives.	The ET emphasized the importance of a unified national policy, suggesting that such a framework could streamline and enhance future projects, ensuring alignment with both environmental and gender objectives.
<b>Predominance of Quantitative Metrics:</b> While quantitative metrics offer valuable insights, they	The ET expanded their qualitative analysis, organizing thorough discussions and field visits. Collaborations with CSOs and development

<sup>27</sup> Morras-Imas and Rist define triangulation of methods as "Collection of the same information using different methods in order to increase the accuracy of data", p. 300. . Morra **Imas**, L. G., & **Rist**, R. C. (2009). The Road to Results: Designing and Conducting Effective Development Evaluations. Washington, D.C., World Bank.

<sup>28</sup> Morras- Imas and Rist, p. 376.

might not fully encapsulate the multifaceted nature of the GEF Project outcomes.	partners further augmented the assessment process.
<b>Efficiency Assessment Challenges:</b> Without standard benchmarks for assessing project efficiency within the specific context of North Macedonia, evaluating management procedures and outcomes became intricate.	By meticulously cross-referencing gathered data and tapping into their vast expertise in similar developmental projects, the ET could identify potential areas for enhancement, ensuring a robust assessment of the project's efficiency.
<b>Time-lag in Observable Impacts:</b> Many of the project's outcomes may have long gestation periods before they manifest as tangible impacts. This time-lag can make it challenging to correlate immediate post-project evaluations with definitive long-term change.	The ET employed a combination of retrospective analysis and predictive modeling. They assessed historical data to trace observable changes and used projections to estimate potential future impacts, grounding their findings in both empirical data and informed forecasting
<b>Qualitative Impact Dimensions:</b> Not all impacts are quantitative. Perceptual, behavioral, and attitudinal shifts, particularly regarding gender equality and environmental consciousness, might not be immediately discernible through numbers	The ET engaged in comprehensive stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, and sentiment analyses, leveraging qualitative methodologies to capture these subtler shifts in community perspectives and behaviors.
<b>Sustainability Insights:</b> Evaluating the potential long-term impacts and sustainability of the project posed challenges due to the evolving nature of both environmental and gender paradigms.	The ET actively engaged with key stakeholders, assessing the current socio-economic dynamics and institutional commitment. This approach aimed at projecting sustainability and devising strategies to cement the long-term impacts.

### 3.7 Ethical considerations

The ET is fully independent, free of any conflicts of interest for this work. During the evaluation process, the ET followed the principles of impartiality, credibility, and accountability and aligned with the OECD DAC ethical considerations for development evaluations<sup>29</sup> and United Nations Ethical Guidelines<sup>30</sup>. The ET followed ethical considerations in selecting interviewees, interacting with them, and respecting their personal and institutional rights. In addition, the ET requested informed consent from stakeholders before asking any questions related to the Programme evaluation. To obtain consent, the ET briefly explained the reasons and objectives of the evaluation and the scope of the questions. Stakeholders had the right to refuse or to withdraw at any time. The ET also ensured respondent privacy and confidentiality, as the disclosure of confidential information may seriously jeopardize the efficiency and credibility of the evaluation process. Therefore, the ET was responsible for exercising discretion in all matters of the final Programme evaluation, not divulging confidential information without authorization. The ET respected informants' right to provide information in confidence and also ensured that sensitive information could not be traced to its source protecting the key informants from eventual reprisals.

Original data, including interview records and notes from interviews, are retained in confidential files until completion of the evaluation and will be deleted afterwards.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation- UNEG/CoC, 2008.

## 4 Presentation of findings

The final evaluation has presented the following findings, responding directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.

### 4.1 Relevance

The ET analyzed the GEF Project's relevance at any point during the life cycle, considering several critical aspects. The team examined aligning the Project's design and objectives with North Macedonia's national priorities and strategies for gender equality. This included an assessment of the extent to which the GEF Project responded to the needs of beneficiaries and key stakeholders. Furthermore, the ET assessed the Project's alignment with the unique challenges and needs within the country, such as limited capacities within public administration and high turnover of qualified staff.

The evaluation of the Project's relevance included its contribution to international obligations, including EU integrations and alignment with the SDGs. This process included the analysis of the extent to which the Project incorporated and reflected gender mainstreaming, disability inclusion and other human rights principles.

- **The extent to which the design of the intervention, including the formulation of its planned results, relevant to the needs and priorities of the intended beneficiaries and key stakeholders**

**F1. The GEF was meticulously designed upon request from the Government of North Macedonia and the Secretariat for European Affairs to address the critical institutional needs related to gender equality (GE), while also recognizing the specific challenges and requirements of the country.**

The SEA, as a separate expert service of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, has a mission to provide full professional support and coordination to the Government in its pursuit of EU membership. Its analysis revealed concrete gaps in addressing gender equality goals, leading to a request “for technical expert support for gender mainstreaming to align its operations with the EU Gender Equality acquis<sup>31</sup>”. In connection to this Sectorial Working Groups, while essential for integrating gender equality goals into sector governance, also revealed a lack of gender capacity as a weakness in the reform process. Generally, these needs assessments and other institutional level analysis indicate “that the country's institutions mandated to promote GE face capacity gaps, lacking sufficient human, technical, and financial resources, while units engaged in gender mainstreaming across various sectors also lack the necessary political support<sup>32</sup>”. These challenges hamper integrating gender considerations into different aspects of government policy and practice. This situation is further affected by inadequate vertical and horizontal coordination between GE mechanisms at the national and local levels, creating barriers to comprehensive and cohesive action on gender issues.

Acknowledging these challenges, the Project focused on building knowledge and capacity within the SEA and IPA Units/Departments, equipping them with the necessary resources and skills to include a gender perspective in their operations. This involved providing targeted support to central governing body (MLSP), the institution coordinating IPA-related structures (SEA), and engaging with SWGs to ensure a unified approach across sectors. In parallel, the Project was working to enhance administrative structures by establishing mechanisms equipped with well-trained staff and effective management systems to satisfy the requirements for executing the EU GE acquis across government levels.

These needs have determined the Project's well-balanced combination of two inter-linked strategies: strengthening national capacities and policies in line with the EU requirements and reinforcing data collection systems (for informed policy-making). For example, the SSO stated that the Project addressed their need to improve understanding of gender statistics and typology of gender-responsive indicators. In addition, the Project assisted the SSO to incorporate gender perspective in all future foreseen activities and plans.

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<sup>31</sup> Request from the SEA to UN Women

<sup>32</sup> EU Progress Report on North Macedonia, 2019 and 2020. Other analytical reports and interviews with the national institutions.



Thus, the partners stated that GEF Project for North Macedonia was thoughtfully tailored to their unique needs, addressing their priorities and leveraging regional knowledge. Through this approach, the GEF ensured demand-driven technical assistance that considered the specificities of participating institutions; the key informants stated that the Project has helped develop their capacities to reflect gender equality and mainstream gender in their policies and practices.

The ET finds that the Project strategies were deeply informed by concrete lessons and priorities drawn from similar GEF initiatives in Kosovo, Serbia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. By incorporating regional experience and best practices, the Project's design benefited from a wealth of shared knowledge.

- **The extent to which the Programme is consistent with national priorities and strategies on gender equality**

**F2. The GEF's concerted efforts reinforced the existing gender equality framework in North Macedonia and brought innovative practices and methodologies to the forefront. By weaving gender considerations into various facets of policymaking and implementation, the Project provided a “robust foundation for sustainable and equitable progress<sup>33</sup>”.**

**The attention to the translation of policy across sectors and the inter-connectedness of governance, reflects a deep understanding of the complex nature of gender issues, showcasing a commitment to a comprehensive and lasting impact.**

At its design and conceptualization, the GEF Project firmly aligned with the country's pursuit of gender equality, supporting the end results of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2013-2020 and the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-2020. It emphasized Strategic Goal 1: "Establishment of an effective and efficient system for achieving gender equality through functional mechanisms for support at national and local levels, harmonized indicators for measuring progress on gender equality, and secured gender statistics." The GEF's "multifaceted support to the national gender policy<sup>34</sup>" involved efforts for transposing national gender policy into various sectors such as SWGs and EU Sector Budget Support (SBS), IPA programming, gender-responsive budgets, and monitoring. The partners recognized these efforts ensured coherent gender mainstreaming and a consistent application of gender equality principles across different realms of governance, economy, and social development, as envisaged in the Strategy.

In addition, through collaborative efforts with IPA structures and the national gender equality mechanism, the Project offered specialized technical assistance to foster inter-sectorial governance and integrate the gender perspective cohesively across various governmental departments and agencies<sup>35</sup>.

**The partners stated that GEF's “targeted and comprehensive approach has assisted the country's alignment with EU standards, strengthening its pre-accession reform processes, including the ability to adhere to EU priorities, policy initiatives, and funding mechanisms<sup>36</sup>”.** The Project focused on enhancing knowledge and competencies of government entities involved in IPA programming, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. It supported the Department for Equal Opportunities and associated Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, the national partners (from the SEA, the IPA Units, and SWGs) recognized that the Project "enhanced their capacities in fostering EU accession, addressing areas that the European Commission identified as needing reform".

On the policy level, the Project aligned with the priority areas identified in the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. These areas included establishing a responsive system that encourages gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality in all sectors and spheres of life (and challenging entrenched societal stereotypes). In line with EU Acquis communautaire standards, the Project extended its support to Chapters 19, 23, and 24 of the EU's negotiation frameworks, which focus on social policy and employment, judicial and fundamental rights, and justice, freedom, and security, respectively.

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<sup>33</sup> KII- national partners

<sup>34</sup> Desk review of the Project documents

<sup>35</sup> This Project's approach supported national priority for a systematic and cooperative approach to gender equality among different stakeholders.

<sup>36</sup> KII notes, Government of North Macedonia and other governance actors

<sup>37</sup> These steps facilitated the integration of a gender perspective into policy planning processes, paving the way for North Macedonia's effective alignment with EU gender equality legislation.

### **F3. The GEF remained responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and well-aligned with the gender equality national strategic priorities**

The analysis of the changes on the demand side<sup>38</sup> shows that the GEF intervention logic remained relevant throughout its implementation. The Project aligns with the gender equality objectives outlined in the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027<sup>39</sup> that was adopted during its implementation. In addition to supporting a more effective system for promoting gender equality and improving women's position and participation in all spheres of public and private life as the central Strategy's objective, the GEF Project was working on enhancing the capacities of critical governmental bodies involved in EU accession. These efforts contribute to the NSGE Specific Objective 1.1, which called for strengthening gender mechanisms at the central level in compliance with the legal framework for gender equality. Furthermore, by equipping these entities with the requisite knowledge and skills to integrate a gender perspective into IPA programming, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation, the GEF Project contributed to Specific Objective 1.2. This objective sought to establish a functional system for integrating the gender perspective into policymaking, programs, and budget processes.

The GEF Project extended its assistance to include areas often overlooked in gender equality considerations. The Project became an active participant in the drafting of the new Law on Sports, offering recommendations that derived from the analysis "Gender Equality in Sport in North Macedonia". In connection to this, the Project facilitated policy dialogue on improving gender equality across various facets of sports (management, participation, financing, representation, media coverage, and more). This proactive approach directly contributed to the promotion of gender equality in sport, which is outlined as Specific Objective 2.10.

The focus on strengthening the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, specifically the Equal Opportunities Department and associated Equal Opportunity Coordinators/ Gender Focal Points contributed to the Specific Objective 2.4 to ensure the equal participation of women in decision-making at all levels in political and public life (under General Objective 2).

However, despite these results in recent years, various indicators have shown that North Macedonia requires efforts to obtain EU countries level regarding gender equality, and the distance from the frontier has been widening<sup>40</sup>. The analytical reports showed that authorities in North Macedonia need support to bridge skills gaps, build institutional capacity, expedite reforms, and improve the performance of public structures, while also working on the partnerships including those with CSOs<sup>41</sup>. Thus, the importance of the strengthened capacities of authorities at various levels to align with the EU standards and transpose EU Gender Acquis in national legislation and policies, enhanced implementation mechanisms and availability and quality of gender-sensitive data (for monitoring and evaluation of measures and policies) have remained critical. The Project's areas of intervention and engagement with the stakeholders have been confirmed as highly relevant in the context of North Macedonia's EU accession path and achievement of sustainable development.

- **The extent to which the GEF align with international obligations of North Macedonia**

### **F4. The GEF demonstrated a clear commitment to international standards on gender equality, particularly those articulated by CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention; it also responded to critical recommendations that GREVIO issued.**

Such alignment reflected the Project's continuous efforts to uphold the stipulations of CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. The partners recognized that the Project's innovative initiatives, particularly those addressing societal stereotypes and promoting gender equality in diverse sectors, including sports, were a practical response to GREVIO's recommendations. In adherence to Recommendation 16 of the CEDAW Committee, the Project invested in fortifying the national machinery for gender mainstreaming and equal

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<sup>38</sup> The ET assessed if the external developments required response and if the Project adjusted and fine-tuned its intervention as set out in the ToC and its intervention logic. The evaluation has focused on whether the overall objective and outcomes, as the main references under the intervention logic, remained valid and achievable or whether there was a case for revision to take account of changes in the external environment, demand, or speed of delivery.

<sup>39</sup> [https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2022/strategija\\_/Стратегија\\_за\\_родова\\_еднаквост\\_2022\\_2027.pdf](https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2022/strategija_/Стратегија_за_родова_еднаквост_2022_2027.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> For example, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/thematic-composite-indices/gender-inequality-index#/indicies/GII> or World Wide Governance Indicators for North Macedonia, <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>

<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, reports

opportunities advocating for required resources. The Project also acted upon Recommendation 29, focusing on women's participation in public and private life, offering capacity development to improve women's political and public life involvement, and promoting their equal participation in decision-making processes at all levels. In line with Recommendation 40, The Project's efforts to strengthen the gender-related data collection practices contributed to setting the basis for economic empowerment. At the same time, these actions were consistent with the recommended involvement of women's organizations in achieving the SDGs.

To further consolidate its alignment with international standards, the Project followed the objectives outlined in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, focusing primarily on Strategic Area H – Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women. It targeted strengthening national machinery and integrating gender perspectives into public policies, programmes, and projects. In doing so, the Project translated EU legislative norms into North Macedonia's socio-political fabric. In addition, the comprehensive Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP), provided a thorough assessment of gender equality progress across the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action.

- **The extent to which the intervention is consistent with, and contributing to the SDGs**

#### **F5. The GEF Project's emphasis on gender equality and the empowerment of women within the context of North Macedonia's EU accession process and institutional frameworks contributed to the realization of the SDGs, particularly SDG 5 and SDG 16.**

The GEF Project collaborated closely with the MLSP, its Equal Opportunities Department, and other national institutions under the gender mechanisms, contributing to SDG 5 to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." The main efforts have been strengthening gender equality mechanisms at a national level and mainstreaming gender into EU accession processes and IPA programming. Specifically, the Project's intention to foster a bottom-up approach (to policy-making and implementation) directly reinforced Target 5. c, which aimed to "adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels." The Project also supported the commitment to ensure women's full and effective participation at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life, directly contributing to the achievement of Target 5.5. In addition, the Project's efforts to integrate gender considerations into policy-making processes and programming helped to "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" (Target 5.1).

The Project contributed to SDG 16 "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels." The GEF Project's efforts to strengthen public administration staff and its capacity to integrate gender equality considerations aligned with this goal. By prioritizing gender equality in institutional mechanisms and ensuring inclusive and participatory decision-making (Target 16.7), the Project contributed to building more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Furthermore, by enhancing the administrative capacities of national gender mechanisms, the Project also promoted transparent, accountable, and efficient institutions, reflecting Target 16.6.

The Project also contributes to SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, by ensuring the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups were addressed. In line with Target 10.2, the Project focused on eliminating specific barriers and establishing inclusive policies to ensure equal access to services and opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable victims of violence.

- **The extent to which disability inclusion has been considered and reflected in the Programme's design and during its implementation**

#### **F6. The GEF Project design and implementation integrated human rights and Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE), considering the needs of diverse groups of marginalized women, such as rural, older, women with disabilities, Roma, and minorities, in policy-making processes**

While not specifically targeting pre-selected marginalized groups, the core of the GEF Project focused on implementing women's human rights standards across various policy domains, institutional frameworks, and funding mechanisms.

One of the critical aspects of this approach was the development of the CGEP tool, which assessed women's empowerment and gender equality across the twelve BpFA areas, incorporating a cross-cutting analysis of

institutional mechanisms and women's human rights. The CGEP paid attention to the empowerment of various vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities, confirming the Project's dedication to diversity and inclusion. In addition, the GEF Project and SSO further exemplified this commitment to inclusivity. As indicated in other parts of the report, this collaboration led to essential knowledge products (like "Women and Men in North Macedonia - Statistical Portrait of Trends in the Field of Gender Equality,") offering a comprehensive view of gender equality trends. More importantly, the Project advocated for enhanced disability-disaggregated data collection and monitoring systems, aligning with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)<sup>42</sup>.

These efforts translated into practical alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). From improving women's political participation in alignment with ICCPR Article 3 to addressing economic, social, and cultural rights as per ICESCR Article 7, the Project ensured that its interventions and programs catered to the needs of diverse groups, especially women with disabilities.

## 4.2 Coherence

When assessing the coherence of the GEF Project, the ET first scrutinized the internal consistency of the Project, evaluating the logical connection between its objectives, activities, and expected outcomes. The investigation encompassed an assessment of how well the components of the GEF Project were designed to achieve the desired changes in gender equality and policy planning in alignment with EU integrations.

The ET also assessed the Project's external coherence by examining how well it aligned with UN Women's corporate strategic priorities and the specific strategic approach in North Macedonia. This evaluation also considered the extent to which the GEF Project adhered to broader gender equality objectives and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives addressing violence against women and girls in the region. In parallel, the ET explored the extent to which the GEF Project established synergies with the larger UN Women's portfolios and complemented efforts in the area of gender equality. The evaluation also emphasized UN Women's comparative advantage in the field of gender equality, assessing how the organization's unique expertise and approach positioned it favorably in comparison to other development partners and relevant stakeholders in North Macedonia. The findings offer a comprehensive understanding of the GEF Project's coherence both internally and in alignment with wider strategic priorities and regional initiatives.

- **The extent to which the objectives, activities, and results of the GEF Project are logically consistent and contribute to the achievement of changes (expected outcomes)**

### **F7. The GEF was built upon a cohesive framework with a focus on integrating gender equality principles into the EU accession process**

One of the Project's fundamental efforts was the adaptation of national gender policies across different sectors. This established an efficient mechanism for achieving gender equality and set the stage for EU Sector Budget Support and IPA programming. Complementing this, a secondary endeavor provided technical assistance for the coordination of intersectoral governance in line with the national gender equality mechanism.

Utilizing a rights-based transformative approach, the Project targeted sustainable changes at individual, legislative-political, and societal levels. Goals were set to improve the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis and foster positive socio-economic development within North Macedonia. These were further refined into prerequisites such as enhancing gender-related skills within governmental institutions and fortifying the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms. The ET provided a detailed analysis of the GEF Intervention logic in Annex 3 of this report.

However, the ET identified areas where improvements could be made. The Project's success was contingent upon key assumptions like political stability and a mutual commitment to North Macedonia's EU accession

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<sup>42</sup> The Project's recommendations to refine gender-specific data collection also emphasized capturing the unique experiences of women with disabilities accurately, thus promoting rights-sensitive, gender-responsive, and disability-inclusive policies and programs.

process. A deeper analysis of possible barriers and risks could fortify the Project against unforeseen challenges, allowing for better adaptability.

The Project demonstrated a clear vertical logic by aligning its objectives, activities, and outcomes. However, there is an opportunity for further examination of the integration of its various components. Still, the FE finds that the connections between national policy adaptation, technical assistance, and the broader societal transformation toward gender equality have been limited. The stakeholders recognized the need for a more comprehensive and strategically oriented engagement strategy with diverse governance actors, to enhance effectiveness and increase its impact.

Although the Project exhibited clear vertical logic, connecting objectives, activities, and outcomes, the integration of its various components could be further examined. The relationship between national policy adaptation, technical assistance, and the wider societal transformation toward gender equality may benefit from more explicit connections and mapping. Additionally, a more thorough and strategic engagement strategy with various governance actors could enhance the Project<sup>43</sup>.

Lastly, the complex nature of the Project's objectives, requires intricate data collection as essential, and some targets may be too ambitious. A meticulous reassessment of outcome-level targets and indicators could result in more accurate tracking of progress and meaningful monitoring. This careful approach would help ensure the ongoing success of the GEF Project in North Macedonia, maintaining its alignment with broader gender equality goals while being responsive to unique challenges and opportunities. (Annex 3)

- **The extent to which the GEF Project adheres to corporate strategic priorities of UN Women and the UN Women priorities in North Macedonia**

#### **F8. The GEF Project adheres to corporate strategic priorities of UN Women and the UN Women priorities in North Macedonia**

The GEF Project has effectively harnessed UN Women's distinct triple mandate—normative support, UN system coordination, and operational activities—to accelerate gender equality efforts and women's empowerment. Operationally, the Project supported the implementation of the UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025<sup>44</sup>, priorities, highlighting the thematic area of Governance and Participation in Public Life.

For example, the Project advocated for full and equal women's participation in decision-making, aiming to ensure that women and girls benefited from gender-responsive laws, policies, budgets, services, and accountable institutions. A key focus was placed on nurturing a legislative and policy environment conducive to women's influence in political institutions and processes. In addition, the Project worked to include women's perspectives in decision-making, emphasizing equal participation in public policy design, execution, and assessment<sup>45</sup>. Finally, the partnership with the State Statistical Office (SSO) echoes UN Women's commitment to data collection and dissemination, particularly concerning SDG5 indicators.

The Project's complementary support extended to other core areas of the UN Women Strategic Plan. Dynamic capacity development and partnership building (including civil society engagement) reinforced women's leadership and participation in decision-making processes in critical areas, along with VAWG. The Project subtly encouraged women's economic empowerment by revealing and tackling gender inequalities, thus fostering a discrimination-free environment conducive to women's active workforce participation<sup>29</sup>.

The Project's intersectional approach in North Macedonia has been crucial in acknowledging the complex and multifaceted challenges faced by women and girls from diverse backgrounds. By focusing on EU

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<sup>43</sup> The stakeholders recognized the need to strengthen collaboration with diverse governmental entities, independent and regulatory bodies, and non-governmental organizations across multiple levels of governance and sectors.

<sup>44</sup> The Strategic Plan 2022–2025 articulates how UN Women will leverage its unique triple mandate—encompassing normative support, UN system coordination, and operational activities—to mobilize urgent and sustained action to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Plan mainstreamed integrated approaches with seven systemic outcomes to address the root causes of inequality and affect broader systems change, across its thematic focus areas: i) governance and participation in public life; ii) women's economic empowerment; iii) ending violence against women and girls; and iv) women, peace and security, humanitarian action, and disaster risk reduction. More at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025>

<sup>45</sup> This focus facilitated initiatives to enhance institutional capacities for gender equality, thereby transforming harmful social norms.

accession, reform efforts, and fortifying institutional capacities among stakeholders, the Project ensured a comprehensive and robust application of legal frameworks and policies vital for gender equality. However, the stakeholders have expressed concern on only a UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia only, as this could be a limitation that hampers long-term strategic commitment to country's support.

**F9. Regional experience has been valuable in conceptualizing the GEF Project and ensuring its coherence with the broader, regional EU accession process<sup>46</sup>**

In North Macedonia, the implementation of the GEF has been enriched by insights drawn from achievements in neighbouring countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. In these countries, UN Women played a critical role in supporting national stakeholders in strategically aligning GEWE initiatives with EU assistance programming and policy processes<sup>47</sup>. The early integration of the Gender Institutional Mechanism exemplified how swiftly gender equality can be incorporated into government reforms and EU-supported strategies<sup>48</sup>. These experiences guided the GEF in North Macedonia and fostered opportunities for regional collaboration with other UN Women offices, contributing to coherent approach to enhancing gender equality and strengthening EU accession mechanisms.

The need for exchange of experience and practices among IPA countries remains as an opportunity; still, the priority remains to preserve a nationally specific focus that harmonizes with regional efforts. The integrated approach thus stands as a beacon for quality investment in gender equality, showcasing the potential for tangible changes in gender-related policies and practices.

