

# “Establishing a Circular Economy Framework for the Plastics Sector in Ghana” (CEF-PS)

## Mid-Term Review (MTR) Report

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The diversity of perspectives and all direct and indirect input provided by the project’s partners, government counterparts, the executing team, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders consulted during the process are gratefully acknowledged.

The quality of reflection facilitated through this review process has allowed for the development of evidence-based findings and conclusions, providing the basis for lessons and recommendations. At this mid-term stage, these are offered with the purpose of enhancing the performance of this project during its remaining period of operation as well as to guide the design and implementation of other projects funded under the Global Environment Facility’s 7<sup>th</sup> replenishment cycle (GEF-7).

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019, designation by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the disease in 2019 caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
EPA	(Ghana's) Environmental Protection Agency
EPR	Extended Producer Responsibility
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
FSP	Full-sized project
GEF-7	Global Environment Facility's 7th replenishment cycle
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GPAP	Global Plastic Action Partnership
HACT	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer
KPI	Key performance indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MESTI	(Ghana's) Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation
MLGDRD	(Ghana's) Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization and Rural Development
MOFAD	(Ghana's) Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development
MOH	(Ghana's) Ministry of Health
MoGCSP	(Ghana's) Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MRI	Mountain Research Institute
MSWR	(Ghana's) Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NPAP	(Ghana's) National Plastic Action Partnership
NPMP	(Ghana's) National Plastics Management Policy
OFP	(GEF's) Operational Focal Point
PEE	Project Executing Entity
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PIR	Project Implementation Report
PSC	Project Steering Committee
TOC	Theory of Change
RSS	Resource Recovery Secretariat
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME(s)	Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprise(s)
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
u-POPs	Unintentional emissions of persistent organic pollutants
USD	United States dollar

## Glossary of Mid-Term Review-Related Terms

Term	Definition
Results-Based Management (RBM)	A management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts.
Monitoring	A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds.
Review	An assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad hoc basis. Note: Frequently “evaluation” is used for a more comprehensive and/or more in-depth assessment than “review”. Reviews tend to emphasize operational aspects. Sometimes the terms “review” and “evaluation” are used as synonyms.
External evaluation/review	The evaluation/review of a development intervention conducted by entities and/or individuals outside the donor and implementing organizations.
Formative evaluation/review	Evaluation/review intended to improve performance, most often conducted during the implementation phase of projects or programs.
Programme	A group of complementary projects designed and managed in a coordinated and coherent way, simultaneously or sequentially, to obtain broader benefits and long-term results (impact) not directly attainable from managing the projects individually. A programme is further typically characterized as a systematic and complex intervention to address a development problem or need to attain specific sectoral, national, regional or global development objectives.
Project	A development intervention, which is designed to achieve specific objectives (outputs/outcomes) contributing to a higher objective (impact) within a given budget and a specific period of time, i.e. it has a beginning and an end.
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries’ requirements, country needs, global priorities, and partners’ and donors’ policies. Note: Retrospectively, the question of relevance often becomes a question as to whether the objectives of an intervention or its design are still appropriate given changed circumstances.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention’s objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of continued long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.
Institutional development impact	The extent to which an intervention improves or weakens the ability of a country or region to make more efficient, equitable, and sustainable use of its human, financial, and natural resources. For example, through: (a) better definition, stability, transparency, enforceability and predictability of institutional arrangements and/or (b) better alignment of the mission and capacity of an organization with its mandate, which derives from these institutional arrangements. Such impacts can include intended and unintended effects of an action.
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor. Means by which a change will be measured. Example: Total wastewater in t/yr.
Target	Definite ends to be achieved. Specifies a particular value that an indicator should reach by a specific date in the future. Example: Reduce by 50% the amount of wastewater in t/yr, between 2015 and 2020.
Milestones	Interim targets; points in the lifetime of a project by which certain progress should have been made. They provide an early warning system and are the basis for monitoring the trajectory of change during the lifetime of the project.
Baseline	The situation prior to a development intervention against which progress can be assessed or comparisons made.

Assumptions	<p>Hypotheses about factors or risks, which could affect the progress or success of a development intervention.</p> <p>Necessary conditions for the achievement of results at different levels. These are conditions that must exist if the project is to succeed but which are outside the direct control of the project management. This is called the external logic of the project because these conditions lie outside the project's accountability and can be related to laws, political commitments, political situation, financing, etc.</p>
Risk analysis	<p>An analysis or an assessment of factors (called assumptions in the logical framework) that affect or are likely to affect the successful achievement of an intervention's objectives. A detailed examination of the potential unwanted and negative consequences to human life, health, property, or the environment posed by development interventions; a systematic process to provide information regarding such undesirable consequences; the process of quantification of the probabilities and expected impacts for identified risks.</p>
Environmental and Social Safeguards	<p>UNIDO Environmental and Social Safeguards Policies and Procedures (ESSPP) identifies a total of 12 operational safeguards pertaining to environmental social risks. Every UNIDO project/programme needs to undergo an E&amp;S screening to determine its level of risk and the appropriate mitigating action (if any) to be elaborated.</p>
Theory of Change (TOC)	<p>Theory of Change, or programme theory, is similar to a logic model, but includes key assumptions behind the causal relationships and sometimes the major factors (internal and external to the intervention) likely to influence the outcomes.</p>
Conclusions	<p>Conclusions point out the factors of success and failure of the evaluated intervention, with special attention paid to the intended and unintended results and impacts, and more generally to any other strength or weakness. A conclusion draws on data collection and analyses undertaken, through a transparent chain of arguments.</p>
Lessons learnt	<p>Generalizations based on evaluation experience with projects, programmes, or policies that abstract from the specific circumstances to broader situations. Frequently, lessons highlight strengths or weaknesses in preparation, design, and implementation that affect performance, outcome, and impact.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness, quality, or efficiency of a development intervention; at redesigning the objectives; and/or at the reallocation of resources. Recommendations should be linked to conclusions.</p>
Gender mainstreaming	<p>The process of assessing and supporting overcoming different implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men participate and benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.</p>

For more related terms and definitions see also:

- [OECD-DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management](#)
- [UNDG Results-based management handbook](#)
- [UNIDO 2019 Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women](#) and [UNIDO Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Mainstreaming the Project Cycle](#)

## Executive Summary

### Background, Scope and Methodology of this Mid-Term Review

This report is the Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the project, “*Establishing a Circular Economy Framework for the Plastics Sector in Ghana*” (CEF-PS), which was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on 8 December 2021. Signature of the Project Execution Agreement (PEA) between UNIDO, as GEF’s Implementing Agency, and Ghana’s Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI) / Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the National Project Executing Entity (PEE) allowed for the project’s official launch in June 2022. The project’s inception workshop took place in December 2022. Currently planned to run until November 2026, this 60-month Full-Sized Project (FSP) has a USD 7 million cash grant from the GEF and in-kind contributions of USD 81,923,668 (as planned at project design).

Commissioned by UNIDO, as the project’s Implementing Agency, in line with its own accountability and organisational learning requirements, this MTR was undertaken during May-July 2024 by an independent team led by Dr. Joyce Miller, together with national consultant Darko Akomeah of the Mountain Research Institute (MRI) in Ghana. The Review Team operated under the responsibility of UNIDO Project Manager Müge Ulvinur Dolun, in liaison with UNIDO’s Independent Evaluation Division (ODG/EIO/IEU) on the MTR’s conduct and issues related to its methodology.

This MTR covers the project’s design and first two years of execution, until June 2024. Its purpose is to assess the project’s performance and progress vis-à-vis the envisaged results and indicators, gauge barriers and risks for their achievement, identify needed changes to keep the project on track, and draw out lessons, good practices, and recommendations that could be used to strengthen the project’s ongoing activities and strategy for replication and sustainability as well as to enhance the design and implementation of similar current and future projects.

The MTR applied a robust, evidence-based approach to develop the findings, lessons learned, and recommendations based on: i) review of key documents; ii) assessment of project design; and iii) in-depth interviews (face-to-face through a field mission and remote consultation). A total of 38 key stakeholders that benefit from, contribute to, support, execute, manage, and/or supervise the project were consulted with the aim of gathering a range of perspectives regarding the project’s performance to date. Facts were clarified through the discussion of preliminary findings and feedback on the draft MTR report.

The target audience for this MTR Report is the donor (GEF), Implementing Agency (UNIDO), national executing partner (MESTI/EPA), and other stakeholders consulted during this review.

### Overall Assessment

The project’s performance is deemed to be ‘Moderately Unsatisfactory’ at this mid-point stage in its implementation (see **Table 1**) and the project’s risk is currently assessed as ‘High’ (see **Table 7**).

### Main Findings

#### Project Design Assessment

Aligned with growing global concern regarding plastic pollution and Ghana’s interest to become a replicable model for dealing with its burgeoning waste problem, the project’s design is considered sound, appropriate, technically feasible, and suitably resourced to contribute to its long-term objective to transition the country to a circular economy framework for managing plastics. Validated through stakeholder consultation during its preparation – which ensured the project’s relevance and opportunity to leverage efforts of other development actors – the design reflects a holistic approach to strengthen enabling conditions to incentivize the switch to circular economy and build technical capacities for its adoption, while supporting synergies and collaboration through knowledge sharing.

The results framework is clear, realistic and measurable with a logical flow of outputs to outcomes to impact, incorporating gender-sensitivity and the synergistic power of its constituent components. Envisaged outcomes reflect tangible changes in attitude, capacities, and behaviour that can be reasonably expected to influence the wider ecosystem towards the desired change to circular economy. This results framework can be easily transferred into a M&E plan to facilitate monitoring.

## **Project Performance and Progress Towards Results**

### **Relevance**

The project's outcomes are highly relevant to global interest in implanting effective approaches to deal with the growing problem of plastic pollution affecting both terrestrial and marine environments. While activities need to be reviewed, refined, and consolidated, given the contributions of other development actors that have materialised over the past two years, the project is still well-aligned with Ghana's development priorities, the interests of private sector beneficiaries to innovate and scale up efforts to shift to circular economy, and the country's ambition/vision to function as a showcase in proactively addressing the plastic waste menace. The project is consistent with the donor's priorities for circular economy as well as sustainable production, consumption and environmentally-sound disposal, and it is fully pertinent to UNIDO's mandate for promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

### **Efficiency**

Time and cost parameters are significantly below expectations for this mid-way point in the project's execution. A 2-year delay has been incurred due to a confluence of contributing factors. Project resources and inputs have, so far, not been optimally converted into the desired results.

### **Effectiveness and Progress Towards Results**

While inception activities were satisfactorily carried out in the anticipated way with broad stakeholder engagement, followed by development of a work plan and budget, duly approved by a properly constituted and mandated PSC, there has been very little shift into execution. The project's poor performance over the past two years is attributed to: i) inability to mainstream the coordination of the management of the project due to political interference; ii) inadequate management and governance process to rapidly identify and analyse challenges and recalibrate arrangements; iii) insufficient recognition of the pivotal role of a formalised, staffed PMU to advance project activities; iv) differing expectations regarding procurement. The recent change in the project's leadership, accompanied by an operational PMU, offer promising signals of the potential to shift into action. Improvement in performance will need to be confirmed in the next reporting period.

## **Project Implementation Management**

### **Project Management**

The project's poor performance, thus far, on effectiveness, efficiency and progress to results, is largely attributed to the leadership and management arrangements that have not been conducive to delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.

### **Results-Based Work Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Systems, Reporting**

A results-based approach for the project's planning, execution, monitoring and reporting has been incorporated into the project's design, adequately resourced, and deployed. Through the development and communication of the first PIR (ending June 2023), there was timely identification of underperforming activities and concerns were raised about national execution arrangements, particularly the inaction to establish the PMU. These weaknesses have been corroborated through the MTR, another instrument of results-based work planning, M&E, and reporting that has been planned, resourced, and is being used to support the project in improving its performance.

### **Knowledge Management**

Development and dissemination of knowledge are resourced and integrated into the project's design through the inclusion of relevant activities, with clear roles and responsibilities. On the one hand, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP since the project's launch and the multistakeholder work of Task Forces carried out under this platform have enabled meaningful dissemination of knowledge on plastics management. On the other hand, the RSS and Centre of Excellence have yet to be operationalised, and together with UNDP's Waste Recovery Platform, play their anticipated roles in building up knowledge, shared understanding of circular economy, and ensuring that data on types of waste being handled across the country is available to facilitate circular economy of plastics and other materials. The ability to store, retrieve, and apply the project's knowledge could not yet be assessed as the PMU has only been recently established and staffed.

### **Financial Management and Co-Finance**

Both Implementing Agency and National PEE follow the policies and procedures that apply to the use of GEF and UNIDO resources as documented in the Project Execution Agreement and seen in the review of quarterly financial reports submitted to date. No instances of financial mismanagement were detected. Co-financing contributions, on the order of 1:11 for GEF's cash investment, if realised, would significantly enlarge the pool of available resources, thereby providing a key lever to magnify the project's impact and sustain its results and benefits. Co-financing achieved is to be reported at the project's mid-term and closing to assess the extent to which it has been effectively leveraged. As the project has had limited execution thus far, it can be expected that the bulk of such co-financing contributions are still ahead. To date, there was no evidence that co-financing has been tracked and reported.

### **Stakeholder Engagement and Communication**

Robust consultation and engagement of relevant stakeholders during project preparation and design phase provided a clear view of the actors to be engaged, in which ways, to ensure the project's relevance, utility, and success. Notions elaborated in the resulting Stakeholder Engagement Plan are evident throughout the project's activity planning. Stakeholder interactions dropped off following launch and inception, which has consequently lowered awareness of the project. A recent misstep in communications with the pilots, whose effects were amplified by the lack of clarity regarding the pace, level, and conditions of anticipated disbursements that have been in process since their pre-selection three years ago, have frayed their trust and confidence in MESTI. This shows the importance of clear communication and the need to be transparent about the purpose for information requested from pilot companies and how this will be used.

### **Scale-up, Sustainability and Resilience**

Design elements are in place [i.e. national project execution, significant co-financing from public and private sector actors, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP, supportive institutional actors (the planned RSS and Centre of Excellence hosted by Ho Technical University), a governance mechanism that includes influential actors with a role to play in supporting a circular economy approach for plastics, a financial mechanism through the envisaged plastic waste recycling fund] that contribute to sustaining the project's results and benefits. Meaningful potential for scaling up and resilience can be found in the MESTI/NPAP partnership's Task Force work that has generated inputs, guidance and recommendations through a multistakeholder platform, together with the project's planned investment in pilots, whose scaling up efforts are expected to drive collection to feed the production of value-added products from plastic waste. Measures to mitigate risks in case of a shift in government priorities following the upcoming national general election in December 2024 are to be undertaken during the current year in the form of building MESTI/EPA's capacity to ensure that institutional knowledge remains within the Ministry.

At the time of the MTR, these aspects were planned but not fully operationalised, as the project had progressed very little into execution.

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

Informed by policies of the GEF and UNIDO that link gender equality and environmental sustainability, the project's design adequately reflects gender mainstreaming aims within relevant output formulations and includes realistic targets for participation in training, capacity building, and the incremental employment envisaged to be gained through the project's support. The gender analysis of the pilot companies and Ghana NPAP's baseline report of the Plastics and Plastic Waste Sectors provide a robust basis for the project's Gender Action Plan. However, the operationalisation of the project's design principles and plans have yet to materialise in a meaningful way.

### **Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)**

The project was suitably subjected to UNIDO's internal ESS screening during its preparation and categorized. During inception, risks were appropriately identified at the pilot sites that required mitigation actions and review over the project's life. The resulting Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) has yet to be used as a 'living document' to guide project stakeholders in assessing effects and developing mitigation measures, given the PMU's recent establishment. With little project content executed, no ESMP reports are yet available. As no disbursements have been released to the pilots, the anticipated ongoing monitoring of the identified risks is still ahead.

### **Performance of Partners**

#### **Implementing Agency**

In its role as GEF Implementing Agency, UNIDO is actively exercising project oversight, supervision and overall budget management. While aiming to respect the strict separation between implementation and execution, in view of the prolonged delay in operationalising the project's support, UNIDO's substantial handholding is straining the agency's capacities in light of limited project resourcing for such support and its own constraints.

#### **National Counterparts**

While MESTI has accepted ownership of the project and put elements in place to assure its high-level consideration within its own political structure, there appears to have been a drop in the interest of other government counterparts who have a role in implementing the NPMP, signalled by their complete absence from the recent PSC meeting, following dissatisfaction expressed in earlier meetings with the project's severe delay in execution to date. While recognizing there is a learning curve involved in the shift to full national execution, the selected arrangements have not been conducive for delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.

#### **Donor**

The donor's timely disbursement of funds to strengthen national capacity and operationalise national policy is highly relevant assistance to overcome the identified barriers and catalyse a circular economy approach to deal with the plastic menace in Ghana. Given the project's severe delay since its launch, GEF Secretariat feedback channelled through the GEF OFP played a key role in triggering rethinking and re-architecting the project's leadership arrangement. This has enabled the project to progress since spring 2024, together with major handholding support provided by the Implementing Agency, which is beyond what is envisaged and resourced under GEF's strict separation of implementation and execution.

Project Implementation Management

## **Project Management**

The project's poor performance, thus far, on effectiveness, efficiency and progress to results, is largely attributed to the leadership and management arrangements that have not been conducive to delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.

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## **Scale-up, Sustainability and Resilience**

Design elements are in place [i.e. national project execution, significant co-financing from public and private sector actors, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP, supportive institutional actors (the planned RSS and Centre of Excellence hosted by Ho Technical University), a governance mechanism that includes influential actors with a role to play in supporting a circular economy approach for plastics, a financial mechanism through the envisaged plastic waste recycling fund] that contribute to sustaining the project's results and benefits. Meaningful potential for scaling up and resilience can be found in the MESTI/NPAP partnership's Task Force work that has generated inputs, guidance and recommendations through a multistakeholder platform, together with the project's planned investment in pilots, whose scaling up efforts are expected to drive collection to feed the production of value-added products from plastic waste. Measures to mitigate risks in case of a shift in government priorities following the upcoming national general election in December 2024 are to be undertaken during the current year in the form of building MESTI/EPA's capacity to ensure that institutional knowledge remains within the Ministry.

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### **Performance of Partners**

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While MESTI has accepted ownership of the project and put elements in place to assure its high-level consideration within its own political structure, there appears to have been a drop in the interest of other government counterparts who have a role in implementing the NPMP, signalled by their complete absence from the recent PSC meeting, following dissatisfaction expressed in earlier meetings with the project's severe delay in execution to date. While recognizing there is a learning curve involved in the shift to full national execution, the selected arrangements have not been conducive for delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.

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At this mid-term point, the project’s overall performance is rated as ‘Moderately Unsatisfactory’ [this reflects the calculated average of the ratings (i.e. a score of 3.6 out of 6)].

**Table 1** provides the ratings for each of the reviewed criteria<sup>1</sup>. Overall, the project’s risk rating is ‘High’ (see **Table 7**).

Note that the criteria of Gender Mainstreaming and Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) have not been rated. While the application of gender mainstreaming principles has been verified, their operationalisation has yet to materialise in a meaningful way as very little substantive work has been initiated thus far. Therefore, the Review Team does not have sufficient basis to rate the project’s performance on this dimension. While ESS has been suitably addressed during the project’s design and a management plan is in place, this has yet to be operationalised. Therefore, the Review Team does not have sufficient basis to rate the project’s performance on this dimension.

**Table 1 – Summary of Evaluation Criteria and Mandatory Ratings**

Evaluation Criteria		Rating
<b>A</b>	<b>Project Design Assessment</b>	
1	• Overall Design	Satisfactory
2	• Project Results Framework	Satisfactory
<b>B</b>	<b>Project Performance and Progress Towards Results</b>	
1	• Relevance	Satisfactory
2	• Efficiency	Highly Unsatisfactory
3	• Effectiveness and Progress towards Results	Unsatisfactory
<b>C</b>	<b>Project Implementation Management</b>	
1	• Project Management	Unsatisfactory
2	• Results-based Work Planning, M&E Systems, Reporting	Satisfactory
3	• Knowledge Management	Moderately Satisfactory
4	• Financial Management and Co-finance	Moderately Satisfactory
5	• Stakeholder Engagement and Communication	Moderately Satisfactory
<b>D</b>	<b>Scale-up, Sustainability and Resilience</b>	Unsatisfactory
<b>E</b>	<b>Gender Mainstreaming</b>	Not rated
<b>F</b>	<b>Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)</b>	Not rated
<b>G</b>	<b>Performance of Partners</b>	
1	<b>Implementing Agency</b>	Moderately Satisfactory
2	<b>National Counterparts</b>	Moderately Unsatisfactory
3	<b>GEF as Donor</b>	Moderately Satisfactory
<b>Assessment of overall performance</b>		Moderately Unsatisfactory

<sup>1</sup> These ratings follow UNIDO’s 6-point scale based on level of ‘satisfaction’ (refer to **Table 3**). For the criterion of Scale-up, Sustainability, and Resilience, the 6-point rating scale is based on ‘likelihood’.

## Summary of Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Key lessons learned and recommendations (see **Table 2**) are offered to the national executing partner (MESTI/EPA), UNIDO as GEF’s Implementing Agency, the GEF as donor, and other stakeholders consulted during this review with the aim of providing avenues for consolidating and realising the full development impact of this intervention. **Section 12** of this report sets these in context, with priority and responsibility for being taken forward, in which timeframe.

