

TERMINAL EVALUATION

Project ID:	9747
Project Name:	Building Core Capacity for the Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania
Countr(ies):	Mauritania
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW	3
A. Description	3
B. Key Dates	3
C. Disbursements	3
II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES	4
A. Main Terminal Evaluation Findings	4
B. Stakeholder Engagement	5
C. Gender Equality	5
D. Knowledge Management	6
III. CORE INDICATORS	7
IV: CO FINANCING	8
V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS	8
VI. ANNEX	9

I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

Building Core Capacity for the Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the Context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania

Country

Mauritania

GEF ID

9747

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development,
Mauritania

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

MSP

Objective

To strengthen national capacity for environmental information and knowledge management for the implementation, monitoring and reporting of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Mauritania

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

3/23/2018

Agency Approval

5/2/2018

Implementation Start

7/20/2018

First Disbursement

8/14/2018

Expected MTR

1/17/2023

MTR Submission

2/17/2026

Actual MTR

Expected Completion

12/30/2023

Actual Completion

12/31/2023

Actual TE

2/2/2026

TE Submission

2/17/2026

Final Disbursement

C. Disbursements

Project Financing
1,040,250.00

Cumulative Disbursement
905,000.00

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main Terminal Evaluation Findings

The evaluation confirmed the project's strong strategic relevance, fully aligning with UNEP's Medium-Term Strategies, GEF priorities, and Mauritania's national frameworks. It advanced environmental governance, data transparency, and evidence-based policymaking while supporting MEA commitments (UNCCD, CBD, Paris Agreement) and SDGs 13, 15, 16, and 17. Complementarity was evident through partnerships with GIZ, universities, and local communities (Review Report para. 5).

All 10 outputs and 2 outcomes were achieved, contributing to improved environmental governance through integrated information systems and policy coordination. Key achievements included the State of the Environment Report, GIS-based databases, a cloud-based EIS, and capacity-building initiatives. Approximately 80% of planned actions were completed by project closure, and stakeholder feedback confirmed relevance and utility. Impact is rated as Likely, contingent on continued institutional commitment and system integration (Review Report paras. 8 and 13).

The project faced significant external challenges, including COVID-19 disruptions and the dissolution of CNOEZA, which weakened ownership and caused delays. Two no-cost extensions totaling 19 months were required. Adaptive management strategies included revising work plans, prioritizing virtual activities, and supporting vulnerable communities through microprojects that maintained food security and social cohesion during the crisis (Review Report paras. 7 and 10).

Financial management was rated highly satisfactory, with 100% budget utilization, strict adherence to UNEP standards, timely disbursements, and transparent reporting. Efficiency was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and institutional changes; however, adaptive strategies such as remote implementation and leveraging partnerships helped ensure delivery within the revised timeline (Review Report paras. 9 and 10).

Monitoring was satisfactory, guided by a results-based approach with SMART indicators and participatory frameworks. The system tracked 37 indicators and maintained regular reporting, enabling adaptive management. Reliance on process indicators, combined with the lack of gender-specific metrics, suggests opportunities to strengthen the assessment of long-term institutional change. (Review Report para. 11).

Sustainability is rated moderately likely. The EIS has been integrated into MESD structures and supported by capacity-building and a validated sustainability strategy. While progress has been significant, sustaining results will benefit from continued attention to stakeholder engagement, data integration, and financial planning. Strengthening legal mandates, structured follow-up, and resource mobilization could further support long-term viability and reduce risks of discontinuity. (Review Report para. 12).

Performance benefited from strong preparation, UNEP oversight, and MESD leadership. Inclusive stakeholder engagement, gender-focused initiatives, and knowledge-sharing strengthened ownership. While the project maintained alignment with UNEP's ESSF and overall risk was rated low, there is scope to strengthen impact through deeper PSC engagement, diversified focal point arrangements, and enhanced feedback mechanisms (Review Report para. 13).