- **The extent to which the Programme established synergies with the larger UN Women's portfolios and complemented and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives addressing violence against women and girls in the region**

**F10. The GEF project's coherence and synergy with UN Women in North Macedonia's initiatives have created a seamless alignment, particularly in the realm of gender-responsive budgeting at both national and local levels. Focused on enhancing the competencies of public administration staff, including gender focal points within ministries, this collaboration fostered gender analysis and crafted gender-responsive budgeting, harmonized with the programming of IPA funds.**

The GEF project also aligned with the UN Country Team (UNCT) Development Partnership Framework (2016–2025) and specifically with Pillar 3: Transparent and Accountable Democratic Governance. This alignment emphasized evidence-based, anticipatory, and gender-responsive policies, with UN Women playing a vital role across areas such as legal frameworks, human rights, and rule of law. Through robust data collection and analysis—ensured through the work of the State Statistical Office, the GEF has bolstered central and local governments, enhancing evidence-based policymaking sensitive to all genders and vulnerable groups. These outputs underscored UN Women and GEF's steadfast dedication to inclusive development in North Macedonia.

Additionally, UN Women's leadership of the UNCT Gender Thematic Group, in conjunction with various UN agencies, ensured coordination relevant to the GEF project. These coordination and cooperation extend to policy analyses, reports, and manuals, aiding the government in the accession process, and has even proven instrumental in developing a new Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2023–2030. For example, GEF cooperated with UNOPS's work to enhance capacities on EU integration and UNDP's support in public management reforms, with a focus on gender-sensitive governance structures.

As GEF North Macedonia broadens its reach to include sectors like rural development, energy, and the environment, collaboration with other UN agencies becomes increasingly important. However, during evaluation, stakeholders at national and local levels identified a general limited coordination and information sharing among UN agencies. Some expressed concerns about occasional overlaps and competing activities,

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<sup>46</sup> <https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=11541>

<sup>47</sup> One notable outcome, for instance, was the GEF-induced transformation in Serbia's environmental and climate change sectors.

<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, these efforts in Albania served as financial triggers in national employment strategy. Yet, challenges such as delayed adoption of gender-related legislation and policies in some areas have acted as obstacles to full realization of these goals.

highlighting a need for more transparent, organized communication and collaboration within the UN system in North Macedonia. This call for improved coordination serves as a crucial reminder of the continuous evolution required in multi-agency collaborations to ensure that unified and effective approaches are maintained.

- **The extent to which UN Women possess a comparative advantage in the area of work in comparison to other development partners and relevant stakeholders in North Macedonia**

**F11. In GEF North Macedonia, UN Women's engagement signifies a pivotal step in transforming gender equality, demonstrating a comprehensive and innovative approach to align with EU gender equality legislation. Stakeholders across different levels recognize numerous comparative advantages of UN Women: through their expertise, commitment, consistency, partnerships, leadership, and innovative methodologies, through this (and other initiatives) have crafted a multifaceted response to gender equality challenges. UN Women's approach transcends traditional boundaries, embracing a comprehensive and integrative perspective that links various policy domains in shaping the gender equality landscape.**

Collaboration with national stakeholders has been foundational to UN Women's success in North Macedonia. Their ability to cultivate partnerships transcends typical donor-beneficiary relationships, extending into what is seen as a 'feminist relation,' open and cooperative<sup>49</sup>. In this context, UN Women's involvement through the GEF represents a critical transformation in gender equality and the team has displayed profound expertise in gender mainstreaming across sectoral strategies, utilizing gender data in a meaningful way. Their services, including coaching, training, guidance, and advice, have aided governmental bodies in aligning with EU gender equality standards.

Unlike conventional interventions, UN Women's core mandate has embraced a holistic and integrative perspective, connecting various policy areas like economic and environmental policies, yielding valuable insights for local development. This has been also reflected through the GEF Project, showing UN Women's robust management capability. They have demonstrated adaptability, responsiveness, and unmatched project administration, fostering collaboration and a cohesive response to gender equality challenges. UN Women's leadership in gender equality has earned recognition and appreciation from government representatives and international stakeholders alike. UN Women and the GEF Team's commitment to including marginalized voices in decision-making processes has not gone unnoticed. They have devised targeted, culturally sensitive interventions that recognize the complex intersections of identity, reflecting a genuine commitment to both gender equality and intersectionality.

Notwithstanding these achievements, some areas for growth have been noted. The stakeholders have expressed the expectation that UN Women could wield its authority more decisively against trends threatening gender equality and act more forcefully against political actions that contradict gender equality principles.

### **4.3 Effectiveness**

In assessing the effectiveness, the ET addressed several key components. The team analyzed the GEF's influence on adopting the EU Gender Equality acquis and its consequent effects on socio-economic outcomes for all genders in North Macedonia. They also gauged how well the Project shifted societal norms.

The administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, such as the Equal Opportunities Department and Gender Focal Points, were evaluated in terms of their alignment with EU standards and international obligations. The team took note of unexpected outcomes from the Project, both positive and negative, to measure its full scope of influence. Lastly, the evaluation considered the efficacy of the Project's strategies and other factors in its implementation. This holistic approach offered a concise yet encompassing view of the GEF Project's effectiveness in promoting gender equality in North Macedonia.

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<sup>49</sup> The partners stated that this UN Women's approach has extended its influence to marginalized groups and underdeveloped communities, forging connections that have a real impact.

**F12. The GEF has been effective in delivering its outputs, and making credible contribution to the achievement of stated outcomes, the primary and secondary sources confirmed positive changes in relevant statistical indicators<sup>50</sup>.**

The ET prepared a comprehensive analysis of the Project's intervention logic (this included the overall results chain, outcomes and outputs) and respective indicators under each of the elements, striving to establish credible links to the extent possible between specific results and reported progress under the outputs and outcomes. The ET reflected on changes measured by proposed indicators and analyse the extent to which targets have been achieved. In the cases of missing information, the FE worked to collect other information and link reported results with outcomes

- **Evidence of enhanced transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis results in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia**

**F13. Progress has been made towards transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis results in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia**

**The GEF Project in North Macedonia aimed to enhance the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis, seeking to foster socio-economic development for both genders. Emphasizing compliance with global norms of gender equality, Outcome 1 of the project was directed by key government personnel responsible for European Integration and Gender Equality. These dual objectives converged in a concerted effort to implement the EU Gender Equality acquis.**

The partners stated that UN Women, through the GEF Project, "meticulously crafted its activities to resonate with the country's dedication to nurturing EU-aligned gender equality". They recognized its efforts to build on existing frameworks and identify areas for potential growth, highlighting that the Project has been instrumental in instituting practices that contribute to a favourable climate for gender equality promotion. These findings are further expanded through the analysis of international assessments, such as the EU Progress Reports and the Country Level Implementation Plan for North Macedonia. These documents have marked advancements concerning gender equality while recognizing challenges and room for further enhancement. This dual acknowledgement provides a roadmap for the continued evolution of the Project's activities and initiatives.

The primary data indicate that "a distinctive feature of the GEF Project in North Macedonia was its collaborative spirit". Actively aligning with key national stakeholders like the SEA and the MLSP, the Project has woven partnerships central to its success.

SEA, a key partner for gender mainstreaming in EU integration processes, has continued to demonstrate an uncompromising commitment to planning, coordinating, and monitoring North Macedonia's accession to the EU. Similarly, MLSP, focusing on overseeing the national gender policy, has played a critical role in advancing the status of both women and men at various governmental levels.

Regular coordination and communication with SEA and MLSP have been vital in anticipating challenges and mitigating potential risks. The joint creation of knowledge products and continuous dialogues reinforce national institutions' strong ownership of the Project's results. Moreover, the GEF Project has nurtured partnerships with Equal Opportunities Coordinators, IPA units, and other central government entities. Collaborations with the SSO have been pivotal in addressing standardized gender data collection and analyses, resulting in the mapping of gender-specific SDGs and additional relevant analyses.

- **The extent to which the GEF Project promoted favourable social norms and attitudes to ensure gender equality and prevent discrimination of and violence against women.**

**F14. Under Output 1 the GEF aims to equip various entities involved in EU accession with the knowledge and skills to incorporate a gender perspective into their work. The detailed exploration of output 1 reveals multi-dimensional progress in gender mainstreaming, touching on various aspects of policymaking, capacity building, collaboration, and communication. The trajectory is positive, with targets being met, exceeded, or closely approached. The initiative's efforts are aligned with broader strategic goals and**

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<sup>50</sup> The in-depth analysis of the COIII effectiveness has been based on its aggregated progress and monitoring reports, the work plans, and other prepared analytical reports and documents. The interviews with stakeholders served to validate findings.



**international norms, reflecting a comprehensive and responsive approach. The ongoing areas of focus and future planning underline the continued commitment to evolving this vital work.**

The following sections outline the key areas of progress:

**Developing Gender-Responsive Guidelines and Principles and Strategic Documents:** The partners stated that the Project assisted national institutions in crafting sector-specific comprehensive guidance notes in the sectors: Transport; Agriculture; Competitiveness and innovation; Public administration reform; Justice; Environment and climate change; Security; and Health. These documents serve as foundational tools for gender mainstreaming, offering concrete examples and setting common principles. The ET finds that the proposed OECD Gender Equality Markers provided a standardized way to evaluate and track progress.

The stakeholders recognized that integrating gender perspectives is essential to create a coherent approach across different fields and entities and guide individual institutions in their planning process and alignment with broader global goals such as the SDGs and European Union principles. They stated that this approach promoted a notion that “gender is not isolated but intertwined with core objectives and goals, reflecting a modern understanding of gender equality as a multifaceted issue that impacts all sectors of society<sup>51</sup>”. For example, in the environmental sector, gender mainstreaming has become vital, with planning stages that include gender considerations, women’s participation, and analysis that are linking gender equality to sustainability. Simultaneously, the competitiveness and innovation sector saw gender equality as central to growth, focusing on gender balance in decision-making, and alignment with global initiatives like the UN’s SDG 5 and EU principles. Complementary to this, the SEA representatives and other national partners stated that the Project has been supportive in enabling them to reflect gender mainstreaming inputs in IPA III action fiches across ten thematic areas<sup>52</sup>

The national partners emphasized that GEF’s assistance ensured that women and men’s different needs and situations have been addressed in crucial legislation, aligning with international norms and implementing the UN’s Leave No One Behind approach”. For example, GEF was “precious in engendering the draft Law on Administrative Servants and Public Sector Employees”. In parallel, the Project provided inputs to the Ministry of Information Society and Administration for the new Public Administration Reform Strategy and to the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of good governance concerning the new Law on Sport. The representatives of these institutions stated that “these efforts

The ET already highlighted critical GEF’s deliverable, the Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) as significant step in reflecting gender equality and the status of women. Without repeating what was already reported, the ET needs to highlight that this process involved robust data collection and analysis in consultations with various stakeholders<sup>53</sup>. The CGEP serves as a comprehensive tool in North Macedonia for analyzing gender equality, identifying areas of progress and those needing further attention and investment. By including quantitative and qualitative information, it helped policymakers, organizations, and activists formulate strategies and policies for gender equality and women’s empowerment. It is also a “valuable tool in monitoring progress, assessing policy impacts, and advocating for more inclusive and gender-responsive development”.

**Capacity development and training support:** the ET finds that developing two training packages (basic and advanced training programmes) demonstrated the GEF’s commitment to “ensuring public administration staff possess the skills to integrate gender perspectives”. The Project involved 18 national institutions and the creation of gender champions in seven institutions; the key informants stated that this training programme enabled them to understand primarily gender equality and link gender mainstreaming with IPA programming. They said that “the GEF went beyond the intended goal, fostering sustainability and strong local ownership of gender mainstreaming processes”, recognizing that the first Training of Trainers on gender mainstreaming in IPA processes further strengthened this effort.

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<sup>51</sup> KII notes, national partners

<sup>52</sup> (These fiches included Economic cohesion, Enhanced security, and fight against organized crime, terrorism, and radicalization; Fundamental rights; Health; Reforms and resilience and Integration facility).

<sup>53</sup> This document hence, the document provided an overview of key indicators related to gender equality, such as education, employment, health, and social norms. It highlighted existing gender gaps and challenges which was pivotal in assessing the situation and guiding future support within the country.

In addition, the GEF effectively assisted in mainstreaming gender across institutions and strategic plans. For example, the representatives of the SEA and the SWGs reported they have begun to integrate gender into their EU accession-related work. However, internal SEA reforms and changes in the SWGs membership highlighted the need for a more encompassing approach to training activities.

**Roster and Expertise Mobilization:** creating and regularly updating a roster with sector-specific GM experts signify a structured approach to gender mainstreaming. The draft of Twelve Terms of Reference for recruiting experts in priority sectors like Agriculture and Rural Development, Competitiveness and Innovation, and Public Administration Reform further indicates a meticulous and tailored approach to providing support.

**Visibility and Regional Collaboration:** the participation in the GEF Bosnia and Herzegovina Gender Mainstreaming in IPA training and the recruitment of a Communications Specialist amplify the Project's visibility. This includes the development of a visual identity, Communication Strategy, and promotional materials, fostering a network of peer-to-peer support and creative brainstorming across Western Balkans.

- **The extent to which National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) have the administrative capacities to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes, in line with EU Gender Equality legislation and policy and international obligations (Output 2-related)**

**F15. Output 2 prioritized strengthening National Gender Mechanisms, namely, the Equal Opportunities Department and Coordinators/Gender Focal Points, to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes. The ET finds that the Project ensured progress in these areas, fortifying administrative capacities for gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes and harmonizing with EU directives and international mandates. Output 2 presented a cohesive and methodological approach, with achievements spanning sectors like gender data, public administration, sports, regional collaboration, and awareness creation. These achievements showed a consistent dedication to gender equality, aligned with broader strategies, marking a positive course in the ongoing endeavours and setting the ground for future initiatives.**

**Capacities for Gender Mainstreaming:** The Department of Equal Opportunities and Coordinators for Equal Opportunities from diverse institutions have enhanced their capabilities to align with EU integration and IPA procedures, integrating gender perspectives into various strategic frameworks. The GEF assisted with the preparation and finalization of the National Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027 as a cornerstone in shaping the nation's vision for gender equality in the years ahead. In addition, this support extended to the Programme for Statistical Surveys 2023-2027 of the State Statistical Office, which recognized the importance of gender data for informed decision-making, the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023-2026 of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration that promotes gender equality across governmental structures. In addition, national institutions benefited from the support to amend the Criminal Code, reflecting the provisions stipulated by the Istanbul Convention and in line with EU standards, marking progress in legal reforms.

In parallel, the GEF engaged various stakeholders in driving the gender mainstreaming agenda by working on sector-specific (gender mainstreaming) guidance. The critical partnership has been with the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of good governance policies (DPM) that resulted in strategic analysis and recommendations on gender equality in sports. Complementary, the GEF partnered with the Agency for Youth and Sport, addressing youth policies and further expanding the analysis on gender equality in sports. This analysis (of gender equality in sports) emphasized the pivotal role of sports in societal health and well-being and the need for equal opportunities for all, concluding that “innovative programs can enhance girls' participation, medias need to adopt gender-sensitive reporting, while measures against gender-based discrimination remain essential<sup>54</sup>”. Furthermore, the analysis recommended various measures, from ensuring women's balanced participation in sports organizations, while promoting inclusion by developing a national strategy to increase girls' participation including improving access to facilities, increasing women trainers, conducting awareness campaigns, countering stereotypes, enhancing young girls' participation through inclusive programs, and providing incentives to organizations working to advance gender equality. The collaboration with the DPM resulted in analysis of gender and anti-discrimination; the DPM stated that efforts related to gender and anti-corruption set the basis for a broader initiative, the Southeast Europe

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<sup>54</sup> Ref to Analysis on gender equality in sport in North Macedonia, 2022

Good Governance and Anti-corruption Women Forum, with potentials “to become a centre of excellence and knowledge hub to support gender mainstreaming through anti-corruption measures<sup>55</sup>”.

Also, the Ministry of Defense recognized GEF's support in mainstreaming gender in defence and security. Similarly, the partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Policy concentrated on women in diplomacy and gender equality in foreign policy. These achievements exhibit the progress made in strengthening national institutions and represent a commitment to infusing gender sensitivity across the fabric of government policies and programs. By aligning with international standards and commitments, the nation reinforces its dedication to creating an inclusive society that recognizes and promotes gender equality.

**Enhancing Gender Data and Statistics:** the SSO has advanced in collecting, examining, and sharing gender statistics and indicators. By leading the mapping of SDG gender-related indicators and embracing the gender perspective into its 5-year Statistical Programme, the SSO has underscored gender statistics' importance. In addition to the annually released Women and Men in North Macedonia, key achievements include the historical analysis of "Women and Men in North Macedonia for 2000-2021. The SSO recognized that this publication is a product of "extensive collaboration with UN Women" and offers a profound analysis of gender statistics, and reveals critical trends and challenges. The publication also identifies gaps and limitations in gender data, including a lack of coordination among data producers and missing information on gender-based violence. This work supports monitoring the country's progress towards international commitments like the 2030 Agenda, SDGs, and the EU accession process, serving as a crucial resource for understanding gender equality in North Macedonia.

In addition, the selected representatives from public administration have augmented their knowledge and expertise in gender statistics and mainstreaming. Enhanced skills in gender analysis and utilization of gender statistics affirm the SSO's crucial role. Specialized training and networking events have ensured that the latest methods and perspectives are being implemented.

**Collaborative efforts** have been reinforced through focused meetings, workshops, GEF activity alignment in the work plan, and even regional exchange with participants in GEF WB best practices. This engagement has bolstered cooperation and allegiance among key allies on gender equality and EU assimilation.

**Creating Awareness and Capacity Development** this output produced many awareness products, holding capacity development planning meetings with relevant CSOs. The campaign included a variety of materials, such as billboards and infographics, underlining the multifaceted approach to promoting gender equality.

- **Existence of unexpected changes, both positive and negative, that beneficiaries and other key stakeholders perceive as a result of the program's activities**

**F16. The GEF delivered several unexpected results during its implementation, showcasing flexibility, influence on transformation, and an aptitude for innovation in the field of gender equality and EU integrations. The adaptability of the Project to the complex landscape of gender policy, including challenges such as limited capacities within public administration and high turnover of qualified staff, facilitated unbroken progression in capacity building, educational endeavours, and gender-focused studies.**

The GEF Project expanded the discourse on gender equality by fostering dialogue among scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners, illustrating creativity in extending gender policy planning beyond conventional domains. Its effectiveness in facilitating cooperation and standardized approaches in data collection, for example, among the public institutions aligned with the national priorities in the statistics. The Project aligned with the PAR Strategy objectives, contributing to a dialogue and consolidating a collective commitment to gender equality, development, and human rights.

Frequent changes in the political setup posed additional challenges, yet the Project's adaptability to these shifts demonstrated the strategic importance of gender equality in North Macedonia's EU accession path. Beneficiaries and key stakeholders have recognized the Project's success as indicative of the value of adaptable planning, collaboration, and openness to fresh approaches, thus ensuring a more vigorous and resilient framework for gender mainstreaming. In addition, the GEF Project was pivotal in guiding gender-related legislative reforms and policies in North Macedonia; this was achieved by connecting various stakeholders.

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<sup>55</sup> KII notes, and DPM's inputs

It also nurtured new expertise in gender policy, merging traditional capacity development with innovative approaches that combined technical experts and practitioners and online learning platforms.

**F17. Despite notable achievements, the Project results faced challenges due to limited capacities and a high turnover of experienced staff in the national institutions.**

The stakeholders stated that engaging qualified new employees is a particular issue (for various reasons, from non-competitive salaries to legal and formal obstacles that limit employment in the public sector). At the same time, motivation for capacity development remains low. Although these experiences reinforced the Project's adaptability confirming that even in challenging conditions it managed to deliver effective capacity development support. Still, nationally-driven and stronger cooperation and coordination could have enhanced these learning outcomes.

The intricate design of the GEF Project's strategies reflected the multifaceted nature of gender equality challenges in alignment with EU accession, as ensuring that various initiatives interacted dynamically and supported one another was a challenge. The analysis of available primary and secondary sources, indicate that the SEA and the national partners need to intensify the coordination of development assistance and create a synergistic effect that could amplify individual impacts. This finding underscores the need for more robust strategic planning and the potential for sustained influence, aligning gender mainstreaming expertise with EU reform priorities in North Macedonia, even amid the challenges of limited administrative capacity and political instability.

- **The extent to which factors and Programme implementation strategies facilitated or affected the implementation of the Programme and the achievement of results**

**F18. The GEF in North Macedonia has become an exemplar of robust and adaptive gender equality implementation, guided by a EU accession agenda.**

The GEF's alignment with EU gender equality legislation played a critical role in setting the strategic direction. It facilitated the introduction of gender-responsive law-making and policy-planning methodologies tailored to North Macedonia's unique context. This alignment further created opportunities for international collaboration and the exchange of best practices, ensuring that gender equality remained at the forefront of policy and social dialogue in the country.

The alignment with EU standards, expertise, innovative strategies, and focus on inclusive, feminist relationships drove the initiative's achievements. However, cultural resistance, complex coordination, and expectation management provided learning opportunities for future interventions. The rich tapestry of experiences offers invaluable insights into effective gender equality implementation, contributing to a broader understanding of gender dynamics within the country and beyond. UN Women's holistic approach allowed for more coherent and multifaceted strategies that connected various aspects under the policy framework (economic, social, and political context).

In addition, engaging with multiple stakeholders expanded the inclusiveness of this approach. The ET finds that GEF's efforts to foster non-hierarchical, feminist relationships with national stakeholders from various levels and structures, built trust and created a conducive environment for open and honest discussions about gender issues<sup>56</sup>.

**F19. The Project's implementation and its journey were not without challenges. Deep-rooted societal norms and pervasive gender biases often acted as substantial barriers, compounded by growing anti-gender sentiment from conservative circles. The country faces increasing EU scepticism, coupled with fatigue towards EU integration; these challenges added another layer of complexity to promoting gender equality, underscoring the importance of localized and context-specific strategies.**

Navigating resistance from communities deeply tied to traditional gender roles and confronting the rising tide of conservative opposition required careful handling and negotiation. The ET finds that the GEF team balanced between advocating for profound changes and recognizing what was realistically achievable<sup>57</sup>. Practically, the GEF team could not ignore "the weariness associated with the extended EU integration

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<sup>56</sup> These results are particularly apparent with the translation of the gender equality goals and national commitments into sector-specific action plans that resonated with the country's specific needs

<sup>57</sup> This relates to the rising negative national sentiment towards gender related topics and challenging country's political, governance, social and economic situation

process was interwoven with these complexities, reflecting a broader societal trend<sup>58</sup>. The partners stated that GEF adopted "a delicate, nuanced approach, marked by dialogue, empathy, based on understanding of dynamics in North Macedonia".

This complex situation in the countries that involved various partners called for effective management and coordination. Though successful in many areas, some stakeholders perceived a need for more proactive information sharing on gender equality and gender mainstreaming (in policies and practices) and stronger coordination role for UN Women, suggesting room for potential improvement. At the same time, the partners stated that GEF's implementation is a testament to robust, adaptive, and collaborative strategies for achieving results. The successes and challenges encountered offer a blueprint for others seeking to drive gender equality, demonstrating that change is possible despite deeply entrenched societal norms and complexities. One of the strongest statements is that "the story of GEF in North Macedonia will likely continue to inspire and inform gender equality efforts far beyond its borders".

#### 4.4 Efficiency

In scrutinizing the efficiency, the ET centered on two primary dimensions. Initially, the team assessed the strategic allocation of resources, encompassing financial, human, and technical support, to ascertain their effectiveness in realizing the Project's outcomes. This process aimed to determine if the resources were channeled in the most impactful manner to maximize the desired results. Following that, the ET delved into the leadership and management structure of the Programme. This entailed evaluating the effectiveness of management and administration roles, understanding how these roles contributed to the project's accomplishments, and determining any potential areas for optimization. Collectively, the evaluation emphasized the importance of both resource allocation and effective leadership in driving the efficient execution and success of the GEF Project

- **The extent to which the resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) have been allocated strategically to achieve the Programme outcomes**

**F20. The GEF Project embodied efficient execution and a strategic vision, demonstrating strong delivery rates and an appropriate allocation of resources. These factors align with the national priorities and needs and purposefully position North Macedonia to foster gender equality and human rights, setting a benchmark for future endeavours in the region and beyond.**

The partners planned the GEF Project for a duration of two years<sup>59</sup>. However, given the initiative's complexity and the intricate, multi-dimensional efforts required to enhance the capacities and performance of the institutions engaged in the EU accession process and transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis, the ET finds it was unrealistic to complete all activities within such a constrained timeframe. The response from the stakeholders (UN Women, SEA and the SIDA) to pursue a nine-month non-cost extension (until 30 September 2023) was adequate and this extension was necessary and well-justified. This additional time for implementation enabled the UN Women GEF Team and its collaborative partners to shift their focus toward genuine transformation and capacity development, thereby avoiding the "delivery trap" where undue pressure falls solely on the execution of activities and the disbursement of funds.