**Table 2 – List of Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

<b>Lesson 1</b> For the GEF Secretariat	In view of the high learning curve effects, national actors who are established for the purpose of policymaking – not the management and execution of development assistance projects – need significant technical backstopping and operational support while undertaking these unfamiliar execution roles for which they are not equipped.
<b>Lesson 2</b> For the GEF Secretariat	The strict separation of implementation and execution has weakened prospects for achieving the full development impact of GEF-funded interventions, in the absence of an explicit mandate and resourcing for carrying out the needed institutional strengthening to support project execution.
<b>Lesson 3</b> For UNIDO	The timely establishment of a Project Management Unit (PMU) provides a key structural element to enable and advance project activities as well as leverage execution support
<b>Recommendation 1</b> For the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and UNIDO	Request a 2-year ‘no cost’ extension of the currently planned timeline.
<b>Recommendation 2</b> For the PMU, with validation by the PSC	Adaptively revise the project’s overall planned activities and the 2024 Work Plan (adding qualitative indicators to gauge relevance, quality, utility) based on an understanding of the current ecosystem landscape, together with leveraging results already produced through the co-financing of development partners and efforts of other actors over the project’s two years of delay.
<b>Recommendation 3</b> For the PMU, with support from UNIDO	Draw on external consultancy experienced in operationalising complex international development projects to provide support in planning the project’s work, developing the needed ToRs, supervising and assessing the delivered results.
<b>Recommendation 4</b> For the PMU	Clarify the expectations, commitments, and conditions of disbursements using tailored ToRs attached to signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the participating pilots that reflect mutual understanding of ways in which their learning and data will be collected and deployed to assist the government in developing and operationalising a responsive circular economy policy.
<b>Recommendation 5</b> For National Project Director, MESTI Chief Director, and the GEF OFP	Strengthen the accountability function of the PSC, together with its ability to sustain the project’s results by re-engaging the interest and active participation of selected government partners and other national actors with a key role to play in operationalising the NPMP.
<b>Recommendation 6</b> For GEF	Adequately resource and embed institutional strengthening within project design, as part of the Implementing Agency’s mandate to enhance prospects for achieving full development impact under modalities of full national project execution.

# 1 Evaluation Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

## 1.1 Mid-Term Review (MTR) Background

- 1) This report relates to the mid-term review (MTR) of the project “*Establishing a Circular Economy Framework for the Plastics Sector in Ghana*” (hereafter, referred to as CEF-PS or simply ‘the project’). Approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) on 8 December 2021, the signature of a Project Execution Agreement (PEA) between UNIDO, as the GEF’s Implementing Agency, and Ghana’s Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (MESTI), as the national Project Executing Entity (PEE), marked the project’s official launch and formal start of execution on 7 June 2022.
- 2) This 60-month full-sized project (FSP) has a USD 7 million cash budget funded by the GEF, complemented by almost USD 82 million in planned co-financing from national sources. The project is currently planned to run until November 2026. See **Annex I – Project Fact Sheet**.
- 3) This MTR was planned and budgeted as part of the project’s design, which is encapsulated in the GEF CEO Endorsement. Commissioned by GEF’s Implementing Agency, in line with UNIDO’s own accountability and organisational learning requirements, this MTR was undertaken at the mid-way point in the planned execution of activities by an independent external team led by Dr. Joyce Miller, working together with national consultant Darko Akomeah of the Mountain Research Institute (MRI) in Ghana.

## 1.2 Purpose, Scope, and Approach

- 4) This MTR had the following aims:
  - Assess the project’s design, performance and progress towards the desired results;
  - Gauge barriers and risks related to project design, management, and performance of partners that may have had an influence on fully achieving the anticipated results by this mid-way point;
  - Identify needed changes and develop recommendations to set the project on track to achieve its expected results in the remaining period of implementation or a justified extension thereof;
  - Draw out lessons and good practices that could be used to enhance design and implementation of similar current and future projects.
- 5) In terms of scope, this assessment covers the project’s first two years of execution until June 2024, with reference to performance on key indicators outlined in the project results framework (see **Table 4**).
- 6) This MTR was designed and conducted following UNIDO’s Evaluation Policy<sup>2</sup> and Evaluation Manual<sup>3</sup>, considering requirements for UNIDO’s mid-term review reporting to the GEF<sup>4</sup>. The Review Team operated under the responsibility of UNIDO Project Manager Müge Dolun, within UNIDO’s Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency Unit, in liaison with UNIDO’s Independent Evaluation Division.
- 7) A participatory approach was used whereby key stakeholders were kept informed and consulted throughout the process. Stakeholders were also provided with formal opportunities to clarify facts (e.g. through feedback on preliminary findings presented during the PSC’s third meeting on 9 July 2024 in Accra and on the draft MTR Report subsequently circulated later in July 2024).
- 8) To triangulate findings, data was collected from multiple sources:
  - Desk review: of key documentation (see **Annex III**), including CEO Endorsement, Stakeholder Engagement Plan, Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting minutes, progress reports, monitoring data, work plans, cooperation agreements, documentation related to the envisaged pilots, relevant websites and correspondence, media searches, etc.;

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<sup>2</sup> UNIDO (2015). Director General’s Bulletin: Evaluation Policy (UNIDO/DGB/(M).98/Rev.1)

<sup>3</sup> UNIDO Evaluation Manual (2023) [Evaluation manual | UNIDO](#)

<sup>4</sup> Guidelines for Mid-Term Review (MTR) report preparation and submission to the GEF (21 May 2021)

- **Remote Interviews:** were carried out during May to July 2024 with 14 global stakeholders (50% women, 50% men), including relevant UNIDO staff and representatives of actors involved in implementing projects designed to support management and circularity of plastics in Ghana.
  - **In-Situ Interviews:** were carried out face-to-face during a field mission (30 June to 9 July 2024) with 24 national stakeholders (37.5% women, 62.5% men), including the National PEE, Project Management Unit (PMU), ecosystem collaborators, and private sector actors selected during the design phase to engage in pilots. See **Annex IV – Stakeholders Consulted**. Protocols tailored to respondent cohorts were developed and used to guide these semi-structured interviews; an example is included in **Annex V**.
  - **Project Steering Committee meeting:** convened in Accra at the end of the field mission (9 July 2024), this session provided an opportunity to gather nuances and observe the dynamics and interactions of PSC members. This meeting also provided a timely opportunity to clarify facts and deepen understanding of main areas identified for potential lessons learned and recommendations.
- 9) To preserve the evaluation’s integrity and enhance freedom of expression, stakeholders were assured of confidentiality. Evidence supporting the assessment has not been directly attributed to individuals or their institutions during the data collection phase as well as in reporting the MTR’s results.
- 10) The quality of data analysis was assured using QDA Miner software. This tool was used to systematically analyse, cross-reference, and comment data gathered through interviews. This evidence-based approach was used to develop insights into the project’s main findings, key strengths and shortfalls. This analysis formed the basis for crystallising the findings and rating the required criteria, using UNIDO’s scale, as shown in **Table 3**. This effort formed the basis for developing lessons and recommendations for organisational learning and operational improvement.

**Table 3 – Rating Scale Used to Assess Project Performance**

Rating			Definition	Category
6	HS	Highly Satisfactory	Level of achievement presents no shortcoming (90-100% achievement rate of planned expectations and targets)	SATISFACTORY
5	S	Satisfactory	Level of achievement presents minor shortcomings (70-89% achievement rate of planned expectations and targets)	
4	MS	Moderately Satisfactory	Level of achievement presents moderate shortcomings (50-69% achievement rate of planned expectations and targets)	
3	MU	Moderately Unsatisfactory	Level of achievement presents some significant shortcomings (30-49% achievement rate of planned expectations and targets)	UNSATISFACTORY
2	U	Unsatisfactory	Level of achievement presents major shortcomings (10-29% achievement rate of planned expectations and targets)	
1	HU	Highly Unsatisfactory	Level of achievement presents severe shortcomings (0-9% achievement rate of planned expectations and targets)	

## 2 Context and Background

- 11) Nestled along the curve of the Gulf of Guinea, Ghana serves as a bridge to the countries of West Africa with Burkina Faso to the north, Cote d’Ivoire to the west while Togo to the east. With a population of close to 35 million, growing at 2.2% per annum<sup>5</sup>, Ghana is widely regarded as a stable democracy, economic powerhouse, and a key player on the African continent. However, its fast-growing economy has also been accompanied by a burgeoning plastic waste problem.
- 12) The widespread use of plastic accelerated in the past few decades, driven by its versatility, durability, and affordability. This surge in production led to a corresponding increase in plastic waste. The rapidly increasing level of plastic pollution represents a serious global environmental issue with adverse environmental, social, economic and health effects. Under a business-as-usual scenario and in the

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/ghana-population/>.

absence of necessary interventions, the amount of plastic waste entering aquatic ecosystems was expected to nearly triple from its 2016 level to 23–37 million tonnes per year by 2040<sup>6</sup>.

- 13) At present, Ghana generates 1.1 million tons of plastic waste per year, with just 5% collected for recycling<sup>7</sup>. Under a business-as-usual scenario this was projected to rise to 1.3 billion metric tons by 2050<sup>8</sup>. The prevailing ‘take, make, use, dispose’ linear model puts plastic pollution in landfills, oceans, and the food chain. Ghana’s alarming rise of plastic waste was evident across sectors: industrial (plastic processing, manufacturing, packaging industries), commercial (workshops, wholesalers, retailers) and municipal, with household consumption of single-use plastics as a major culprit (particularly shopping bags, water sachets). While the ability to produce and consume plastic masks, gloves and other personal items skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2022, the ability to manage the resulting plastic waste did not. The substitution of traditional cultural packaging (e.g. leaf wrappers) for food and beverages with what was perceived to be more hygienic, convenient packaging, together with the plastic bag’s association with prosperity, have created a sanitation crisis as Ghana’s cities struggle to manage the resulting plastic waste.
- 14) Only a fraction of Ghana’s plastic waste is collected, reused and/or recycled, meaning that plastics often ended up in uncontrolled landfills or burned in the open, together with solid waste. The country’s scrapyards, Agbogbloshie<sup>9</sup> (near Accra) was notorious for its detrimental effects on human health and the environment resulting, in part, from burning plastic from exported electronic waste. This led to unintentional emissions of persistent organic pollutants (u-POPs), which pose severe threats to human health and the environment. Plastic waste was also dumped into marine environments, with macro- and micro-plastics visible along shorelines, in coastal waters, and estuaries. In 2022, Ghana’s fishermen reported that “for some years now, whenever we cast our nets, all we catch are plastics”<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, Accra’s frequent floods had been linked, in part, to plastic-clogged drainage and waterways<sup>11</sup>.
- 15) In October 2019, Ghana became the first African nation and the second country globally to join the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP) – an initiative of the World Economic Forum “to translate plastic pollution commitments into concrete action”<sup>12</sup>. Under this framework, in 2020, Ghana established its National Plastic Action Partnership (NPAP) to support the country’s transition to a fully circular economy for plastics. In February 2021, MESTI announced the National Plastics Management Policy (NPMP, which was revised and approved in May 2022). The NPMP was designed to bring focus and cohesion across the proliferation of policies and programmes spanning public and private sectors to address the country’s rapidly growing plastic pollution crisis<sup>13</sup>, while also putting in place responsive policies to operationalise circular economy practices in the plastics value chain<sup>14</sup>. In November 2021, Ghana launched its National Action Roadmap, which elaborated how plastics would be managed across the product lifecycle and how plastic leakage into oceans and waterways would be eliminated.
- 16) Against this background, the GEF-funded project was conceived during 2019-2020 with the objective to

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<sup>6</sup> UNEP (2024). Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution. <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution>

<sup>7</sup> World Economic Forum, “Ghana’s Challenge”. <https://www.globalplasticaction.org/ghana>

<sup>8</sup> Global Plastics Action Partnership (12 October 2022), “Trade and the Circular Economy: A Deep Dive into Plastics Action in Ghana <https://www.globalplasticaction.org/case-study-details/aJY680000080MHGA2>

<sup>9</sup> It should be mentioned that the so-called Agbogbloshie (= Old Fadama) scrapyards was evicted in July 2021 and does not exist any longer. Plastic waste (including tires) originated there primarily from the dismantling of end-of-life vehicles and – in a minor dimension – of electronic and electronic goods, reaching their useful life. The narrative that this e-waste was imported to Ghana does not consider the fact that most of these items were discarded in Ghana.

<sup>10</sup> The World (25 February 2022). “Ghana’s Fishermen are Drowning in Plastic. The Govt is Trying to Tackle Pollution Before It’s Too Late”. <https://theworld.org/stories/2022/02/25/drowned-plastics-ghana-thinking-outside-box-tackle-pollution>

<sup>11</sup> Plastic Pollution Coalition (21 June 2015). “Ghana’s Growth Spurs Uncontrollable Trash”.

<https://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/blog/2015/8/16/ghanas-growth-spurs-uncontrollable-trash>

<sup>12</sup> World Economic Forum, “Ghana Becomes First African Nation to Join Ambitious Partnership to End Plastic Pollution”.

<https://www.weforum.org/press/2019/10/ghanabecomes-first-african-nation-to-join-ambitious-partnership-to-end-plastic-pollution>

<sup>13</sup> MESTI (12 February 2021). “Revised National Plastics Management Policy”. <https://mesti.gov.gh/documents/revised-national-plastics-management-policy/#:~:text=The%20purpose%20of%20the%20National,plastics%20pollution%20crisis%20in%20Ghana.>

<sup>14</sup> ¶21 in CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

strengthen Ghana’s capacity to transition to a circular economy framework that:

- facilitates sustainable plastics management through operationalising the National Plastic Action Partnership (NPAP-GPAP) and the National Plastic Management Policy (NPMP);
- ends marine plastic pollution;
- reduces unintentional emissions of persistent organic pollutants (u-POPs)
- addresses plastic leakage into the country’s oceans and waterways.

## 2.1 Project Concept

- 17) Given the long-term vision (impact) for Ghana to “establish a circular economy that delivers environmental, social and economic benefits equally and becomes a model to replicate around the world”, the project had an objective to “strengthen national capacity to transition to a circular economy framework that addresses plastic leakage into the county’s oceans and waterways, facilitates sustainable plastics management through operationalising the National Plastic Action Partnership (NPAP) and National Plastic Management Policy (NPMP), and ultimately ends marine plastic pollution and reduces u-POPs”. In this light, the project was constituted by four components, which were populated by sets of outputs (with key performance indicators/targets), underpinned by activities, as shown in **Table 4**.

**Table 4 – Project Results Framework**

<b>OVERALL OBJECTIVE</b>	Strengthen national capacity to transition to a circular economy framework that addresses plastic leakage into the county’s oceans and waterways, facilitates sustainable plastics management through operationalising the National Plastic Action Partnership (NPAP) and the National Plastic Management Policy (NPMP), and ultimately ends marine plastic pollution and reduces u-POPs
<b>Component 1 – Establishing an enabling framework for a circular economy in plastics management</b>	
<b>OUTCOME 1.1</b> Legal and institutional framework realigned to support a circular economy in the plastics sector under Ghana’s National Plastics Management Policy and the NPAP	<b>OUTPUTS</b> 1.1.1 Situational analysis: plastic flows assessed for community-level archetypes 1.1.2 Legal and institutional capacities for circular economy in plastics sector assessed 1.1.3 National implementation/actionable plans and technical guidelines on bottom-up approach to circular economy in plastics and marine litter management developed in close cooperation with NPAP and within context of the NPMP 1.1.4 Responsive policies and regulations amended to institute and operationalise circular economy practices and business models, including green procurement procedures and quality standards 1.1.5 Resource Recovery Secretariat (RRS) established
<b>Component 2 – Capacity building and pilot projects, including public-private partnerships (PPP), and district and household partnerships, technology transfer using BAT/BEP for a circular economy in plastics management</b>	
<b>OUTCOME 2.1</b> Capacity built among all relevant stakeholders to ensure integration and mainstreaming of circular economy approaches within plastics management	<b>OUTPUTS</b> 2.1.1 Stakeholders from the public sector (including targeted, municipalities, industrial private sector associations and public) trained on respective policies, regulations and technical guidelines within the NPMP and NPAP National Action Roadmap, including the gender dimension 2.1.2 Capacities of private sector strengthened at all stages of the value chain on new responsive regulations, procurement procedures or quality standards in view of implementing circular economy practices in the industrial sector
<b>OUTCOME 2.2</b> Pilot projects and their supporting collection networks implemented to deliver circular economy benefits	<b>OUTPUTS</b> 2.2.1 Sustainable financing, business models and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), and district-community partnerships (DCP) developed and applied in the pilots 2.2.2 Pilot projects for reducing plastics from fossil feedstock implemented 2.2.3 Pilot projects for reducing plastic leakage into nature implemented 2.2.4 Pilot projects for demonstrating effective after-use plastic economy implemented
<b>Component 3 – Coordination, communication strategy and knowledge management among key partners and stakeholders for achieving Ghana’s NPAP-GPAP and NPMPs objectives</b>	
<b>OUTCOME 3.1</b> Coordinated action and synergies with key international, regional and national partners and stakeholders ensured to achieve Ghana’s NPAP-GPAP and NPMP objectives	<b>OUTPUTS</b> 3.1.1 Enhance continuity of Ghana’s NPAP-GPAP Secretariat to improve transparency, accountability and coordination of the various legislative instruments, capacity building efforts and pilot demonstration activities for a circular plastics economy framework 3.1.2 Enhance RRS’ capacity for coordination of circular economy and plastics partnerships, cooperation frameworks, and agreements within the NPMP implementation objectives
<b>OUTCOME 3.2</b>	<b>OUTPUTS</b>

Communication strategy in place to raise awareness about NPAP-GPAP, NPMP and relevant plastic topics	3.2.1 Communication strategy along circular economy perspective developed and implemented to raise awareness of negative impacts of plastic pollution on natural environmental systems (marine litter, POPs, GHG emissions and human health) towards consumer behaviour change
<b>OUTCOME 3.3</b> Knowledge management set up to share project information and knowledge locally, nationally, and globally	<b>OUTPUTS</b>
	3.3.1 Effective knowledge management done through RRS, NPAP-GPAP, and UNDP platform sharing experience, raising awareness, promoting replication and best practices on the national level 3.3.2 A knowledge exchange platform to promote national & regional partnerships, learn from other countries' experiences, innovation, and share state-of-the-art knowledge products related to circular plastics framework strengthened and disseminated amongst GPAP countries and partners in the region and other key stakeholders

**Component 4 – Monitoring, evaluation, and replication**

<b>OUTCOME 4.1</b> Effective and efficient implementation of the project based on GEF and UNIDO requirements	<b>OUTPUTS</b>
	4.1.1 The project and its activities are monitored and evaluated on a periodic basis in line with GEF, UNIDO and Government requirements
	4.1.2 Project monitoring plan designed and executed 4.1.3 Mid-term review and terminal project evaluations conducted

Source: CEO Endorsement, GEF ID 10401

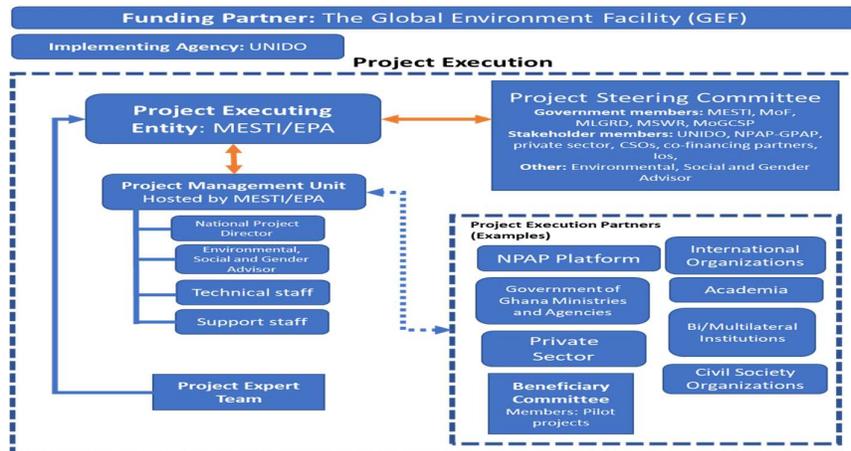
18) At the time of the project’s design, the National Plastic Management Plan was perceived as insufficient to truly motivate plastic waste reduction and recycling. Inadequate infrastructure for plastics reuse, remanufacturing and recycling, coupled with lack of public awareness and education on proper waste management were identified as hindering progress. By supporting the Ghanaian government in updating its institutional and legal frameworks to incentivize the plastic sector’s switch to circular economy, improve enforcement mechanisms, and kick-off circular economy approaches through demonstration activities, this project aimed to significantly reduce plastic waste pollution as well as position Ghana as a circular economy hub that could be looked to as a model for replication the world over.

**2.2 Arrangements for Operationalisation and Governance**

**2.2.1 Implementation**

- 19) The project’s institutional arrangement reflects GEF’s long-time policy on the separation of implementation and execution responsibilities (see **Figure 1**). Under GEF’s 7<sup>th</sup> replenishment cycle (GEF-7), this separation is being strictly enforced, meaning that GEF’s Implementing Agencies (UNIDO, in this project’s case) could no longer be involved in the execution of projects they designed. In a break from previous practice, the GEF Secretariat has insisted that project execution be carried out by third parties. This includes international non-governmental organisations, regional centres, and national partners.
- 20) As GEF’s Implementing Agency for this project, UNIDO managed its overall budget, supervised execution, and held ultimate responsibility for monitoring, evaluation, and implementation.