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) supported the GEF Project, allocating a budget of around 16.5 million SEK (USD 1,825,416.00). The ET commends the strategic allocation of these funds; however, assessing or measuring the Project's cost-effectiveness at this preliminary stage may be premature, especially as many interventions symbolize long-term commitments and tangible benefits are expected to materialize over time. Nonetheless, the ET recognizes the strategic nature of resource allocation and identifies encouraging early indications of progress. Some exemplary initiatives could be gender mainstreaming in non-traditional areas- such as gender and sports<sup>60</sup>, setting the stage for gender-sensitive transformation and greater gender-balance over time. Similarly, the Project's support for gender mainstreaming in formulating and implementing anti-discrimination policies and establishing the Southeast Europe Good Governance and Anti-corruption Women Forum offers exciting growth prospects.

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<sup>58</sup> KII notes

<sup>59</sup> initially scheduled from 15 December 2020 until 14 December 2022

<sup>60</sup> As indicated in the previous paragraphs, the GEF assisted in preparing the comprehensive study "Women in Sports" and the resulting Law on Sports following gender equality principles

Furthermore, the Project's success in aiding national institutions to incorporate gender considerations into IPA Programming and policymaking is pivotal, although continued monitoring of gender indicators will be vital especially during the implementation.

The careful and strategic use of funds identified savings and their subsequent reallocation to multiply activities or address urgent needs further illustrate the Project's adaptability and responsiveness. The adaptability was particularly evident in adjusting to the unprecedented challenges brought by COVID-19, demonstrating a flexible and resilient approach. Future budget planning need to draw upon updated research and renewed capacity assessments of partner absorption capacities, ensuring the initiative's continued delivery.

- **The extent to which the leadership and management of the Programme including the structuring of management and administration roles have been effective**

**F21. The GEF Project Team played an integral role in realizing the Project's objectives by developing and meticulously executing detailed work plans. Despite working within a complex framework, the team completed planned activities and progressed towards targets within the approved budget, a testament to UN Women's effective coordination and management.**

At the operational level, establishing an implementation team laid the foundation for overall coordination, systematic planning, and meaningful interactions with lead national institutions (such as SEA and the ministries). The Inception Phase was crucial, as it allowed for Project start-up, building of working relationships, and refinement of the Work Plans. The role of the Head of UN Women Office as the Project Manager during the Project's first years was unique and highly valuable, fostering trust-building and strengthening partnerships with key national institutions. While the direct management of a specific project might be non-typical for the Head of the Office, this strategic involvement reflected the profound importance of the GEF Project for UN Women in North Macedonia. It also contributed to aligning UN Women's initiatives, thereby enhancing coherence and paving the way for more extensive support to governance reform and EU accession priorities.

Despite potential challenges, such as the delayed engagement of the Project Manager and changes within the coordinator team, the UN Women's Office remained focused and dedicated, ensuring efficient implementation and continuity of activities. In this context, the engagement of an experienced full-time Project Manager in the last year of GEF implementation further augmented the team, adding strength to the implementation structure and ensuring continuity. Additionally, the Project benefited significantly from the input of Gender Coordinators with sector-specific knowledge. UN Women's setup of the GEF Project Management team, complete with technical experts, and the provision of administrative, financial, and communication support, demonstrated a commitment to excellence and alignment with the staffing arrangements.

The Project's effects were also felt in its communication and visibility measures. For instance, collaborations with the State Statistical Office resulted in the historical analysis of gender equality in North Macedonia (2000 to 2021) that was broadly promoted<sup>61</sup>. This study identified trends in women's status and offered recommendations to enhance data collection. The Project Team fostered strong partnerships with national and local stakeholders, such as the Department of Equal Opportunities/MLSP, IPA Coordinators within line ministries, and other relevant entities. These partnerships, good practices, and synergies with other ongoing initiatives (as presented under the Coherence part of this report) augmented the Project's effectiveness. Key informants acknowledged the Project team's technical knowledge and management capacities, emphasizing its success in aligning gender mainstreaming expertise with EU reform priorities.

The ET recognizes that the GEF Project was a multifaceted and managerially demanding initiative. Comprising numerous components, engaging various partners, and necessitating specialized skills and expertise resulted in a substantial workload for the Project Team and the Head of Office. This extensive operational demand accentuated the requirement for robust management and coordination. Still, the UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia and GEF Project team adhered to defined roles and mobilized specialized skills, achieving a more balanced division of responsibilities and enhancing the overall effectiveness. The GEF Project Team's accomplishments serve as a testament to the power of collaboration,

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<sup>61</sup> [https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPoslednaPublikacija\\_en.aspx?id=88](https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPoslednaPublikacija_en.aspx?id=88)

planning, and strategic alignment, demonstrating a blueprint for success that can be applied to future initiatives.

**F22. The GEF Project incorporated results-oriented annual plans and more detailed monthly plans, providing a solid basis for scheduling, resource allocation, budget control, and achievement of results.**

The GEF Project adopted results-oriented annual and monthly work plans, providing a solid foundation for scheduling, resource allocation, budget control, and the achievement of desired objectives. These comprehensive work plans facilitated the planning, implementation, and synchronization of activities, ensuring alignment with country priorities and the identified needs of partners and participating institutions in North Macedonia.

The preparation of work plans reflected feminist approach, involving the joint efforts of the GEF Project team and partners, primarily SEA. The partners, and beneficiaries participated in planning inputs and scheduling activities for their respective portfolios. This approach facilitated successful collaboration and synergy with other initiatives in the sectors, as indicated in the previous paragraphs of this report, and helped to align with EU reform priorities and promote gender mainstreaming in various sectors and areas of governance. The partners stated that GEF's work planning was efficient and effective, helping also to plan and schedule capacity development activities, further enhancing the progress under the broader equality framework.

**F23. The steering structure and coordination mechanism have been timely established and contributed to efficient and effective implementation**

*The Steering Committee (SC)* ensured strategic, transparent coordination of the GEF Project's implementation and monitoring. Meeting bi-annually, the SC took key decisions, approved plans, and participated in project evaluations. It provided essential policy guidance, aligning the Project's goals with national gender mainstreaming efforts and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework management structures. The SC's composition, including SEA (Chair), Equal Opportunity Department/MLSP, SIDA, EU Delegation, and UN Women, ensured diverse input. The UN Women international Senior Gender Mainstreaming expert offered technical advice. Collaboratively, they addressed challenges, monitored progress, and steered the project towards its objectives.

**Progress Review meetings** between UN Women, the GEF Project Team, SEA, and SIDA were held periodically, maintaining alignment and focus.

Overall, these coordination mechanisms, fostered collaboration, cohesion, and information exchange among diverse stakeholders, enhancing the effectiveness and impact of the GEF project<sup>62</sup>.

**F24. The ET finds that the partners recognized that the GEF had established itself as a prominent initiative, achieving acclaim and visibility in supporting gender equality and women's empowerment.**

The GEF Project demonstrated a high standard of communication, effectively disseminating key messages through various channels and tailored approaches. Roundtable discussions, media collaborations, and participation in events ensured that the Project's messages reached diverse audiences. This approach fostered impactful dialogue, engaging stakeholders such as government authorities, academics, CSOs and the wider public. The Project's commitment to open and inclusive dialogue allowed for broad discussions on gender issues, promoting proactive measures. This dynamic communication platform nurtured collaborative relationships, raised public awareness, and maintained transparency and accountability of the GEF efforts and results.

Concerning knowledge generation and management, the GEF excelled in its reporting structure, producing substantive and informative overview of deliverables. The ET finds that these reports served as a virtual knowledge repository that documented activities, results, and long-term effects.

The GEF used benefits of innovative technology, enhancing the reader's understanding and use of generated knowledge. In addition to ensuring availability of all the main deliverables via UN Women web-site<sup>63</sup>, the Project supported partners, such as the State Statistical Office, to continue working on user-friendly tools for data processing and analysis. This comprehensive online repository of knowledge enhanced

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<sup>62</sup> [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pirs8zPAts5k6fEWjBj8liwZS\\_fPCCC-](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1pirs8zPAts5k6fEWjBj8liwZS_fPCCC-)

<sup>63</sup> A wide range of critical documents, including research publications, guidelines, and other resources

transparency, facilitated collaborations, and promoted learning among stakeholders. The GEF Project's adept use of digital technology showcased its commitment to freely accessible knowledge and effective mission achievement in North Macedonia.

#### 4.5 Sustainability

In evaluating the sustainability of the GEF Project, the ET addressed several key criteria. First, the likelihood of the Project's benefits enduring well beyond its completion was assessed. The review emphasized the importance of long-term gains, especially in ensuring that gender equality advancements made during the project are sustained. Secondly, stakeholder capacity development was examined, with a focus on their potential to continue and amplify the Project's efforts. The analysis underscored improved communication, coordination, and information exchange among partners as pivotal for sustainability. Additionally, the team gauged the degree of stakeholder ownership at the country level, recognizing that genuine local ownership is crucial for enduring benefits. Lastly, the ET identified potential avenues for the continuation and expansion of the Project's results and activities, emphasizing the need for scalable initiatives and sustainable frameworks. Overall, the assessment underscored the Project's foundational work in ensuring a lasting positive impact on gender equality in North Macedonia.

- **The likelihood that the benefits from the GEF will be maintained for a reasonably long period after its completion**

**F25. The likelihood of maintaining the GEF Project's benefits in North Macedonia beyond its completion is promising but not without challenges. Several factors can affect the progress in transposing the EU Gender Equality acquis and achieving transformative changes in gender equality measures.**

While North Macedonia has made progress in revising and adopting legislation and aligning it with international standards implementation challenges persist. The delays in EU accession process majorly influence policy and legislation in the country; these points further compound uncertainties regarding the sustainability of achievements. Additionally, weak coordination within the government- "the "sylos" system of the ministries twinned a lack of responsibility, and the absence of a merit-based pay system and sound retention policy can affect the ongoing planning and implementation of accession activities. The slow pace of civil service restructuring and public management system reform, combined with high turnover among competent and well-trained staff in institutions (SEA, IPA Units and IPA implementing structures including SWGs) may disrupt the ability to maintain momentum in IPA Programming and EU Acquis transposition.

Yet, there are more positive and "optimistic" indicators. The North Macedonian government's commitment to international and EU-accession-related standards could boost a supportive environment for ongoing efforts in gender equality and gender mainstreaming. In this context, the Project had a supportive role, demonstrating a positive trajectory in assisting national partners to understand and "nationalize" EU Gender Equality legislation and policies and align with international obligations.

The GEF Project's influence on partner institutions in North Macedonia has been critical achievement: the partners recognized that UN Women's GEF enabled them to enhance their knowledge and skills and reflect "a more unified approach to mainstream gender perspective in in sectoral strategies and policies, and more specifically in the NPAA and the IPA cycle<sup>64</sup>".

However, risks to sustainability remain and ensuring that SEA, IPA structures, Gender Mechanism, and related institutions can continue their vital work requires vigilance. This attention to evolving dynamics will safeguard the GEF's legacy and promote ongoing progress in gender equality and inclusive governance in the country. Therefore, the continued investment in staff, cooperative mechanisms, and alignment with EU standards must be seen as essential components in sustaining the transformative effects achieved by the GEF Project

- **The extent to which stakeholders' capacities have been developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits and improved communication, coordination and information exchange among the partners**

**F26. The GEF efforts were directed towards bolstering the operational capacities of national partners. Central to these endeavours was enhancing the administrative capabilities of key National Gender**

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<sup>64</sup> KII notes



**Mechanisms, including the Equal Opportunities Department and the Coordinators/Gender Focal Points. By aligning them with EU integration and IPA procedures, a robust framework was established that promises enduring gender mainstreaming efforts. Complementing this, the Project played a pivotal role in aiding the finalization of the National Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027 and mainstreaming gender in other critical national strategic documents. These documents are cornerstones envisaged to guide North Macedonia's journey towards gender equality, embedding the principles of gender mainstreaming in the nation's development roadmap.**

An emphasis on data-driven insights marked another hallmark of the initiative. By further fortifying the SSO's capacity to strengthen gender perspectives in its five-year Statistical Programme and underlining the cardinal role of gender statistics for evidence-based policymaking and informed decisions. Parallely, capacity-building remained a consistent theme across the GEF's activities, that provided representatives from public administration with refined knowledge and tools in gender statistics, gender-sensitive policymaking and wider, in gender mainstreaming. The ET finds that the Project contributed to a cadre of professionals in public institutions equipped for future endeavours in gender equality. In addition, the fabric of inter-agency collaboration progressed, as in the case of IPA programming.

Furthermore, the Project's role as a bridge, connecting local concerns with regional and international platforms, was instrumental. Dialogues with esteemed institutions like the other UN Agencies, the UN Country Team, and the EU Institute for Gender Equality enriched the national conversation, bestowing valuable insights upon national stakeholders.

- **The extent to which stakeholders' ownership and capacities at the country level have been developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits**

**F27. The GEF has nurtured a strong sense of ownership in gender-related processes, characterized by active stakeholder engagement, alignment with national priorities, and responsive support. However, the challenge remains in building and promoting national leadership and ensuring long-term sustainability, requiring continued efforts from all stakeholders involved.**

The Project, driven by demand, has been vital in building strong ownership concerning gender-related processes and activities. The partners were involved in identifying their needs, reflecting specific sectoral and national strategies priorities, while the GEF provided tailor-made assistance to enhance gender elements in these strategic priorities and national policies.

The GEF Project fostered a high degree of ownership crucial for implementing capacity development and knowledge transfer activities. Stakeholders in North Macedonia noted that the Project responded promptly to their capacity development needs, ensuring political resources and support. In addition, the FE finds that the Project ensured the ownership of results, allowing national partners to link gender equality strategies with broader efforts to foster sustainable socio-economic development<sup>65</sup>.

However, the GEF Project's success in ownership has not been fully mirrored in the leadership domain: although it was the initial stage, the Project was guiding and insisting on some specific activities. While there were efforts to align with EU standards and regulations, the national political environment did not always favour gender equality. These facts reveal the need for the national partners to be more active in setting a clear vision, mobilizing resources, and fostering collaboration among various stakeholders when it comes to building and promoting national leadership in gender equality. Factors such as personnel fluctuations in government units and the need for additional training might be additionally affecting stronger national leadership in gender mainstreaming..

- **Opportunities for continuation and expansion of the results and activities in the area of the GEF Project**

**F28. The GEF Project has created a multi-faceted, adaptable approach to promoting gender equality. Its initiatives spanned from the highly technical to support of unconventional areas, offering valuable insights and models for future endeavours and policies. The partners, including high-level officials, recognized that these models, grounded in the Project's successes in the country, hold potential for scalability and replication in diverse settings and sectors.**

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<sup>65</sup> Stakeholders emphasized that their policy initiatives considered the needs of various groups, including marginalized populations and were guided by sound problem prioritization, planning, implementation, and monitoring.

The Project provided a tested blueprint for promoting gender equality by integrating it into various conventional and unconventional sectors. These sectors showcased replicable models of success driven by the Project's innovative methodologies and far-reaching collaborations.

**Approaches to Gender-Sensitive Policies:** The Project pioneered a holistic method to weave gender considerations into policies and ensured it was integral to policy-making. By following this approach, the Project created a roadmap for designing and implementing policies with a gender lens, that involved training policymakers, conducting gender impact assessments, and providing tools to measure gender responsiveness within the entire implementation cycle. This approach can be replicated across regions and sectors, ensuring that gender considerations are intrinsic to policy frameworks.

**Capacity Development for IPA Programming:** The GEF Project ensured that IPA programming, often dominated by technical criteria, integrates gender equality by training IPA officials, providing gender analysis tools, and facilitating dialogue between gender experts and IPA officials. Complementary to this, gender-responsive budgeting introduced gender equality analyses for specific policy sectors, and this practice has been the basis for the Sector Planning Documents; this was a new practice in the programming context.

Gender mainstreaming of assistance planning and IPA programming is recognized as very important and transferable to other countries on the road to EU accession in the region. This model underscores the importance of mainstreaming gender in financial and technical assistance programs and can be replicated in various international assistance paradigms. For that purpose, the manual produced for gender mainstreaming in programming could be adjusted and implemented in other countries.

**Gender and Sports:** Venturing into unconventional domains, the GEF Project explored the intersection of gender and sports. Acknowledging that sports can be both a reflection of societal gender norms and a tool for challenging them, the Project worked on promoting gender equality in sports. Initiatives ranged from promoting women in leadership roles to using sports as a medium to challenge gender stereotypes. Such a model illustrates the versatility of gender equality initiatives, emphasizing that any sector, no matter how non-typical, can and should integrate gender considerations.

## 4.6 Impact

In assessing the GEF North Macedonia Project, the ET examined its systemic impact on gender inequality and empowerment of women and girls. The team analyzed the Project's transformative influence on institutions, policies, and practices at local and national levels, highlighting key advances in gender equality. The analysis also delved into how the Project has enhanced the empowerment of women and girls, considering its training, capacity-building, and collaborations. Overall, the ET determined the Project's role in strengthening gender rights and ensuring enduring positive changes in North Macedonia..

- **The extent to which the Project is contributing to systemic changes (transformations in institutions, policies, and practices) that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls**

**F29. The GEF Project has precipitated changes in laws and policies in line with the EU gender acquis, thus contributing to the broader development discourse in the country. The ET meticulously gauged the GEF's accomplishments, examining its influence on systems and policies and the potential ripple effects its outcome could ignite.**

The ET applied the policy cycle model<sup>66</sup> as an analytical tool to illustrate the correlation between the GEF's accomplishments and changes at the systemic level resulting from the more gender-sensitive policies. Thus, the ET delved into how the Project has contributed and supported policies (strategies and laws) that are gender-sensitive and gender-focused, reflecting on the effectiveness and accountability of implementation mechanisms (through partnerships with authorities).

### **I) Policy decisions (problem identification and agenda setting) and policy development**

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<sup>66</sup> Reference to Guy Peters "Policy Making Cycle- steps and approaches," in "Capacity for Policy- how can we do it better", prepared by Tomislav Novovic, UNDP, Belgrade, 2010

The Project provided materials for defining issues and agenda setting as closely allied elements of policy decisions<sup>67</sup>. By carrying out analysis and assessment and codifying its knowledge and experience, the GEF was able to influence "problem definition and agenda setting" within the policy cycle. Subsequently, it has recommended apt responses to these issues, thereby contributing to policy development<sup>68</sup>.

A particular area of focus for the Project has been analyzing issues impacting women's lives. For example, the GEF supported the analysis of women in sports in North Macedonia revealing that "a conspicuous absence of up-to-date data hinders the assessment of female participation<sup>69</sup>." A notable legislative gap persists as the country's sports laws and strategies overlook gender equality<sup>70</sup>. The Project supported decision-making bodies and coordination structures conducting gender-based analysis and initiating legislative changes, as was the case with the new Law on Sports.

Beyond the legal sphere, the Project has significantly influenced other policy fronts. The publication "Women and Men in North Macedonia: A Statistical Portrait of Trends in gender equality" provides a comprehensive analysis of gender equality in North Macedonia, highlighting progress and challenges since 2000. Covering diverse topics like health, employment, political participation, and criminal justice, it offers insights into gender equality trends in the country. The analysis revealed that rural women face employment challenges due to the gendered household labour division and insufficient social services. There are persistent gender stereotypes in the country, with women handling most unpaid domestic tasks. Furthermore, there is a notable gender disparity in political representation (with 18 female mayors in 25 years versus 642 males).. The stakeholders perceive this "publication pivotal for evidence-based gender equality policymaking in North Macedonia"<sup>71</sup>.

The ET finds that these proposed issues and policy solution have been instrumental in addressing various and interlinked aspects of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

## **II) Policy drafting, including policy Instruments and Implementation mechanisms:**

According to the stakeholders, the Programme has designed tools and instruments that resulted in new policies and facilitated policy implementation. The iterative consultation with different governing structures and various governance tiers- from the sectoral working groups to members of the gender equality mechanism and other stakeholders<sup>72</sup> has been critical in shaping the national policies, strategies, and laws. The GEF's influence could be reflected in its multi-pronged approach, affecting formulation of various policies and their implementation aspects<sup>73</sup>.

For instance, the representatives of the Government of North Macedonia recognized GEF's support while preparing a comprehensive document, the National Development Strategy 2022-2042. This is still on-going activity, and GEF supported the initial stage that "involved rigorous integration of gender perspectives in every aspect of the strategy, ensuring that it addresses the specific needs and challenges faced by women and men alike, and works towards creating an inclusive and equitable society<sup>74</sup>."

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<sup>67</sup> Priority setting and issue definition are almost inherently complex and involve choosing what issues are essential and inescapable (while many others with greater long-term significance may be straightforward to ignore or define incorrectly). After the identified issues, the next step in setting an agenda is to address them through the actions of the Government, its sub-ordinated units or other stakeholders. The "framing" of issues involves defining particular problems under terms that can help to mobilize political support for their adoption. Ref to Guy Peters "Policy Making Cycle- steps and approaches" and Jon Pierre, B. Guy Peters "Governance, Politics and the State," Macmillan, USA, 2016

<sup>68</sup> Ibidem, Jon Pierre, B. Guy Peters "Governance, Politics and the State," Macmillan, USA, 2016

<sup>69</sup> Deep-rooted patriarchal views continue to dominate, leading to gender stereotypes and minimal female representation, notably, only 8.9% in sports leadership roles. The analysis highlighted that "systematic deficiencies, from sparse opportunities and mentorship to a gender-biased awards system and skewed media representation, hamper women's progress".

<sup>70</sup> To address these challenges, measures ranging from improved female participation and representation to dedicated national plans and legislative amendments are imperative.

<sup>71</sup> KII notes- they recognized that the analysis offers recommendations to improve data collection and reporting to support evidence-based policymaking and monitoring of the country's progress towards gender equality goals

<sup>72</sup> Annual Donors Report- Inception Report, Progress Reports for 2021 and 2022. Also, different reports and documents were produced and presented as Annexes to the donors' reports.

<sup>73</sup> For example, meeting with the representatives of the Deputy prime Minister in charge of governance and the Ministry of Justice. Analysis of meeting minutes and workshop reports available to the ET.

<sup>74</sup> KII, UN Women North Macedonia and the SEA representatives

The GEF Project extended its support to the Ministry of Information Society and Administration for developing the Public Administration Strategy. In this context, the Government crafted the Law on Administrative Servants and the Law on Public Sector Employees, aiming to address the varied needs and circumstances of both women and men. To ensure alignment with international human rights standards such as CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the UPR recommendations, the GEF Project extended its support for preparing these laws. This "invaluable input was instrumental in weaving gender equality principles into the drafts<sup>75</sup>". In addition, the previous paragraphs of this report highlighted the GEF's assistance to the DPM in preparing the Law on Sports, ensuring "critical support in providing insight and recommendations through the working group dedicated to drafting this law<sup>76</sup>".

The ET finds that the Project has effectively delivered various policy tools and instruments. For example, with the expertise of the GEF project, eight comprehensive guidance notes were crafted, serving as tools with tangible examples for gender mainstreaming across diverse sectors<sup>77</sup>. These notes establish foundational principles to guarantee the consistent integration of gender considerations during planning, implementation and reporting (ensuring both trackability and reportability).

The Project provided capacity development guidebooks that codified knowledge and experience for the EU IPA-specific programming areas, as elaborated in this report<sup>78</sup>.

- **The extent to which the Project contributed to empowered women and girls in all dimensions**

**F30. The partners stated that the GEF Project followed and implemented a holistic and dedicated approach to gender equality, "painting a vivid picture of a world where women were both contributors and leaders in shaping the future". The GEF Project's alignment with the European Institute for Gender Equality's empowerment components was evident in its strategic approach to gender equality.**

The GEF's efforts have strived to enhance women's sense of self-worth. Practically, the Project advocated for gender equality in sports, combatting societal stereotypes and promoting increased participation of girls in sports. It worked to reinforce the inherent value and capabilities of women. Moreover, the GEF pushed media entities to adopt gender-sensitive reporting, further bolstering women's recognition in every field.

The GEF Project reshaped the legal framework for the Right to Determine Choices. It made significant contributions to the amendments of the Criminal Code, ensuring that women's rights were unequivocally recognized and protected, thus granting them greater autonomy in decision-making. Concurrently, through various training and networking events, the GEF worked to empower women and provide them with the knowledge to make informed choices in both personal and professional spheres.

The Project made commendable strides in ensuring access to opportunities and resources for women. The Project's efforts to fortify institutions like the Equal Opportunities Department ensured that systemic supports were robustly in place. These results facilitated pathways for women to access opportunities, also strengthening collaborations with the central national ministries, like the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such collaborations signified GEF's intent to integrate women into traditionally male-dominated sectors. In granting women the power to control their own lives, the GEF launched extensive awareness campaigns. These campaigns encompassed a myriad of materials and outreach methods and equipped women with basic knowledge to assert their rights and navigate societal challenges. In addition, The Project's emphasis on gender statistics, through an intensive partnership with the SSO, armed women with objective data, enabling them to base their life decisions on concrete evidence.

Lastly, the GEF Project was instrumental in enhancing women's ability to influence social change. Through the support and strengthening of platforms (like the Southeast Europe Good Governance and Anti-corruption Women Forum or the Resource Centre on Gender Responsive Policy Making and Budgeting as a knowledge hub), women were given a voice and placed in pivotal roles on more prominent regional stages. The Project's deep involvement in shaping policy recommendations and driving policy and legal reforms ensured that women were at the forefront of societal change.

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<sup>75</sup> KII, Government of North Macedonia

<sup>76</sup> KII notes

<sup>77</sup> These sectors included transport, agriculture, competitiveness and innovation, public administration reform, justice, environment and climate change, security, and health.

<sup>78</sup> The effectiveness part of this report provides details on the GEF activities and deliverables.

**F31. In essence, while power dynamics are rooted deeply and can resist change, the GEF Project in North Macedonia made strides in altering the contours of these dynamics. The partners stated that the GEF championed gender equality at multiple levels – from institutional mechanisms at the national level to policy implementation, setting in motion a transformative process. The partners expect that, over time, these continued efforts promise to create a more equitable North Macedonian society.**

The GEF Project undertook an ambitious mandate to facilitate the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis into the country's legal and administrative frameworks. In addition, the GEF Project sought to reshape the very foundations of decision-making in the context of EU accession. By targeting vital bodies in the integration process and management of pre-accession funds, like the SEA, IPA Units, SWGs, and other decision-making entities, the Project aimed to instil gender-sensitive perspectives in every facet of the EU integration process, from programming and implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Such a comprehensive approach inherently challenges existing power dynamics by demanding that gender considerations stand at the forefront of policy design and execution. Furthermore, the emphasis on bolstering the capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, notably the Equal Opportunities Department and the associated Coordinators/Gender Focal Points, was an explicit nod to transforming power relations at the institutional level. By ensuring these entities were well-equipped to integrate gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes and implement EU Gender Equality legislation, the GEF Project was simultaneously elevating the role and influence of gender-centric mechanisms within the national administrative apparatus<sup>79</sup>.

The collaborative nature of the GEF Project, encapsulated in partnerships between CSOs in the grasping policy-making process, was another pivotal factor in the recalibration of power dynamics. These partnerships enhanced the CSOs' visibility as the core actors in governance processes. They channelled their concerns into larger policy discourses, ensuring that the interests of marginalized groups were not side-lined.

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<sup>79</sup> Regionally, the facilitated discussions with esteemed institutions like the Council of Europe and the EU Institute for Gender Equality magnified the concerns of marginalized groups on a larger stage, highlighting the multi-layered challenges they face, especially the intersection of gender discrimination and violence.

## 5 Conclusions and lessons learned

### 5.1 Conclusions

#### **RELEVANCE**

##### **Conclusion 1:**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia exemplifies a meticulously tailored approach that addresses the nuances of institutional requirements for gender equality (F1). Developed in harmony with national stakeholders such as the SEA, the project stands as a beacon of alignment with both national priorities and EU gender standards, effectively bridging the chasm between formulated policies and their real-world application (F2, F3). Its agility and adaptability, further emphasized by its synchrony with the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027, showcase the project's continuous relevance in an ever-evolving gender policy landscape (F3).

Extending its commitment to the global stage, the project echoes internationally acclaimed benchmarks like CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and GREVIO, weaving global aspirations seamlessly with EU norms and guidelines (F4., F5). Its strategy, resonating with goals beyond the immediate horizon, targets broader SDGs, especially SDG 5 and 16. The GEF Project's rights-based, inclusive approach shines through in initiatives like the Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP). This tool, combined with the project's overarching commitment, emphasizes its ambition to integrate gender perspectives across policies holistically, steadfastly championing the rights and needs of all women, particularly those from vulnerable segments in North Macedonia (F6).

#### **COHERENCE AND RESPONSIVENESS**

##### **Conclusion 2:**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia stands out with its strategic design that synchronizes national gender equality aims with both EU accession prerequisites and broader international commitments (Based on F7). By embedding a rights-based transformative approach, the project efficiently decodes EU gender directives, ensuring socio-economic progress. While the foundation is sound, potential areas of enrichment include a more holistic integration of its components and extensive stakeholder engagement. Enhancing data collection measures and revisiting ambitious targets can further bolster the project's durability and effectiveness.

Concurrently, the GEF Project serves as a reflection of UN Women's triple mandate, aligning seamlessly with its strategic priorities, international standards, and other relevant interventions (Based on F8 and F9). This alignment is further underscored by the project's resonance with overarching UN Women initiatives and the UN Development Partnership Framework, demonstrating a deep commitment to gender-centric governance reform. As the project's influence broadens, a more integrative approach involving multiple UN agencies is imperative. Feedback from stakeholders accentuates the need for reinforced coordination and clarity within the UN network to ensure unduplicated efforts and peak efficiency (Based on F10).

##### **Conclusion 3:**

UN Women possesses a clear comparative advantage in executing the GEF Project, which reinforced its critical role in advancing gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

UN Women's proficiency in navigating the complex landscape of national and international organizations, along with its in-depth understanding of international frameworks and gender equality standards, has been highly valued. The GEF's effective management with the involvement of the UN Women Head of Office in North Macedonia, strategic approach to national authorities, and facilitation of work and collaboration with the main institutions in the EU accession process have positioned UN Women as a catalyst for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and long-term partnerships. Furthermore, UN Women's leadership, technical expertise, and support have been highly important in areas with limited national resources (Based on F11.).

#### **EFFECTIVENESS**

##### **Conclusion 4:**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia has emerged as a cornerstone in the nation's efforts to promote gender equality in the EU accession process. Its initiatives, backed by comprehensive analyses and active collaborations, have ensured that gender considerations are interwoven into the fabric of policy-making and execution. The project's outcomes resonate with its dedication to ensuring that North Macedonia is on an unwavering path towards a gender-equal society, in line with international standards and expectations.

The GEF Project in North Macedonia stands as a beacon of multifaceted dedication towards gender equality. Driven by a commitment to align with EU Gender Equality acquis and North Macedonia's democratic principles, the project embodies an unwavering emphasis on gender inclusivity. By advancing the transposition of international standards and fortifying national mechanisms, such as the Equal Opportunities Department and Gender Focal Points, the initiative harmoniously integrates with the EU directives and global mandates. The subsequent integration of gender perspectives into national strategies, legal reforms, and alignment with the National Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027 bears testament to this commitment. Noteworthy strides in gender-responsive guidelines across sectors, coupled with the empowering of the State Statistical Office for gender-centric data, epitomize the project's foresight for informed policymaking. With a holistic approach spanning capacity development, training support, and expertise mobilization, GEF's initiative not only embeds gender norms in all facets but also ardently champions an informed and aware North Macedonia that acts upon gender equality tenets. The outcomes of this integrated strategy, backed by international assessments and collaboration from key stakeholders, reflect a concrete journey towards a gender-equitable society in North Macedonia. (Based on F12 to F15.)

#### **Conclusion 5:**

The GEF Project's adaptability stands out as a primary strength, given the frequently changing political landscape and challenges such as limited capacity within public administration and a high turnover of staff. The project's ability to pivot, innovate, and bring about transformation in the field of gender equality and EU integrations in the face of adversity demonstrates resilience. Furthermore, by promoting dialogue across diverse stakeholders, the GEF project expanded the discourse on gender equality beyond traditional domains. It also successfully fostered new expertise by merging conventional capacity development with innovative strategies. Nevertheless, the challenges of limited capacities and frequent staff turnovers indicate the need for sustainable solutions, highlighting the importance of stronger cooperation and better coordination in future endeavours. (based on F16 and F17.)

#### **Conclusion 6:**

The GEF in North Macedonia serves as a beacon for dynamic gender equality implementation. The key to its success was its alignment with EU standards, as well as the adoption of innovative strategies and an inclusive, feminist approach. By anchoring its initiatives to international best practices and a deep understanding of North Macedonia's specific challenges, the GEF ensured the realization of global gender goals in local contexts. However, the project also faced significant challenges, primarily rooted in deep-seated societal norms and gender biases. The rise of conservative opposition and increasing EU skepticism further complicated the terrain. Nevertheless, GEF's nuanced, empathetic approach—backed by ongoing dialogue and deep contextual understanding—proved invaluable in navigating these challenges. While there were areas identified for improvement, particularly around information sharing and coordination, the GEF project, generally epitomizes a robust, adaptable, and collaborative strategy for realizing gender equality in challenging settings. (based on F18 and F19.)

### **EFFICIENCY**

#### **Conclusion 7.**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia stands out as a paradigm of strategic resource allocation and efficient management, intricately aligning with national gender equality and human rights objectives. Both the strategic foresight in resource deployment and the efficient managerial efforts underscore its effectiveness in fostering transformative impacts.

The core strength of the project emanated from a meticulously orchestrated management structure, with the GEF Project Team excelling in coordination, planning, and engagement with pivotal national entities, notably SEA. UN Women's decision to strategically place the Head of Office as the Project Manager and integrate specialized Gender Coordinators has significantly amplified the project's outcomes in line with EU accession and gender mainstreaming priorities.

Furthermore, the emphasis on results-oriented annual reports and monthly plans, coupled with transparent decision making (through the steering structures decisions), has ensured consistent alignment with national needs and stakeholder collaboration. This strategic alignment, bolstered by well-defined coordination mechanisms, culminated in a synchronized and cohesive implementation, enhancing project effectiveness.

The project's dedication to fostering impactful dialogue, alongside its adeptness in utilizing innovative technologies for knowledge dissemination, marks its commitment to transparency, stakeholder engagement, and mission accomplishment in the nation. (based on F20, F21, F22, f23 and F24).

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Conclusion 8**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia has created a dynamic environment promoting gender mainstreaming, marked by both groundbreaking practices and policy blueprints. However, obstacles such as policy implementation lags and shifting civil service roles pose threats to maintaining the pace of progress. The nation's dedication to aligning with global and EU norms acts as a steadfast pillar, anchoring the ongoing gender integration efforts. Through the project, institutional partners have witnessed transformative growth in both functional and technical spheres. Still, emerging challenges, such as anti-gender sentiments, highlight the importance of continuous oversight and strategic countermeasures (based on F25).

The GEF Project's emphasis on stakeholder capacity enhancement has established a formidable foundation for persistent gender-focused initiatives. By fortifying National Gender Mechanisms, weaving gender perspectives into strategic documents, and emphasizing data-centric methodologies, the Project has instilled a long-lasting culture of gender-sensitive policy creation. The enriched collaborative landscape, highlighted by varied partnerships, encapsulates the comprehensive vision the project advocates. Additionally, stakeholder engagement and ownership are vital pillars of the GEF approach, ensuring stakeholder-centric dynamism in gender activities. Yet, nurturing national gender equality leadership within the prevailing political milieu emerges as a focus area. This scenario underlines the continual necessity for robust support from stakeholders, stressing the significance of enduring financial and political commitment (based on F26 and F27).

Furthermore, the GEF Project's adaptability points towards a vast reservoir of opportunities for extending and mirroring its achievements across varied fields. Its pioneering strategies, spanning policy formation, anti-corruption, and even areas like sports, offer models with potential applications beyond national boundaries. This multifaceted strategy not only reaffirms the universal tenets of gender equality but also highlights the model's flexibility for different sectors. Successes in these arenas suggest possibilities for wider regional or global replication (based on F28).

## **IMPACT**

### **Conclusion 9:**

The GEF Project in North Macedonia has catalyzed systemic transformations to further gender equality and elevate the status of women and girls. By steering changes in laws, policies, and practices in line with the EU gender acquis, the GEF has positively impacted both the institutional framework and the broader societal discourse.

The GEF's strategic approach to gender mainstreaming in policy decisions and development is commendable. Through its efforts, it has been instrumental in defining gender-related issues and setting the policy agenda. The meticulous analysis of areas such as women in sports and its subsequent recommendations have demonstrated the Project's pivotal role in influencing policy and legislation. By integrating gender perspectives across multiple sectors, including public administration and anti-corruption, the GEF has ushered in a more gender-inclusive policy framework, championing the cause of gender equality.

Moreover, the GEF Project has championed women's empowerment across various dimensions. By advocating for greater representation of women, challenging societal norms, and reshaping legal frameworks, the Project has made significant strides in enhancing women's sense of self-worth, right to determine choices and access to opportunities. The intensive collaborations with national bodies and efforts to increase women's influence in shaping societal changes are a testament to GEF's commitment to a gender-balanced future. The GEF's emphasis on addressing power dynamics and working to "hear" marginalized women's voices underscores its holistic and comprehensive approach. The Project's



interventions have promoted the notion that gender considerations are central to policy design, while marginalized communities have a voice in shaping the national gender narrative. In the journey towards an equitable North Macedonian society through gender-sensitive policies and progress towards EU Acquis transposition, the GEF Project's foundational work has been critical. To solidify these gains and continue advancing the cause of gender equality, sustained effort and strategic expansion of current initiatives are required. (based on F29 and F30)

## 5.2 Lessons learned

The ET identified the following lessons learned:

- **Importance of National Alignment and Ownership:** The GEF Project is integrated and consistent with national priorities. These projects receive better support and face fewer bureaucratic and operational hurdles: GEF implementation confirmed this assumption, and the stakeholders perceive the project as addressing their needs and complementing their visions, actively participating and contributing to activities. This approach has contributed to GEF's longevity and success in enhancing its effects.

In addition, the GEF highlighted the value of international benchmarks and practices, offering a wealth of knowledge and insights. Its efforts to connect local stakeholders with international standards and tested models and experiences contributed to more refined and effective strategies.

- **The Delicate Nature of Sustainability:** Despite its relative success in delivering results and meeting all targets, the GEF's lasting effects and impact are not guaranteed. The durability of project outcomes is susceptible to various socio-political, economic, and environmental factors. Therefore, regular reviews, feedback mechanisms, and adaptive strategies that the GEF followed help to reinforce the sustainability of project results.
- **Comprehensive Policy Integration is Vital:** Policies that are designed in silos often fail to address systemic challenges. Therefore, the GEF went beyond just gender-based policies and supported gender considerations in every facet of public policy, ensuring holistic progress towards gender equality.

In addition, the GEF proved that relying on solid data can significantly enhance the effectiveness of policies and interventions that derive from these policies. Regular data collection, analysis, and interpretation provide a clearer picture of existing challenges, allowing for more targeted and impactful strategies.

- **Capacity Development is a Cornerstone:** For any initiative to be truly successful, there should be a self-sustaining mechanism in place. By investing in capacity-building, the GEF supported national stakeholders involved in the EU accession and transposition of EU Acquis in national legislation. These efforts equipped these institutions with skilled personnel and resources to carry the torch forward without over-relying on external interventions.
- **Challenges of Implementation over Legislation:** While legislation can set the stage for change, the actual transformation occurs at the grassroots through implementation. There's a need to go beyond mere policy formulation and invest heavily in mechanisms, resources, and awareness campaigns that ensure the on-ground execution of these policies.

In connection with this, the GEF showed that a holistic approach to policy planning is recommended (while fragmented efforts can lead to redundancies and missed opportunities). The Project facilitated regular communication, coordination, and collaboration among various stakeholders, streamlining their efforts, maximizing resource utilization, and magnifying their impact.

- **Importance of Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** Gender issues intersect with multiple sectors like health and education, social affairs and economy, and traditional gender mainstreaming efforts often focus on these sectors. The GEF demonstrated that venturing into unconventional domains, like sports or anti-corruption, can provide fresh perspectives and offer innovative platforms to advocate for gender equality. In addition, these efforts showed that by fostering collaboration across these sectors, interventions can address women's multifaceted challenges, leading to comprehensive solutions and systemic change.

## 6 Recommendations

The ET conducted a thorough analysis of findings and conclusions and prepared recommendations that are robust, actionable, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the national institutions involved in the EU accession, policy planning and implementation and gender mainstreaming based on a thorough analysis of the findings and conclusions.

To ensure the validity and relevance of the recommendations, the ET engaged in interactions with the stakeholders. These interactions provided an invaluable opportunity to gather first-hand feedback, insights, and perspectives from those directly influenced by the GEF Project. Through open and collaborative discussions, the ET sought to understand the various stakeholders' experiences, needs, and aspirations, ensuring to incorporate their voices and views into recommendations.

The validation process involved discussing the initial recommendations with the main stakeholders. Their input and feedback were carefully considered and taken into account to refine and finalize the recommendations. This iterative validation process helped ensure that the recommendations were grounded in the realities of the beneficiaries and aligned with their priorities and expectations.

<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b></p> <p>For: UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia</p> <p>Priority: <b>High</b></p>	<p><b>The ET recommends that UN Women prioritize continuity and adaptability in the GEF Project's subsequent phases, ensuring that technical assistance remains demand-driven, tailored, and inclusive. The ET recommends considering longer-term support that covers five to ten years.</b></p> <p>The ET recommends the following priority activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Demand-Driven Tailoring:</b> Ensure that future interventions continue to be informed by a bottom-up identification of gender-related challenges, tapping into feedback from partner institutions, and capitalizing on UN Women's global and regional experiences and best practices.</li> <li>▪ <b>Continued Alignment with National and International Standards:</b> To fortify the relevance of interventions, the GEF project should maintain its close alliance with national gender equality frameworks, EU norms and EU Gender Acquis, and the evolving landscape of gender equality policies, like the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027.</li> <li>▪ <b>Expand Inclusive Outreach:</b> In line with its rights-based approach, the GEF Project should further its focus on the comprehensive integration of women's rights, especially from marginalized groups, including women with disabilities. Collaborations aimed at data collection, like those with the SSO, should be deepened and further expanded.</li> <li>▪ <b>Explore the Opportunities to Establish a Rapid Experts Support Platform</b> to offer advisory services and capacity building tailored to sectoral and institutional needs on short notice. Part of these efforts should be investigating innovative mechanisms to involve academic institutions and actively engaging with existing Gender Resource Center specializing in gender and governance.</li> </ul> <p>(Conclusion 1)</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b></p> <p>For: UN Women Offices</p> <p>Priority: <b>High</b></p>	<p><b>The ET suggests that the GEF Project in North Macedonia emphasizes refining its operational framework to ensure coherence with both national objectives and international commitments while optimizing stakeholder engagement.</b></p> <p>The ET recommends the following priority activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Integrate Project Components:</b> Building on its meticulously planned architecture, the Project should consider a more profound integration of its diverse components, ensuring that the various aspects of the project feed into each other constructively.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Broaden Stakeholder Engagement:</b> In-depth consultations and collaboration with a broader spectrum of stakeholders, including additional UN agencies, can ensure better efficiency and prevent overlapping efforts.</li> <li>▪ <b>Strengthen UN Women's On-Ground Presence:</b> To guarantee the Project's sustained success, consider establishing a more permanent or robust presence of UN Women in North Macedonia. This could facilitate better long-term planning, monitoring, and stakeholder relationship management.</li> <li>▪ <b>Leverage UN Women's Comparative Advantage:</b> The subsequent phases of the GEF Project should further exploit UN Women's proficiency in collaborating with a diverse set of national and international organizations. By strategically engaging with the main institutions in the EU accession process, the GEF Project can solidify UN Women's role as a leader in gender equality initiatives in North Macedonia.</li> </ul> <p>(Conclusion 2, Conclusion 1)</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> For: UN Women Regional Office/ UN Women Offices)</p> <p>Priority: <b>High</b></p>	<p><b>The ET advises that the GEF Project in North Macedonia continues to embed gender norms comprehensively while refining strategies to address the emerging challenges of limited capacities and staff turnovers.</b></p> <p>This will ensure its objectives resonate effectively within the nation's EU accession process and broader gender equality aspirations.</p> <p>The ET recommends the following priority activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Ongoing Capacity Development:</b> Invest in a sustainable strategy that offers regular training, ensuring continuous knowledge transfer and embedding of gender perspectives, even in the face of high staff turnover.</li> <li>▪ <b>Community Engagement:</b> Initiate extensive community outreach programs targeting societal norms and biases. These can play a pivotal role in changing perceptions and countering the rise of anti-gender sentiments and EU scepticism.</li> <li>▪ <b>Strengthen Stakeholder Collaboration:</b> Foster frequent and structured dialogues with diverse stakeholders. This collaborative approach will help in broadening the gender equality discourse and countering challenges more effectively.</li> <li>▪ <b>Enhance Communication Strategy:</b> Roll out a robust communication strategy emphasizing the successes and methodologies of the GEF project. This could play a crucial role in swaying public opinion and tackling conservative opposition.</li> </ul> <p>(Conclusion 4, Conclusion 5 and Conclusion 6)</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> For: UN Women Regional Office/ UN Women Offices)</p> <p>Priority: <b>Medium</b></p>	<p><b>The ET recommends that the GEF Project in North Macedonia persistently pursues its strategic resource allocation and management practices, ensuring its interventions align perfectly with national gender equality goals and human rights objectives.</b></p> <p>The ET recommends the following priority activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Evolve Management Structure:</b> While maintaining the Project's core strengths, explore ways to further enhance the coordination, planning, and stakeholder engagement processes, ensuring even more efficient outcomes.</li> <li>▪ <b>Technology Partnerships:</b> Actively seek partnerships with technology-driven entities to innovate knowledge dissemination platforms, further enhancing transparency and stakeholder engagement.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Periodic Review Mechanisms:</b> Introduce regular review mechanisms that assess and realign strategies based on stakeholder feedback, ensuring consistent alignment with national needs.</li> </ul> <p>(Conclusion 7)</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> For: UN Women Program Presence Office in North Macedonia</p> <p>Priority: <b>Medium</b></p>	<p><b>The ET recommends the GEF Project in North Macedonia to proactively address the challenges that can potentially disrupt the sustainability of its results, even as it leverages its successes to influence broader sectors.</b></p> <p>The ET recommends the following priority activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Monitoring and Strategic Responses:</b> Implement vigilant monitoring systems, coupled with strategic response mechanisms, to counter challenges like policy enforcement delays and rising anti-gender sentiments.</li> <li>▪ <b>Expand Capacity Development:</b> Further focus on the strengthening of National Gender Mechanisms and other pivotal entities, ensuring a robust foundation for gender-responsive policymaking in the long term.</li> <li>▪ <b>Long-term Funding and Resource Commitment:</b> Advocate for increased domestic and international funding for gender equality initiatives. Use gender-responsive budgeting to ensure appropriate allocation of funds to gender-meanstrimming initiatives.</li> <li>▪ <b>Documentation and Replication:</b> Systematically document successful project methodologies, facilitating their easy replication across diverse sectors within and beyond North Macedonia.</li> </ul> <p>(Conclusion 7, Conclusion 8 and Conclusion 6)</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6:</b> For: UN Women Regional Office</p> <p>Priority: <b>High</b></p>	<p><b>The ET suggests that the GEF Project in North Macedonia amplifies its already significant efforts in reshaping the nation's gender equality landscape. This can be achieved by consolidating its strategic advances and addressing identified gaps.</b></p> <p>The ET recommends the following priority activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Enhanced Collaboration with Educational Institutions:</b> Establish partnerships with educational entities to integrate gender studies into curricula, influencing the mindset of the younger generation.</li> <li>▪ <b>Strengthen Partnerships:</b> Collaborate with regional and international organizations that focus on gender equality to leverage resources and share best practices.</li> <li>▪ <b>Scope Expansion:</b> Explore areas not yet addressed and consider branching into them, further enhancing the comprehensive impact on gender equality.</li> <li>▪ <b>Regular Review of Policies:</b> Set up mechanisms for frequent policy assessment, ensuring they remain effective and adaptive to evolving societal norms and challenges.</li> </ul> <p>(Conclusion 8, Conclusion 7 and Conclusion 6)</p>