**Figure 1 – Implementation, Execution, and Governance Structure**



Source: CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

### 2.2.2 Execution

- 21) Following the Ghanaian government's advocacy to the GEF Secretariat for a project to address the country's mounting plastic pollution problem, UNIDO was selected as GEF's Implementing Agency and MESTI was selected as its National Project Executing Entity (National PEE). During the project's 1<sup>st</sup> Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting, UNIDO's role was likened to that of "*an architect*", with MESTI described as "*the constructor responsible for assembling the building*".
- 22) MESTI's positive assessment under the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) conducted by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2016 enabled its selection as National PEE, thereby making MESTI responsible for the project's full execution and daily management<sup>15</sup>. This responsibility was formalised in the Project Execution Agreement (PEA) signed in June 2022 between UNIDO and MESTI, acting in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- 23) In terms of leadership and management arrangements, the CEO Endorsement indicated that a National Project Director was to be appointed to guide the Project Management Unit (PMU). Staffed with a National Project Coordinator (as an in-kind contribution of MESTI), an Environmental, Social and Gender Advisor (jointly funded by NPAP and the project), M&E and other experts, supported by administrative and communication coordinators, as determined by the National PEE, the PMU was to be responsible for:
  - assigning and supervising project activities
  - recruiting national consultants
  - coordination with stakeholders, donors, the Implementing Agency, relevant national agencies and the private sector, including the Ghana NPAP
  - preparing terms of reference (ToRs) for project activities
  - reviewing project progress reports and Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) data,
  - supervising project procurement and financial resources
  - organizing and convening project coordination stakeholder meetings
  - reviewing project outputs and outcomes.

### 2.2.3 Governance

- 24) Chaired by MESTI, the PSC was the highest form of project governance in the country. According to the Project Implementation Manual (PIM) prepared by MESTI (July 2024), PSC members spanned a breadth of government partners: EPA, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC); Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI); Ministry of Local Government, Decentralization and Rural Development (MLGDRD); Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR); Ministry of Finance (MOF); Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD); Ministry of Health (MOH); Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP); Ghana Recycling Initiative by Private Enterprise (GRIPE); and observers including NPAP and UNIDO.
- 25) NPAP's participation in the PSC was expected to improve coordination and communication amongst plastic and circular economy stakeholders<sup>16</sup>. UNIDO's inclusion was expected to support the National PEE by providing oversight, support, advice and promoting a cohesive approach amongst relevant projects.
- 26) Following a ToR drafted by MESTI, the PSC was expected to review and monitor progress of project execution, approve annual work plans, provide strategic advice/guidance, facilitate coordination amongst project partners, ensure national ownership, and sustain the project's results and benefits.
- 27) To date, the PSC had met three times (28 April 2023, 23 November 2023, 9 July 2024). Minutes of its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting acknowledged delays in execution (e.g. delays in visiting the 12 pilot sites, attributed to "*procurement bottlenecks at MESTI*". A PSC participant from the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquaculture Development (MOFAD) expressed dissatisfaction with the delay. During this meeting, the GEF Operational Focal Point (OFP) highlighted the project's importance to Ghana.

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<sup>15</sup> See ¶109 in the CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

<sup>16</sup> See ¶113 in the CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

### 3 Findings: Project Design Assessment

#### 3.1 Project Design

Finding 1: Aligned with growing global concern regarding plastic pollution and Ghana’s interest to become a replicable model for dealing with its burgeoning waste problem, the project’s design is considered sound, appropriate, technically feasible, and suitably resourced to contribute to its long-term objective to transition the country to a circular economy framework for managing plastics. Validated through stakeholder consultation during its preparation – which ensured the project’s relevance and opportunity to leverage efforts of other development actors – the design reflects a holistic approach to strengthen enabling conditions to incentivize the switch to circular economy and build technical capacities for its adoption, while supporting synergies and collaboration through knowledge sharing.

- 28) The Review Team has a positive view regarding the appropriateness of the intervention for achieving its development objective within the planned 5-year timeframe (2021-2026). This assessment is based on:
- Project content and logic are sound, drawing synergistic power from its constituent components, with adequate resourcing.
  - Use of a root cause analysis to deduce outputs (and their underpinning activities) that would be produced using the project’s support to overcome the identified barriers and gaps, thereby driving outcomes seen as key to establishing a circular economy framework for the plastics sector in Ghana.
  - Direct linkage to national (¶43) and global (¶42) challenges and priorities (deduced from the compelling justification in the CEO Endorsement).
  - Key parties with an interest and role to play were engaged from the outset. During preparation, the project framework and execution arrangements were discussed with MESTI and other stakeholders, including the pilot companies “to provide feedback on the project design and project activities to ensure cohesion”<sup>17</sup>. Such an approach builds common understanding and heightens relevance (¶43).
- 29) A large portion i.e. 62% (USD 4.35 million) of the project’s cash budget is allocated to pilots. These are expected to generate meaningful global environmental benefits (GEBs) and showcase replicable, scalable examples of circular plastic solutions and innovation. This dimension signals the pivotal role that private sector actors are expected to play in shifting to circular economy.
- 30) The Review Team uncovered some dissatisfaction with the fact that actors involved in collection were overlooked in the selection of pilots. A stakeholder explained: “If you want to talk about plastics, you need to talk about collection. If there are no waste pickers, there are no recyclers. If there are no waste pickers, all the landfills will be full in a short time”. However, the logic of the project’s pilots focus on downstream actors is understandable in terms of creating a ‘pull’ effect, where the demand for recyclable materials is expected to drive improvements in collection efficiency.
- 31) To strengthen relevance, the project’s design considered activities already underway or planned. Although travel was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic, remote stakeholder consultations were carried. Review Team interviews with World Bank, GIZ, North Rhine-Westphalia-Ghana Partnership, Basel-Rotterdam-Stockholm (BRS) Convention Secretariat, World Economic Forum/GPAP and NPAP Ghana confirmed “close exchange” with UNIDO and input to “avoid duplication”, “build on their experience”, and “identify linkages”. A stakeholder asserted “this project was taking over where we left off”. Another explained that the GEF/UNIDO project notion “is to be part of that ecosystem: to support activities that couldn’t be completed or could be continued; for example, through training and capacity-building”.

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<sup>17</sup> Section A, after ¶4 in the CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

- 32) The intention to build on other actors' contributions is seen through co-financing of USD 500,000 from GIZ<sup>18</sup>; USD 500,000 from Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (related to Norad-1 project on marine litter/microplastics implemented by BRS Convention Secretariat); and USD 600,000 from GPAP (related to its ongoing plastic waste management activities in Ghana). Furthermore, explicit provisions were included in the project's results framework to build on deliverables and recommendations of these actors (e.g. Activity 1.1.4.1. ...implement remaining outstanding recommendations of Norad-1 project; Output 3.1.1. Enhance continuity of Ghana's NPAP-GPAP Secretariat'; Output 3.1.1. Effective knowledge management done through RRS, NPAP-GPAP, UNDP platform sharing experience).
- 33) Working back from this desired final impact, the project's Theory of Change (TOC) is comprehensively elaborated (see **Annex VI**). It demonstrates how the project is expected to lead to its results by starting with the intended long-term impact and working backwards through the necessary preconditions (intermediate states) to identify the causal pathways, which, if followed, will contribute to the desired end state, which represents a transformative change. The TOC is perceived to be quite robust, based on the Review Team's analysis contained in **Table 5**. Its visualisation in a single page shows how this project's support feeds its direct outcomes into the larger ecosystem, supporting medium-term and intermediate outcomes that can be expected to strengthen national capacity to transition to a circular economy framework for managing plastics, as a way to deal with a critical challenge facing the country (¶12).

**Table 5 – Theory of Change (TOC) Assessment**

Dimension	Remarks	Assessment
Long-Term Impact	Clearly stated, measurable, realistic. Reflects national government's vision for Ghana to become a replicable model, based on successfully implanting and operationalising a circular approach to manage plastic.	Satisfactory
Impact Drivers	Visualised in terms of four levers influencing broader adoption. Seen as under the influence of the project, its implementing partners and relevant stakeholders, these drivers are expected to transmit vital catalytic power through the impact pathways and contribute to realising the project's contribution to the desired long-term impact.	Satisfactory
Intermediate Outcomes	These are suitably linked to four levers (replication, scalability, sustainability, mainstreaming) that can be expected to spur broader adoption of the attitudes and behaviour that need to evolve in order to implant and operationalise the envisaged circular economy framework.	Satisfactory
Direct Outcomes	These six direct outcomes reflect a combination of support areas that have proven successful in development cooperation contexts to achieve desired results within the planned timeframe.	Satisfactory
Outputs	These reflect the granular analysis conducted during project preparation to elaborate activities to address the numerous barriers to overcome in order to shift towards reducing plastic use and adopt a circular approach to deal with plastic waste.	Satisfactory
Assumptions	Their numbering and placement facilitate understanding of external factors that could meaningfully influence the realisation of the intended long-term impact.	Satisfactory
Monitoring, Evaluation and Replication	Indications (through numbering, placement) of key leverage points to track stakeholder engagement, performance data, use of project knowledge reinforce importance of establishing and carrying out monitoring from project's outset. This visualisation highlights key points for data collection to confirm that the project is on track and/or needs recalibration due to shortfalls, etc.	Satisfactory
Risks	Concisely stated and prominently displayed, although not exhaustive as key risks related to the National PEE's leadership and management capacities and the consequent need for institutional strengthening were not identified yet underpin the project's severe delay to date.	Moderately Satisfactory
Causal links	Implied by the visualisation; explained in the narrative.	Satisfactory

<sup>18</sup> The activities developed by GIZ and financed by the state chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) since 2018 under the umbrella of the Ghana-NRW partnership together with local partners (NGOs, universities, start-up hubs, MESTI/EPA) spanning implementation of stakeholder fora, piloting incentive and take-back schemes for PET-bottles in different locations, a technical study visit to NRW on managing plastic waste, an event at 'Plastics Recycling World Exhibition' in NRW, up to a process for enhancing capacities to develop and manage an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)-system for plastics in Ghana (due to the COVID-pandemic, the capacity development on EPR was implemented through webinars). The findings and recommendations were shared with MESTI, UNIDO, and World Bank. These activities were planned and implemented autonomously by GIZ and coordinated where possible and necessary with Ghanaian and international partners, like MESTI and UNIDO. Following a request by MESTI, GIZ granted MESTI the possibility to contribute the funds used by GIZ for its projects as co-financing to the GEF project.

Narrative	'If', 'then', 'because' structure transmits intervention logic, linked to desired long-term impacts.	Satisfactory
Visualisation	While challenging to digest at first glance, close reading of the concisely formulated text, together with use of colour, positioning, and links guide the mapping of underpinning Outputs to Outcomes within the ecosystem intended to evolve towards a circular approach for plastics management.	Satisfactory

- 34) Several risks were analysed regarding climate change, social and environmental effects, and health consequences that could influence the project's longer-term prospects. The latter especially focussed on the pandemic that had struck during the project's preparation, generating 51,225 cases in Ghana by November 2020 and increasing the country's waste generation by 20%, following a dramatic upsurge in single use plastics<sup>19</sup>. Mitigation measures were suitably elaborated for each major risk that was identified.
- 35) Adequate M&E activities are included with clear responsibility to ensure effective project execution, identify risks and mitigation strategies, and regularly communicate progress towards results. M&E is suitably provisioned, with USD 320,000 (representing 4.6% of the project's cash budget), supplemented by over USD 1 million of in-kind contributions from UNIDO and the National PEE over the 5-year period. Regular monitoring exercises were to be conducted, tracking tools were to be developed and used, and annual Project Implementation Reports (PIRs) were to be elaborated by the PMU. A mid-term and terminal evaluation were planned and budgeted accordingly.

**The rating for Project Design is 'Satisfactory'**

### 3.2 Project Results Framework

Finding 2: The results framework is clear, realistic and measurable with a logical flow of outputs to outcomes to impact, incorporating gender-sensitivity and the synergistic power of its constituent components. Envisaged outcomes reflect tangible changes in attitude, capacities, and behaviour that can be reasonably expected to influence the wider ecosystem towards the desired change to circular economy. This results framework can be easily transferred into a M&E plan to facilitate monitoring.

- 36) The results chain is clear. It is formulated at the appropriate level, realistic and measurable, with a logical flow of outputs to outcomes to impact. The project's outputs are broken down into detailed, often quite specific activities. This pragmatic approach allowed UNIDO to successfully transform the overall project into 'contractable' and 'recruitable' pieces supporting the PEA signed with MESTI (¶121).
- 37) As opposed to simply reformulating or summarizing lower-level activity-oriented results, which is characteristic of a weaker results framework, this project's outcomes reflect changes in attitude and behaviour to influence the ecosystem (i.e. Ghana's legal/institutional framework will be 'realigned', new capacities that facilitate adoption will be 'built', pilot projects will 'deliver benefits'. Together, these will presumably incentivize the switch to circular economy for plastic. This would be a transformative change.
- 38) The project results framework relies on output and outcome indicators to be used during monitoring to gauge performance and alert to the need to undertake corrective action. Primarily quantitative indicators have been elaborated, together with numerical targets in many cases (e.g. Output 1.1.2 has a target to achieve "2 completed assessment reports on legislative and policy initiatives for a circular economy").
- 39) Considering the project's expected contributions to GEF-7 core indicators for area of marine habitat under improved practices, GHG emissions mitigated, and reduction/avoidance of POPs emissions, it is reassuring to see that baselines have been included in the results framework that will facilitate the incremental benefit that can be attributed to the project's support. For other project aspects, baselines of 'none' or 'does not exist' reflect the notion that this project's results will add incremental value.
- 40) In view of the targets set for men and women in both the formal and informal sector to co-benefit from the GEF's investment in this project, the results framework does contain a sprinkling of gender-sensitive indicators. These give direction to project executors to ensure that both men and women benefit from

<sup>19</sup> See ¶106 in the CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

the project's support when it comes to staffing (e.g. of the RSS) and capacity building.

- 41) Sources of data to verify the status of indicators at output- and outcome-levels are elaborated in the project results framework, together with assumptions. This approach reflects good practice for translation into the M&E plan and can be expected to facilitate the project's monitoring.

**The rating for the Project Results Framework is 'Satisfactory'**

## 4 Findings: Project Performance and Progress towards Results

### 4.1 Relevance

**Finding 3:** The project's outcomes are highly relevant to global interest in implanting effective approaches to deal with the growing problem of plastic pollution affecting both terrestrial and marine environments. While activities need to be reviewed, refined, and consolidated, given the contributions of other development actors that have materialised over the past two years, the project is still well-aligned with Ghana's development priorities, the interests of private sector beneficiaries to innovate and scale up efforts to shift to circular economy, and the country's ambition/vision to function as a showcase in proactively addressing the plastic waste menace. The project is consistent with the donor's priorities for circular economy as well as sustainable production, consumption and environmentally-sound disposal, and it is fully pertinent to UNIDO's mandate for promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development.

#### Global Priorities

- 42) The project is consistent with growing global consciousness of the need to manage plastic waste pollution harming ecosystems, wildlife, and human health, with its far-reaching environmental, economic, and social implications. The project is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which represent a universal call to action to achieve a more sustainable future for all, leaving no one behind. The project directly supports SDG #13 Climate Action (by reducing greenhouse gas emissions from landfilling and incineration of plastic waste); SDG #9 Industry, Innovation, Infrastructure; SDG #8 Decent Work (generating employment, income, and innovation through the project's pilots); and SDG #12 Responsible Consumption and Production (by implanting circular approaches to deal with plastic waste, replace plastic with renewables developed from casava starch as seen in a pilot). The project also contributes to SDG #5 Gender Equality through training public and private sector actors on gender dimensions of relevant policies, regulations, and technical guidelines in the NPMP and NPAP National Action Roadmap.

#### National Priorities

- 43) Through its aim to implant a circular economy approach – with collateral benefits in terms of using waste as a resource, job creation, and reduction of environmental impact – the project is seen as highly aligned with the urgent national need to address to Ghana's alarming rise of plastic waste (¶12). The CEO Endorsement (see ¶120) enumerated a set of national strategies, plans, reports and assessments showing the project's consistency with national priorities, policies, and commitments. Interviewees described the project as *"one of the actionable projects to implement the NPMP's implementation plan"* and confirmed that it directly supported MESTI in implementing policy to drive the needed behaviour change for Ghanaians to adopt circular principles and practices, in a context where the concept of circular economy was portrayed as *"very new"* with *"many people not comfortable with buying used products, especially for plastics"*. Stakeholder consultations during the project's inception phase reconfirmed its relevance; these *"yielded positive signals and interest"* in managing the country's plastic waste.
- 44) In helping to operationalise the country's NPMP, this project was also valued for its support *"so that Ghana can be a top player that others will look to"* – referring to the national vision of becoming a replicable model in the plastics waste management domain, for Africa and beyond (¶17). In light of ongoing negotiations regarding a global treaty on plastics<sup>20</sup>, this project is expected to generate

<sup>20</sup> During the UN Environmental Assembly in March 2022, 175 nations voted in favour of adopting a legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution globally. While negotiations were still ongoing, the goal was to create an enabling framework to facilitate the global transformation of the plastics system through circular economy. See <https://www.unep.org/inc-plastic-pollution>

*“examples of how things can happen in this part of the continent”.*

#### **UNIDO Alignment**

- 45) The project fully reflects UNIDO’s commitment to promoting circular economy as an alternative to the traditional linear economic model where resources are kept in use for as long as possible, maximum value is extracted from them, and waste is relocated from the end of the supply chain to the beginning, thereby giving the used materials a new life<sup>21</sup>. UNIDO’s active promotion of a circular economy for plastics stemmed from its potential to simultaneously address environmental pollution, create economic opportunities, and promote social well-being. This approach aligns closely with the agency’s broader mandate to foster inclusive and sustainable industrial development.
- 46) UNIDO’s longstanding experience, reputation, and competence in technical cooperation related to policy support, technology transfer, innovation, and capacity building for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements could all be leveraged under this project’s framework. UNIDO’s Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency Unit, under which this project was managed, acted as the focal point for the agency’s circular economy activities. Currently, UNIDO implemented projects that address various building blocks of circular economy; for example: supporting resource-efficient and cleaner manufacturing of products, while other interventions were helping to develop safe, easy-to-recycle products with longer lifetimes, and still others dealt with the recovery of resources at the end of a product’s life<sup>22</sup>.

#### **Donor Alignment**

- 47) The project is fully aligned with GEF’s promotion of circular economy approaches. Interviewees described this GEF-7 funded project as a ‘lighthouse’ – expected to generate valuable lessons from Ghana’s experience in putting an enabling regulatory environment in place to induce change and the efforts of industry actors to reduce the nation’s plastic pollution footprint – that could inform the upcoming GEF-8’s Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program<sup>23</sup>.
- 48) The CEO Endorsement also described the project’s alignment with the GEF’s Chemical and Waste Program 1 on Industrial Chemicals, pointing to the investment in developing financing/business models and pilot demonstrations that support a broad shift to sustainable production, consumption, and environmentally-sound disposal patterns. Furthermore, the project was closely aligned with the GEF’s International Waters focal area, which recognizes the need to transform the entire life cycle of plastics to reduce marine pollution. A large portion of marine litter, in the form of micro-plastics, derives from land-based activities and should consequently also be seen in the context of waste management issues.
- 49) Concerning the project’s situation at present, all stakeholders readily acknowledged that it had not progressed according to its planned timeline. There was also concern regarding duplication due to the efforts of several development partners in the plastics and circular economy space over the past two years, during the project’s inability to advance. These aspects led the project to being classified as at ‘moderate risk’ at the submission of the first PIR (until June 2023) and subsequent calls to review, refine, and consolidate its planned activities, in the spirit of adaptive management.
- 50) The Review Team’s interviews confirmed that the project was nevertheless still perceived to be relevant as international partners, like UNIDO and GEF, were counted on by national actors to *“bring in projects that have the resources to help implement the national plastics policy”*. Stakeholders observed that Ghana *“still has a huge plastic problem”, “there’s still so much to be done”,* and that while other projects have *“done bits and pieces”,* this project was still expected to help the country *“make important strides”*. A

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.unido.org/unido-circular-economy>

<sup>22</sup> UNIDO (2024). Circular Economy: Designing Out Waste and Pollution <https://www.unido.org/topics/circular-economy>

<sup>23</sup> GEF (September 2022). Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program. This funds global, regional, national, and city-level projects with the aim of establishing metrics, benchmarks and standards; addressing the trade of plastic products and waste; advising businesses on moving toward circular practices through innovation; sharing best practices; and raising awareness of circular economy opportunities and the business case for adopting circular practices [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/GEF\\_IP\\_PlasticPollution\\_2022\\_10\\_12\\_0.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10/GEF_IP_PlasticPollution_2022_10_12_0.pdf)

stakeholder asserted that “if we’re able to get the project moving, that will draw more interest”; another maintained that “each component is still relevant and can really contribute”.

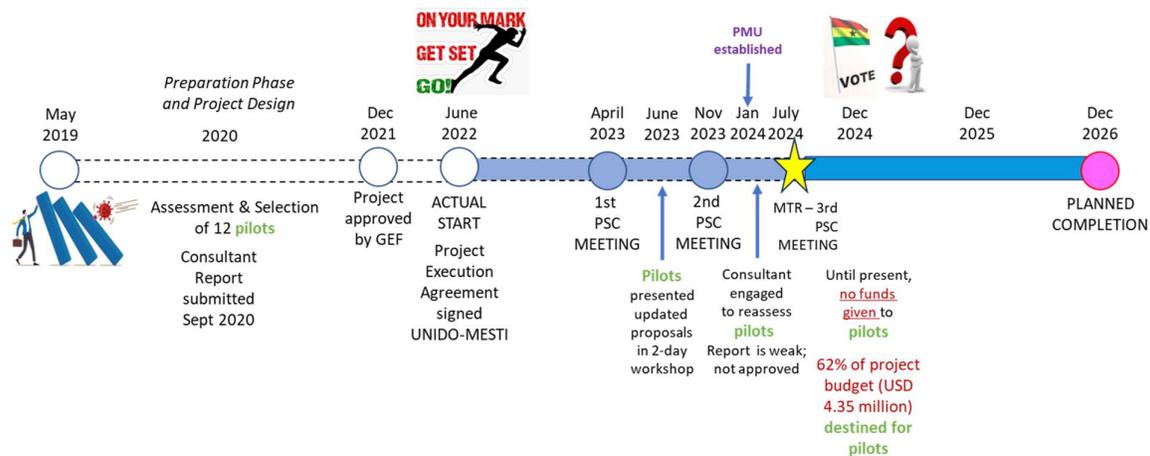
**The overall rating for Relevance is ‘Satisfactory’**

#### 4.2 Efficiency

**Finding 4:** Time and cost parameters are significantly below expectations for this mid-way point in the project’s execution. A 2-year delay has been incurred due to a confluence of contributing factors. Project resources and inputs have, so far, not been optimally converted into the desired results.

- 51) From a time perspective: the project has been planned with a 5-year duration (see Error! Reference source not found.).

**Figure 2 – Project Design and Execution Timeline**



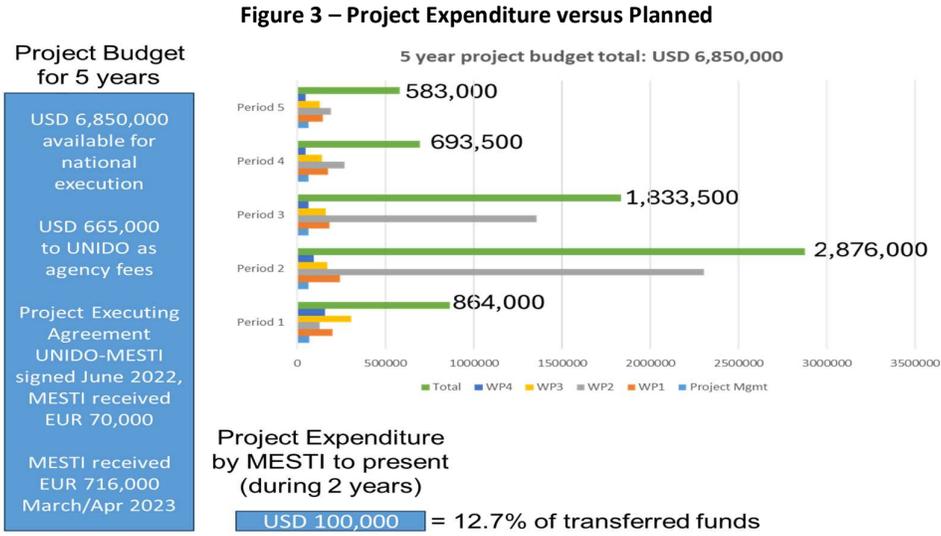
- 52) The 6-month period to achieve signature of the PEA between UNIDO and MESTI was the start of a trajectory that accumulated up to a 2-year delay. The Review Team identified several contributing factors:

- **Insufficiently planned duration to accommodate the discussion, negotiations, and learning process related to full national execution.** A stakeholder observed, “that process took much longer than originally expected”. The Review Team understood that UNIDO Procurement needed substantial time “to turn the project into an executing arrangement with clear milestones and work packages with instalments based on specific deliverables”. This approach was adopted in view of UNIDO’s overall accountability for the project’s delivery, as GEF’s Implementing Agency.
- **Atypical arrangement for the project’s leadership.** While there may have been compelling reasons at the outset to place the project’s leadership within the hands of a political appointee, this decision proved ineffective for tangibly advancing the project into action, which was attributed by stakeholders to “the lack of institutional authority to approve and mandate” and “inability to control and direct Ministry staff”. While the project’s leadership structure has now been shifted (since February 2024), this process reportedly reflected “a lot of back and forth”, contributing to the delay.
- **Shift to fully national execution without resourcing institutional strengthening.** The fact that national government actors expressed challenges to understand this project’s design (“it was supposed to help us translate our national plastic policy into an operational framework...but it was unclear how the activities were connected to the policy”), long periods for response including many periods of silence, extended substantive feedback loops between UNIDO and the National PEE regarding ToRs, then once recruited, Consultants have not been deemed sufficiently competent for the required tasks, together with UNIDO staff stepping in to significantly support the National PEE in an effort to shift the project

into execution (¶102) are evidence, in the eyes of the Review Team, of clear needs for strengthening the National PEE’s project leadership, management and procurement approaches.

➤ **Delay in establishing PMU.** Although the Project’s Inception Report (dated January 2023) indicated that the positions and numbers of consultants had been discussed and agreed between MESTI/EPA and UNIDO, ToRs had been developed to facilitate their recruitment, and an April 2023 deadline had been set to establish the PMU and complete all remaining inception activities, the Review Team understood that its staff were “recruited very late”. The PMU has been operational since January 2024. This constitutes a 9-month delay in establishing the PMU, which is a pivotal instrument for advancing the project’s work. A stakeholder explained that “the Ministry is supposed to make sure that the PMU is formed beforehand. This pre-financing is considered as the government’s contribution”. In the case of this UNIDO/GEF project, “the money came before the PMU was formed”.

53) From a cost perspective: The PMU indicated that approximately USD 100,000 worth of expenditure has been incurred during the project’s two years of operation since June 2022. This represents 12.7% of the project funds transferred thus far from UNIDO to MESTI (see **Figure 3** Error! Reference source not found.). According to the Progress Report presented during 3<sup>rd</sup> PSC meeting (9 July 2024), the project’s 2024 workplan consists of 27 activities with a budget of USD 848,300. Thus far, 3% has been expended.



54) With both time and cost parameters significantly below expectations at this mid-way point in the project’s execution, its resources and inputs have been poorly converted into the desired results.

**The overall rating for Efficiency is ‘Highly Unsatisfactory’**

**4.3 Effectiveness and Progress Towards Results**

Finding 5: While inception activities were satisfactorily carried out in the anticipated way with broad stakeholder engagement, followed by development of a work plan and budget, duly approved by a properly constituted and mandated PSC, there has been very little shift into execution. The project’s poor performance over the past two years is attributed to: i) inability to mainstream the coordination of the management of the project due to political interference; ii) inadequate management and governance process to rapidly identify and analyse challenges and recalibrate arrangements; iii) insufficient recognition of the pivotal role of a formalised, staffed PMU to advance project activities; iv) differing expectations regarding procurement. The recent change in the project’s leadership, accompanied by an operational PMU, offer promising signals of the potential to shift into action. Improvement in performance will need to be confirmed in the next reporting period.

55) The project’s effectiveness (output level) and progress towards results (outcome level) were assessed by

reviewing the status, quality, and achievements over the past two years (June 2022 to June 2024) with respect to the baselines, indicators, and targets outlined in the results framework (see **Table 4**) and performance vis-à-vis core outcome indicators (see **Annex II**). Evidence reviewed included the Project Inception Report (January 2023), first Project Implementation Report (covering July 2022 to June 2023), an annual progress report (covering January to December 2023), a subsequent quarterly report (covering April to June 2024), Minutes from the first two PSC meetings (held in April and November 2023). These materials were complemented with inputs from responsible MESTI and UNIDO staff and insights gathered from a range of stakeholders interviewed during May-July 2024. While the PIR (covering July 2023 to June 2024) was not available at the time of the MTR, the progress presented during the 3<sup>rd</sup> PSC meeting (9 July 2024) reflects the project's current status.

- 56) The Review Team considers that inception period activities were carried out in the anticipated way and in a satisfactory manner based on the following aspects:
- Broad stakeholder engagement through a 1-day inception workshop in Accra (14 December 2022) that brought together 104 relevant participants to ensure common understanding of the project's delivery structure, linkages, roles and responsibilities of all partners and reporting responsibilities.
  - This was followed up within a reasonable time with a smaller, more operationally oriented group through a 2-day workshop (24-25 January 2023) with technical officers from MESTI, EPA, UNDP, NPAP, and UNIDO who reviewed and collated inputs into a 2023 work plan, finalised along with the 2023 budget through a consecutive 2-day meeting (26-27 January 2023) on MESTI premises.
  - The resulting 2023 plan and budget were approved by the PSC during its first meeting in April 2023.
  - The PSC was properly constituted to ensure national ownership, assure the project's smooth operation, and sustain the results (¶124). With a ToR to guide its operation, the PSC structure was expected to provide project oversight, governance, and ensure coordination amongst its members.
- 57) While the project's planning and inception followed the expected course, two years later at the mid-way point in execution, very little headway has been made in triggering the activities designed to deliver the outputs underpinning its desired outcomes. For each output across the project's substantive components, the first PIR (to June 2023) indicated that 'limited progress was made in FY2023', with the remark that the designated activities would be undertaken in FY2024. While work plans had been formulated then duly approved by the PSC, there was a complete inability to shift into execution until the change in the project's leadership in February 2024.
- 58) During the GEF Assembly in August 2023 in Vancouver, the GEF Secretariat had signalled its serious concern regarding this project's pace of execution to the GEF OFP in Ghana and MESTI's responsible Minister. The Review Team noted that this feedback was appropriately taken forward through the project's governance structure (PSC meeting, November 2023), which resulted in a request for a revised work plan to be provided by end December 2023 to get the project back on track and for the PSC to convene within the first quarter of 2024. The revised work plan was shared with UNIDO in the second week of April 2024. The PSC met for a third time on 9 July 2024. By this time, the National PEE had managed to architect a change in the project's leadership.
- 59) Having considered the evidence, the Review Team attributes the project's poor performance during the major period of its operation, until recently, to the project's leadership and management arrangements, which were not conducive to delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes. See **Section 5.1** for further elaboration and evidence regarding this finding. The recent change in the project's leadership, accompanied by an operational PMU, offer promising signals of the potential to shift into action. Improvement in performance will need to be confirmed in the next reporting period and corroborated through the Terminal Evaluation.

***The rating for Effectiveness and Progress towards Results is 'Unsatisfactory'***

## 5 Findings: Project Implementation Management

### 5.1 Project Management

Finding 6: The project's poor performance, thus far, on effectiveness, efficiency and progress to results, is largely attributed to the leadership and management arrangements that have not been conducive to delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.

60) Based on the review of project documentation, correspondence exchanged amongst relevant parties, and stakeholder interviews, the Review Team identified several elements related to the leadership and management arrangements selected for the project that have played a role in its disappointing performance:

➤ **Inability to mainstream the coordination of the management of the project due to political interference.** The initial placement of the project's leadership reflected political considerations moreso than an arrangement that was integrated into the Ministry's bureaucracy and staff performance management system that would have fostered the project's operationalisation, daily management, and allow for approval of disbursement of the project's funds. Sentiments collected through interviews point to competing interests to control the project's resources, which have put a significant brake on action. Put in the hands of governments, such projects are viewed as *"a source of revenue"*. Stakeholders asserted: *"they're looking at this project from a funds angle and therefore want to run it themselves"*, *"they're not looking at the results angle"*. Moreover, stakeholders contended that such projects are opportunities to create personal power: *"they create fiefdoms"*; *"they want to work in silos because of the money"*; *"they've seen the money, so they'll pretend they can do it"*. Yet another observed that *"there's concern about how much can be retained for the Ministry's own people to execute the project"* – reflecting a notion that reducing the use of external consultants could potentially channel more project resources towards national staff who are 'mainstreamed' into supporting the project. It is understood that the 2024 work plan would address these challenges.

➤ **Inadequate management and governance processes to sufficiently identify and analyse execution challenges and rapidly recalibrate arrangements.** With the GEF's shift of full execution into national hands, this project has been subjected to institutional arrangements that reflect manoeuvring and bureaucratic hurdles linked to political interests. This has severely delayed execution. Although the delay was suitably recognized and documented in the established monitoring system (i.e. through the 1<sup>st</sup> PIR ending June 2023), UNIDO, as Implementing Agency, appears to have had limited recourse, apart from reminding the National PEE of its obligation to set up the PMU, as required under the PEA signed in June 2022, and alerting to the need for an alternative MESTI official to sign-off on daily operational decisions, in view of the delay in proceeding with project activities.

Recalibrating the situation required an extended period, in view of the political considerations to be managed. While the GEF OFP appropriately brought forward concerns about the pace of execution conveyed by the GEF Secretariat in August 2023 and amplified this message in November 2023 through the project's 2<sup>nd</sup> PSC meeting, it took months to gain acceptance for and transition into a new leadership arrangement for the project, which took effect from February 2024.

➤ **Learning curve for government entities to operationalise international development projects.** Responding to the notion that this project's execution was expected to strengthen its competences, a strategy was adopted to 'mainstream' the project into Ministry activities. This was expected to allow MESTI staff to *"put their skills to use"* in procurement, financial management, and M&E and develop capacities through *"supervising the officers who are doing the project's work"*. This change has involved a learning curve for all parties.

➤ **Insufficient recognition of the pivotal role of a formalised, fully staffed PMU to enable and advance project activities.** Some stakeholders attributed the project's delayed execution to the bureaucracy

of MESTI's procurement processes. However, the Review Team understood that Procurement relied on the PMU to first qualify and share the project's needs in the form of approved ToRs that could then be used to recruit the needed consultants. Without a formal PMU in place until January 2024, recruitment has been understandably delayed, with a direct negative effect on the pace of execution.

Once the PMU was in place, the PIR 2023 indicated that the Implementing Agency would be able to provide direct guidance and capacity building to the staff responsible for overall execution, including reporting, M&E, and financial reporting, amongst others. While the obligation to set up the PMU was outlined in the PEA, the role of this mechanism in operationalising the project does not seem to have been recognised, given the extended period until its establishment in January 2024

In the absence of a formal PMU team, UNIDO did provide substantial handholding support. Without an operational structure in place, its effects have been sub-optimal – as witnessed by the inadequate absorption of feedback and lengthy, repeated feedback cycles on the ToRs to reach a level of quality that would allow consultants contracted to perform the work packages to understand the expected deliverables (at which quality) to be provided in which timeframe. As an interviewee explained, *“if it's not clear what is expected, you can foresee that you won't get good results”*.

- **Immature procurement activities.** Little of the project's content has been outsourced to this point, apart from the recent hire of two PMU staff and two consultants engaged by MESTI to assess the pilots in October 2023 and to then reassess them in June 2024. Prior to the establishment of a formal PMU, recruitment was delayed.

The latest available Procurement Report (for second quarter 2024) highlighted the low budgets expended thus far on consultancy services. This may have been influenced by an idea to minimise the use of consultants – based on the reasoning that the project is *“supposed to build in-house capacity”*. Indeed, inhouse staff were seconded to provide support on the project. They were not paid for their services. Presumably such work was part of MESTI's co-financing contributions (¶177).

Reflecting inputs gathered through interviews, together with the several feedback cycles with UNIDO involving detailed support for developing the ToRs (many of which have yet to receive a no-objection from UNIDO that would facilitate the intended recruitment), the Review Team observed that there is not full shared understanding of the skillsets and resourcing needed to deliver the project and the ability to supervise and critically analyse contracted deliverables, as illustrated by the example of the Consultant engaged to reassess the pilots (e.g. according to the minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> PSC meeting on 22 November 2023, 10 days were initially calculated to analyse 12 sites; UNIDO's input raised this to 30 days – yet the resulting report still does not facilitate movement to disbursement due to insufficient quality of assessment, inaccuracies in budgets, etc.).

- **Differing understandings of execution support.** The idea that full national execution would serve to strengthen MESTI's competences was welcomed by the National PEE and GEF OFP. Despite the GEF's notion to strictly separate implementation and execution (¶19), national counterparts are keen to have – and arguably very much need – UNIDO's technical and execution support. Other development actors, particularly World Bank, offer significant backstopping (to the extent of providing monthly training for MESTI procurement staff at its office in Accra or using remote means, characterised as *“a key thing to boost us as a Ministry”*). Against this background, the Review Team would ask the question: to what extent has this situation amplified national expectations for support?

Different understandings about how such execution support would be funded have added another layer of complication. National counterparts expressed the belief that such support is covered by the project's agency fee provided by GEF to UNIDO (USD 665,000 over the 5-year period), while UNIDO utilizes these funds to cover its support at both project level (conduct annual monitoring, review expenditure reports, oversee procurement) and corporate level (interactions with GEF Secretariat, participation in GEF Council Meetings, etc.).

- 61) The PMU is now operational. With the recent leadership change, commitments have also been expressed

regarding the intention and ability to closely support the PMU team. There are signs that this change is having positive effects. Interviewees observed that *“something has changed”, “there’s movement”, “PMU is responsive; before, it would take 6-8 weeks to get a response”, “we see that they’re trying to get things going”*. These sentiments suggest that the project is shifting gear and moving into action. As reported to the PSC (on 9 July 2024) through the latest Procurement Report (to end June 2024) and 2024 Work Plan show that resources have been invested in preparation and attempts to kick off activities (mainly that ToRs had been developed, awaiting UNIDO’s non-objection). While these are promising signals, actual improvement in performance will still need to be confirmed through the next quarterly progress report, covering July-September 2024.

**The rating for Project Management is ‘Unsatisfactory’**

**5.2 Results-Based Work Planning, M&E, Reporting**

Finding 7: A results-based approach for the project’s planning, execution, monitoring and reporting has been incorporated into the project’s design, adequately resourced, and deployed. Through the development and communication of the first PIR (ending June 2023), there was timely identification of underperforming activities and concerns were raised about national execution arrangements, particularly the inaction to establish the PMU. These weaknesses have been corroborated through the MTR, another instrument of results-based work planning, M&E, and reporting that has been planned, resourced, and is being used to support the project in improving its performance.

- 62) Appropriate tools to promote a results-based approach to planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting are available to the project, and there is evidence of their use by the Implementing Agency and the National PEE. For example, the project’s results framework has been suitably used as a management tool to guide development of the M&E system and work plans, which can then be used to guide notions about the required staff and consultants. While work plans have been duly developed, little progress has been made in their realisation (¶157).
- 63) M&E is adequately planned and resourced (¶135) through the GEF cash grant of USD 320,000 complemented by over USD 1 million in co-financing, which reflects contributions from MESTI and UNIDO related to designing/implementing the M&E system, tracking output/outcome indicators, joint work planning sessions, field monitoring, project reporting, as well as mid-term and final evaluation.
- 64) The current MTR exercise was planned, adequately budgeted, and is being independently executed. It has facilitated consultation with key stakeholders and provides an external view of the project’s design and performance to date. The MTR has suitably functioned to facilitate learning, explore intended and unintended effects, as well as identify shortfalls that can hopefully be rectified during the project’s remaining period of execution. In this light, the MTR represents good practice.
- 65) The M&E plan provisions for systematic collection of data on specified indicators/targets, which can then be used to report on achievements vis-à-vis the use of allocated funds. The Review Team confirms that quantitative ‘end targets’ and indicator descriptions from the results framework have been accurately transferred into the data collection template (i.e. the project’s M&E plan). Inclusion of ‘key deliverables’ in relation to each output and outcome has been interpreted by the Review Team as an additional accountability device for the PMU to track achievements of Ministry staff and consultants in relation to their ToRs and specified tasks. This is a useful approach. However, the Review Team cautions that the simple provision of deliverables – such as participation lists, attendance records, reports, agreements, minutes of workshops and meetings – is not sufficient to fulfil the project’s targets in and of themselves. Data within such deliverables needs to be extracted and analysed to assess the achievement of targets.
- 66) Based on the reviewed project documentation, some level of quarterly and annual reporting is in place regarding financial aspects and project progress. However, their preparation and submission has not been carried out in a timely manner. This has consequently weakened opportunities to identify and diagnose underperforming activities and arrangements and develop remediation measures.

- 67) The project was characterized as being at ‘moderate risk’ through its first PIR (ending June 2023). This core monitoring and reporting instrument functioned appropriately. It identified underperforming activities in a timely manner. It also formally flagged concerns about national execution arrangements, advocating the need to proceed with establishing the PMU, which was expected to be in place by April 2023 at the latest according to the project’s Inception Report Workplan.