## 7 Annexes:

### *Annex 1: Consulted stakeholders (in alphabet order)*

Institution/body/ agency	Contact person	Title
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Arlinda Bekjiri	MFA Gender Equality Coordinator
Swedish Embassy	Biljana Dzartova-Petrovska	Senior Program Manager for Human Rights, Rule of Law and Gender Equality
Ministry of Finance	Bojana Angjelkovska	CPCD
Secretariat for European Affairs	Drita Abdiu Halili	State Secretary
Secretariat for European Affairs	Elizabeta Buova	Head of SEA Training Center
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Fatmire Isaku	Deputy Minister
UN Women RNM Office	Gordana Stefkovska Veljanovska	Project Manager, GEF
State Statistical Office	Jasmina Gjorgievska	Coordinator of the Sector for dissemination and PR
UNDP	Kristina Plecic	Gender Specialist
Center for Research and Policy Making	Ljupka Trajanovska	Project Coordinator
State Statistical Office	Marina Mijovska	Gender equality coordinator in SSO
Ministry of Information Society and Administration	Miroslav Grozdanovski	Coordinator of SWG for Public Administration Reform
UN Women RNM Office	Natasa Dimitrovska	Output Coordinator, GEF
Ministry of Information Society and Administration	Natasha Knezhevik	IPA Unit of MISA
Ministry of Health	Nermina Fakovikj	GE coordinator in Ministry of Health
Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information	Petar Gajdov	State advisor for international collaboration
Resident Coordinator	Rossana Dudziak	Resident Coordinator
UN Women RNM Office	Simona Levi	Project Assistant, GEF
Secretariat for anticorruption and good governance	Slavica Grkovska	Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia in

		charge of good governance policies
Ministry of Labor and Social Policy	Svetlana Cvetkovska	Head of Department for Equal Opportunities
Secretariat for anticorruption and good governance	Tatjana Popovska	Special advisor for coordination of the Cabinet of the DPM of GoNM
Association of businesswomen in North Macedonia	Valentina Disoska,	President of Association of businesswomen in North Macedonia
Secretariat for European Affairs	Valentina Janevska	Cabinet of the State Secretary
UN Women RNM Office	Vesna Ivanovikj - Castarede	Head of the Office

## Annex 2: Project Evaluation Matrix

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
Relevant evaluation criteria: <b>RELEVANCE</b>				
SQ1.1. To what extent was the design of the intervention, including the formulation of its planned results, relevant to the gender equality priorities in the country? Is the Project relevant to the needs of key stakeholders and priorities and women in the Republic of North Macedonia?	JC1.1.1. The extent to which the GEF project addressed priorities of North Macedonia and needs of beneficiaries concerning GE/GM  JC1.1.2. The extent to which the beneficiaries and stakeholders were consulted about the Project's design and were involved in the design of intervention logic/ areas of involvement	- Evidence that the priorities of North Macedonia and needs of beneficiaries were reflected in the GEF Project during the design  - Evidence that the beneficiaries and stakeholders were consulted about the Project's design and its intervention logic/ areas of involvement	1. Desk/literature review of relevant documents (including problem analysis conducted by the UN Women and national stakeholders)  2. Key informants' interviews (semi-structured interviews)  ▪ Interviews with the UN Women Project Team ▪ Representatives of the GoNM- Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism ▪ Representatives of the SAE, ▪ Institutions and members of the SWGs ▪ Representatives from the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points)	In depth analysis of the national strategic and policy frameworks and development context with the reference to GEWE and GM in North Macedonia  Analysis of the EU Accession process/ EU Progress Reports for the country  Problem/risk analysis related to GEF areas of intervention  Triangulate data collected from various sources and means (e.g., cross check interview data with desk review to validate or refute TOC).
SQ1.2. To what extent is the intervention aligned with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment?	JC1.2.1. The extent to which the Project aligns with North Macedonia` international obligations and commitments in the field of gender equality and mainstreaming  JC1.2.2. The extent to which the Project supported the EU Gender Equality acquis priorities and requirements  JC1.2.3. The extent to which the intervention consistent with, and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals	- Examples and opinions that the Project addressed North Macedonia` international obligations and commitments in the field of gender equality and gender mainstreaming  - Evidence (opinions and examples) that the Project contributed to the EU Accession processes and milestones  - Evidence that the Project addresses SDGs and their targets- particularly # 5 and #16(SDG 5.1, SDG 5.2 SDG 5-3, SDG5-4, SDG 11.7, SDG 16.1 and SDG 16.2.)		
SQ1.3. To what extent have gender and human rights principles and strategies been integrated into the Project design and implementation?	JC1.3.1. The extent to which the Project design is based on gender-based, human rights, and systemic- socio-cultural and political analyses  JC1.3.2. The extent to which implementation strategies are HRBA and gender responsive	- Evidence (examples and opinions) that gender and human rights standards and principles related to non-discrimination and equality/ inclusion are contained in the design  - Examples and opinions that gender responsive principles and HRBA are integrated in implementation strategies.		
SQ1.4. To what extent participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) was maximized in the project's	JC1.4.1. The extent to which participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) was ensured in the project's planning, design, implementation and decision	- Evidence that the Project ensured participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) during the entire Project		

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
planning, design, implementation and decision? To what extent has the Project considered and reflected disability inclusion?	JC1.4.2. The extent to which disability inclusion has been considered and reflected in the Project design and during its implementation	cycle (planning, design, implementation and decision) - Evidence (examples and opinions) that disability inclusion has been considered during the design and implementation of the Project		
Relevant evaluation criteria: <b>COHERENCE</b>				
SQ 2.1. Are the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the GEF logically connected and consistent?	JC2.1.1. The extent to which the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the GEF Project are logically connected and consistent with each other	- Evidence and the analysis that the objectives, activities, and expected outcomes of the GEF are logically connected and consistent with each other	1. Desk/literature review of relevant documents (including third-party reports and national documents)	Analyse policy making processes, EU accession agenda and gender equality/ gender mainstreaming efforts in North Macedonia. Analysis of the reports and achievements of other development partners. Analysis of the national reporting practice.  Interviews with the key informants  Results of implemented researches  Triangulate data collected
SQ2.2. To what extent does the Project fit within UN Women's Strategic Plan and interrelated threefold mandate?	JC2.2. The extent to which the Project adheres to corporate strategic priorities of UN Women JC2.3. The extent to which the Project established synergies and inter-linkages with other interventions of UN Women	- Evidence (desk review examples and opinions) that the Project adheres to corporate strategic priorities of UN Women - Evidence and examples of synergies between the Project and other UN Women interventions	2. Map a theory of change to identify the logic, indicators problem analysis and assumptions behind the GEF Project 3. Key informants' interviews	
SQ2.3. To what extent is the intervention consistent with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, and reflect national/subnational priorities and commitments?	JC2.3.1. The extent to which the Project align with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, JC2.3.2. The extent to which the Project reflect national/subnational priorities and commitments	- Evidence- opinions and examples- that the GEF Project aligns with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, - Evidence that the Project reflect national/subnational priorities and commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews with the UN Women Project Team</li> <li>▪ Representatives of the GoNM- Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism</li> <li>▪ Representatives of the SAE,</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the SWGs</li> <li>▪ Representatives from the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points)</li> <li>▪ Representatives of UN Agencies and other development partners</li> </ul>	
SQ2.4. To what extent does the program complement and coordinate with other interventions and initiatives addressing gender equality and gender mainstreaming especially in the context of policy making and EU accession?	JC2.4.1. The extent to which the Project complemented and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives addressing gender equality and gender mainstreaming especially in the context of policy making and EU accession JC2.4.2. The extent to which the implementation of the project ensured synergies and coordination with Government's and key partners relevant efforts while avoiding duplications at a general/country level JC2.4.3. The extent to which the Project established synergies with the larger portfolios and the work of the UN Country Team in North Macedonia	- Examples of cooperation and coordination between the GEF Project and other initiatives that authorities and development partners implemented in this area - Examples of synergies that the GEF Project and other initiatives in the critical area ensured during the implementation - Evidence (including opinions) that the Project established linkages and synergies with other GA/GM activities and UN projects and initiatives and agencies		



Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
SQ2.5. What are UN Women's comparative advantages in North Macedonia to implement this project?	JC2.5.1. The extent to which partners and beneficiaries perceive UN Women as best placed to support gender equality and gender mainstreaming (especially in the policy making and the EU GE acquis)	- Opinions of beneficiaries and partners about UN Women as best placed to support gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the policy making processes. Examples and opinions that UN Women unique capacities.		
Relevant evaluation criteria: <b>EFFECTIVENESS</b>				
SQ3.1. To what extent has the GEF Project progressed towards its outputs? Has the GEF Project contributed to the progress under outcomes?	3.1.1. The extent to which transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis results in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia has been enhanced	<p>Evidence of enhanced transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis results in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicator 1: Evidence of progress in implementing commitments on gender equality reported in relevant international documents</li> <li>Indicator 2: Evidence of progress in implementing commitments on gender equality reported in relevant national documents</li> </ul>	<p>1.GEF Project relevant data extraction- detailed analysis of: 1) planned activities and outputs and 2) achievement of results).</p> <p>Desk review of international documents such as EU progress reports, CEDAW report, and Universal Periodical Reports (UPR); Review of Annual Gender Inequality Index, EU Gender Equality Index, and similar scores; Performance monitoring reports produced by SEA and MLSP</p> <p>2. Interviews with key informants - focus on validating or refuting lines of inquiry - collecting perceptions about legal documents, strategies, partnerships established and skills developed and actions implemented related to the GEF Project. Observations on the "why" and factors that influence or impede effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interviews with the UN Women Project Team</li> </ul>	<p>Analysis of the GEF Project results versus established targets</p> <p>Contribution analysis against the outcomes and outcome indicators</p> <p>Completion of a template of 'factors' with analysis of 'strength of influence (the factors affect the Project ability to achieve its outputs and progress towards outcomes)</p>
	3.1.2. The extent to which key Government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality comply with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment, and implement the EU Gender Equality acquis (Outcome-level)	<p>- Evidence (opinions and examples) that key Government personnel mandated for EU/ GE comply with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment, and implement the EU Gender Equality acquis</p> <p>The following indicators will be additionally considered</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicator 1: Increase in central policy and EU IPA planning and programming documents, reflecting gender and social responsiveness</li> </ul>		
	3.1.3. The extent to which SEA, IPA units, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession have the knowledge and skills to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes. (Output 1- level)	<p>- Evidence that SEA, IPA units, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession have increased the knowledge and skills to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes. (Output 1- level)</p> <p>The following indicators should be considered:</p>		

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
	<p>3.1.4. The extent to which National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) have the administrative capacities to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes, in line with EU Gender</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator 1: Existence of national reference document on gender equality and the status of women</li> <li>• Indicator 2: Existence of revised and updated “Gender Mainstreaming in IPA” training package</li> <li>• Indicator 3: Number of civil servants, sector specialists and Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Focal Points participating in GM in IPA training (Target: 40 participants)</li> <li>• Indicator 4: Number of GM experts supporting SEA</li> <li>• Indicator 5: Number of EU IPA planning and programming documents for which GM inputs are provided (Target: at least 4 documents)</li> <li>• Indicator 6: Number of gender mainstreaming guidance documents prepared (Target: 8)</li> <li>• Indicator 7: Number of GM inputs for selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession (Target: 12)</li> <li>• Indicator 8: Number of supported coordination, networking and exchange events/ meetings/ consultations between EO Coordinators and sector governance structures</li> <li>• Indicator 9: Existence of GM &amp; IPA elements in the standard curriculum for civil servants (Target: Elements are included)</li> <li>• Indicator 10: Number of trained gender mainstreaming trainers specialized on EU IPA priority issues (Target: 10 trainers)</li> <li>• Indicator 11: Existence of a roster with sector-specific GM experts (Target: roster in place)</li> </ul> <p>- Evidence (opinions, perceptions and examples) that National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) have the administrative capacities to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes, in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representatives of the SAE,</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the SWGs</li> <li>▪ Representatives from the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points)</li> </ul> <p>3. Other findings to cover gaps or validate preliminary findings</p>	

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
	Equality legislation and policy and international obligations (Output 2-related)	<p>line with EU Gender Equality legislation and policy and international obligations</p> <p>The following indicators should be considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator 1: Number of sector strategies, programmes, action plans, funds, etc. consistently reflecting gender sensitivity (Target: at least 6 (depending on policy cycle)</li> <li>• Indicator 2: Number of sector-specific GM Guidance presentation sessions (Target: at least 8)</li> <li>• Indicator 3: Availability of Gender Training Needs Assessment in NPAA processes (Target: 1 assessment)</li> <li>• Indicator 4: Number of participants in “Gender mainstreaming in NPAA process” training</li> <li>• Indicator 5: Number of coordination meetings</li> <li>• Indicator 6: Number of inputs for refinement of gender-sensitive indicators (EUROSTAT/ EURF-aligned, SDG localization)</li> <li>• Indicator 7: Number of awareness raising and PR products/ visuals/infographics on the benefits of gender equality in the context of government reform and EU accession priority areas produced</li> <li>• Indicator 8: Number of CSO and women’s NGO representatives benefiting from capacity development &amp; training sessions on gender mainstreaming in line with the EU GE acquis (Target: 1 training)</li> <li>• Indicator 9: Number of participants in networking/ exchange of best practice events, meetings, study visit on gender mainstreaming in the EU accession context</li> </ul>		
SQ 3.2. What factors, positive and/or negative, affected the achievement of Project results and objectives?	JC3.2. The extent to which factors facilitated or affected the implementation of the Project and the achievement of results	- Examples and types of factors perceived to have facilitated of affected Project implementation and achievement of results		

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
<p>SQ3.3. Has the Project achieved any unforeseen results, either positive or negative? For whom?</p>	<p>JC3.3.1. Existence of unexpected changes, both positive and negative, that beneficiaries and other key stakeholders perceive as a result of the program's activities</p> <p>JC3.3.2. Existence of factors contributing to the GEF Project success or underachievement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Examples of unexpected positive changes related to GEVE/ GM identified in the change pathway/theory of change and/or reported by stakeholders</li> <li>- Examples and analysis of factors contributing to the GEF Project success or underachievement</li> </ul>		
<p>SQ3.4. How effective have the selected strategies and approaches been in achieving Project results?</p>	<p>JC3.4.1. The extent to which the selected strategies contributed to achieving results/</p> <p>JC3.4.2. Degree to which Project strategies are complementary and mutually reinforcing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence (opinions and examples) that the selected strategies and approaches ensured delivery of results</li> <li>- Evidence of complementarity between Project's strategies</li> </ul>		
<p>Relevant evaluation criteria: <b>EFFICIENCY</b></p>				
<p>SQ4.1. Have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the Project outcomes?</p>	<p>JC 4.1.1. The extent to which the costs of the intervention aligned with the results</p> <p>JC4.1.2. The extent to which financial and human resources were appropriately and strategically distributed to achieve outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The analysis and comparison between results verified and costs (by objective)</li> <li>- The analysis (including percentage) of financial and human resources that the Project used to produce results</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Desk review of the GEF Project documents and project management practices</li> <li>2. Interviews with the UN Women Project Team</li> <li>3. Interviews with national and other development partners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representatives of the SAE,</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the SWGs</li> <li>▪ Representatives from the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points)</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>Analysis of the GEF Project management practices</p> <p>Meeting minutes with GEF Project/ UN Women Team and other stakeholders</p> <p>Desk review of the critical indicators</p> <p>Triangulation of the collected primary and secondary data</p>
<p>SQ4.2. Has there been effective leadership and management of the Project including the structuring of management and administration roles to maximize results?</p>	<p>JC4.2.1. The extent of existence and utilization of management systems that facilitated efficient implementation of the Project</p> <p>JC4.2.2. The extent to which leadership and management of the Project were effective to maximize results</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence that sound management system (including risk management) was in place and facilitated efficient implementation of the GEF Project.</li> <li>- Evidence that the Project's management structure facilitated (or hindered) efficient delivery of results and</li> </ul>		
<p>SQ4.3. Have the Project timely delivered results?</p>	<p>JC4.3.1. The degree of timely implementation of the GEF Project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidences of timely implementation of activities (without delays) and delivery of outputs</li> </ul>		
<p>SQ4.4. Is there a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities by all parties involved?</p>	<p>JC4.4.1. The extent to which project stakeholders were involved in Project's implementation, including clear roles and responsibilities</p> <p>JC4.4.2. The extent of interest and active participation of the representatives that joined the project at a later stage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence (opinions and examples) of the stakeholders' involvement in the Project's implementation including the clarity of roles during the implementation</li> <li>- Declared interest and examples of active participation of the representatives that joined the project at a later stage</li> </ul>		

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
SQ4.5. To what extent are the project monitoring mechanisms in place effective for measuring and informing management of project performance and progress towards targets?	JC4.5.1. The extent to which the monitoring mechanisms is in place effective for measuring and informing management of project performance and progress towards targets  JC4.5.2. The extent to which the Project M&E systems provided management with a stream of data that allowed it to learn and adjust implementation accordingly	- Evidence that the monitoring mechanisms are in place and effective for measuring and informing management of project performance and progress towards targets  - Existence of results-oriented and quality monitoring and reporting systems and analysis of reports	4. Analysis of the UN Women management practices	
Relevant evaluation criteria: <b>SUSTAINABILITY</b>				
SQ5.1. What is the likelihood that the benefits from the Project will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the Project phase out?	JV5.1. Existence of national mechanisms or structures to maintain the results achieved (and the extent that financial and human resource capacities are ensured)	- Type of national/local mechanisms/ structures to maintain the results achieved and evidence that financial resources are assigned to national/sub-national mechanisms	1. Desk review of the GEF Project documents and project deliverables  2. Interviews with the UN Women Project Team  3. Interviews with stakeholders and partners	Analysis of the GEF Project reports and deliverables and also other reports of development partners  Analysis of meeting minutes and results of various researches/ surveys
SQ5.2. What steps were taken to develop and/or reinforce the operating capacities of national partners during the Project's implementation?	JC5.2.2. The extent to which stakeholders' capacities have been developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits  JC5.2.3. The extent to which the Project contributed to improved communication, coordination and information exchange among the partners	- Evidence that stakeholders' capacities have been developed to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits  - Evidence (opinions and examples) that the GEF Project fostered communication, coordination and information exchange among the partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Representatives of the SAE,</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism</li> <li>▪ Institutions and members of the SWGs</li> <li>▪ Representatives from the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points)</li> <li>▪ UN Agencies and other development organizations, etc)</li> </ul>	Context analysis including relevant indicators for North Macedonia  Triangulation of primary and secondary data
SQ5.3. How effectively has the project generated national capacities, ownership and partnerships to ensure sustainability of results?	JC5.3.1. Existence of the country ownership of the results and partnerships with relevant stakeholders  JC5.3.3. The extent to which the Project contributed to partnerships and national capacities for GE/ GM	- Evidence that legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes are in place for sustaining project benefits  - Evidence (opinions and examples) that the Project fostered effective partnerships and development of national capacities for GE/GM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ UN Agencies and other development organizations, etc)</li> </ul>	
SQ5.4. To what extent will the GEF Project be replicable or scaled up? Are there some innovative and best practices generated?	JC5.4.1. Opportunities for continuation and expansion of the results and activities in the area of the GEF Project  JV5.4.2. The extent to which the GEF generated innovative and good practices	- Evidences about the opportunities for continuation and expansion of the results and activities in the GEF Project areas  - Evidence of innovative approaches and best practices that GEF Project generated	4. Third-party analysis and analytical documents	

Relevant sub-question	Judgement criteria	Indicators	Data Sources and collection tools	Data analysis
Relevant evaluation criteria: <b>IMPACT</b>				
SQ6.1. To what extent is the Project contributing to systemic changes in the country?	JC6.1. The extent to which the Project is contributing to systemic changes (transformations in institutions, policies, and practices) that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls	- Evidence including opinions, examples and other data that the GEF Project influenced institutions, policies and laws and practices concerning gender equality and gender mainstreaming	1. Desk/literature review of relevant documents (including third-party reports and national documents)	Interviews with the key stakeholders: Representatives of the SAE,
SQ6.2. Is there evidence of progress towards Project's potential impact on empowerment of women and girls?	JC6.2.1. The extent to which the Project contributed to empowered women and girls in all dimensions	- Evidence/ examples and opinions that the Project contributed to empowerment of the women and girls across all its areas and dimensions	2. Key informants' interviews Representatives of the SAE, Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism Institutions and members of the SWGs Representatives from the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) UN Agencies and other development organizations, etc) 3. Other sources and consultations as appropriate	Institutions and members of the IPA mechanism Institutions and members of the SWGs UN Agencies and other development organizations, etc) Analysis of the results of various available researches and surveys. Review of national statistics and other available data Triangulation of the collected primary and secondary data

### Annex 3: Analysis of the GEF's intervention logic and indicators

ANALYSIS OF OVERALL OBJECTIVE	
Comments on overall objective	Comments on Indicators (including benchmarks)
<p><b>Overall objective: <i>Enhanced transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis results in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia</i></b></p> <p>The GEF Project's overall objective seeks to create lasting transformations in North Macedonia's gender equality landscape by enhancing the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis, leading to positive socio-economic development outcomes for women, men, girls, and boys.</p> <p>The ET finds that a tangible connection can be identified between the GEF achievements and the advancement of gender equality in alignment with EU principles in North Macedonia. The primary contributions are observed in the establishment of legislative alignments, development of gender-responsive policies and strategies, and creation of mechanisms for effective coordination between various government and non-government entities.</p> <p>These efforts underline the Project's commitment to reinforcing North Macedonia's alignment with EU Gender Equality standards, fostering a societal environment where both genders can equally participate and benefit from socio-economic development. The focus on enhancing legal frameworks and fostering collaboration reflects a strategic approach, positioning North Macedonia closer to its aspirations of integration with the European Union while emphasizing the critical importance of gender equality in that process.</p>	<p>Together, these indicators provide a framework to assess North Macedonia's commitment to gender equality, both internationally and nationally. By aligning with international commitments and translating them into national actions, these indicators encapsulate the essence of the overall objective, highlighting the concerted efforts to enhance the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis and drive positive socio-economic outcomes for all genders within the country.</p> <p><b>Indicator 1: <u>Evidence of progress in implementing commitments on gender equality reported in relevant international documents</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator serves as a critical yardstick for North Macedonia's alignment with international standards on gender equality. By evaluating progress using international documents, it reflects the country's commitment to achieving gender equality in line with global expectations and treaties. The alignment with international commitments symbolizes the integration of gender equality within the broader socio-economic development, essential for meeting the overall objective.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> Monitoring the evidence of progress in implementing commitments can provide a clear and objective evaluation of how North Macedonia is integrating global gender equality principles. It reflects a comprehensive approach to gender inclusivity, embodying the spirit of the overall objective by showcasing the nation's participation in a global movement towards gender parity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 2: <u>Evidence of progress in implementing commitments on gender equality reported in relevant national documents</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator is paramount to understanding North Macedonia's national dedication to gender equality. It focuses on how international commitments are translated into domestic policies, strategies, and actions, showcasing how the nation is advancing gender equality at the local level. The utilization of national documents to assess progress emphasizes the alignment with national values and priorities, directly contributing to the socio-economic well-being of women, men, girls, and boys.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> By focusing on evidence from national documents, this indicator provides a localized and culturally relevant perspective on gender equality implementation. It offers insights into how international principles are adapted and integrated into national agendas, reflecting a tangible commitment to gender equality that resonates with the country's unique context.</li> </ul>

ANALYSIS OF OUTCOME	
Comments on overall objective	Comments on Indicators (including benchmarks)
<p><b>Outcome 1: Key Government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality increasingly comply with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment, and implement the EU Gender Equality acquis</b></p> <p>Outcome 1 of the GEF Project in North Macedonia focuses on increasing compliance of key Government personnel with global norms and standards of gender equality, particularly implementing the EU Gender Equality acquis. The ET observes a direct link between this outcome and the overall objective of enhancing the transposition of EU Gender Equality principles in the country.</p> <p>Through initiatives such as legislative alignments, gender-responsive policy reforms, and fostering coordination among various entities, Outcome 1 serves as a catalyst for the broader societal transformations envisaged by the Project. By ensuring that government officials and structures are aligned with EU Gender Equality standards, the Project lays the groundwork for positive socio-economic development outcomes for all genders.</p> <p>Outcome 1's emphasis on compliance with European norms also underscores North Macedonia's commitment to EU integration, which is central to the Project's overall goal. By aligning governmental practices with the EU Gender Equality acquis, Outcome 1 not only advances gender equality within governmental structures but also positions North Macedonia closer to its aspirations of alignment with the European Union.</p>	<p>This element of the results chain is integral to the GEF Project's broader vision of enhancing gender equality in North Macedonia, aligning the country with EU standards, and fostering a society where gender equality is central to socio-economic development. It represents a strategic step towards the realization of the overall objective, reflecting North Macedonia's dedication to both gender equality and European integration.</p> <p><b>Indicator 1:</b> Increase in central policy and EU IPA planning and programming documents, reflecting gender and social responsiveness</p> <p><b>Relevance:</b> This indicator aligns directly with Outcome 1 by emphasizing the integration of gender and social responsiveness in central policy documents and EU IPA planning. It represents a concrete commitment to meeting EU and global standards of gender equality, focusing on ensuring that key Government personnel integrate gender equality considerations into policy development and planning.</p> <p><b>Measure:</b> The indicator aims to evaluate the alignment with Outcome 1 by monitoring the increase in gender-responsive policy and planning documents. However, the absence of a benchmark, baseline, and target presents a problem in evaluating progress. Additionally, the indicator lacks specificity, measurability, and a time-bound framework, which further hampers the ability to assess the implementation of Outcome 1 effectively. Such limitations underscore the need for a more refined and detailed approach to gauge the success in achieving the alignment with global norms and standards of gender equality and the implementation of the EU Gender Equality acquis within North Macedonia's government structures. Without these elements, it becomes challenging to quantify and time-align the progress made in meeting the desired outcome.</p>
ANALYSIS OF OUTPUTS	
Comments on Output 1	Comments on Indicators and benchmarks
<p><b>Output 1: SEA, IPA units, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession have the knowledge and skills to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes</b></p> <p>Output 1 of the GEF Project is centred around a multifaceted approach to building the capacity of critical governmental units in North Macedonia, specifically those dealing with SEA, IPA structures, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies involved in EU accession. The activities encompass the preparation of a Country Gender Profile,</p>	<p>Output 1's indicators could measure North Macedonia's commitment to cultivating gender-responsive processes within the context of EU accession. The emphasis on creating and revising essential documents, training packages, and specialized rosters highlights the intention to construct a robust infrastructure for gender mainstreaming. Meanwhile, the specific targets for training civil servants, sector specialists, and Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Focal Points underscore an awareness that success requires widespread dissemination of knowledge and expertise.</p> <p>These indicators outline a multifaceted strategy for integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of EU accession planning and programming in North Macedonia. They signal a move</p>



adapting training methodology, delivering gender mainstreaming training, provision of support, and direct guidance on gender mainstreaming within priority reform areas and relevant EU Chapters.