**The rating for Results-Based Work Planning, M&E, and Reporting is ‘Satisfactory’**

### 5.3 Knowledge Management

Finding 8: Development and dissemination of knowledge are resourced and integrated into the project’s design through the inclusion of relevant activities, with clear roles and responsibilities. On the one hand, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP since the project’s launch and the multistakeholder work of Task Forces carried out under this platform, have enabled meaningful dissemination of knowledge on plastics management. On the other hand, the RSS and Centre of Excellence have yet to be operationalised and, together with UNDP’s Waste Recovery Platform, play their anticipated roles in building up knowledge, shared understanding of circular economy, and ensuring that data on types of waste being handled across the country is available to facilitate circular economy of plastics and other materials. The ability to store, retrieve, and apply the project’s knowledge could not yet be assessed as the PMU has only been recently established and staffed.

- 68) The project explicitly provisions for knowledge management amongst key partners and stakeholders in service to achieving the Ghana NPAP and NPMP’s objectives. Relevant activities, roles, and responsibilities are suitably outlined under Outcome 3.3 and its underpinning outputs that can be expected to build up knowledge and shared understanding of circular economy, thereby addressing a key barrier to implementing and mainstreaming circular economy practices that was identified in the project’s preparation and used as a justification for this intervention (¶10).
- 69) The Review Team has a positive view of the project’s resourcing of knowledge management. In addition to relevant aspects under Component 3’s overall budget of USD 800,000 as the GEF cash grant (which was expected to be enlarged by over USD 3 million in co-financing contributions), USD 70,000 in cash and USD 500,000 in co-financing was allocated to the development and dissemination of knowledge management products (including technical reports, lessons learned, impact studies, etc.).
- 70) MESTI’s partnership with NPAP and their multistakeholder Task Force work, the RSS, Centre of Excellence, and UNDP’s Waste Recovery Platform are pillars of the project’s knowledge management strategy. They are all expected to contribute to raising awareness; sharing experience, best practices, and circular economy business models; and promoting replication across the country, spanning both formal and informal sectors. At the time of writing this report, the inauguration of the Ghana Circular Economy Centre of Excellence was planned for October 2024; its host and value chains had already been contracted<sup>24</sup>.
- 71) The PIR 2023 confirms that the close cooperation between NPAP and MESTI has enabled knowledge dissemination on plastics management throughout the country. Their ongoing cooperation, which has been built into the project’s design and resourcing under Component 3, can be expected to strengthen the dissemination of knowledge as the project shifts more strongly into execution.
- 72) On the other hand, the anticipated collaboration with UNDP has not unfolded, as planned, due to differing expectations regarding the contractual arrangements. . Following several meetings between MESTI and UNDP, the Review Team understood this issue has now been resolved, with the agreement to allocate 3% for General Management Support and 3% for Direct Project Costs to UNDP of the USD 120,000 budgeted under the project’s Component 3 for the Waste Recovery Platform as a service fee, reflecting UNDP’s own institutional requirements. The Waste Recovery Platform is intended to be a

<sup>24</sup> To understand the relevance of this initiative for the current project, see <https://open.unido.org/projects/GH/projects/210154>

website that details the different kinds of waste being handled across the country. This would function as a vital information resource to facilitate circular economy of plastics and other materials.

- 73) Recently set up and staffed, the PMU is still in the process of identifying and acquiring relevant documentation to facilitate its work, which interviewees mentioned had been slowed in relation to changes in administration and leadership. The Review Team had little visibility of the extent to which a suitable knowledge management system has been established. Elements that constitute a suitable knowledge management system include the effective storage and retrieval of relevant information and the ability of PMU members to respond in a timely and appropriate way to requests.

**The rating for Knowledge Management is 'Moderately Satisfactory'**

#### 5.4 Financial Management and Co-Finance

Finding 9: Both Implementing Agency and National PEE follow the policies and procedures that apply to the use of GEF and UNIDO resources as documented in the Project Execution Agreement and seen in the review of quarterly financial reports submitted to date. No instances of financial mismanagement were detected. Co-financing contributions, on the order of 1:11 for GEF's cash investment, if realised, would significantly enlarge the pool of available resources, thereby providing a key lever to magnify the project's impact and sustain its results and benefits. Co-financing achieved is to be reported at the project's mid-term and closing to assess the extent to which it has been effectively leveraged. As the project has had limited execution thus far, it can be expected that the bulk of such co-financing contributions are still ahead. To date, there was no evidence that co-financing has been tracked and reported.

- 74) As Implementing Agency, UNIDO follows established procedures for financial management and related guidance, which are in alignment with GEF requirements. As National PEE, MESTI/EPA has its own financial systems, fiduciary responsibilities and accountability mechanisms. In signing the PEA in June 2022 that launched this project, both parties have agreed to policies and procedures that apply to the use of GEF and UNIDO resources mentioned therein. In this light, no instances of financial mismanagement have been detected by the Review Team, based on its review of quarterly financial reports submitted since the fourth quarter of 2022 to the second quarter of 2024.
- 75) Major co-financing contributions (USD 81 million) were identified in the design phase, backed up by signed commitment letters from public and private sector actors. Given the USD 7 million cash grant provided by the GEF, for every USD 1 dollar it was investing, a further USD 11.70 was expected to be catalysed within the country. If realised, the anticipated co-financing would be a key lever for magnifying the project's impact, as well as sustaining its results and benefit.
- 76) At design, co-financing contributions of selected global actors were calculated as USD 1.6 million (₱10. As the respective outputs have been delivered to MESTI, the project can build on these resources and legitimately attribute their co-financing contributions. Without access to these organisations' internal financial records (which is beyond the Review Team's mandate), it could not be confirmed that the estimation matches the reality of their design and execution cost.
- 77) In addition to the USD 6 million of in-kind contributions (reflecting the use of MESTI/EPA premises and staff involvement) that are expected to flow into the project over the course of its execution, co-financing contributions on the order of USD 40 million are expected to come from funding associated with the implementation of the NPMP and proceeds from the Plastic Waste Recycling Fund.
- 78) Co-financing is a condition for the pilots. Interviewees showed understanding of its aim: "*entrepreneur are committed*", "*it increases our seriousness*", "*it assures the donor that the project will be completed*". One cautioned that as some mitigation areas require changing attitudes and behaviour, a profitable business model would require more time to achieve and thus, co-financing requirements would be an obstacle. Having sufficient assets to be an ongoing concern can be used as an indicator that the pilots will be able to serve their intended demonstration, scaling up, and learning purposes (₱190). In this light, such

co-financing as enhancing the project’s resilience. At design, close to USD 34 million in pilot co-financing was calculated. As agreements are not yet in place with participating pilots and no funds have been disbursed, the Review Team cannot determine whether the planned co-financing will indeed materialise, individually or in aggregate. Several pilots pointed to risks incurred during the 2-year wait for the anticipated funds. Many expressed growing frustration and a loss of confidence in MESTI. Some said they had to draw on the identified co-financing and had already used cash components for the outlined pilots.

- 79) To date, there was no evidence that co-financing has been tracked and reported.

***The rating for Financial Management and Co-Finance is ‘Moderately Satisfactory’***

## 5.5 Stakeholder Engagement and Communication

Finding 10: Robust consultation and engagement of relevant stakeholders during project preparation and design phase provided a clear view of the actors to be engaged, in which ways, to ensure the project’s relevance, utility, and success. Notions elaborated in the resulting Stakeholder Engagement Plan are evident throughout the project’s activity planning. Stakeholder interactions dropped off following launch and inception, which has consequently lowered awareness of the project. A recent misstep in communications with the pilots, whose effects were amplified by the lack of clarity regarding the pace, level, and conditions of anticipated disbursements that have been in process since their pre-selection three years ago, have frayed their trust and confidence in MESTI. This shows the importance of clear communication and the need to be transparent about the purpose for information requested from pilot companies and how this will be used.

- 80) Consultation of actors with activities already underway or being planned during this project’s preparation (¶31) reflects suitable stakeholder engagement. A robust analysis was carried out, pinpointing stakeholders to be engaged in various ways throughout the project’s lifetime, based on their ability to influence and make decisions about its outputs, outcomes, and the way in which the project was managed. Expectations, concerns, and recommendations from this initial phase are documented in the project’s Stakeholder Engagement Plan. This approach reflects good practice in the Review Team’s eyes.
- 81) The project excelled in achieving its first stakeholder engagement milestone, by managing to draw together 104 relevant actors in an Inception Workshop (14 December 2022). Following the aims laid out in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, this event served to build common understanding of the project’s delivery structure, roles and responsibilities of all parties (¶56), identify risks, discuss how the pilot project experiences could be adequately scaled and sustained, and generate inputs regarding which stakeholders to involve in which ways to ensure the project’s success.
- 82) Following its kick-off and inception, interactions with stakeholders became noticeably less regular as their engagement is triggered in relation to the project’s execution. Without execution, stakeholder engagement and communication waned. This lowered awareness of and interest in the project – and generated questions about MESTI’s ability to leverage this project’s support for the stated purpose.
- 83) Given the broadly positive perceptions concerning the Task Force experience and outputs, which has engaged 300 key stakeholders (¶88), the partnership between MESTI and NPAP is seen by the Review Team as an asset that the project can usefully leverage for communication and engagement.
- 84) The Review Team has noted that the Stakeholder Engagement Plan’s principles related to ‘consultation’, ‘public involvement’ and ‘stakeholder participation’ are well reflected in the project’s activity-level planning. These activities can be expected to secure the support of relevant stakeholders, provided there is close attention to the way in which engagement and communications are carried out. During a mid-June 2024 face-to-face meeting with the pilot companies, MESTI clearly communicated about the release of funds and asked for their input into the proposed agreements to define a clear payment schedule. MESTI indicated that the agreements would need to be shared with UNIDO and receive a ‘non-objection’ in order to proceed with the disbursements. The pilot companies were understandably perplexed

regarding yet further delay for receiving the anticipated support. The recent misstep in communication (seen in the request to pilots for photos without indicating the purpose) generated frustration: “we were not happy seeing that email”, “don’t know what the photos are for”. Some pilots complied with the request out of fear that “this would become a reason to withhold the funding”. This communication deteriorated trust in relationships already frayed by the delay in receiving disbursements (aggravated by expectations raised with deadlines repeatedly set by MESTI, but then unfulfilled – linked to shortfalls in project management).

**The rating for Stakeholder Engagement and Communication is ‘Moderately Satisfactory’**

## 6 Findings: Scale-up, Sustainability and Resilience

**Finding 11:** Design elements are in place [i.e. national project execution, significant co-financing from public and private sector actors, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP, supportive institutional actors (the planned RSS and Centre of Excellence hosted by Ho Technical University), a governance mechanism that includes influential actors with a role to play in supporting a circular economy approach for plastics, a financial mechanism through the envisaged plastic waste recycling fund] that contribute to sustaining the project’s results and benefits. Meaningful potential for scaling up and resilience can be found in the MESTI/NPAP partnership’s Task Force work that has generated inputs, guidance and recommendations through a multistakeholder platform, together with the project’s planned investment in pilots, whose scaling up efforts are expected to drive collection to feed the production of value-added products from plastic waste. Measures to mitigate risks in case of a shift in government priorities following the upcoming national general election in December 2024 are to be undertaken during the current year in the form of building MESTI/EPA’s capacity to ensure that institutional knowledge remains within the Ministry. At the time of the MTR, these aspects were planned but not fully operationalised, as the project had progressed very little into execution.

- 85) The adoption of national execution, together with significant co-financing commitments, is a key pillar for assuring that results and benefits will be sustained following the project’s close. As MESTI is responsible for formulating and enforcing national policy regarding plastics and the circular economy approach that is to be operationalised through this project’s support, this architecture provides an important foundation for institutional sustainability.
- 86) As the key governance mechanism at national level, the PSC has been designed to ensure national ownership and sustain project results (¶106). Led by MESTI, with representation from relevant government ministries involved in implementing the NPMP (¶24), the PSC gathers influential actors with an interest and role to play in a circular economy approach for plastics. Minutes of the PSC’s 1<sup>st</sup> meeting (April 2023) confirm participation from the identified government institutions, while Minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting (November 2023) mention that several key members had sent apologies for their absence. As directly observed by the Review Team, apart from a large delegation from MESTI/EPA and a representative from the Ministry of Health (MOH), no representatives from other Ministries took part in the PSC’s 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting (July 2024). It is understood that this was mainly due to industrial strike action by civil servants.
- 87) While included under the NPMP’s Focus Area: Good Governance, Inclusiveness and Shared Accountability, the RSS – which was to be operationalised through the project’s support with the aim of coordinating all activities related to plastics and circular economy and ensuring policy coherence and inter-ministerial collaboration – has received Cabinet approval and was currently in the process of staffing. The inauguration of the Ghana Circular Economy Centre of Excellence, to be hosted by Ho Technical University, is planned for October 2024 (¶70). Once up and running, this Centre is expected to play an important role in sustaining the project’s results, given its function to establish a body of knowledge on circular economy innovations drawing on research and piloting (including this project’s pilots).
- 88) Before the project’s kick-off, the NPAP was already operating as a neutral platform since 2020 to support Ghana’s transition to circular economy for plastics (¶15). The partnership between MESTI and NPAP can be expected to support implementation of the NPMP. Under the MESTI/NPAP partnership, an Action

Roadmap was developed linked to Ghana’s national policy, built relationships with key institutional actors, and engaged over 300 actors/technical specialists from across public and private sectors in multistakeholder Task Forces spanning six strategic impact areas that met bi-monthly. Ghana’s plastic problem cannot be addressed by a single actor. In connecting relevant stakeholders to different communities (e.g. plastic collectors and banks), the Task Forces’ work can indeed be expected to enhance resilience. Their synergies and contributions to activities of the UNIDO/GEF project being implemented by MESTI are summarized in the Inception Workshop Report (December 2022). Based on the provision of inputs, guidance, and recommendations generated by these Task Forces, whose value was confirmed by participating actors interviewed by the Review Team, this level of stakeholder engagement can be expected to boost the sustainability of the project’s results and benefits. However, interviewees also mentioned that the Task Force recommendations had not yet been taken forward (a private sector participant asserted that “*these Task Forces worked through a stakeholder-consulted process; their recommendations should have been implemented a year ago*”). Without leveraging this effort, the catalytic power of this level of stakeholder engagement is weakening.

- 89) The CEO Endorsement (see its ¶157) stated that the project’s long-term sustainability “*will be rooted in the funds accruing from the plastic recycling fund*”. This notion is reflected in USD 40 million co-financing that MESTI committed to the project based on the availability of funds from the country’s plastic levy<sup>25</sup>. Under Ghana’s Customs and Excise (Duties and Other Taxes) (Amendment) Act (2013), an ad-valorem duty of 10% of the ex-factory price was placed on plastics products, with at least 50% accruing as proceeds from the tax to be paid into a plastic waste recycling fund. To date, this environmental tax and resulting plastic fund have not been fully operationalised. While international development actors (e.g. GIZ) have supported Ghana on EPR (¶10, the concept had yet to be operationalised, and the government had yet to earmark the funds to ensure that plastic waste is effectively managed.
- 90) The sustainability of circular economy for plastics was to be assured by the action of recovery companies at the top of the value chain producing value-added products from collected waste plastics. This was expected to create a demand for waste plastic and thereby enable plastic waste collection networks to thrive. While none of the pilots included in the project have, as yet, received the anticipated financial support, once they are in a position to scale up their activities, according to the plans and vision outlined in their proposals, they can be expected to play an important demonstration role, as well as perform the anticipated ‘pull’ effect in driving collection (¶129), as well as contribute their real-world data and learning to the development of the EPR scheme, effective business models, and the enabling legal framework needed for the circular economy to fully flourish. Furthermore, the co-financing condition attached to the pilots’ participation is seen as enhancing the project’s resilience (¶176).
- 91) Since the project’s launch, the country’s general election in December 2024 has been identified as risk to sustaining the project’s results and benefits, as a change in administration could shift government priorities. Interviewees mentioned that national elections typically result in “a big pause of 3 to 6 months” while the government is “*acclimating and shifting people into different portfolios*”. While the PIR (ending 2023) indicates that ‘no progress was made on the risk in FY2023’, mitigation measures were expected to be undertaken in FY2024 to fully sensitize bureaucrats within MESTI/EPA and build the National PEE’s capacity to ensure that the needed institutional knowledge remains in the Ministry.

**The rating for Scale-up, Sustainability and Resilience is ‘Unsatisfactory’**

## 7 Findings: Gender Mainstreaming

Finding 12: Informed by policies of the GEF and UNIDO that link gender equality and environmental sustainability, the project’s design adequately reflects gender mainstreaming aims within relevant

<sup>25</sup> UNEP Law and Environmental Assistance Platform (LEAP) – Plastic Pollution in Ghana. [https://leap.unep.org/en/countries/gh/case-studies/ghana#:~:text=The%20Customs%20and%20Excise%20\(Duties,a%20plastic%20waste%20recycling%20fund.](https://leap.unep.org/en/countries/gh/case-studies/ghana#:~:text=The%20Customs%20and%20Excise%20(Duties,a%20plastic%20waste%20recycling%20fund.)

output formulations and includes realistic targets for participation in training, capacity building, and the incremental employment envisaged to be gained through the project's support. The gender analysis of the pilot companies and Ghana NPAP's baseline report of the Plastics and Plastic Waste Sectors provide a robust basis for the project's Gender Action Plan. However, the operationalisation of the project's design principles and plans have yet to materialise in a meaningful way.

- 92) The UN has a mandate to promote social justice through gender equality<sup>26</sup>. SDG #5 seeks gender equality and to empower women and girls through a set of specific targets. Gender mainstreaming involves necessary temporary measures to combat direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination that have left women or men in a particularly disadvantageous position. The GEF and UNIDO have cascaded these global sentiments into their respective policies<sup>27</sup>, which guide project execution actors.
- 93) The project's design suitably reflects these inclusiveness and mainstreaming notions (¶140). As evidence, the CEO Endorsement indicates that an Environmental, Social and Gender Advisor is to be included in the PMU, jointly funded by NPAP and the project (¶123). Furthermore, gender dimensions are included in relevant output formulations. Realistic targets for participation (in training and capacity building) and incremental employment are included in the project's key performance indicators, reflecting data gathered through a (2020) baseline Gender Analysis Report of Ghana's Plastics and Plastic Waste Sectors conducted by Ghana's NPAP showing that men and women respectively constitute about 61% and 39% of the workforce in both formal and informal sectors. It is positively noted that attention is to be put on ensuring that equal opportunities are provided to women and men to participate in project activities and decision-making at all levels<sup>28</sup>. The project is expected to include youth and women's groups and strengthen gender mainstreaming throughout project design and implementation<sup>29</sup>.
- 94) The CEO Endorsement contains a Gender Action Plan, which reflects findings of a Gender Analysis of the twelve pilot companies identified during the project's preparation phase and the NPAP's 2020 Report to understand gender roles, barriers, and impacts across the plastics value chain as the basis to influence gender policy considerations and recommendations for national action. This Gender Action Plan, which is grounded in data, identifies specific directions that the project should take for increasing awareness, transforming behaviour, and empowering individuals to reduce plastic pollution and redesign plastic packaging that take account of the ways in which activities differently impact women and vulnerable groups in the plastics and plastic waste management sectors.
- 95) While the suitability of the project's design vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming aims has been verified, their operationalisation has yet to materialise in a meaningful way as very little substantive work has been initiated thus far. Therefore, the Review Team does not have sufficient basis to rate the project's performance on this dimension.

**Gender Mainstreaming has not been rated.**

## 8 Findings: Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)

Finding 13: The project was suitably subjected to UNIDO's internal ESS screening during its preparation and categorized. During inception, risks were appropriately identified at the pilot sites that required mitigation actions and review over the project's life. The resulting Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) has yet to be used a 'living document' to guide project stakeholders in

<sup>26</sup> p19, Guidance Document: Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations, UN Evaluation Group, August 2014

<sup>27</sup> GEF's Policy on Gender Equality (2017) links gender equality and environmental sustainability and outlines strategies for integrating gender considerations throughout activities. See [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.C.53.04\\_Gender\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.C.53.04_Gender_Policy.pdf). UNIDO's Policy (2019) and its Strategy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2020-2023) ensure that UNIDO-implemented projects promote gender parity, an enabling, inclusive working environment, and accelerate progress in delivering on gender equality commitments. See <https://www.unido.org/our-focus-cross-cutting-services/gender-equality-and-empowerment-women>

<sup>28</sup> See ¶141 in the CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

<sup>29</sup> See ¶93 in the CEO Endorsement for GEF ID 10401

assessing effects and developing mitigation measures, given the PMU's recent establishment. With little project content executed, no ESMP reports are yet available. As no disbursements have been released to the pilots, the anticipated ongoing monitoring of the identified risks is still ahead.

- 96) At design, the project was suitably subjected to UNIDO's Environmental and Social Safeguards Policy and Procedures to ensure its compliance with relevant environmental legislation in Ghana and other ESS requirements during its development and implementation. The project was appropriately identified as 'Category B', signifying that it is likely to have comparatively less adverse impacts on human populations or environmentally important areas than those in 'Category A'. The risks that were identified are site-specific and can be readily minimized by applying appropriate management and mitigation measures or incorporating internationally recognized design criteria and standards.
- 97) During the inception phase, the pilot projects were engaged individually about their business operations to assess their ESS compliance. Risks were identified at the pilot sites that required specific actions to mitigate and monitor over the project's life. These assessments have been appropriately documented in the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) included in Annex S of the CEO Endorsement
- 98) The absence of ESMP monitoring is understandable as the PMU has been established only recently. As no disbursements have been released to the pilot sites, monitoring their risks and specified mitigation actions is still ahead. The Review Team noted that companies' environmental permits included within the ESMP expired in 2021. Interviews with selected pilot companies confirmed understanding of the need to update these requirements and assurances were received that renewals were underway, although some indicated delays on the part of Ghana's EPA to provide the required permits.
- 99) While ESS has been suitably addressed during the project's design and a management plan is in place, this has yet to be operationalised. Therefore, the Review Team does not have sufficient basis to rate the project's performance on this dimension.