These activities are intricately woven to enhance the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary for these bodies to adopt a gender-responsive approach to EU accession processes. This includes initiatives such as establishing a roster of gender mainstreaming experts, Training of Trainers, and facilitating integration of gender-related modules into standard curricula for civil servants.

The strategy educates and equips these entities and integrates gender mainstreaming within systemic processes, policies, and operations. It aligns these functions with international gender norms and the EU Gender Equality acquis. The aim is not just compliance with standards but a foundational shift towards a culture that promotes gender equality.

Furthermore, collaboration, networking, and exchange events are emphasized, fostering an environment of understanding and collaboration across different spheres of governance. Providing technical input and feedback on EU IPA planning and programming documents underlines these efforts.

The synthesis of these efforts is aligned with and instrumental in achieving Outcome 1, focusing on ensuring that key government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality increasingly comply with global norms and standards of gender equality, and implement the EU Gender Equality acquis. By fostering this integrative approach, the project positions North Macedonia closer to its aspirations of integration with the European Union, with gender equality as a core value. These activities thus directly contribute to the overall objective of the GEF Project, by emphasizing and nurturing a path for North Macedonia's European integration that is not only harmonious with but also reinforces the nation's commitment to gender equality and the inclusive socio-economic development of all its citizens.

towards greater inclusivity, alignment with EU Gender Equality legislation, and adherence to international obligations. By setting distinct and measurable targets, these indicators enable a tangible assessment of progress, contributing to transparency, accountability, and continuous enhancement in this vital aspect of the country's European integration process.

**Indicator 1: Existence of a national reference document on gender equality and the status of women**

- **Relevance:** This indicator reflects a foundational aspect of institutionalizing gender equality, ensuring a standardized reference for policy and implementation. It is vital to have a common framework that defines the principles and guidelines following international norms and the EU Gender Equality acquis.

- **Measure:** Creating a national reference document serves as a concrete step towards unifying gender equality efforts, setting a baseline for both assessment and alignment with EU standards.

**Indicator 2: Existence of revised and updated "Gender Mainstreaming in IPA" training package**

- **Relevance:** A revised training package ensures that critical stakeholders are equipped with up-to-date and relevant tools and knowledge for integrating gender mainstreaming into EU IPA processes, thereby reinforcing the quality and consistency of implementation.

- **Measure:** The adaptation and update of the training package indicate the commitment to continuous improvement and alignment with evolving standards and requirements.

**Indicator 3: Number of civil servants, sector specialists, and Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Focal Points participating in GM in IPA training**

- **Relevance:** This quantitative measure illustrates the extent of capacity building and outreach, reflecting the scale of engagement and development of human resources in the gender mainstreaming process.

- **Measure:** By targeting a specific number of participants, the indicator sets a clear, measurable benchmark for success, closely linked to the effectiveness of training efforts.

**Indicator 4: Number of GM experts supporting SEA**

- **Relevance:** The engagement of gender mainstreaming experts signals a focused and professional approach, enhancing the SEA's ability to address gender equality within its scope of responsibilities.

- **Measure:** A specific target number would further refine this indicator's measurability, enabling a more accurate assessment of capacity building and support within SEA.

**Indicator 5: Number of EU IPA planning and programming documents for which GM inputs are provided**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator emphasizes the integration of gender mainstreaming within planning and programming documents, a vital aspect of ensuring that gender considerations are embedded in core EU IPA processes.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> The target of at least four documents sets a quantifiable goal, demonstrating a commitment to tangible and specific progress.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 6: Number of gender mainstreaming guidance documents prepared</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> Creating guidance documents is a practical measure to facilitate the understanding and implementation of gender mainstreaming principles, offering clear instructions and standards.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> By setting a target of eight guidance documents, this indicator provides a tangible benchmark, reflecting an organized and systematic approach to promoting gender equality.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 7: Number of GM inputs for selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator represents the active engagement and influence of gender mainstreaming expertise in the critical decision-making process, reinforcing the integration of gender perspectives in EU accession matters.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> Targeting 12 gender mainstreaming inputs sets a clear standard for quantity and engagement, reflecting a significant commitment to gender integration within decision-making processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 8: Number of supported coordination, networking, and exchange events/meetings/consultations between EO Coordinators and sector governance structures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> Coordination and collaboration between different entities are vital for a coherent and synergized approach to gender mainstreaming, ensuring alignment and consistency across sectors.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> A target of one event underscores the importance of interconnectedness and collaborative action, setting a measurable goal for fostering dialogue and partnership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 9: Existence of GM &amp; IPA elements in the standard curriculum for civil servants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> Including gender mainstreaming and IPA elements in the standard curriculum institutionalizes gender considerations within the ongoing professional development of civil servants, ensuring long-term integration.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> The transformation from a current absence to inclusion in the standard curriculum provides a clear benchmark for success, signifying a systemic change.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 10: Number of trained gender mainstreaming trainers specialized in EU IPA priority issues</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> Training specialized trainers creates a cascade effect, expanding the reach and impact of gender mainstreaming knowledge and skills across various sectors and levels.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> By setting a target of 10 trainers, this indicator offers a measurable goal reflecting the importance of specialized training and expertise.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 11: Existence of a roster with sector-specific GM experts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> A roster of sector-specific experts establishes a pool of qualified resources, supporting tailored and efficient gender mainstreaming efforts across various fields.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> Establishing such a roster from a baseline of non-existence marks a clear and specific achievement, enhancing the readiness and capability to address gender mainstreaming needs in different sectors.</li> </ul>
Result 2	Indicators and benchmarks
Comments on Result 2	Comments on Indicators and benchmarks
<p><b>Output 2: National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) have the administrative capacities to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes, in line with EU Gender Equality legislation and policy and international obligations</b></p> <p>Output 2 of the GEF Project in North Macedonia focuses on fortifying the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, such as the Equal Opportunities Department and Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points, to effectively conduct gender mainstreaming in the context of the NPAA (National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis) planning and implementation. These processes align with both EU Gender Equality legislation and international obligations, acting as a catalyst to institutionalize gender equality at various administrative levels.</p> <p>The planned activities under Output 2 offer a diverse and strategic roadmap towards achieving this goal. Activities such as providing gender mainstreaming expertise, dissemination of UN and EU sector-specific gender-mainstreaming guidance, and targeted training have been designed to cultivate awareness, understanding, and expertise in line with EU Gender Equality standards. Further activities focus on nurturing collaboration, coordination, and communication between different structures, such as the State Statistical</p>	<p>Output 2's indicators elucidate North Macedonia's determination to strengthen the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms such as the Equal Opportunities Department and Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points. The attention to embedding gender sensitivity into sector strategies, conducting gender training needs assessments, and producing awareness-raising products emphasizes a holistic approach beyond policy formulation to include capacity building, coordination, and public awareness.</p> <p>Furthermore, the emphasis on networking and the exchange of best practices, the technical support to the State Statistical office and the overall system, and the tailored training sessions demonstrate an inclusive strategy that recognizes the diverse needs and areas of engagement required for effective gender mainstreaming.</p> <p>These indicators outline a comprehensive strategy for equipping key national mechanisms with the tools and knowledge needed to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes. They signify North Macedonia's commitment to aligning with EU Gender Equality legislation and fulfilling international obligations. By setting specific and measurable targets, these indicators offer a coherent and well-defined path to ensure that gender equality is at the heart of North Macedonia's European integration efforts, reinforcing accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement in this critical aspect of societal advancement.</p> <p><b>Indicator 1: Number of sector strategies, programmes, action plans, etc. consistently reflecting gender sensitivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator emphasizes the integration of gender sensitivity into key planning documents, aligning</li> </ul>

<p>System, Equal Opportunity Coordinators, IPA Units/Coordinators, and others, strengthening the synergy and coherence in implementing the EU GE acquis.</p> <p>Additionally, activities like communicating the nexus of gender equality, development, and EU accession to the general public and capacity development sessions for CSOs and women's NGO representatives extend the reach of the gender mainstreaming strategy beyond the government structures, engaging wider society and stakeholders in the dialogue and practice of gender equality.</p> <p>Output 2 and its strategic interventions correspond to Outcome 1 by reinforcing the ability of critical governmental structures to integrate and operationalize gender equality within the broader framework of European integration. The multifaceted approach ensured that gender equality is not merely an add-on but is woven into the fabric of the planning, policy formulation, and implementation at various levels.</p> <p>The culmination of these efforts in Output 2 thus aligns with the GEF's overall objective, manifesting North Macedonia's commitment to gender equality as a central tenet of its socio-economic development, reinforcing the country's alignment with EU Gender Equality legislation and fortifying its standing in the international community as a nation that recognizes and promotes gender equality as a vital component of its growth and EU integration.</p>	<p>with international standards and promoting gender equality across different sectors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> With a baseline of zero and a target of at least six, this indicator sets a clear and ambitious goal to mainstream gender within various strategic planning processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 2: Number of sector-specific GM Guidance presentation sessions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> By focusing on guidance presentation sessions, this indicator recognizes the importance of educating and informing stakeholders on gender mainstreaming practices.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> The target of at least eight sessions indicates a commitment to disseminate gender-mainstreaming guidance to various sectors, providing a measurable way to track progress.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 3: Availability of Gender Training Needs Assessment in NPAA processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator acknowledges the importance of understanding specific training needs to enhance gender mainstreaming capabilities effectively.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> The transformation from no assessment available to one assessment signifies a conscious effort to evaluate and respond to training needs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 4: Number of participants in “Gender mainstreaming in NPAA process” training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator underlines the necessity of training in gender mainstreaming, directly aligning with efforts to increase administrative capacities.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> A target of one training session represents a critical step towards building competence in gender mainstreaming within the NPAA processes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 5: Number of coordination meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> Coordination meetings demonstrate the intention to foster collaboration and consistent communication among key stakeholders.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> With a target of five meetings, this indicator sets a concrete path for regular collaboration and engagement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 6: Number of inputs for refinement of gender-sensitive indicators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator focuses on the refinement of gender-sensitive indicators, enhancing the quality and accuracy of gender-responsive monitoring.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> A target of one input emphasizes the ongoing commitment to refining gender-sensitive metrics.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 7: Number of awareness raising and PR products on the benefits of gender equality</b></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator recognizes the importance of public awareness in fostering a culture of gender equality.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> With a target of 10 products, it represents a comprehensive approach to public engagement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 8: Number of CSO and women’s NGO representatives benefiting from capacity development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> Capacity building for CSOs and NGOs reflects an inclusive approach to strengthening gender mainstreaming.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> The target of one training session signifies investment in civil society as vital partners in gender equality efforts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Indicator 9: Number of participants in networking/exchange of best practice events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Relevance:</b> This indicator promotes networking and knowledge sharing, facilitating continuous learning and collaboration.</li> <li>• <b>Measure:</b> With a target of five participants, it encourages an engaged community of practice around gender mainstreaming.</li> </ul>
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## **Annex 4: List of consulted documents**

### **1. Project document:**

Final Annual Plan of Activities (2021, 2022, 2023)

UN Women-GEF North Macedonia (REVISED, October 2020)

### **2. Project reports:**

#### **2020**

Activity Report for the Inception Phase GEF (13 March 2021)

#### **2021**

Donor Report GEF for 2021 (February 2022)

Annex A Results Matrix

Annual Work Plan (2022)

GEF Communication and Outreach Strategy and Plan

GEF Factsheet

#### **2022**

Donor Report GEF for 2022 (February 2023)

Annex 1 Results Matrix

Annex 2 Predlog Zakon za administrativni sluzbenici

Annex 3 Predlog Zakon za vrabotenite vo javniot sektor

Annex 4 TNA on GM in IPA Processes Report

Annex 5 Action Fiche - EU for economic cohesion (final)

Annex 6 Action Fiche - EU for enhanced security and fight against organized crime, terrorism and radicalisation (final)

Annex 7 Action Fiche - EU for Fundamental Rights

Annex 8 Action Fiche - EU for health (final)

Annex 9 Action Fiche - EU for reforms and resilience (Green Agenda and Connectivity)

Annex 10 Action Fiche - EU integration facility (final)

Training Needs Assessment on gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning and revision processes (Report)

### **3. Country Gender Equality Profile**

2. SUMMARY OF CGEP 2023.docx

Agenda 18.04.2023 Validation session with CSOs

Agenda 19.04.2023 Validation session with gov institutions

Agenda 20.04.2023 Validation session with donor community

Integrative comments and feedback from validation sessions (mk)

Presentation CGEP

#### **4. Gender mainstreaming in IPA Programming**

First cycle (2022)

Training Needs Assessment on Gender Mainstreaming in IPA Processes (report)

Basic Training Programme- training curricula

Advanced Training Programme- training curricula

Second cycle (2023)

Basic Training Programme- training curricula

Advanced Training Programme- training curricula

#### **5. Guidance notes**

1-Agriculture Rural Development- Guidance Document

2-Environment Climate Change - Guidance Document

3-Health - Guidance Document

4-Innovation Competition - Guidance Document

5-Justice - Guidance Document

6-Public Administration Guidance Document

7-Security - Guidance Document

8-Transport - Guidance Document

#### **6. Knowledge products**

Women and Men in North Macedonia: a statistical portrait of trends in gender equality

Gender equality in sport in North Macedonia

Women and Men in North Macedonia

Country Gender Equality Profile

#### **7. Reports from events and study tours**

Reports and documents from the study tours (Sweden and Switzerland)

Reports and documents from various events that the Project organized

## Annex 5: Interview guides

(Note: the original interview protocols are formatted with heading levels for match the Evaluation Matrix and coding system in MAXQDA.

### Interview guide for the UN Women Project Team

Date of Interview:

Consultants' names:

Name of interviewee(s):

Gender (male/female/other):

Position:

Please describe your role in the Project:

- 1.
- 2.

#### Relevance

*JC 1.1.1. To what extent were the needs and priorities of beneficiaries identified during the design?*

*JC 1.1.2. To what extent have the beneficiaries and stakeholders been consulted about the Project's design and its intervention logic/ areas of involvement?*

*JC1.2.1. To what extent to which the Project aligns with North Macedonia` international obligations and commitments in the field of gender equality and mainstreaming?*

*JC1.2.2. To what extent the Project supported the EU Gender Equality acquis priorities and requirements*

*JC 1.2.3. To what extent is the Project consistent with, and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals?*

*JC1.3.1. To what extent the Project design and implementation is based on gender-based, human rights, and systemic- socio-cultural and political analyses*

*JC1.4.1. To what extent participation and inclusiveness was ensured in the project's planning, design, implementation and decision*

*JC1.4.2. To what extent has disability inclusion has been considered and reflected in the Project design and during its implementation?*

#### Coherence:

*JC2.3. To what extent has the GEF Project established synergies and linkages with other interventions of UNW?*



JC2.3.1. To what does the Project align with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment?

JC2.4.1. To what extent the Project complemented and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives addressing gender equality and gender mainstreaming especially in the context of policy making and EU accession?

JC2.4.2. To what extent the implementation of the project ensured synergies and coordination with Government's and key partners relevant efforts while avoiding duplications at a general/country level?

JC2.5.2. What are UN Women unique capacities in North Macedonia?

### **Effectiveness:**

3.1.1. To what extent has the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis resulted in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia?

3.1.2. To what extent the GEF Project contributed to the capacities of the key Government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality to comply with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment, and implement the EU Gender Equality acquis (Outcome-level)

3.1.3. To what extent the GEF Programme contributed to enhanced knowledge and capacities of the SEA, IPA units, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes. (Output 1-level)?

3.1.4. To what extent has the GEF Project contributed to enhanced capacities of the National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department, Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA planning processes, in line with EU Gender Equality legislation and policy and international obligations (Output 2-related)

JC3.2.1. To what extent different factors facilitated or affected the implementation of the Project and the achievement of results?

JC3.2.2. Has the GEF Project generated good practices? To what extent have there been obstacles or shortcomings that affected the Project?

JC3.3.1. To what extent the GEF Project created unexpected changes, both positive and negative, that beneficiaries and other key stakeholders perceive as a result of the its activities?

### **Efficiency**

JC 4.1.1. To what extent the resources have been allocated to achieve the GEF project results?

JC4.2.1. To what extent of existence and utilization of management systems facilitated efficient implementation of the Project?

JC4.3.1. To what degree has the GEF Project timely, in a logical sequence, and availability of inputs?

JC4.4.1. To what extent the project stakeholders were involved in Project's implementation? Did they have clear roles and responsibilities?

JC4.4.2. To what extent there has been interest and active participation of the representatives that joined the project at a later stage?

JC4.5.1. To what extent constraints (e.g., political, practical, bureaucratic) affected implementation? How the Project responded to these changes?

## **Sustainability**

JV5.1. To what extent there are national mechanisms or structures to maintain the results achieved (and the extent that financial and human resource capacities are ensured)?

JC5.2.2. To what extent has the project strengthened stakeholders' capacities to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits

JC5.2.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to improved communication, coordination and information exchange among the partners

JC5.3.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to partnerships and national ownership of results and processes?

JC5.4.1. To what extent opportunities for continuation and expansion of the results and activities exist?

JV5.4.2. To extent has the GEF generated innovative and good practices? Can you provide examples?

## **Impact**

JC6.1. To what extent is the Project is contributing to systemic changes (transformations in institutions, policies, and practices that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls) concerning gender equality and gender mainstreaming in North Macedonia

JC6.2.1. To what extent has the Project contributed to reducing inequalities and empowerment of women and girls?

## Interview guide- SEA

Date of Interview:

Consultants' names:

Name of interviewee(s):

Gender (male/female/other):

Position:

UN Women has contracted the independent Evaluation Consultant to conduct the final evaluation of the "Gender mainstreaming advisory services to the North Macedonian administration at central level / Gender Equality Facility - GEF" (GEF project). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of results and performance of the Project according to recognized evaluation criteria. The evaluation is taking place in the last months of implementation of the Project.

It is in this context that the evaluation team is seeking the inputs of key stakeholders, in order to gain a better understanding of the Project's implementation and results.

Please be assured that your responses to the questions will be treated confidentially and will not be reported in such a way that the respondent can be identified. It is of primary importance to the evaluation that your responses be frank and direct.

We thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Please describe your role in the Project:

1.

### Relevance

*JC 1.1.2. To what extent have you been consulted about the Project's support?*

*JC 1.1.3. To what extent have your comments have been incorporated into the Project design?*

*JC 1.1.1. To what extent the Project addressed the needs and priorities of the SEA?*

*JC1.2.1. To what extent to which the Project aligns with North Macedonia` international obligations and commitments in the field of gender equality and mainstreaming?*

*JC1.2.2. To what extent the Project supported the EU Gender Equality acquis priorities and requirements*

*JC 1.2.3. To what extent is the Project consistent with, and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals?*

### Coherence

*JC2.3.1. To what does the Project align with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment?*

*JC2.4.1. From the SEA perspective, to what extent the Project complemented and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives addressing gender equality and gender mainstreaming especially in the context of policy making and EU accession ?*

JC2.5.2. From your perspective, can you identify UN Women unique capacities in North Macedonia?

### **Effectiveness:**

3.1.1. To what extent has the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis progressed in North Macedonia? What are in your view benefits – to what extent it resulted in positive socio-economic development for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia?

3.1.3. To what extent the GEF Programme contributed to enhanced knowledge and capacities of the SEA to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes?

- Are there evidence about capacity development of IPA units, SWGs, and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession?
- To what extent the “Gender Mainstreaming in IPA” training package contributed to improved capacities of SEA, civil servants, sector specialists and Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Focal Points participating in GM in IPA training?
- To what extent have you improved EU IPA Planning and Programming concerning GM inputs? Can you provide some examples?
- To what extent the Project supported coordination, networking and exchange events/ meetings/ consultations between EO Coordinators and sector governance structures?
- Has the Project helped with gender mainstreaming guidance documents?
- What is in your view the most important results achieved through the partnership with the GEF Project?

JC3.2.1. To what extent different factors facilitated or affected the implementation of the Project and the achievement of results?

JC3.2.2. Has the GEF Project generated good practices? To what extent have there been obstacles or shortcomings that affected the Project?

JC3.3.1. To what extent the GEF Project created unexpected changes, both positive and negative, that beneficiaries and other key stakeholders perceive as a result of the its activities?

### **Sustainability**

JV5.1. To what extent there are national mechanisms or structures to maintain the results achieved (and the extent that financial and human resource capacities are ensured)?

JC5.2.2. To what extent has the project strengthened SEA’s capacities to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?

JC5.2.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to improved communication, coordination and information exchange among the SEA and other partners involved in EU accession process?

### **Impact**

JC6.1. To what extent is the Project is contributing to systemic changes (transformations in institutions, policies, and practices that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls) concerning gender equality and gender mainstreaming in North Macedonia

## Interview guide- IPA mechanism and SWGs

Date of Interview:

Consultants' names:

Name of interviewee(s):

Gender (male/female/other):

Position:

UN Women has contracted the independent Evaluation Consultant to conduct the final evaluation of the "Gender mainstreaming advisory services to the North Macedonian administration at central level / Gender Equality Facility - GEF" (GEF project). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of results and performance of the Project according to recognized evaluation criteria. The evaluation is taking place in the last months of implementation of the Project.

It is in this context that the evaluation team is seeking the inputs of key stakeholders, in order to gain a better understanding of the Project's implementation and results.

Please be assured that your responses to the questions will be treated confidentially and will not be reported in such a way that the respondent can be identified. It is of primary importance to the evaluation that your responses be frank and direct.

We thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Please describe your role in the Project:

1.

### Relevance

*JC 1.1.2. To what extent have you been consulted about the Project's support?*

*JC 1.1.3. To what extent have your comments have been incorporated into the Project design?*

*JC 1.1.1. To what extent the Project addressed the needs and priorities of the SEA?*

*JC1.2.1. To what extent to which the Project aligns with North Macedonia` international obligations and commitments in the field of gender equality and mainstreaming?*

*JC1.2.2. To what extent the Project supported the EU Gender Equality acquis priorities and requirements*

*JC 1.2.3. To what extent is the Project consistent with, and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals?*

### Coherence

*JC2.3.1. To what does the Project align with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment?*

*JC2.4.1. From the SEA perspective, to what extent the Project complemented and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives addressing gender equality and gender mainstreaming especially in the context of policy making and EU accession?*

JC2.5.2. From your perspective, can you identify UN Women unique capacities in North Macedonia?

## **Effectiveness**

3.1.1. To what extent has North Macedonia progressed in implementing commitments on gender equality reported in relevant international and national documents? To what extent is the country progressing in transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis in IPA planning and programming and sectoral policies?

- To what extent has the EU IPA planning and programming document reflect gender and social responsiveness?
- Have you participated in the “Gender Mainstreaming in IPA” training package? To what extent has this training programme been relevant to you? To what extent has the gender mainstreaming guidance been relevant and supported IPA Programming?
- To what extent have you increased the knowledge and skills to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation of IPA programmes?
- Can you provide details on the supported coordination, networking and exchange events/ meetings/ consultations between EO Coordinators and sector governance structures?

JC3.2.1. To what extent different factors facilitated or affected the implementation of the Project and the achievement of results?

JC3.2.2. Has the GEF Project generated good practices? To what extent have there been obstacles or shortcomings that affected the Project?

JC3.3.1. To what extent the GEF Project created unexpected changes, both positive and negative, that beneficiaries and other key stakeholders perceive as a result of the its activities?

## **Sustainability**

JV5.1. To what extent there are national mechanisms or structures to maintain the results achieved (and the extent that financial and human resource capacities are ensured)?

JC5.2.2. To what extent has the project strengthened (members of) IPA mechanisms and SWGs’s capacities to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?

JC5.2.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to improved communication, coordination and information exchange among the SWGs and their members? To what extent there are improvements within the IPA mechanisms?

## **Impact**

JC6.1. To what extent is the Project is contributing to systemic changes (transformations in institutions, policies, and practices that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls) concerning gender equality and gender mainstreaming in North Macedonia

## Interview guide- State Statistical Office

Date of Interview:

Consultants' names:

Name of interviewee(s):

Gender (male/female/other):

Position:

UN Women has contracted the independent Evaluation Consultant to conduct the final evaluation of the "Gender mainstreaming advisory services to the North Macedonian administration at central level / Gender Equality Facility - GEF" (GEF project). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of results and performance of the Project according to recognized evaluation criteria. The evaluation is taking place in the last months of implementation of the Project.

It is in this context that the evaluation team is seeking the inputs of key stakeholders, in order to gain a better understanding of the Project's implementation and results.

Please be assured that your responses to the questions will be treated confidentially and will not be reported in such a way that the respondent can be identified. It is of primary importance to the evaluation that your responses be frank and direct.

We thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Please describe your role in the Project:

1.

### Relevance

*JC 1.1.2. To what extent have you been consulted about the Project's support?*

*JC 1.1.3. To what extent have your comments have been incorporated into the Project design?*

*JC 1.1.1. To what extent the Project addressed the needs and priorities of the State Statistical Office?*

*JC1.2.1. To what extent to which the Project aligns with North Macedonia` international obligations and commitments in the field of gender equality and mainstreaming, especially in the area of statistics?*

*JC1.2.2. To what extent the Project supported the EU Gender Equality acquis priorities and requirements*

*JC 1.2.3. To what extent is the Project consistent with, and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals?*

### Coherence

*JC2.3.1. To what does the Project align with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment (with the reference to statistics) ?*

*JC2.4.1. From the State Statistical Office perspective, to what extent the Project complemented and coordinated with other interventions and initiatives in the statistics (broadly) and gender sensitive statistics?*

JC2.5.2. From your perspective, can you identify UN Women unique capacities in North Macedonia?

## **Effectiveness**

3.1.1. To what extent has the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis resulted in positive socio-economic development outcomes for women and men, girls and boys in North Macedonia?

What are the main results you have achieved with support from GEF Project and UN Women?

Have you ensured refinement of gender-sensitive indicators (EUROSTAT/ EURF-aligned, SDG localization)?

3.1.2. To what extent the GEF Project contributed to the capacities of the key State Statistical Office to comply with global norms and standards of gender equality?

JC3.2.1. To what extent different factors facilitated or affected the implementation of the Project and the achievement of results?

JC3.2.2. Has the Statistical Office generated good practices in partnership with the GEF Project? To what extent have there been obstacles or shortcomings that affected the Project?

JC3.3.1. To what extent the State Statistical Office in partnership with the GEF Project created unexpected changes? Please provide examples.

JC3.5.1. To what extent the State Statistical Office was involved in Project's implementation? Did you have clear roles and responsibilities?

JC3.5.2. To what extent there has been interest and active participation of the State Statistical Office?

## **Sustainability**

JV5.1. To what extent there are national mechanisms or structures to maintain the results achieved (and the extent that financial and human resource capacities are ensured)?

JC5.2.2. To what extent has the project strengthened (members of) IPA mechanisms and SWGs's capacities to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?

JC5.2.3. To what extent has the Project contributed to improved communication, coordination and information exchange among the SWGs and their members? To what extent there are improvements within the IPA mechanisms?

## **Impact**

JC6.1. To what extent is the Project contributing to systemic changes (transformations in institutions, policies, and practices that address gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls) concerning gender equality and gender mainstreaming in North Macedonia



## Interview Protocol for Development Partners (including UN Agencies)

Date of Interview:

Consultants' names:

Name of interviewee(s)

1. X

Gender (male/female/other)

1. X

Position

1. X

UN Women has contracted the independent Evaluation Consultant to conduct the final evaluation of the "Gender mainstreaming advisory services to the North Macedonian administration at central level / Gender Equality Facility - GEF" (GEF project). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievement of results and performance of the Project according to recognized evaluation criteria. The evaluation is taking place in the last months of implementation of the Project.

It is in this context that the evaluation team is seeking the inputs of key stakeholders, in order to gain a better understanding of the Project's implementation and results.

Please be assured that your responses to the questions will be treated confidentially and will not be reported in such a way that the respondent can be identified. It is of primary importance to the evaluation that your responses be frank and direct.

We thank you in advance for your collaboration.

- Could you please introduce yourself, your organization and your role in this organization?
- Which specific reform priorities of the country and needs of people (especially vulnerable) your organization is addressing?
- Are you familiar with the Gender Equality Facility - GEF" (GEF project) and UN Women support to the EU accession process in North Macedonia? If yes, how is your work related to the areas of intervention of this Project?
- Do you think that the GEF Project have been appropriately focused on the governance- policy making and EU accession priorities its core areas of intervention?
- Have there been any external factors that affected or affecting security EU Accession process, adoption of the Gender EU Acquis and reforms in North Macedonia?
- Was there an effective nation-driven mechanism for donor coordination in place? If not, what other mechanisms for donor coordination were in place?
- From your perspective, what areas should be prioritized in the future in the area of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and especially in the context of EU Accession?

## Annex 6: Evaluability assessment framework

Project design (as described in the Project document, Logical Framework or narrative)	
Clarity	<p>The Theory of Change (ToC) and intervention logic for the Gender Equality Facility (GEF) Project have been meticulously crafted, based on a detailed problem analysis. The primary challenges identified include ensuring government institutions and individuals involved in strategic document preparation possess gender skills and knowledge, and enabling National Gender Mechanisms to conduct gender mainstreaming effectively in North Macedonia's National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA) planning processes.</p> <p>In its implementation, the GEF Project will continue its efforts towards strengthening gender skills and knowledge within government institutions, consolidating the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, and fostering cooperation among different stakeholders for effective gender mainstreaming.</p> <p>To address these challenges, the GEF Project centers around key objectives and areas of intervention. For example, the project seeks to enhance the skills and knowledge of governmental bodies such as the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), Sector Working Groups (SWGs), Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) units, and decision-making bodies related to EU accession. The GEF Project also aims to strengthen the administrative capacities of National Gender Mechanisms, including the Equal Opportunities Department and Equal Opportunities Coordinators in line Ministries, enabling them to effectively mainstream gender in NPAA planning processes.</p> <p>Directly attributing developmental changes to the GEF Project could be challenging as achieving high-level changes requires collaboration among numerous partners. However, the evaluation can investigate changes within beneficiary institutions and assess whether the GEF Project contributed to these changes, by examining the perceptions of targeted beneficiaries across various levels.</p> <p>The Evaluation Team (ET) has developed a custom-made methodology to cover the Project's results framework, its specific objectives, and activities that contribute to its main goal and impact. This methodology captures the relationships between the main goal and specific objectives, and analyzes the proposed steps for achieving those specific objectives.</p>
Relevant	<p>The Project is relevant in the context of international norms and standards, EU accession priorities for North Macedonia, and the needs of women and girls in several ways:</p> <p><b>EU Accession Priorities:</b> The GEF Project assists North Macedonia in its EU accession process by encouraging the implementation of the EU's gender equality standards. The project's advisory services on gender mainstreaming in public administration support the alignment of North Macedonia's legal and institutional frameworks with the requirements of EU acquis chapters, such as Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment) and Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights).</p> <p><b>Compliance with International Norms and Standards:</b> The GEF Project is designed to foster gender equality in compliance with international norms and standards, including CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Istanbul Convention. By providing gender advisory services that promote the integration of gender considerations into policy, legislative, and institutional frameworks, the project helps North Macedonia fulfill its obligations under these international instruments.</p> <p><b>Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):</b> The GEF Project contributes significantly to the achievement of SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by ensuring that gender</p>

	<p>mainstreaming becomes a standard practice in public policies and institutional practices. The project's focus on gender-responsive budgeting also aligns with the SDG 5 target of undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources.</p> <p>In addition, the GEF Project indirectly supports SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering transparent, accountable, and inclusive institutions. By advocating for gender balance in decision-making positions within public administration, the project aids in ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.</p> <p>Collaboration with Public Administration: The project forms a vital collaboration with North Macedonia's public administration, particularly at the central level. By offering advisory services, building capacity, and providing technical assistance, the project fosters an environment within public institutions that is conducive to promoting gender equality. This support enables these institutions to formulate and implement policies that are equitable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of women.</p> <p>Addressing the Needs of Target Groups: The GEF Project is tailored to address the needs of women in North Macedonia by providing gender mainstreaming advisory services to public administration. The project seeks to bridge the gap between gender equality policy and practice, addressing a significant barrier in North Macedonia's pursuit of gender equality.</p> <p>Inclusion of Disadvantaged Groups: The GEF Project ensures that its gender mainstreaming efforts are inclusive and consider the needs of marginalized women, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, women with disabilities, and women in rural areas. By considering intersectional gender issues, the project promotes inclusive policies that take into account the varied experiences and needs of all women.</p>
Plausible	<p>The project's intervention logic, aimed at enhancing gender mainstreaming within North Macedonia's central administration, has retained its validity throughout the course of implementation. Despite the commendable progress made, challenges persist. These obstacles can impede the government and other key actors from effectively advocating for gender equality and implementing gender-responsive policies.</p> <p>The GEF Project has adopted an ambitious approach to these issues, striving to enhance legislative frameworks and strengthen the capacities of stakeholders to address gender disparities. UN Women, as the project's executing agency, holds this project in high regard due to its potential to create meaningful change for stakeholders and, fundamentally, for women and girls in North Macedonia.</p> <p>The GEF Project continues to make considerable strides towards achieving its goals, with the expectation that all established targets will be fulfilled. However, the varying dynamics and factors specific to North Macedonia, such as policy shifts, staff turnover, financial constraints, and the need for sustained partnerships, could influence the outcomes achieved.</p> <p>Accounting for these elements, the plausibility of the GEF Project remains robust. The Project directly addresses pertinent gender equality issues and aligns with the strategic objectives of EU integration. Grounded in international norms and standards, the project is responsive to the specific needs of women and girls in North Macedonia. However, the longevity and future development of the results obtained hinge upon the sustained commitment of governments, service providers, and other stakeholders to overcome existing challenges and maintain a steadfast focus on gender equality.</p>
Validity and reliability	<p>The GEF Project exemplifies a dependable and valid intervention logic, distinguished by unambiguous objectives, outputs, outcomes, and indicators. The inclusion of baselines and targets for each indicator, along with gender-sensitive indicators, allows for an efficient and inclusive measurement of progress. This contributes to a more accurate</p>

	<p>assessment of the Project's success and a better understanding of its impact on different gender groups.</p> <p>The ET observes that the GEF Project showcases a robust intervention logic, which includes well-established baselines and targets for each indicator. This comprehensive monitoring framework integrates data collection from various levels and encourages cooperation with partners and stakeholders. This collaboration ensures the collation and availability of all relevant data for evaluation.</p> <p>The intervention logic of the GEF Project is coherently structured, with achievable outputs and outcomes that align well with the project's objectives. Clear links between the elements of the results framework, including outputs, specific objectives, and overall goals, further attest to the Project's validity.</p> <p>The GEF Project is well-prepared to measure progress effectively, thanks to the presence of indicators at all levels of the hierarchy of objectives. Moreover, gender-sensitive indicators foster a more inclusive and precise understanding of gender transformation and its impacts. The baselines and targets given for each indicator offer a transparent framework for gauging progress, facilitating the Project's reporting of its current status and enabling the ET to accurately evaluate its achievements (effectiveness) and changes (impact and sustainability).</p>
Testable	<p>The ET finds that the critical linkages have been established between activities and specific objectives; however, direct links and establishing contribution claims between specific objectives and progress under the overall objective was more challenging. The evaluation questions have been formulated to explore, discuss and identify these links.</p>
Consistent	<p>The Gender Equality Facility (GEF) Project demonstrates a high degree of consistency between its intervention logic and the various supporting documents, such as the project document, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation (M&amp;E) framework, work plans, and progress reports. This consistency is evident through the explicit references to the original Theory of Change and the Project's intervention logic within these materials.</p> <p>The coherence maintained across these documents ensures that the GEF Project stays on course with its primary objectives while preserving robust alignment with its intervention logic. This unity enhances the Project's capacity to achieve the intended outcomes, as it provides all stakeholders with a clear understanding of the program's goals, strategies, and indicators to guide their efforts. This strong cohesion aids in the accurate tracking of progress and facilitates effective implementation and achievement of the Project's goals.</p>
Complexity	<p>The Gender Equality Facility (GEF) Project, accurately crafted with the objective of enhancing the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis in North Macedonia, presents a considerable level of complexity. This intricacy is the outcome of various factors that include the multi-dimensional areas it addresses, the intricate national context in which it operates, and the involvement of a broad array of stakeholders with differing interests and areas of expertise.</p> <p>To streamline the transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis, thereby promoting gender equality, the GEF Project deploys a well-thought-out, comprehensive approach. This includes targeted interventions aimed at building the capacities of government institutions and individuals involved in strategic documents' preparation, strengthening national gender mechanisms like the Equal Opportunities Department, and fortifying the administrative capacities necessary for effective gender mainstreaming in planning processes. This multi-faceted approach brings with it a heightened complexity, necessitating a well-coordinated strategy to address the multitude of interconnected issues effectively and efficiently.</p>

	<p>The unique socio-political landscape of North Macedonia adds another layer of complexity to the GEF Project. Each country's context presents its own set of challenges and opportunities, requiring the project to adapt its methods and strategies to the specific circumstances, whilst maintaining fidelity to the overarching objective of aligning with the EU Gender Equality acquis.</p> <p>The project's management structure also exhibits complexity, involving a plethora of stakeholders across various sectors. These include government bodies, national gender mechanisms, decision-making bodies related to the EU accession process, and other actors whose collaborative efforts are vital in creating an environment conducive to achieving the project's goals. Balancing the differing interests, objectives, and operational modes of these stakeholders requires a keen understanding of their roles and a careful orchestration of their inputs.</p> <p>Despite the challenges brought about by these complexities, the GEF Project team has demonstrated commendable competence in maneuvering the project's trajectory towards its objectives. Their success testifies to their capacity to navigate a complex landscape, effectively manage diverse stakeholders, and apply a comprehensive approach to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in North Macedonia, in line with the EU Gender Equality acquis.</p>
Agreement	The stakeholders' commitment at all levels remained high from the initiation of the Project.
Information availability	
The complete set of Project documents available	The Project Team provided full set of documentation, including submitted Description of the Action- Project Document, Annual Progress Reports, Other Reports including commissioned studies and analysis under all specific objectives
Baseline measures exist	<p>The part Validity and reliability revealed availability of baseline data for indicators. Disaggregated data are available for indicators.</p> <p>The ET has access to various reports and deliverables (including conferences and workshops that the Project organized) and this will enable to verify judgement criteria and indicators from the evaluation framework.</p>
Data on a control group	The Project did not include the control group to compare with the intervention group and the absence of the control group prevents for direct analysis of the performance changes among beneficiaries and target groups.
Data has been collected for all the indicators	The UN Women Project Team has been providing details on activities and results in various areas of intervention. The EC received and initially analyzed annual reports, critical products the GEF Project delivered during its implementation and details on the status of indicators.
Availability of critical data	<p>The ET has analyzed available materials and carried out the initial interviews and the workshop with the UN Women Project Team. These inputs served to identify key stakeholders and beneficiaries using HRBA framework.</p> <p>The UN Women team provided details and information about involvement of partners and beneficiaries answering questions who were involved or benefited from the Project and when.</p>
Gender disaggregated	The Project team provided disaggregated data for all indicators, especially those that were under its direct responsibility

Previous reviews or evaluations	The GEF Project did not include previous mid-term reviews or analysis.
Institutional context	
Accessibility to and availability of stakeholders	<p>The ET has been provided with contacts for all stakeholders involved in the GEF Project. Working closely with the GEF Project Team, the ET reviewed and analyzed the list of potential interviewees, which includes partners, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders with a focus on eliminating violence against women, promoting gender equality, and empowering women's rights, as mentioned in Annex 1 of this report. The approach to selection of the key informants has been elaborated in the IR, following human-rights based approach.</p> <p>The ET is planning field visits and in-person meetings during July and August 2023; to engage a broader range of stakeholders who may not be accessible during the field mission, the ET will also conduct online interviews.</p>
Resources available to do the evaluation	The ET has maintained consistent communication with the GEF Project team and primary partners. This collaboration has aided the evaluation process by identifying and connecting with key informants and will continue to serve as a resource for resolving any potential issues that may arise during the evaluation
Coordination requirements	The evaluation will include participation from representatives of the GEF Project team. The ET will also arrange meetings with the Government of North Macedonia and other development partners to ensure proper coordination and a comprehensive understanding of the Project's context and progress.

## Annex 7: Terms of Reference

International Consultant for the Final Evaluation of the Project “Gender Mainstreaming advisory services to the North Macedonian administration at central level



Advertised on behalf of :

<b>Location :</b>	Home-based with possible travel in North Macedonia, Republic of North Macedonia
<b>Application Deadline :</b>	03-May-23 (Midnight New York, USA)
<b>Additional Category :</b>	Gender Equality
<b>Type of Contract :</b>	Individual Contract
<b>Post Level :</b>	International Consultant
<b>Languages Required :</b>	English
<b>Expected Duration of Assignment :</b>	14th of May 2023 – 31st of August 2023 (estimated 4 months)

**UNDP is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All applications will be treated with the strictest confidence.**

**UNDP does not tolerate sexual exploitation and abuse, any kind of harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination. All selected candidates will, therefore, undergo rigorous reference and background checks.**

### Background

UN Women, grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security.

Placing women’s rights at the center of all its efforts, the UN Women leads and coordinates United Nations system efforts to ensure that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action globally. It provides strong and coherent leadership in support of Member States’ priorities and efforts, building effective partnerships with civil society and other relevant actors.

In line with the European Council’s decision of March 2020 to open accession negotiations with the Republic of North Macedonia, the Sida-funded “Gender Equality Facility” (GEF) in the country aims at strengthening effective implementation of national and international legal frameworks on gender equality and women’s rights, mainstreaming gender equality into EU integration and planning processes for pre-accession assistance, and strengthening institutional mechanisms for gender equality in line with EU standards.

Expert support is being provided for the integration of gender perspectives into sector dialogue, policy revisions and ongoing reforms in line with the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA), recovery programmes, including EU-funded IPA programmes and actions, the Government’s Annual Work Programme, and the strategic planning of line Ministries. Thereby, GEF supports institutions to correctly align with the EU Gender Equality acquis. The Project also addresses

challenges in implementation of laws and gender equality policies by providing support for enhancing coordination and monitoring of gender equality policies and measures. In the medium to longer-term, and in line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the Principles of the EU Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025), the Project aims to secure implementation/application of gender equality legislation, policies and standards through policy dialogue, technical expertise and guidance, development and sharing of good practice, and strategic partnerships and cooperation.

## **Duties and Responsibilities**

### **2. Description of the programme/project**

#### **2.1 Project strategy and key objectives**

The project represents a consolidated framework that addresses key national priorities for advancing gender equality and responds to the Government demands for technical and expert support on alignment with EU Gender Acquis.

The overall goal and Theory of Change of the GEF Project is designed to support the Government of North Macedonia in transposing effectively EU Gender Equality Acquis, ensuring gender mainstreaming in the EU accession processes, and contributing to achieving gender equality and gender parity for women and men.

To contribute to the overall goal, the project interventions are designed towards achieving the following outcome: **Key Government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality increasingly comply with global norms and standards of gender equality and women's empowerment and implement the EU Gender Equality acquis.**

GEF programme in North Macedonia follows UN Women methodology implemented in other countries in Western Balkans, linking the development approach with the EU accession/integration agenda through promoting gender and social responsiveness in strategies, plans, policies, budgets, funds and priorities.

The Project is aligned with the Country's international obligations on gender equality and women's rights (CEDAW, Beijing PfA, SDG 5, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda, EU GAP 2021-2025, EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025), and supports further alignment of national strategic documents on gender equality.

The overall objective of the project is being achieved by increasing long-term capacities and skills of key Government personnel mandated for European Integration and Gender Equality to mainstream GE goals into the country's planning and policy processes, so they perform their mandate efficiently and in line with the European Council's decision of 25th March 2020 to open accession negotiations with the country.

Expert support is provided for the integration of gender perspectives into sector dialogue, policy revisions, recovery programmes, and ongoing reforms, including EU-funded IPA programmes and actions, the Government's Annual Work Programme, and the strategic planning of line Ministries.

In the medium to longer-term, and in line with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the Principles of the (draft) EU Gender Action Plan III, the Project aims to secure implementation/application of gender equality legislation, policies and standards through policy dialogue, technical expertise and guidance, development and sharing of good practice, and strategic partnerships and cooperation.

In 2022 significant moment was the screening process which underlined the need of GEF interventions and further support towards systematic and sustainable application of gender responsive policies at national (and local) level of governance.



Aligning the project outcome with the strategic priorities of the [UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework \(2021-2025\)](#), GEF Project builds on UN Women’s capabilities and comparative advantages by:

1. facilitating implementation of the Country’s reform agenda through inter-sectorial and inter-institutional coordination,
2. supporting change management by effectively accommodating change and supporting the implementation of new policies and programmes as a key constraint to achieving de facto equality,
3. providing a regional perspective of the Western Balkan countries in their way to full EU membership, to national contexts, and
4. providing high quality GEWE and GM technical support on the country’s EU accession path.

Activities are clustered under two main outputs (one focusing on the Secretariat for European Affairs – SEA and the other on the Equal Opportunities Department at Ministry of Labor and Social Policy), which are linked to the specific outcome and overall goal of the Project:

- **Output 1:** SEA, IPA Units, Sector Working Groups (SWG), and selected decision-making bodies and coordination structures involved in EU accession have the knowledge and skills to include a gender perspective in programming, implementation, reporting, monitoring and evaluation of IPA programmes.
- **Output 2:** National Gender Mechanisms (Equal Opportunities Department and related Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points) have the administrative capacities to perform gender mainstreaming in NPAA<sup>[1]</sup> planning processes and implement EU Gender Equality legislation and policy, in line with EU regulations and international obligations.

## 2.2 *Project beneficiaries and stakeholders*

Direct beneficiaries of the GEF Project include the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), the Equal Opportunity Department at Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, State Statistical Office, Government officials of Line Ministries engaged in priority sectors, such as members of SWGs, IPA Units/Departments, as well as Equal Opportunity Coordinators/Gender Focal Points and other government institutions.

SEA is a long-term partner in integration of GEWE and GM in the country’s EU accession and IPA related processes, with the added value toward sustainability of results by substantially including the SEA Training Center into implementation and planning processes. Thus, SEA training center was substantially involved in the process of training needs assessment and preparation of an appropriate training program on GM (basic and advanced program) and the first cycle of training provided for representatives from IPA structures, Gender Focal Points and representatives from SWG.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, with its Department for Equal Opportunities, as the main national coordinating body in the field of gender equality, with GEF assistance is supporting the implementation of activities aimed at strengthening the role of the National Gender Mechanism in creation and implementation of policies, laws, and strategies at central and local level. For the project duration, specific GM interventions have been raised and integrated few laws that have been put under the government’s ENER system for consultation with citizens and citizens groups.

The collaboration between GEF Project and State Statistical Office (SSO) is exemplary in many aspects, providing sustainability of actions and local ownership by confirming the leading role of SSO in the implementation of all activities aimed at strengthening the role of SSO as lead coordinator in the national statistical system. Specific support has been provided in enhancing the capacities of SSO and improving the administrative procedures for data collection on gender equality, and organization of data and presentation of findings. As a result, a resourceful publication has been prepared with gender disaggregated data for male/female participation in many different aspects of societal life. The publication is directly in line with Country Gender profile produced as a basic document for

further interventions in the sector. In addition, significant efforts have been committed in improving the outreach and public awareness on the importance of gender statistics and data through implementation of campaigns and visibility products.

Important partnership has also been established with the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister on anti-corruption and good governance, which has commenced with support on gender mainstreaming for the drafting of the new Law on Sport, through the promotion of the first of its kind of analysis on gender and sport, continuing with important planned mutual work on anti-corruption and women's leadership in anti-corruption.

Given the importance of foreign policy and EU standards on gender parity, UN Women continued its collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The newly established cooperation between GEF and MFA as emerging key partner provides opportunity for future GEF interventions in the field of political representation of women in the foreign policy, strengthening of women in diplomacy and enabling women to undertake positions with higher decision-making power and authority.