**Environmental and Social Safeguards has not been rated**

## 9 Findings: Performance of Partners

### 9.1 Implementing Agency

Finding 14 In its role as GEF Implementing Agency, UNIDO is actively exercising project oversight, supervision and overall budget management. While aiming to respect the strict separation between implementation and execution, in view of the prolonged delay in operationalising the project's support, UNIDO's substantial handholding is straining the agency's capacities in light of limited project resourcing for such support and its own constraints.

- 100) The Review Team perceives that UNIDO has been actively exercising the anticipated oversight on the project's implementation, managing the overall project budget and supervising execution, in alignment with its role as GEF Implementing Agency. Ghanaian government stakeholders confirmed that *"all along the way, UNIDO has been forceful to ensure that things are supposed to be done", "UNIDO is in meetings and been trying to guide the process", "UNIDO has been really forthcoming", "...always gets back to us"*.
- 101) Project supervision on behalf of the donor is being adequately performed by UNIDO's GEF Coordination Office, beginning with a review of the quality of project design and subsequently focussed on ensuring compliance with GEF and UNIDO requirements during implementation and execution.
- 102) Seeing the challenges that the National PEE has faced from the outset to operationalise and manage the project – with the aim of mitigating the accumulating delay – UNIDO Project Management staff in Vienna and Accra stepped in (e.g. supported drafting of December 2022 Inception Workshop Report, weekly engagement with the project's leadership, meetings with the GEF OFF, remote and in-person support for developing the annual work plan, procurement plan, and ToRs to be used by MESTI to recruit and deploy consultants to perform the project's work). While UNIDO staff found creative ways to provide this assistance (i.e. through

sharing resources from other projects, in-kind time contributions), this appears to be straining their capacities.

- 103) UNIDO undertook the role of GEF Implementing Agency for this project at a time when it was not yet fully geared up to outsource full project execution to a national government entity. This is evidenced by the extended period (6 months) needed to prepare the PEA. Capacity constraints on the UNIDO side related to Procurement and Finance (described by interviewees as “too busy”, “overworked” “able to provide standard material and a reporting appendix but not available to answer specific questions”) and GEF Coordination Unit (described as “too small”, “too busy” and during its restructuring, which coincided with this project’s PEA development, “nobody could advise on what routes to follow”) limit their ability to provide direct execution support. Consequently, the burden has fallen to UNIDO’s Project Managers to support national executors in meeting the agency’s expectations for project execution and UNIDO’s own financial and reporting requirements. As these have reportedly been oriented to European Union protocols (to manage auditing risks) and therefore not aligned with GEF requirements, this is generating further (unanticipated) administrative work for the two contracting parties (UNIDO and MESTI).

**The performance of UNIDO is rated as ‘Moderately Satisfactory’**

## 9.2 National Counterparts

Finding 15 While MESTI has accepted ownership of the project and put elements in place to assure its high level consideration within its own political structure, the Review Team is concerned about a possible drop in the interest of other government counterparts who have a role in implementing the NPMP, , following dissatisfaction expressed in earlier meetings with the project’s severe delay in execution to date. While recognizing there is a learning curve involved in the shift to full national execution, the selected arrangements have not been conducive for delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.

- 104) The performance of national actors considers the extent to which the identified government counterparts (including the National PEE and those included in the PSC) as well as the PMU have adequately played their agreed roles and undertaken their responsibilities.
- 105) At Leadership Level – MESTI seized ownership of this project, recognising the opportunity to operationalise the NPMP and drive the needed behaviour change for the country’s adoption of circular economy (¶143). The project has high endorsement from the Ministry and its leadership was associated with the Presidency, which an ecosystem actor indicated “means priority, access, and importance”.
- 106) At Governance Level – The PSC has been appropriately constituted and operates according to a ToR with clear roles and responsibilities (¶156). This mechanism is being used to anchor national ownership of the project’s execution and outcomes and is designed to sustain the results benefits (¶186). Members have used this forum to raise concern about the project’s delays (¶127). Apart from MESTI and MOH, there was no participation of other counterpart Ministries involved in implementing the NPMP in the latest PSC meeting (9 July 2024) due to strike action (¶186). A continuing downward trend in the participation of such other actors would raise a serious question about their continuing interest in assuring this project’s success and leveraging its outcomes. Participation in future PSC meetings will need to be assessed to draw suitable conclusions.
- 107) At Execution Level – The initially selected arrangements have not been conducive for delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes (¶159). The project’s leadership and management arrangements required an extended period to analyse and resolve (¶160).

**The performance of the National Counterpart is rated as ‘Moderately Unsatisfactory’**

## 9.3 Donor

**Finding 16** The donor’s timely disbursement of funds to strengthen national capacity and operationalise national policy is highly relevant assistance to overcome the identified barriers and catalyse a circular economy approach to deal with the plastic menace in Ghana. In light of the project’s severe delay since its launch, GEF Secretariat feedback channelled through the GEF OFP played a key role in triggering rethinking and re-architecting the project’s leadership arrangement. This has enabled the project to progress since spring 2024, together with major handholding support provided by the Implementing Agency, which is beyond what is envisaged and resourced under GEF’s strict separation of implementation and execution.

- 108) The GEF’s cash grant of USD 7 million, together with the significant co-financing contributions that this investment was intended to catalyse (¶175), is widely perceived and appreciated in providing critical support to strengthen Ghana’s capacity to operationalise its national plastics management policy and transition to circular economy.
- 109) At the time of the MTR, only one annual PIR (ending 2023) had been submitted to the GEF. It was accepted. While no feedback was provided through this mechanism, the GEF Secretariat’s serious interest in ensuring this project’s success is evidenced in feedback conveyed directly to the GEF Operational Point in August 2023, which was appropriately transferred to the National PEE. This input contributed to prioritizing a change in the project’s leadership arrangement, which has enabled progress since spring 2024.
- 110) Based on this project’s experience, the GEF’s insistence on a strict separation between implementation and execution does not appear to be a well thought through design aspect. The project’s severe delay in execution (¶157), coupled with the substantial level of handholding that has been required and is desired by national actors responsible for its execution (¶160) – reinforced by the practices of other development actors, notably World Bank to which the UNIDO/GEF project was frequently compared – is not consistent with the reality of the project’s execution setting and assumptions about the sufficiency of national government capacities for effective project execution.

***The performance of the Donor is rated as ‘Moderately Satisfactory’***

## **10 Remaining Barriers to Achieving Project’s Expected Results**

**Finding 17** Enhancing the likelihood of achieving the project’s envisaged results rests on: i) strengthening national governance; ii) extending the planned timeline for completion; iii) adaptively revising the project’s work within the reality of the current context, together with leveraging results already produced; iv) addressing shortfalls in the capacity to initiate, supervise, and assess planned work; v) restoring the pilots’ lost trust and confidence in MESTI stemming from prolonged delay in the anticipated disbursements and the lack of clarity regarding their pace, level, and conditions; vi) clarifying roles and ongoing resourcing for key knowledge management and stakeholder engagement mechanisms, vii) strengthening institutional knowledge to sustain the project’s results in view of the risk of shifting government priorities related to the December 2024 general election.

- 111) Weak national governance. This project has been designed as key support to operationalising the NPMP (¶17). The project’s M&E system functioned appropriately in identifying underperforming activities and raising concerns about national execution arrangements. Challenges were identified and communicated in a timely manner through the first PIR ending June 2023 (¶167). While the PSC’s second meeting was envisaged for 13 June 2023, which would have been a timely opportunity to address the identified challenges, this meeting did not materialise. Despite the delay in execution and serious concerns identified and formally communicated through the PIR FY23 (ending June 2023), the PSC finally met for a second time on 22 November 2023, several months after the availability of the PIR FY23. While the Minutes recorded dissatisfaction with the project’s performance, there is little evidence that the PSC attempted to diagnose the situation, genuinely hold the responsible parties to account, and set in motion corrective action. The suggestion in the Minutes that the Project Manager should “be in charge of project progress presentations in subsequent steering committee meetings” and that these should “be based on

outputs/outcomes and work done with reference to the annual work plan” is an attempt, albeit weak, at accountability. The drop off in participation of counterpart Ministries in the PSC’s second meeting, followed by their almost complete absence in the PSC’s third meeting, apart from MESTI and MOH – attributed to industrial strike action by civil servants on 9 July 2024 (¶186) – points to a potentially worrying trend (¶106). In case the interest and participation of the PSC’s institutional members lessen, this would reduce prospects for accountability of project execution, provision of strategic input and steering, and sustainability of results, given that their explicit inclusion in this project’s governance structure reflects their involvement in implementing the NPMP (¶186).

- 112) The currently planned timeline for implementation (¶151) is insufficient to deliver the project’s expected results, given that the bulk of the project’s content has yet to be initiated.
- 113) Ability to adaptively revise the project’s planned activities (¶123). The current approach demonstrates considerable inward focus, with attention on consolidating planned activities into larger ToRs expected to attract consultants with larger delivery capabilities, without first understanding and leveraging deliverables and results that have already been or are currently being produced by other actors (¶76).
- 114) Shortfalls in the capacity to develop suitable ToRs (¶60), supervise, and assess the delivered results. This is the project’s key instrument to initiate the planned work and optimally deploy the allocated resources to deliver the envisaged results.
- 115) The pilots’ loss of trust and confidence in MESTI (¶84). This investment represents a major portion of the project’s budget and reflects the pivotal role that private sector actors are expected to play in shifting to circular economy (¶29). The pre-selection of the pilots and their assessment three years ago triggered expectations that have not yet materialised. Their reassessment after prolonged silence has not provided sufficient inputs to facilitate go-ahead (related weakness in procurement and consultant supervision), generating further frustration. Learning and data from the pilots are expected to directly support the government in developing and operationalising a responsive circular economy policy. Yet, the ways in which disbursement conditions will work to support this aim have not been clearly spelled out in the funding agreements currently underway.
- 116) Insufficient clarity regarding the NPAP’s ongoing role and resourcing. There are broadly positive perceptions concerning its achievements in creating and using a neutral, multistakeholder platform and the inputs, guidance, and recommendations generated through its Task Forces (¶83). At the same time, there are perceptions of competition between the RSS and the NPAP, accentuated by the lack of clarity concerning roles and sustainability of resourcing. This situation risks diminishing the asset that has been built up by NPAP in the form of stakeholder engagement.
- 117) Weak anchoring of institutional knowledge to sustain the project’s results. The limited execution and generation of results has consequently limited engagement across MESTI and other relevant government actors. This calls into question the strength of institutional knowledge to leverage the project’s envisaged outputs and outcomes, should there be a change in administration through the upcoming general election in December 2024, which could shift government priorities (¶91). This risk is accentuated by the limited progress in operationalising the RSS and Centre of Excellence, which, together with UNDP’s Waste Recovery Platform, are key pillars of the project’s knowledge management strategy (¶70).

## 11 Overall Assessment and Conclusions

### 11.1 Overarching Assessment and Rating Table

- 118) **Table 6** summarizes the MTR’s findings, according to the criteria of UNIDO’s Evaluation ToR and using UNIDO’s 6-point scale, which were used to assess the project’s design and performance<sup>30</sup>. The project’s

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<sup>30</sup> According to evaluation criteria and 6-point scale stipulated in the evaluation’s ToR: Highly Satisfactory (HS); Satisfactory (S); Moderately Satisfactory (MS); Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU); Unsatisfactory (U); Highly Unsatisfactory (HU). Sustainability of Benefits is rated from Highly Likely (HL) to Highly Unlikely (HU)

overall performance is rated as ‘Moderately Unsatisfactory’ (this reflects the calculated average of the ratings (i.e. 3.6 out of 6) contained in **Table 6**.

**Table 6 – Summary of Findings and Project Performance Ratings by Evaluation Criteria**

Criteria	Summarized Finding	Section	Rating
<b>Project Design Assessment</b>			
Project Design	Aligned with growing global concern regarding plastic pollution and Ghana’s interest to become a replicable model for dealing with its burgeoning waste problem, the project’s design is considered sound, appropriate, technically feasible, and suitably resourced to contribute to its long-term objective to transition the country to a circular economy framework for managing plastics. Validated through stakeholder consultation during its preparation – which ensured the project’s relevance and opportunity to leverage efforts of other development actors – the design reflects a holistic approach to strengthen enabling conditions to incentivize the switch to circular economy and build technical capacities for its adoption, while supporting synergies and collaboration through knowledge sharing.	3.1	S
Project Results Framework	The results framework is clear, realistic and measurable with a logical flow of outputs to outcomes to impact, incorporating gender-sensitivity and the synergistic power of its constituent components. Envisaged outcomes reflect tangible changes in attitude, capacities, and behaviour that can be reasonably expected to influence the wider ecosystem towards the desired change to circular economy. This results framework can be easily transferred into a M&E plan to facilitate monitoring.	3.2	S
<b>Project Performance and Progress Towards Results</b>			
Relevance	The project’s outcomes are highly relevant to global interest in implanting effective approaches to deal with the growing problem of plastic pollution affecting both terrestrial and marine environments. While activities need to be reviewed, refined, and consolidated, given the contributions of other development actors that have materialised over the past two years, the project is still well-aligned with Ghana’s development priorities, the interests of private sector beneficiaries to innovate and scale up efforts to shift to circular economy, and the country’s ambition/vision to function as a showcase in proactively addressing the plastic waste menace. The project is consistent with the donor’s priorities for circular economy as well as sustainable production, consumption and environmentally-sound disposal, and it is fully pertinent to UNIDO’s mandate for promoting inclusive and sustainable industrial development	4.1	S
Efficiency	Time and cost parameters are significantly below expectations for this mid-way point in the project’s execution. A 2-year delay has been incurred due to a confluence of contributing factors. Project resources and inputs have, so far, not been optimally converted into the desired results.	4.2	HU
Effectiveness and Progress towards Results	While inception activities were satisfactorily carried out in the anticipated way with broad stakeholder engagement, followed by development of a work plan and budget, duly approved by a properly constituted and mandated PSC, there has been very little shift into execution. The project’s poor performance over the past two years is attributed to: i) inability to mainstream the coordination of the management of the project due to political interference; ii) inadequate management and governance process to rapidly identify and analyse challenges and recalibrate arrangements; iii) insufficient recognition of the pivotal role of a formalised, staffed PMU to advance project activities; iv) different expectations regarding procurement. The recent change in the project’s leadership, accompanied by an operational PMU, offer promising signals of the potential to shift into action. Improvement in performance will need to be confirmed in the next reporting period.	4.3	U
<b>Project Implementation Management</b>			
Project Management	The project’s poor performance, thus far, on effectiveness, efficiency and progress to results, is largely attributed to the leadership and management arrangements that have not been conducive to delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.	5.1	U

Results-Based Work Planning, M&E, Reporting	A results-based approach for the project's planning, execution, monitoring and reporting has been incorporated into the project's design, adequately resourced, and deployed. Through the development and communication of the first PIR (ending June 2023), there was timely identification of underperforming activities and concerns were raised about national execution arrangements, particularly the inaction to establish the PMU. These weaknesses have been corroborated through the MTR, another instrument of results-based work planning, M&E, and reporting that has been planned, resourced, and is being used to support the project in improving its performance.	5.2	S
Knowledge Management	Development and dissemination of knowledge are resourced and integrated into the project's design through the inclusion of relevant activities, with clear roles and responsibilities. On the one hand, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP since the project's launch and the multistakeholder work of Task Forces carried out under this platform, have enabled meaningful dissemination of knowledge on plastics management. On the other hand, the RSS and Centre of Excellence have yet to be operationalised and, together with UNDP's Waste Recovery Platform, fully play their anticipated roles in building up knowledge, shared understanding of circular economy, and ensuring that data on types of waste being handled across the country is available to facilitate circular economy of plastics and other materials. The ability to store, retrieve, and apply the project's knowledge could not yet be assessed as the PMU has only been recently established and staffed.	5.3	MS
Financial Management and Co-Finance	Both Implementing Agency and National PEE follow the policies and procedures that apply to the use of GEF and UNIDO resources as documented in the Project Execution Agreement and seen in the review of quarterly financial reports submitted to date. No instances of financial mismanagement were detected. Co-financing contributions, on the order of 1:11 for GEF's cash investment, if realised, would significantly enlarge the pool of available resources, thereby providing a key lever to magnify the project's impact and sustain its results and benefits. Co-financing achieved is to be reported at the project's mid-term and closing to assess the extent to which it has been effectively leveraged. As the project has had limited execution thus far, it can be expected that the bulk of such co-financing contributions are still ahead. To date, there was no evidence that co-financing has been tracked and reported.	5.4	MS
Stakeholder Engagement and Communication	Robust consultation and engagement of relevant stakeholders during project preparation and design phase provided a clear view of the actors to be engaged, in which ways, to ensure the project's relevance, utility, and success. Notions elaborated in the resulting Stakeholder Engagement Plan are evident throughout the project's activity planning. Stakeholder interactions dropped off following launch and inception, which has consequently lowered awareness of the project. A recent misstep in communications with the pilots, whose effects were amplified by the lack of clarity regarding the pace, level, and conditions of anticipated disbursements that have been in process since their pre-selection three years ago, have frayed their trust and confidence in MESTI. This shows the importance of clear communication and the need to be transparent about the purpose for information requested from pilot companies and how this will be used.	5.5	MS
<b>Scale-Up, Sustainability and Resilience</b>			
Scale-Up, Sustainability and Resilience	Design elements are in place [i.e. national project execution, significant co-financing from public and private sector actors, the partnership between MESTI and NPAP, supportive institutional actors (the planned RSS and Centre of Excellence hosted by Ho Technical University), a governance mechanism that includes influential actors with a role to play in supporting a circular economy approach for plastics, a financial mechanism through the envisaged plastic waste recycling fund] that contribute to sustaining the project's results and benefits. Meaningful potential for scaling up and resilience can be found in NPAP's Task Force work that has generated inputs, guidance and recommendations through a multistakeholder platform, together with the project's planned investment in pilots, whose scaling up efforts are expected to drive collection to feed the production of value-added products from plastic waste. Measures to mitigate risks in case of a shift in government priorities following the upcoming national general election in December 2024 are to be undertaken during the current year in the form of building MESTI/EPA's capacity to ensure	6	U

	that institutional knowledge remains within the Ministry. At the time of the MTR, these aspects were planned but not fully operationalised, as the project had progressed very little into execution.		
<b>Gender Mainstreaming</b>			
Gender Mainstreaming	Informed by policies of the GEF and UNIDO that link gender equality and environmental sustainability, the project’s design adequately reflects gender mainstreaming aims within relevant output formulations and includes realistic targets for participation in training, capacity building, and the incremental employment envisaged to be gained through the project’s support. The gender analysis of the pilot companies and Ghana NPAP’s baseline report of the Plastics and Plastic Waste Sectors provide a robust basis for the project’s Gender Action Plan. However, the operationalisation of the project’s design principles and plans have yet to materialise in a meaningful way.	7	Not rated
<b>Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)</b>			
ESS	The project was suitably subjected to UNIDO’s internal ESS screening during its preparation and categorized. During inception, risks were appropriately identified at the pilot sites that required mitigation actions and review over the project’s life. The resulting Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) has yet to be used a ‘living document’ to guide project stakeholders in assessing effects and developing mitigation measures, given the PMU’s recent establishment. With little project content executed, no ESMP reports are yet available. As no disbursements have been released to the pilots, the anticipated ongoing monitoring of the identified risks is still ahead.	8	Not rated
<b>Performance of Partners</b>			
Implementing Agency	In its role as GEF Implementing Agency, UNIDO is actively exercising project oversight, supervision and overall budget management. While aiming to respect the strict separation between implementation and execution, in view of the prolonged delay in operationalising the project’s support, UNIDO’s substantial handholding is straining the agency’s capacities in light of limited project resourcing for such support and its own constraints.	9.1	MS
National Counterparts	While MESTI has accepted ownership of the project and put elements in place to assure its high-level consideration within its own political structure, the Review Team is concerned about a possible drop in the interest of other government counterparts who have a role in implementing the NPMP, following dissatisfaction expressed in earlier meetings with the project’s severe delay in execution to date. While recognizing there is a learning curve involved in the shift to full national execution, the selected arrangements have not been conducive for delivering on the agreed milestones, outputs, and outcomes.	9.2	MU
Donor	The donor’s timely disbursement of funds to strengthen national capacity and operationalise national policy is highly relevant assistance to overcome the identified barriers and catalyse a circular economy approach to deal with the plastic menace in Ghana. In light of the project’s severe delay since its launch, GEF Secretariat feedback channelled through the GEF OFP played a key role in triggering rethinking and re-architecting the project’s leadership arrangement. This has enabled the project to progress since spring 2024, together with major handholding support provided by the Implementing Agency, which is beyond what is envisaged and resourced under GEF’s strict separation of implementation and execution.	9.3	MS

## 11.2 Project Risk Assessment

- 119) The project’s overall risk was assessed by transferring the ratings from the above-mentioned assessment into the format elaborated in **Table 7**. The project’s risk has been assessed as ‘high’.

**Table 7 – Risk Identification and Assessment**

Categories	Criteria	At Risk (Rating 1-3)	Not at Risk/ (Rating 4-6)
A. Project design, including TOC and logical	1. Project Design		5
	2. Project Results Framework		5
B. Project performance and progress towards results	1. Relevance		5
	2. Efficiency	1	
	3. Effectiveness and Progress towards Expected Results	2	
C. Project implementation management	1. Project Management	2	
	2. Results-based Work Planning, M&E, Reporting		5
	3. Knowledge Management		4
	4. Financial Management and Co-finance		4
	5. Stakeholder Engagement and Communication		4
D. Scale-up, Sustainability and Resilience		2	
E. Gender Mainstreaming		Not rated as project has not moved sufficiently into execution to assess its performance on these aspects	
F. Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)			
G. Performance of Partners	1. Implementing Agency		4
	2. National Counterparts	3	
	3. Donor		4
<p><b>Overall Risk Rating: ‘High’, based on 5 identified project risks, following UNIDO’s risk rating legend</b></p> <p>Legend: The overall project risk rating at mid-term is based on the number of identified project risks</p> <p>0-1 Low 2-3 Medium &gt;3 High</p>			

### 11.3 Conclusions

- 120) The project’s desired outcomes have not yet been achieved, nor has the project had the opportunity to deliver anticipated insights and lessons (¶47) from operationalising the country’s national plastics policy (¶44) to induce societal change and leverage private sector forces towards reducing the plastic pollution footprint in Ghana as well as inform GEF-8’s Circular Solutions to Plastic Pollution Integrated Program.
- 121) The project’s design is robust, reflecting a well-conceived TOC (¶33) anchored in a root cause analysis carried out during its preparation phase (¶0, directly linked to Ghana’s ambition to become a replicable model for dealing with the burgeoning plastic waste problem (¶43). Its coherence and the synergistic power of constituent components are hallmarks of a sound project results framework. The results chain is clear, formulated at the appropriate level, realistic and measurable, with a logical flow of outputs to outcomes to impact (¶0. While its primarily quantitative indicators/targets (¶38) can be easily cascaded into monitoring and reporting systems, the Review Team cautions that the focus on tracking purely numeric targets to gauge performance misses out on criteria related to relevance, quality, and utility — which are vital for developing overall understanding of the effectiveness, relevance, and impact of the intervention. Such a risk is accentuated in the absence of baselines (¶39).
- 122) Overall, the Review Team considers that the project is still relevant. Some of its planned aspects may already have been covered or partially addressed through the efforts of other development actors that have been actively working over the past two years during which this project has experienced a severe delay in execution (¶49). While it was confirmed that their results have been handed over to MESTI (¶76), the extent to which their deliverables, lessons, and recommendations have been adequately digested and leveraged by MESTI and other key stakeholders involved in implementing the NPMP is outside the

mandate of the Review Team, but needs to be understood, together with the extent to which the barriers identified at the time of this project's design have consequently been mitigated or even overcome.

- 123) The granularity of the project's outputs (broken down into detailed, often quite specific activities) within the results framework (¶136) is a pragmatic approach for an Implementing Agency to transfer project execution, in line with its fiduciary responsibility. On the one hand, such granularity can provide reassurance and function as a comprehensive roadmap for the National PEE to achieve the project's outputs. On the other hand, such a design does not easily consider the effects of execution delays. While this highly granular approach has facilitated contracting, it has unwittingly introduced a level of rigidity and complexity that MESTI's young PMU Unit with relatively little experience in adaptive management, now has difficulty to challenge and revise, without significant external support.
- 124) The project's exceedingly poor performance on efficiency (¶154) and effectiveness (¶157) parameters at this mid-way point in the planned timeline for its execution is linked to initial decisions regarding its leadership and management (¶107) and the extended period of time needed to re-think and re-architect these arrangements (¶160). This is consistent with the governmental context selected for this project's execution, which is designed for policymaking and therefore naturally privileges political considerations. This setting is not designed for project management and execution. Risks related to leadership and management arrangements selected by the National PEE (¶159), the extended time needed for reconfiguration, and limited organisational competences for full project execution (¶160) were not identified in the design phase; yet these shortfalls underpin the project's severe delay and disappointing performance to date.
- 125) Key stakeholders are still counting on the value this project is intended to deliver (¶150). Such expectation normally functions to enhance motivation and accountability, which are critical for project management. These levers could not be effectively activated until recently. The change in the project's leadership and management involves integration into the Ministry's bureaucracy and staff performance management (¶10, which drives accountability. Until now, there has been interest in the project –although reportedly focussed more on its funds than the results those funds are intended to deliver (¶160). But this interest has not been transformed into action, in the absence of the key supportive structure to carry out the project's execution and traction from elements that underpin accountability and motivation.
- 126) The prolonged delay in formally establishing and staffing the PMU reflects limited understanding of its pivotal role in advancing project execution (¶160) and the effects of delay, manifest in MESTI's loss of credibility and stakeholder confidence and increased risks for the pilots (¶178). In the absence of a formal PMU team, UNIDO nevertheless provided substantial handholding support, but its effects have been suboptimal, as evidenced by inadequate absorption and repeated feedback cycles on proposed ToRs still pending UNIDO's non-objection until they reach the required quality.
- 127) The learning curve effects of shifting full project execution into the hands of entities that are not equipped for such endeavours have not been considered in the project's design, resourcing, and strict separation of implementation and execution. The substantial degree of handholding required and desired by national actors (¶158) reflects a disconnect with the assumption that the National PEE will manage to develop its competences under a 'learning by doing' paradigm. The high expectations for technical backstopping and operational support from UNIDO that far outstrip resources provided by the GEF under this project and strain UNIDO's in-house capacities (¶102) brings into question the legitimacy of the strict separation between implementation and execution.
- 128) Motivated by the notion of strengthening internal competences, the National PEE's strategy to 'mainstream' the project into Ministry activities has had unintended effects. While deflecting the use of external consultants (¶160), as provisioned for in the project's design and budget, this approach has added to the workloads of teams already handling demanding portfolios, given MESTI's pivotal role across its mandate of environment, science, technology, and innovation. Furthermore, the approach selected to advance the project's daily work through committee structures – while having the benefit of inclusiveness, has not sufficiently brought together those with the technical knowledge and capacity to think about work

plans and budgets and draft effective ToRs that elaborate work packages with the appropriate activities, sequencing, linkages, and deliverables. This has resulted in extended feedback cycles with UNIDO.

- 129) In view of the severe delay in execution, the strict separation of implementation and execution has not served this project well (¶110). Following the analogy used during the project’s 1<sup>st</sup> PSC meeting (¶21), as ‘the constructor responsible for assembling the building’, MESTI would naturally expect to draw on the expertise and insights of UNIDO as the project’s ‘architect’, as evidenced by high and ongoing expectations for UNIDO’s technical backstopping and operational support. In fact, the government’s anticipated strengthening of its organisational and individual capacities – a key motivation for welcoming full national execution – was explicitly linked to UNIDO’s support (¶60).
- 130) Co-financing is a key design tenant of GEF projects (¶75). Co-finance achieved is to be reported at the project’s mid-term and close. There is no evidence that this data is being tracked (¶75). This will handicap future assessment of the extent to which co-financing is being effectively leveraged to genuinely magnify the project’s impact, as well as ultimately sustain its results and benefit.
- 131) The recent leadership change and formal establishment of the PMU – provided there is appropriate communication (¶84) and systematic efforts to rebuild credibility and confidence (¶77) – can be expected to reinvigorate stakeholder engagement. With the project shifting into action (¶61), there are grounds for optimism. Given the project’s breadth and depth, in the hands of an experienced bureaucrat leading a young, relatively inexperienced PMU unit observed as dedicated, eager to learn and highly motivated, the timeframe to build and deploy the needed competences and roll out the project’s work can be expected to extend beyond the currently planned close in 2026. Up to a 2-year delay has accumulated thus far.

## 12 Moving Forward

### 12.1 Lessons Learned

- 132) In the spirit of promoting organisational learning, three lessons (see **Table 8**) have been distilled from the project’s experience thus far, giving valuable food for thought for ongoing and future project endeavours.

**Table 8 – Lessons Learned with their Context, Priority, and Responsibility**

<b>Lesson 1</b>	<b>In view of the high learning curve effects, national actors who are established for the purpose of policymaking – not the management and execution of development assistance projects – need significant technical backstopping and operational support while undertaking these unfamiliar execution roles for which they are not equipped.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Putting the full execution of development interventions into the hands of a national government seems to be a strategy to strengthen the sustainability of project results as national actors would be obliged to assume operational roles and responsibilities, thereby developing their ownership and the likelihood of their continued support.</li> <li>➤ This strategy may also be predicated on the notion that national governments possess deep understanding of local conditions, challenges, and priorities. These insights would arguably enable them to tailor project execution more effectively to the needs of their populations.</li> <li>➤ This project’s full national execution was welcomed by the National PEE and GEF OFP, taking up the idea that this would serve to strengthen MESTI’s competences (¶60). Reflecting this aim, mainstreaming the project into Ministry activities and the use of committee formats to develop ToRs have fallen short in deploying the project’s resources, with the result that very little of the project’s content has been initiated since its launch 2 years ago (¶128).</li> <li>➤ Being rolled out in a setting that naturally privileges political considerations over project management and execution (¶124), the project has faced ongoing challenges to gain traction, with exceedingly poor performance on efficiency and effectiveness parameters and poor conversion of the project’s resources and inputs into the desired results (¶54).</li> <li>➤ As this project’s experience and disappointing performance, thus far, amply demonstrates,</li> </ul>

	<p>relevant institutional, organisational, and individual competences of governmental entities selected as National PEEs must be strengthened alongside project execution responsibilities</p> <p>➤ This strengthening should be mandated and adequately resourced as part of project design.</p>
<b>Priority</b> <sup>31</sup>	Important Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	GEF Secretariat

<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>The strict separation of implementation and execution has weakened prospects for achieving the full development impact of GEF-funded interventions, in the absence of an explicit mandate and resourcing for carrying out the needed institutional strengthening to support project execution.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<p>➤ Considering the severe delay in execution, the strict separation of implementation and execution has not served this project well (¶110).</p> <p>➤ The government’s anticipated strengthening of its organisational and individual capacities – a key motivation for welcoming full national execution – was explicitly linked to having the technical backstopping and operational support of GEF’s Implementing Agency (¶60). This expectation is not consistent with a separation of implementation and execution.</p> <p>➤ The shift to full national execution has weakened the ability of the Implementing Agency to meaningfully intervene in a timely manner when project effectiveness and efficiency are at risk. The oversight and governance mechanisms available to the Implementing Agency (e.g. highlighting risks within the annual PIR, requesting revisions, withholding non-objections, withholding instalments) do not appear sufficient as corrective and/or mitigation measures, particularly in this project’s situation of severe execution delay.</p>
<b>Priority</b>	Important Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	GEF Secretariat

<b>Lesson 3</b>	<b>The timely establishment of a PMU provides a key structural element to enable and advance project activities as well as leverage execution support.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<p>➤ This project’s experience shows insufficient recognition of the pivotal role of the PMU in operationalising and advancing project work (¶60). It is the key structure supporting execution. This structure and its members can be held accountable for the project’s performance, thereby tapping into motivation and responsibility dimensions that are critical for project management (¶125).</p> <p>➤ In the absence of a formal PMU, the substantial handholding support provided by UNIDO – although well-intentioned in a bid to mitigate the accumulating delay – in addition to straining its own capacities (¶102), it has proven to be suboptimal, as evidenced by inadequate absorption and repeated feedback cycles on proposed ToRs still pending UNIDO’s non-objection (¶126).</p> <p>➤ With the PMU now operational, with clear leadership and support, there are promising signals of the potential to shift into action (¶61).</p>
<b>Priority</b>	Opportunity for Improvement
<b>Responsibility</b>	MESTI and UNIDO

<sup>31</sup> Identified using this categorisation:

*Critical recommendation: address significant and/or pervasive deficiencies in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance cannot be provided regarding the achievement of programme objectives.*

*Important recommendation: address reportable deficiencies or weaknesses in governance, risk management or internal control processes, such that reasonable assurance might be at risk regarding the achievement of programme objectives. Important recommendations are followed up on an annual basis.*

*Opportunity for improvement: comprise suggestions that do not meet the criteria of either critical or important recommendations and are only followed up as appropriate during subsequent oversight activity.*

## 12.2 Recommendations

- 133) Six recommendations are offered (see **Table 9**) to support the project in overcoming key barriers identified to achieving its expected results. Anchored in the preceding evidence, analysis, and conclusions, these are briefly set in context, prioritized, and assigned a lead responsibility and a proposed timeframe for their uptake and implementation.

**Table 9 – Recommendations with Context, Priority, Responsibility, Timeframe**

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	<b>Request a 2-year ‘no cost’ extension of the currently planned timeline</b>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The project’s currently planned close in December 2026 is insufficient to deliver the expected results, given that the bulk of the project’s content has yet to be initiated (¶112).</li> <li>➤ The recommendation to request a 2-year extension reflects the 2-year delay that has accumulated (¶151). An extension request should follow the requirements of UNIDO and the donor. Its duration should be discussed and endorsed by the PSC, observing a preference to avoid multiple extension requests, in light of the required due diligence. While noting that extension requests are normally made in a project’s last 6 months of execution, in view of the slower decision-making and a risk that a change in government priorities may ensue following the December 2024 general election (¶117), it is suggested to request an extension in the near term to heighten prospects for its institutional sustainability.</li> <li>➤ The recommendation to request a ‘no-cost’ extension reflects the limited deployment, thus far, of this project’s resources (¶153) and the finding that the project’s design has been adequately resourced (¶10).</li> <li>➤ Extending the project’s timeline involves costs and reduces overall efficiency. This needs to be balanced against the opportunity to improve effectiveness and prospects for sustaining its results and benefits. It is important to confirm that resources are in place (on the part of UNIDO as well as national actors) to cover the extended period of operation.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority</b>	Critical Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	PSC and UNIDO
<b>Timeframe</b>	Decision during next PSC meeting, which should be planned by October 2024
<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<b>Adaptively revise the project’s overall planned activities and the 2024 Work Plan (adding qualitative indicators to gauge relevance, quality, utility) based on an understanding of the current ecosystem landscape, together with leveraging results already produced through the co-financing of development partners and efforts of other actors over the project’s two years of delay.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The project’s desired outcomes have not yet been achieved, nor has the project had the opportunity to deliver the anticipated insights and lessons (¶120). However, some of its planned aspects may have already been covered or partially addressed in light of efforts over the past two years by various actors (¶122).</li> <li>➤ It is recommended to leverage an adaptive management approach in the review and reconfiguration of project activities.</li> <li>➤ To ensure the relevance, quality, and utility of all activities/outputs/outcomes, qualitative indicators should be included in the monitoring system (¶121), which currently features primarily numeric dimensions to gauge performance.</li> <li>➤ It is recommended to advance as soon as possible on the offer to undertake a stakeholder analysis expressed by NPAP during the 3<sup>rd</sup> PSC meeting (9 July 2024), deploying the project’s Component 3 funds intended to support NPAP’s operation</li> </ul>

	<p>(Output 3.1.1, Activity 3.1.1.2; see <b>Table 4</b>). Such an effort can be expected to update the PMU’s understanding of the stakeholder landscape and reinvigorate interest in exchange, consultation, and participation.</p> <p>➤ Efforts of other development actors included in the project’s co-financing – thereby expected to be of direct relevance to this project’s aims – have been delivered to MESTI (¶76). The review of planned activities should be undertaken with the purpose of actively leveraging these results and recommendations.</p>
<b>Priority</b>	Critical Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	PMU, with validation by the PSC
<b>Timeframe</b>	Within 3 months from now

<b>Recommendation 3</b>	<b>Draw on external consultancy experienced in operationalising complex international development projects to provide support in planning the project’s work, developing the needed ToRs, supervising and assessing the delivered results.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<p>➤ While a PMU has now finally been established (¶61), it is under major pressure to perform. The unit is young with little experience in adaptive management, leading to the Review Team’s conclusion that significant external support is required (¶123).</p> <p>➤ Although UNIDO staff have stepped in to assist, the National PEE’s needs for technical backstopping and operational support far outstrip the resources provided by the GEF under this project context and are straining UNIDO’s in-house capacities (¶127).</p> <p>➤ While ‘mainstreaming’ the project into Ministry activities was intended to strengthen internal competences (¶128), these have not reached needed levels within the short period of time that such a complex project requires to manage the ‘triple constraint’ of time, scope, and budget (standard dimensions of project management). This is understandable as the National PEE is designed for policymaking purposes; its setting is not designed for project management and execution (¶124).</p> <p>➤ High expectations for technical backstopping and operational support from UNIDO are linked to the government’s anticipated strengthening of its organisational and individual capacities. This was a key motivation for welcoming full national execution (¶129). As such resources for the Implementing Agency are not provisioned by the GEF under the current architecture (¶110), it is recommended to utilise the project’s budget to contract the needed external support, assuring the needed competence and experience in operationalising international development projects. The UNIDO Project Managers could be asked for references in this regard.</p>
<b>Priority</b>	Critical Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	PMU with support from UNIDO
<b>Timeframe</b>	Within 1 month from now

<b>Recommendation 4</b>	<b>Clarify the expectations, commitments, and conditions of disbursements using tailored ToRs attached to signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with the participating pilots that reflect mutual understanding of ways in which their learning and data will be collected and deployed to assist the government in developing and operationalising a responsive circular economy policy.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Overall, the pilot companies have lost trust and confidence in MESTI (¶84), in view of the prolonged process of assessment and re-assessment, still without receiving the anticipated disbursements, which has increased their risk (¶78), alongside missteps in communication that have generated further frustration and fear (¶84).</li> <li>➤ Given the prolonged delay in issuing the anticipated disbursements, pressure has increased on MESTI to shift into action. A generic draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was recently shared with the pilots, including a generic disbursement scheme (70% in 2024, 30% in 2025) to assist in understanding the modalities of disbursement as funds will be released in tranches.</li> <li>➤ As learning and data from the pilots are expected to directly support the government in developing and operationalising a responsive circular economy policy (¶115), there needs to be mutual understanding between the contracting parties about the ways in which this is linked to the disbursement conditions, which need to be structured in a manner to support this aim.</li> <li>➤ It is recommended to engage an individual as the direct liaison for the pilot projects. This would serve to strengthen communication, rebuilt trust, and also provide support for monitoring the results.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority</b>	Critical Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	PMU
<b>Timeframe</b>	Within 1 month from now

<b>Recommendation 5</b>	<b>Strengthen the accountability function of the PSC, together with its ability to sustain the project's results by re-engaging the interest and active participation of selected government partners and other national actors with a key role to play in operationalising the NPMP.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The absence of government actors, apart from MESTI/EPA in the recent PSC meeting, with a drop in participation already observed in the meeting six months earlier (¶111) potentially reflects a loss of interest of those with institutional roles in supporting the NPMP's operationalisation (¶17).</li> <li>➤ Their active participation is key for securing national ownership and dissemination of the project's results and benefits (¶106).</li> <li>➤ Their active participation is key to enhancing accountability for project execution, as a PSC populated only by staff from MESTI/EPA does not sufficient any voices to provide an outside view regarding its performance.</li> <li>➤ To enable PSC members to play the expected role of providing accountability and strategic guidance, it is vital that they are properly informed about the issues to be discussed through the sharing of project reports, work plans, and other documents in advance of PSC meetings.</li> <li>➤ It could also be useful to remind members that the PSC is an important platform for sharing meaningful strategic feedback and discussions about roles they could play during the project's operationalisation and for sustaining its results.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority</b>	Critical Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	National Project Director, MESTI Chief Director, and GEF OFF
<b>Timeframe</b>	Within the next 3 months

<b>Recommendation 6</b>	<b>Adequately resource and embed institutional strengthening within project design, as part of the Implementing Agency's mandate to enhance prospects for achieving full development impact under modalities of full national project execution.</b>
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The notion that full national execution would serve to strengthen MESTI's competences was welcomed by the National PEE and GEF OFP (¶60).</li> <li>➤ The strict separation between implementation and execution modalities has been observed in this project's roll out. While this is a break from previous practice used for GEF-funded projects (¶19), the needs and expectations for technical support and handholding by the national entity responsible for project execution have not been mitigated through other measures. There is an expectation that this project's execution is accompanied by institutional strengthening (¶51).</li> <li>➤ Major needs and expectations for UNIDO's technical and execution support have been observed, together with differing expectations about how this support is funded (¶60), generating differing understandings between the Implementing Agency and National PEE of what could and should be provided under the project's framework to facilitate execution and reaching the desired results.</li> <li>➤ The Review Team's exchanges with the National PEE uncovered a question regarding what is envisaged and resourced by GEF under the current modality. This question needs to be clarified. The Review Team's exchanges with UNIDO showed differing understanding from the National PEE regarding what the extent of support that is covered by the agency fee.</li> <li>➤ In light of the technical and execution support needs shown through this project's experience, the resourcing of this institutional strengthening is not sufficiently covered by the agency fee provided to the Implementing Agency.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority</b>	Critical Recommendation
<b>Responsibility</b>	GEF
<b>Timeframe</b>	As part of design of future projects