### **2.3 Project budget, geographical scope and timeframe**

The project duration is from 15 December 2020 until 14 December 2022 (Extended (non-cost) Donor Agreement until 30 September 2023). Total project budget is SEK 16,403.188.18 (USD 1,825,416.00) funded by Sida, Sweden.

The project activities are being implemented in the Republic of North Macedonia with regional and international initiatives for knowledge sharing and exchange of experience.

### **2.4 Project Management**

#### **Operational Management**

The Programme Presence Office team provides overall technical, programme and operations management, oversight and quality assurance for project implementation and coordination and provision of administrative and operational support for the project. The project is managed through direct implementation of UN Women. The overall management responsibility and administration of the project rests with the North Macedonia Programme Presence supported technically by the Regional Office of UN Women for Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul.

The management structure is composed of a national team of: Project Manager (full time), two Project Output Coordinators (full time), Project Assistant (full time), Administrative Assistant (full time), Finance Assistant (full time) and Operations Assistant (full time).

The familiarity and extensive experience with government procedures and working methods will help the project team mitigating potential challenges and obstacles to GEF implementation. The GEF project team will be the key provider of technical expertise in the field.

#### **GEF Steering Committee**

Inter-institutional coordination of implementation and monitoring is ensured through establishment of a Steering Committee (SC) as the forum for regular, transparent and coordinated sharing of information on progress and challenges. The SC oversees the implementation and undertakes all necessary strategic decisions based on the Project's initial plan and budget as well as on monitoring data. SC provides policy guidance and recommendations regarding the Project's strategy and objectives, receives and comments on annual reports, approves annual plans and reports, and participates in the evaluation of the Project. The SC meets twice a year and as needed.

The proposed **SC members** are: SEA (Chair), Equal Opportunity Department/MLSP, SIDA, EU Delegation Office in North Macedonia, and UN Women. The UN Women international Senior Gender Mainstreaming expert attends the SC meetings in her/his role as technical adviser (without decision-making power or voting rights). Representatives of line ministries and other government representatives are invited to take part on a need basis, assuming the status of observers/advisers.

Through its members, the SC is linked to the government-led structures that address gender mainstreaming, as well as to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework management structures. SC meetings are initiated by UN Women, and the Project Manager is responsible for documenting meeting proceedings. Progress updates is shared with SC members one week prior to SC meetings.

In addition, **Progress Review meetings** between UN Women, the GEF Project Team, SEA, and SIDA are held periodically on important operational project issues.

## 1. Evaluation Purpose and Use

### 3.1 Evaluation scope

An external independent final evaluation will be conducted during the final year of project implementation. The evaluation is scheduled between May 2023 and August 2023 (estimated 4 months).

The evaluation includes a data collection mission to Skopje and field visits/meetings with several project partners and stakeholders. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation onsite data collection might need to be replaced by online data collection. This will be revisited and agreed with UN Women during the inception phase of the evaluation.

The evaluation shall cover all aspects of the project, and broadly allocate resources (time) in relation to the relative expenditure between the various project components.

### 3.2 Evaluation purpose

A final project evaluation will be conducted with a special focus on results and achievements, and lessons learnt both from programmatic and coordination perspectives. The main purpose of this final evaluation is to assess the programmatic progress and performance of the above-described interventions from the point of view of **relevance, effectiveness, impact, organizational efficiency and sustainability**. The evaluation will address the following aspects with the results and evidence that is available to date.

The findings of the evaluation will contribute to effective programming, organizational learning and accountability. They will be also used to engage policy makers and other stakeholders at central and local levels in evidence-based dialogues and to advocate for gender-responsive strategies to promote inclusive local and national economic development with particular focus on rural women. The evaluation should also provide specific recommendations as to the priority areas that should be considered in next projects implemented by UN Women North Macedonia office, including interventions that require continued support, successful interventions for expansion, and recommendations on prioritizing interventions to maximize impact.

The evaluation will follow a participatory approach that will include a twofold management structure where all key partners will be represented and additional consultation with key stakeholders, governmental representatives from relevant ministries and national institutions, with local government representatives, civil society representatives and active women's groups as well as key donor partners.

### 3.3 Evaluation objectives

The specific evaluation objectives include:

- Analyze the relevance and coherence of the project objectives, strategy and approach at the national and local level for the Government support to comply with national and international gender equality commitments.
- Assess effectiveness of the project intervention on the target group across the two related outcomes.

- Assess organizational efficiency and coordination mechanisms in progressing towards the achievement of the project results, including the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment results as defined in the intervention.
- Assess the sustainability of the results and the intervention in advancing gender equality mechanisms for the specified target group.
- Analyze how human rights-based approach and gender equality principles are integrated in the project implementation
- Assess how the intervention and its results relate and contribute to the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals
- Identify and document lessons learned, good practices and innovations, success stories and challenges within the project, to inform future work of participating UN agencies in the frameworks of gender mainstreaming and good governance.
- Identify strategies for replication and up-scaling of the project's best practices.

#### 1. **Evaluation Management Structure**

##### ***Evaluation Management Group***

An Evaluation Management Group (EMG) will be conformed and will be the main decision-making body for the evaluation and is composed of UN Women project team members, UN Women North Macedonia Head of Office, and UN Women ECA RO Evaluation Specialist who will provide quality assurance support throughout the evaluation process. The EMG will be responsible for the overall management of the evaluation and will oversee the day-to-day business of the evaluation and communication with the evaluation team. UN Women North Macedonia representative will be responsible for day-to-day management of the evaluation and the coordination for the field visits, including logistical support.

##### ***Evaluation Reference Group***

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be established to ensure that the evaluation approach is relevant to stakeholders, and to make certain that factual errors or errors of omission or interpretation are identified in evaluation products. The reference group will provide input at key stages of the evaluation: inception report; draft and final report. The ERG will be composed of one representative from: Secretariat for European Affairs, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, State Statistical Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Anti-corruption and good governance and Ministry of Information Society and Administration. The ERG will be consulted on key aspects of the evaluation process. The group will be composed to ensure that all relevant stakeholders' groups and perspectives are represented, including from CSOs, partners and contractors.

##### **Evaluation Approach, Methodology Criteria and Questions**

The evaluation will assess progress and challenges for each of the two outcomes, with measurement of the specific results achievements and gaps and how and to what extent these have affected overall progress. It will consist of a desk review of all produced project documents and related sector specific documents and strategies, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, such as SEA, MLSP, SSO, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Anti-corruption and good governance, Ministry of Information Society and Administration and organizations involved in project implementation or addressing the needs and representing the interests of specific groups of women.

The evaluation will be organized as a transparent and participatory process involving relevant stakeholders and partners in North Macedonia. The evaluation will follow gender equality and human rights principles, as defined in the UN Women Evaluation Policy[2] and adhere to the United Nations norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations system[3]. The evaluation methodology will employ mixed methods. A more detailed evaluation methodology will be proposed and agreed with the evaluation team and will be presented in the evaluation inception report.

The evaluation is a final project document/product and will employ both a summative approach focusing on capturing the lessons learned, assessing the achievement of the results at output and outcome levels, as well as a formative, forward-looking approach assessing the applicability of the results in the next phase. The evaluation methodology will furthermore follow a Theory of Change (ToC) approach and employ mixed methods including quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and analytical approaches to account for complexity of gender relations and to ensure participatory and inclusive processes that are culturally appropriate. Methods may include but are not limited to:

- Desk review of relevant documents such as project documents, progress reports, financial records, meeting minutes and monitoring reports, and secondary data or studies relating to the country context and situation analysis.
- Online consultations and discussions with the senior management and project management staff.
- Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, survey with direct and indirect beneficiaries, implementing partners, donor and other stakeholders.
- Field visits to and observation at selected project sites.

Data from different research sources will be triangulated to increase its validity. The proposed approach and methodology have to be considered as flexible guidelines rather than final requirements, and the evaluators will have an opportunity to make their inputs and propose changes in the evaluation design. The methodology and approach should, however, incorporate human rights and gender equality perspectives. It is expected that the evaluation team will further refine the approach and methodology and submit a detailed description in the inception report.

The evaluation will include Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, and Sustainability and Impact criteria. More specifically, the evaluation will address the following evaluation questions that will be further refined once the evaluation team is recruited<sup>[4]</sup>:

- To what extent was the design of the intervention and its results relevant to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries? Was the choice of interventions relevant to the situation of the target group?
- To what extent is the intervention consistent with the key national policy and strategic documents in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment, and reflect national/subnational priorities and commitments?
- To what extent current key project stakeholders were involved in programmes's conceptualization and design process? (This aspect of interest can be rephrased for those representatives that joined the project at a later stage as to how involved are they in the actual project implementation?)
- To what extent have gender and human rights principles and strategies been integrated into the project design and implementation?
- To what extent is the intervention aligned with international agreements and conventions on gender equality and women's empowerment?
- To what extent was the design of the intervention relevant to gender equality priorities in the country? Does the project address the needs and priorities of women in the Republic of North Macedonia and how is it interrelated with the EU Gender Equality acquis?
- To what extent project contributed to advancing the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 2030 Agenda?

## **Coherence**

Internal coherence

- To what extent does the project fit within UN Women’s Strategic Plan and interrelated three-fold mandate and UN Women’s work in North Macedonia?
- Are there any synergies and inter-linkages between the project and other interventions of UN Women in North Macedonia and the Western Balkan Region?

#### External coherence

- To what extent is the intervention consistent with the national development strategies in the area of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment, and reflect national priorities and commitments on GE?
- How does project reflect and align with national strategic plans and normative frameworks and North Macedonia’s international obligations and commitments in the field of women’s rights and gender equality?
- To what extent the project is in complementarity, harmonized and coordinated with the interventions of other actors’ interventions in the same context?
- To what extent the implementation of the project ensures synergies and coordination with Government’s and key partners relevant efforts while avoiding duplications at a general/country level?
- What is UN Women’s comparative advantage in North Macedonia to implement this project?
- To what extent is the project aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework in North Macedonia?

#### Effectiveness:

- To what extent have the expected results of the project been achieved on both outcome and output levels?
- What are the reasons for the achievement or non-achievement of the project results? Has the project achieved any unforeseen results, either positive or negative? For whom? What are the good practices and the obstacles or shortcomings encountered? How were they overcome?
- How effective have the selected programme strategies and approaches been in achieving programme results?
- How well did the intervention succeed in involving and building the capacities of rights-holders, duty-bearers, as well as the project partners?
- To what extent are the programme approaches and strategies innovative for implementation of GEF in North Macedonia? What -if any- types of innovative good practices have been introduced in the programme for the achievement of the results?
- Is there a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities by all parties involved?

#### Efficiency:

- Have resources (financial, human, technical support, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve the project outcomes?
- Has there been effective leadership and management of the project including the structuring of management and administration roles to maximize results? Where does accountability lie?
- Have the outputs been delivered in a timely manner?
- To what extent are the project monitoring mechanisms in place effective for measuring and informing management of project performance and progress towards targets? To what extent was the monitoring data objectively used for management action and decision making?

- Were there any constraints (e.g. political, practical, bureaucratic) identified in the implementation of the different actions and what level of effort was made to overcome these challenges?
- What is the likelihood that the benefits from the project will be maintained for a reasonably long period of time after the project phase out?
- To what extent the intervention succeeded in building individual and institutional capacities of rights-holders and duty-bearers to ensure sustainability of benefits and more inclusive practices to local development and good governance?
- How effectively has the project generated national ownership of the results achieved, the establishment of partnerships with relevant stakeholders and the development of national capacities to ensure sustainability of efforts and benefits?
- What steps were taken to develop and/or reinforce the operating capacities of national partners during the implementation of the programme?
- To what extent has the project been able to promote replication and/or up-scaling of successful practices?
- How effectively has project contributed to the establishment of effective partnerships and development of national capacities?

### **Gender Equality and Human Rights**

- How did the broader human rights context within the country has informed the design and implementation of the project?
- To what extent participation and inclusiveness (with respect to rights holders and duty bearers) was maximized in the project's planning, design, implementation and decision?
- To what extent disability inclusion was integrated in project planning and implementation?
- To what extent Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and gender transformative approaches have incorporated into the design, monitoring and reporting of the project?

The above questions are expected to be revised and refined by the valuation team during the inception phase of the evaluation. It is also expected that the evaluation team will develop an evaluation matrix, which will relate to the evaluation questions, the areas they refer to, the criteria for evaluating them, the indicators and the means for verification as a tool for the evaluation. Final evaluation matrix will be approved in the evaluation inception report.

### **Evaluation Process, duties and responsibilities of the evaluation team**

#### **6.1 Evaluation process**

The evaluation process is divided in five phases:

1. **Preparation**, mainly devoted to structuring the evaluation approach, preparing the TOR, compiling programme documentation, and hiring the evaluation team;
2. **Inception**, which will involve consultations between the evaluation team and the EMG, programme portfolio review, finalization of stakeholder mapping, inception meetings with the ERG, review of the result logics, analysis of information relevant to the initiative, finalization of evaluation methodology and preparation and validation of inception report;
3. **Data collection** and analysis, including in-depth desk research, in-depth review of the project documents and monitoring frameworks, online interviews as necessary, staff and partner survey/s, and field visits;
4. **Data analysis and reporting stage**, focusing on data analyzed, interpretation of findings and drafting and validation of an evaluation report; and

5. **Dissemination, follow-up and use**, once the evaluation is completed UN Women is responsible for the development of a Management Response, publishing of the evaluation report, uploading the published report on the GATE website, and the dissemination of evaluation findings.

The outline above corresponds to the entire evaluation process from preparation, to conduct, reporting and follow up and use. The evaluation team will only be responsible for the inception, data collection and data analysis and reporting phase. Evaluation preparation and dissemination, follow up and use will be responsibility of EMG.

## **6.2 Evaluation team duties and responsibilities**

Corresponding with the inception, data collection, data analysis and reporting stages of the evaluation process, the duties and responsibilities of the evaluation team will be as follows:

- Leading the inception phase and developing an inception report outlining design, approach and methodology of the evaluation and an indicative workplan of the evaluation team within the framework of this ToR.
- Directing and carrying out collection, research and analysis of relevant documentation and other data, and reporting.
- Overseeing and assuring quality of data collection and leading the analysis of the evaluation evidence.
- Preparing for meetings with the evaluation management group, evaluation reference group and other stakeholders to review findings, conclusions and recommendations.
- Leading the preparation of the evaluation communication products.
- To conduct a data collection field mission with the support of the EMG which will include individual interviews with the relevant stakeholders;
- To prepare a Power Point Presentation and an outline on preliminary findings and present to EMG and to ERG;
- To produce and submit a draft and a final evaluation report in English to be validated by EMG and ERG;
- To produce an evaluation brief in English.

## **7. Evaluation team composition**

The evaluation team will include an international consultant as a team leader and a national consultant as team member supporting in all substantive aspects of the evaluation.

Both consultants need to have extensive experience in conducting evaluations, but also some experience in gender equality, gender mainstreaming and women's economic empowerment. The international consultant as team leader is responsible for coordination during all phases of the evaluation process, ensuring the quality of outputs and application of methodology as well as timely delivery of all evaluation products in close collaboration with the evaluation task manager and the evaluation management group. The national consultant will provide support to the international consultant in all the aspects of conducting the evaluation, including translation and interpretation where necessary.

[1] National Programme for the Adoption of the Community *acquis*.

[2] UN Women, *Evaluation policy of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* (UNW/2012/12), <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2012/10/evaluation-policy-of-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women>



[3] United Nations Evaluation Group, Norms and Standards for evaluation in the United Nations system, access at: [http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc\\_cat\\_source\\_id=4](http://www.uneval.org/normsandstandards/index.jsp?doc_cat_source_id=4)

[4] The final evaluation matrix will be included and validated in the evaluation inception report.

## Competencies

### Core Values:

**Integrity** - Demonstrate consistency in upholding and promoting the values of UN Women in actions and decisions, in line with the UN Code of Conduct.

**Professionalism** - Demonstrate professional competence and expert knowledge of the pertinent substantive areas of work.

**Cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity** - Demonstrate an appreciation of the multicultural nature of the organization and the diversity of its staff. Additionally, the individual should have an international outlook, appreciating difference in values and learning from cultural diversity

### Competencies:

- Sensitivity and adaptability to culture, gender, religion, nationality and age
- Strong analytical, writing and reporting abilities
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills, ability to lead a team and negotiate amongst a wide range of stakeholders
- Commitment to quality products and deadlines

## Required Skills and Experience

### Qualification and experience:

- At least a master's degree in economics, social sciences, international relations, gender studies or a related area;
- At least 7 years international experience in conducting evaluations of strategies, policies and/or development programmes and projects;
- Proven experience of designing and leading or participating in gender-responsive and human rights-based evaluations utilizing participatory approaches and methodologies;
- Experience and knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming, gender analysis;
- Excellent analytical, facilitation and communications skills and ability to negotiate amongst a wide range of stakeholders;
- Proficiency in written and spoken English language;
- Knowledge of Macedonian language will be considered an asset.

## Evaluation timeframe and expected outputs

### 8.1 Expected deliverables

The evaluation team is expected to deliver:

- **An inception report:** The evaluation team will present a refined scope, a detailed outline of the evaluation design and methodology, evaluation questions, and criteria for the approach for in-depth desk review and field work to be conducted in the data collection phase. The report will include an evaluation matrix and detailed work plan. A first draft report will be shared with the evaluation management group and, based upon the comments received the evaluation team will revise the draft. The revised draft will be shared with the evaluation reference group for feedback. The evaluation team will maintain an audit trail of the comments received and provide a response on how the comments were addressed in the final inception report.
- **Presentation of preliminary findings:** A PowerPoint presentation detailing the emerging findings of the evaluation will be shared with the evaluation management group for feedback. The revised presentation will be delivered to the reference group for comment and validation. The evaluation team will incorporate the feedback received into the draft report.
- **A draft evaluation report:** A first draft report will be shared with the evaluation management group for initial feedback. The second draft report will incorporate evaluation management group feedback and will be shared with the evaluation reference group for identification of factual errors, errors of omission and/or misinterpretation of information. The third draft report will incorporate this feedback and then be shared with the reference group for final validation. The evaluation team will maintain an audit trail of the comments received and provide a response on how the comments were addressed in the revised drafts.
- **The final evaluation report:** The final report will include a concise Executive Summary and annexes detailing the methodological approach and any analytical products developed during the course of the evaluation. The structure of the report will be defined in the inception report.
- **Evaluation communication products:** Online presentation of the preliminary findings (date TBD), a PowerPoint/Prezi presentation of the final key evaluation findings and recommendations, and a 2-pager/infographics on the final key findings, lessons learned and recommendations in a format preferably adjustable for individual project sites both in English and Macedonian.

Payment will be issued in two instalments upon the satisfactory submission of the deliverables cleared by the evaluation task manager to certify that the services have been satisfactorily performed:

40% upon approval of evaluation inception report

60% upon the validation of the final evaluation report and communication products.

## 8.2 Evaluation time frame

The project evaluation will be conducted between May 2023 and August 2023. The preliminary calendar for the process is detailed in the table below.

Task	Tentative timeframe deadline	Est no days international consultant	Est no of days national consultant
<b>Inception phase May 2023</b>			
Desk review of background documentation	25 May 2023	5	3

Inception meeting with EMG	31 May 2023	1	1
Inception report (including two rounds of revision)	10 June 2023	5	4
<b>Data collection phase June - July 2023</b>			
Documents review, (online) interviews	15 June 2023	4	4
Visit to project sites <sup>[1]</sup>	30 June 2023	5	5
<b>Analysis and reporting phase July - August 2023</b>			
Drafting and presentation of preliminary findings (including one round of revision)	25 July 2023	3	3
Preparation and submission of report (including two rounds of Revision)	5 August 2023	10	5
Review and submission of final report and communication products (PPT and a brief)	25 August 2023	5	2
Total		38	27

**Application procedure:**

The following documents should be submitted as part of the application:

- **Cover letter** to include a brief overview in English (unedited text) about which of your previous experiences makes you the most suitable candidate for the advertised position.
- **P11** with past experience in similar assignments; can be downloaded at <http://www.unwomen.org/about-us/employment>, a signed copy should be submitted.

- **Financial Proposal** specifying a total lump sum amount for the tasks specified in this Terms of Reference. The financial proposal shall include a breakdown of this lump sum amount (daily rate and number of anticipated working days and other possible costs, travel cost excluded). **Possible field visits will be arranged and covered by UN Women in accordance with the Covid 19 travel restrictions.**

#### Evaluation of applicants:

Consultants will be evaluated using a cumulative analysis method taking into consideration the combination of qualifications and financial proposal. Contract will be awarded to the individual consultant whose offer has been evaluated and determined as:

1. Responsive/compliant/acceptable, and
2. Having received the highest score out of below defined technical and financial criteria.

Only candidates obtaining a minimum of 49 points in the technical evaluation would be considered for financial evaluation.

	Evaluation Criteria	Max points
<b>TECHNICAL EVALUATION (70%)</b>		
<b>Language Requirements</b>	Fluency in written and spoken English Language	<b>REQUIRED</b>
<b>Education</b>	Master's degree in economics, social sciences, international relations, gender studies or a related area.	<b>20</b> 0: without relevant master's degree 20: Master's degree
<b>Professional experience</b>	International experience in conducting evaluations of strategies, policies and/or development programmes and projects.	<b>20</b> 0: without 7 years of experience 15: 7 years of experience 20: more than 7 years of experience
	Proven experience of designing and leading or participating in human rights-based evaluations utilizing participatory approaches and methodologies.	<b>10</b> 0: without relevant experience 10: relevant experience
	Experience and knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment, gender mainstreaming, gender analysis.	<b>10</b> 0: without relevant experience 10: relevant experience
	Cumulative experience in conducting of complex projects/strategies that require demonstrated facilitation and communications skills and ability to negotiate amongst a wide range of stakeholders.	<b>10</b> 0: without relevant experience 10: relevant experience
<b>Total technical</b>		<b>70</b>

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**Financial Evaluation (30%) – max. 30 points:**

The maximum number of points assigned to the financial proposal is allocated to the **lowest price** proposal. All other price proposals receive points in inverse proportion. A suggested formula is as follows:

$$p = 30 (\mu/z)$$

Using the following values:

p = points for the financial proposal being evaluated

μ = price of the lowest priced proposal

z = price of the proposal being evaluated

**Evaluation TOR Annexes**

1. UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluations [\[2\]](#)
2. UNEG Ethical Guidelines [\[3\]](#)
3. UNEG Norms for Evaluation in the UN System [\[4\]](#)
4. UNEG Standards for Evaluation in the UN System [\[5\]](#)
5. UNEG Guidance Integrating Human Rights and Gender in the UN System [\[6\]](#)
6. UN Women Evaluation Handbook [\[7\]](#)
7. National Strategy on Gender Equality 2013-2020, and National Action Plan on Gender equality (2018-2020) [\[8\]](#)
8. Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men [\[9\]](#)
9. How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation. Evaluation Handbook [\[10\]](#)
10. Final Evaluation of the programme “Promoting Gender Responsive Policies in South East Europe” in Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, FYR Macedonia and the Republic of Moldova [\[11\]](#)

*At UN Women, we are committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment of mutual respect. UN Women recruits, employs, trains, compensates, and promotes regardless of race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, national origin, or any other basis covered by appropriate law. All employment is decided on the basis of qualifications, competence, integrity and organizational need.*

*If you need any reasonable accommodation to support your participation in the recruitment and selection process, please include this information in your application.*

*UN Women has a zero-tolerance policy on conduct that is incompatible with the aims and objectives of the United Nations and UN Women, including sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, abuse of authority and discrimination. All selected candidates will be expected to adhere to UN Women’s policies and procedures and the standards of conduct expected of UN Women personnel and will therefore undergo rigorous reference and background checks. (Background checks will include the verification of academic credential(s) and employment history. Selected candidates may be required to provide additional information to conduct a background check.)*

[1] Due to the Covid19 pandemic situation onsite data collection might need to be replaced by online data collection. This will be revisited and agreed with UN Women during the inception phase of the evaluation.

[2] <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>

[3] <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>

[4] <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>

[5] <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

[6] <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1616>

[7] <http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/evaluation-handbook>

[8] <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nsp>

[9] [https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/9677/file/NMAC\\_on%20Equal%20Opportunities%20of%20Women%20and%20Men.pdf](https://www.legislationline.org/download/id/9677/file/NMAC_on%20Equal%20Opportunities%20of%20Women%20and%20Men.pdf)

[10] [www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/4/un-women-evaluation-handbook-how-to-manage-gender-responsive-evaluation](http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/4/un-women-evaluation-handbook-how-to-manage-gender-responsive-evaluation)

[11] <https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=11388>.