## Annex I – Project Factsheet

<b>Project Title:</b>	Establishing a circular economy framework for the plastics sector in Ghana
<b>GEF ID:</b>	10401
<b>UNIDO ID:</b>	190244
<b>GEF Replenishment Cycle:</b>	GEF-7
<b>Country(ies):</b>	Ghana
<b>Region:</b>	AFR - Africa
<b>GEF Focal Area:</b>	Multifocal Area (MFA)
<b>Stand-alone / Child Project:</b>	Stand-alone
<b>Implementing Department/Division:</b>	TCS/CCM/CER
<b>Co-Implementing Agency:</b>	N/A
<b>Executing Agency(ies):</b>	Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation/Environmental Protection Agency (MESTI)
<b>Project Type:</b>	Full-Sized Project (FSP)
<b>Project Duration:</b>	60 months
<b>GEF Project Financing:</b>	7,000,000 USD
<b>Agency Fee:</b>	665,000 USD
<b>Co-financing Amount:</b>	81,923,668 USD
<b>Date of CEO Endorsement/Approval:</b>	12/8/2021
<b>UNIDO Approval Date:</b>	12/17/2021
<b>Actual Implementation Start:</b>	12/31/2021
<b>Cumulative disbursement as of 30 June 2023:</b>	3,741,054 USD
<b>Mid-Term Review (MTR) Date:</b>	7/31/2024
<b>Original Project Completion Date:</b>	11/15/2026
<b>Expected Project Completion Date:</b>	11/15/2026
<b>Expected Financial Closure Date:</b>	11/15/2027
<b>UNIDO Project Manager:</b>	Müge Ulvinur Dolun, Industrial Development Officer

## Annex II – GEF-7 Core Indicator Worksheet, reporting until June 2024

<b>Core Indicator 1</b>	<b>Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use</b>				<b>(Hectares)</b>		
	<i>Hectares (1.1+1.2)</i>						
	<i>Expected</i>			Achieved			
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE		
<b>Indicator 1.1</b>	<b>Terrestrial protected areas newly created</b>						
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		(select)					
		(select)					
		Sum					
<b>Indicator 1.2</b>	<b>Terrestrial protected areas under improved management effectiveness</b>						
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score			
				Baseline		Achieved	
					Endorsement	MTR	TE
		(select)					
		(select)					
		Sum					
<b>Core Indicator 2</b>	<b>Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use</b>				<b>(Hectares)</b>		
	<i>Hectares (2.1+2.2)</i>						
	<i>Expected</i>			Achieved			
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE		
<b>Indicator 2.1</b>	<b>Marine protected areas newly created</b>						
Name of Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		(select)					
		(select)					
		Sum					
<b>Indicator 2.2</b>	<b>Marine protected areas under improved management effectiveness</b>						
	WDPA ID	IUCN category	Hectares	METT Score			
				Baseline		Achieved	

Name of Protected Area			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		(select)					
		(select)					
		Sum					
<b>Core Indicator 3</b>	<b>Area of land restored</b>					<b>(Hectares)</b>	
			Hectares (3.1+3.2+3.3+3.4)				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
<b>Indicator 3.1</b>	<b>Area of degraded agricultural land restored</b>						
			Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
<b>Indicator 3.2</b>	<b>Area of forest and forest land restored</b>						
			Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
<b>Indicator 3.3</b>	<b>Area of natural grass and shrublands restored</b>						
			Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
<b>Indicator 3.4</b>	<b>Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) restored</b>						
			Hectares				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	

<b>Core Indicator 4</b>	<b>Area of landscapes under improved practices (hectares; excluding protected areas)</b>	<b>(Hectares)</b>			
		Hectares (4.1+4.2+4.3+4.4)			
		Expected		Expected	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 4.1</b>	<b>Area of landscapes under improved management to benefit biodiversity</b>				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 4.2</b>	<b>Area of landscapes that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations</b>				
	Third party certification(s):	Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 4.3</b>	<b>Area of landscapes under sustainable land management in production systems</b>				
		Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 4.4</b>	<b>Area of High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) loss avoided</b>				
	Include documentation that justifies HCVF	Hectares			
		Expected		Achieved	
		PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Core Indicator 5</b>	<b>Area of marine habitat under improved practices to benefit biodiversity</b>	<b>(Hectares)</b>			
<b>Indicator 5.1</b>	<b>Number of fisheries that meet national or international third-party certification that incorporates biodiversity considerations</b>				
	Third party certification(s):	Number			
		Expected		Achieved	

			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
<b>Indicator 5.2</b>	<b>Number of large marine ecosystems (LMEs) with reduced pollution and hypoxial</b>						
			Number				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
<b>Indicator 5.3</b>	<b>Amount of Marine Litter Avoided</b>						
			Metric Tons				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
			7,300	13,051	0		
<b>Core Indicator 6</b>	<b>Greenhouse gas emission mitigated</b>					<i>(Metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e)</i>	
			Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e (6.1+6.2)				
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)	0	378,410	0		
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)					
<b>Indicator 6.1</b>	<b>Carbon sequestered or emissions avoided in the AFOLU sector</b>						
			Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e				
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)					
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)					
		Anticipated start year of accounting					
		Duration of accounting					
<b>Indicator 6.2</b>	<b>Emissions avoided Outside AFOLU</b>						
			Expected metric tons of CO <sub>2</sub> e				
			Expected		Achieved		
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE	
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (direct)	0	378,410	0		
		Expected CO <sub>2</sub> e (indirect)					
		Anticipated start year of accounting		1	3		

	Duration of accounting		4	4		
Indicator 6.3	Energy saved					
			MJ			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 6.4	Increase in installed renewable energy capacity per technology					
			Capacity (MW)			
		Technology	Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		(select)				
		(select)				
<b>Core Indicator 7</b>	<b>Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management</b>					<b>(Number)</b>
Indicator 7.1	Level of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Program (TDA/SAP) formulation and implementation					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.2	Level of Regional Legal Agreements and Regional Management Institutions to support its implementation					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.3	Level of National/Local reforms and active participation of Inter-Ministerial Committees					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
Indicator 7.4	Level of engagement in IWLEARN through participation and delivery of key products					
		Shared water ecosystem	Rating (scale 1-4)			
			Rating		Rating	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE

<b>Core Indicator 8</b>	<b>Globally over-exploited fisheries Moved to more sustainable levels</b>					<b>(Metric Tons)</b>
Fishery Details			Metric Tons			
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Core Indicator 9</b>	<b>Reduction, disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in processes, materials and products</b>					<b>(Metric Tons)</b>
			Metric Tons (9.1+9.2+9.3)			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	PIF stage	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 9.1</b>	<b>Solid and liquid Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) removed or disposed (POPs type)</b>					
POPs type			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
(select)	(select)	(select)				
(select)	(select)	(select)				
(select)	(select)	(select)				
<b>Indicator 9.2</b>	<b>Quantity of mercury reduced</b>					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 9.3</b>	<b>Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) Reduced/Phased out</b>					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Indicator 9.4</b>	<b>Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control chemicals and waste</b>					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			1	1	0	

<b>Indicator 9.5</b>	<b>Number of low-chemical/non-chemical systems implemented particularly in food production, manufacturing and cities</b>					
		Technology	Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			2	2	0	
<b>Indicator 9.6</b>	<b>Quantity of POPs/Mercury containing materials and products directly avoided</b>					
			Metric Tons			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	PIF stage	Endorsement
<b>Core Indicator 10</b>	<b>Reduction, avoidance of emissions of POPs to air from point and non-point sources</b>					<b>8.92 (grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ)</b>
<b>Indicator 10.1</b>	<b>Number of countries with legislation and policy implemented to control emissions of POPs to air</b>					
			Number of Countries			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
			1	1	0	
<b>Indicator 10.2</b>	<b>Number of emission control technologies/practices implemented</b>					
			Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
<b>Core Indicator 11</b>	<b>Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment</b>					<b>(Number)</b>
			Number			
			Expected		Achieved	
			PIF stage	Endorsement	MTR	TE
		Female		615	0	
		Male		527	0	
		Total	1000	1,142	0	

## Annex III – Documents Reviewed

### Project Documentation

CED Endorsement GEF ID 10401: Establishing a Circular Economy Framework for the Plastics Sector in Ghana  
UNIDO Environmental and Social Screening Template for Project 190244  
Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023, April to June 2024  
MESTI Project Report No. 1, January to December 2023  
Project Steering Committee Minutes (28 April 2023, 22 November 2023)  
Project Inception Workshop Report (Alisa Hotel, Accra), 14 December 2022  
MESTI's Project Inception Report, January 2023

### Thematic Resources

Circle Economy, Business Case: Circular Plastics in Ghana <https://knowledge-hub.circle-economy.com/cehubjapan/article/7960?n=Circular-plastics-in-Ghana>  
European Union (30 May 2022). "The European Union's Actions on Circular Economy in Ghana: The Story of a Service Recipient of the GrEEn Project" [https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/news/european-unions-actions-circular-economy-ghana-story-service-recipient-green-project-2022-05-30\\_en](https://trust-fund-for-africa.europa.eu/news/european-unions-actions-circular-economy-ghana-story-service-recipient-green-project-2022-05-30_en)  
Global Plastics Action Partnership (November 2021). "A Roadmap for Radical Reduction of Plastic Pollution in Ghana" [https://www.wacaprogram.org/sites/waca/files/knowdoc/NPAP\\_Ghana\\_Action\\_Roadmap.pdf](https://www.wacaprogram.org/sites/waca/files/knowdoc/NPAP_Ghana_Action_Roadmap.pdf)  
Global Plastics Action Partnership (March 2022). "NPAP Ghana Financing Roadmap". Available at: <https://weforum.ent.box.com/s/xq75tbq22z0xh838q4ef6d4te1rmnkxe>  
Global Plastics Action Partnership (12 October 2022). "Trade and the Circular Economy: A Deep Dive into Plastics Action in Ghana" <https://www.globalplasticaction.org/case-study-details/aJY680000008OMHGA2> and <https://www.globalplasticaction.org/ghana>  
Global Plastics Action Partnership Annual Impact Report: Turning Plastic Pollution Commitments into Action. Available at: <https://pacecircular.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/GPAP-Annual-Impact-Report.pdf>  
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UNIDO Working Paper (2019). "Addressing the Challenge of Marine Plastic Litter using Circular Economy Methods". Available at: [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2019-06/UNIDO\\_Addressing\\_the\\_challenge\\_of\\_Marine\\_Plastic\\_Litter\\_Using\\_Circular\\_Economy\\_0.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2019-06/UNIDO_Addressing_the_challenge_of_Marine_Plastic_Litter_Using_Circular_Economy_0.pdf)  
UNIDO (2024). UNIDO's Activities and Initiatives for Addressing Plastic Pollution" <https://apps1.unep.org/resolutions/uploads/unido.pdf>  
World Economic Forum (2024). "Ghana National Plastic Action Partnership Celebrates 2 Years" <https://www.globalplasticaction.org/the-ghana-national-plastic-action-partnership-celebrates-2-years>  
Zurek, Kweku (7 June 2022). "MESTI Launches Ghana Circular Economy Centre, Plastic Circular Economy Projects". Available at: <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/mesti-launches-ghana-circular-economy-centre-plastic-circular-economy-projects.html>

### Evaluation Guidance and other Resources

GEF Independent Evaluation Office (13 June 2019). GEF Evaluation Policy [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN\\_GEF.ME\\_C56\\_02\\_Rev01\\_GEF\\_Evaluation\\_Policy\\_June\\_2019\\_0.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/council-meeting-documents/EN_GEF.ME_C56_02_Rev01_GEF_Evaluation_Policy_June_2019_0.pdf)  
UNIDO Evaluation Manual 2023 [Evaluation manual | UNIDO](#)  
UNIDO (2019) Strategy for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women 2020-2023 <https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2019-11/UNIDO%20Gender%20Strategy%20ebook.pdf>

## Annex IV – Stakeholders Consulted

### Remote and In-Person Consultation

Date	Stakeholder	Location
7 May 2024	<b>UNIDO Project Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Müge Dolun</li> <li>➤ Peter Smalley</li> <li>➤ Joseph Yeboah</li> </ul>	Austria and Ghana
28 May 2024	<b>Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm (BRS) Convention Secretariat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Jost Dittkrist</li> <li>➤ Kei Ohno Woodall</li> <li>➤ Andrea Cararo</li> </ul>	Switzerland
28 May 2024	<b>GIZ's Go Circular for Climate and Clean Oceans project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Coralie Marszewski</li> <li>➤ Sharon Frimpong</li> </ul>	Ghana
29 May 2024	<b>GIZ's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) activities in Ghana</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Michael Funke-Bartz</li> </ul>	Germany
29 May 2024	<b>World Economic Forum - Global Plastics Action Partnership (GPAP)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Roisin Greene</li> <li>➤ Bontu Yousuf</li> <li>➤ Pedro Sao</li> </ul>	Switzerland
4 June 2024	<b>UNIDO Project Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Müge Dolun</li> </ul>	Austria (in person)
10 June 2024	<b>World Bank, PROBLUE</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Heather Troutman</li> </ul>	United States
13 June 2024	<b>World Economic Forum - National Plastics Action Partnership (NPAP)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Bontu Yousuf</li> <li>➤ Kelechi Ofoegbu</li> </ul>	Switzerland (in person)
17 June 2024	<b>UNIDO Project Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Peter Smalley</li> </ul>	Austria
25 July 2025	<b>UNIDO Project Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Jérôme Stücker</li> </ul>	Austria

### Field Consultation (face-to-face meetings)

#### Mid-Term Review 📍 1 – 9 July 2024

Time	Meeting	Location
July 1	<b>PMU - Procurement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Frank Van Lare</li> </ul> <b>PMU - Accounts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Joana Amoako</li> </ul>	MESTI
July 1	<b>PMU – Project Officer</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Judith Asmah</li> </ul> <b>PMU – Administrator</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Gifty Ansabah Polley</li> </ul>	CSIR
July 1	<b>National PEE – Strategic Advisor for MESTI Minister</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Oliver Boachie</li> </ul>	MESTI
July 1	<b>EcoSystem Actor – National Plastics Action Plan (NPAP) Secretariat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Kwame Asamoah Mensa-Yawson</li> <li>➤ Kelechi Ofoegbu</li> </ul>	Impact Hub

July 2	<b>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)</b> ➤ Godson Voadoe <b>Ghana National Cleaner Production Centre (under EPA)</b> ➤ Letitia Nyabba	EPA
July 2	<b>PMU – Project Coordinator</b> ➤ Lydia Essuah	MESTI
July 2	<b>GEF Operational Focal Point</b> ➤ Issac Charles Acquah	EPA
Not Interviewed <sup>32</sup>	<b>Project Implementing Partner – UNDP</b> ➤ Catherine Adodoadji-Dogba	
Unable to confirm due to travelling	<b>Project Steering Committee member – Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (MSWR)</b> ➤ Deborah Laryea ➤ Fifi Boadi	
July 3	<b>Pilot Company – Mckingtorch</b> ➤ Makafui Awuku, Founder and CEO	Mckingtorch
July 3	<b>Implementing Agency – UNIDO</b> ➤ Joseph Yeboah	UNIDO Office
July 3	<b>EcoSystem Actor – Food and Beverage Association (FABAG)</b> ➤ Samuel Ato Aggrey, General Secretary ➤ Kobby Adu-Gyamfi, Marketing Manager	FABAG Office
	<b>EcoSystem Actor – Plastic Manufacturers’ Association (GPMA)</b> ➤ Ebbo Botwe, President	FABAG Office
July 4	<b>Pilot Company – Irecoop</b> ➤ Betty Brown	Workshop
July 4	<b>Pilot Company – Asase Foundation</b> ➤ Hilda Addah ➤ Dana Mosora	Asase Foundation
	<b>Pilot Company – SESA Recycling</b> ➤ Ghislain de Castries	
	<b>Pilot Company – City Waste Recycling</b> ➤ Vivian Ahiavibor ➤ Jürgen Meinel	
July 5	<b>Pilot Company – Eco-Solve</b> ➤ John Hall-Acquaah, Founder & CEO ➤ William Kwapong Addo, Communications	Eco-Solve
July 5	<b>Pilot Company – Nelplast</b> ➤ Nelson Boateng	Restaurant near Accra
July 5	<b>EcoSystem Actor – Borla &amp; Taxi Plastic Pickers Association</b> ➤ Lydia Bamfo, President ➤ Maxwel Jumbo, Secretary	Informal Association of Waste Pickers
July 8	<b>UNIDO – Project Management</b> ➤ Müge Dolun (joined remotely) ➤ Jérôme Stücker (joined remotely) ➤ Peter Smalley	Ghana and Austria

<sup>32</sup> At the time of the meeting request to UNDP by the MTR team, UNDP was still awaiting feedback from MESTI/UNIDO on administrative issues. Without having signed and engaged on the project yet, the project team did not feel comfortable speaking to the Review Team for a project that the organization had no existing agreement on or had yet fully engaged in implementation.

	➤ Joseph Yeboah	
July 9	<b>Project Steering Committee (PSC)'s 3rd Meeting</b>	Ghana

## Annex V – Sample Interview Protocol

### Mid-Term Review 🍃 Establishing a Circular Economy Framework for the Plastics Sector

*This independent review of the project's first two years of execution is aimed at identifying barriers and risks to fully achieving the planned activities, outputs, and outcomes. The purpose is to identify any needed changes to keep the project on track – as well as draw out lessons, good practices, and recommendations to strengthen the project's ongoing activities and prospects for replication and sustainability.*

Please be assured that our exchange will be held in confidence. Neither you nor your institution will be identified in any reporting or exchanges with others. Your input is voluntary. It will not be directly shared with the MESTI execution team, UNIDO, or GEF as donor. Your inputs contribute to building up insights regarding the project's operation, key strengths and shortfalls.

You are welcome to provide additional written input directly within this protocol. Please return to [joyce@caprese.org](mailto:joyce@caprese.org)

#### Relevance / Project Design / Execution Architecture

- 1) What is project's **key added value**? Where is it making a **contribution** or **filling a gap**?
- 2) What makes MESTI most **appropriate** to be this project's national executing partner? How helps **fulfil its mandate**?
- 3) Could you explain your understanding of **MESTI's role** in this project? What **works well**? What are the **challenges** ?
- 4) In which ways is this project **helping** MESTI **build up its organisational competences**? What **hinders** this process?
- 5) Would a different **project execution arrangement** be more suitable; why? What are your recommendations?
- 6) Considering developments since project's 2020 design, which aspects of the project are **still relevant**?
- 7) What **outputs/deliverables** developed by other stakeholders are available to build on? **How** would this work?

#### Effectiveness / Efficiency / Project Management

- 8) How should this project's **success be measured**? Where 1= little, 10 is high success, how would you **rate** it so far? **Why**?
- 9) What has stopped the project from **using its allocated budgets**?
- 10) What **procurement challenges** does MESTI face? Which **mechanisms** assure consultants have **adequate competences**?
- 11) Do you use **adaptive management** to unblock obstacles and maintain momentum? What stops you from doing so?
- 12) What **factors** influence the efficient use of resources?
- 13) To what extent has planned **co-financing** materialised: related to execution support? Mobilised investment?

#### Monitoring / Reporting / Planning

- 14) Has **UNIDO's support** been adequate? Where is more support needed?
- 15) To what extent has MESTI been **able to operationalise** expected monitoring & reporting?  
- when you encountered challenges, **how have these been solved**? Are some challenges still not solved?
- 16) Does your **monitoring** system sufficiently support you to i) **collect needed data** for reporting? ii) **identify risks**?
- 17) How has process of doing **annual Project Reports** helped you **increase performance**? **Facilitate learning**? **Examples**
- 18) Concerning **annual Work Plan**: what is **easy** for you? What is **difficult**? What should be **changed**?
- 19) Concerning **financial plan & reporting**: what is **easy** for you? What is **difficult**? What should be **changed**?

#### Knowledge Management

- 20) Which mechanisms are used to capture project knowledge for **staff onboarding**? To ensure **institutional memory**?
- 21) What would be lost if **you** were to leave the project right now? Same question for **your institution**?
- 22) What are your **plans** for **strengthening** the project's knowledge management? Do you have resources to do it?

#### Stakeholder Engagement

- 23) Which **mechanisms** are being used for **communication** and **coordination** with key stakeholders?
- 24) Which **partnerships** best support you in developing the plastics circularity ecosystem and policy environment?
- 25) Which **synergies** should MESTI actively pursue with which actors/initiatives to enhance outcomes, ensure their sustainability? Which efforts would you prioritize, for which reasons?

#### Governance

- 26) Has the **Project Steering Committee** (PSC) adequately supported project? What **works well**? Should **be improved**?
- 27) Does PSC have 'right' **members** to provide **strategic guidance**? Meet frequently enough? All members understand role? Do they all participate? Are they sufficiently knowledgeable about project? Do they give expected feedback? If not, why not?

#### Sustainability

- 28) Are PSC members offering ideas and/or formulating strategies to ensure continuation of project benefits?
- 29) What makes you believe that activities will continue after donor funding ends (e.g. in 2 years)? **Evidence**
- 30) Would you recommend a project **extension**? If so, for how long. What are **pro's & con's** ?

# Annex VI – Project’s Theory of Change