Overall, the project laid a solid foundation for improved environmental governance and data integration in Mauritania. It achieved its outputs, strengthened institutional capacity, and promoted inclusive participation despite external challenges. Sustaining and scaling its impact will require stronger institutional anchoring, interministerial coordination, and long-term financing strategies.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

The project began with a comprehensive stakeholder analysis and a clearly defined governance structure, as outlined in Sections A.3, A.6, and Annex H of the Project Approval Request. The PSC was established, bringing together UNEP EWAD, MESD, key ministries, research institutions, civil society organizations, and other relevant actors at national and subnational levels. Roles and responsibilities were well-articulated, and external partners were aligned with their capacities (Review Report para. 285).

MTR was planned but suspended due to the consultant's health issues and passing. Instead of restarting the process, UNEP held a knowledge exchange session as a cost-effective alternative, given the project's advanced stage and the non-mandatory nature of MTRs for GEF medium-sized projects (Review Report para. 4).

Throughout the project lifecycle, stakeholder engagement evolved positively. The Project Team actively promoted ownership through knowledge-sharing strategies, including wide dissemination of reports and studies via electronic platforms. Strategic partnerships were strengthened with national academic and scientific institutions such as UNA, ISET, ENVFA, IMROP, CNRE, CNERV, OMRG, and ONM, reinforcing technical legitimacy and institutional reach (Review Report para. 286).

Despite COVID-19-related restrictions, the project demonstrated adaptability by establishing a shared vision and aligning work plans with national priorities. Field missions in Benichab reflected growing commitment from local stakeholders, particularly the Benichab Economic Interest Group (G.I.E), which emerged as a strategic partner. Ministries and directorates appointed focal points under Component 1, actively supporting implementation and dissemination of results. Component 2 also benefited from strong engagement through training and capacity-building activities (Review Report para. 287). While progress was evident, there remain opportunities to further strengthen certain aspects. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted field missions and workshops, affecting the timing and consistency of communication and increasing reliance on online platforms—limiting opportunities for full participation in capacity-building activities. Although representation at PSC meetings remained broad throughout the project lifecycle, strategic engagement was less frequent, reducing opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration (Review Report para. 287). Institutional integration was also influenced by uneven participation among sectors, and the PSC's role was at times perceived as more formal than strategic. These observations highlight opportunities to enhance institutional ownership and foster more active involvement in guiding long-term sustainability (Review Report para. 289ii).

Regarding outcomes, the project achieved meaningful collaboration among stakeholder groups, promoting ownership through workshops, training sessions, demonstration projects, and formal engagement strategies. Partnerships with universities, NGOs, and communities strengthened technical capacity and legitimacy. Local and traditional knowledge was integrated into pilot projects in Inchiri and Hodh el Gharbi, while gender-focused initiatives, such as a microfinance project benefiting 62% women, promoted equity (Review Report para. 288). Demonstration projects targeting vulnerable communities addressed livelihood sustainability and climate resilience, contributing to poverty alleviation and inclusive development. Human rights considerations were implicitly addressed through community representation and participatory decision-making (Review Report para. 288). Despite limitations, the project fostered synergy among ministries, academic institutions, and local actors, reinforcing integration into national sustainable development strategies. MESD maintained strong leadership, and stakeholders demonstrated commitment to sustaining activities beyond project closure. Lessons learned include the value of participatory approaches, voluntarism, and adaptive strategies in overcoming contextual and technical challenges (Review Report para. 289i).

C. Gender Equality

At CEO Endorsement/Approval (Section A.4 and Annex M), the project committed to integrating gender and human rights considerations throughout its design and implementation. Planned measures included: (1) incorporating sex-

and age-disaggregated indicators into MEA and SDG frameworks to enable gender-sensitive environmental assessments; (2) establishing an Environmental Information System (EIS) capable of collecting socio-economic and gender-specific data; (3) promoting gender-equitable capacity building through inclusive training and awareness activities; (4) supporting a microfinance initiative targeting indigenous women to strengthen livelihoods and resilience; and ensuring gender balance in project teams and activities, including schools and demonstration projects (Review Report paras. 293 and 294).

Although the project document did not include a gender marker rating or a formal gender action plan (nor was this required at the time of design), these commitments were embedded in the project's approach (Review Report para. 295).

During implementation, the project demonstrated strong responsiveness to gender equality and human rights, catalyzing women's leadership and community empowerment, particularly in Benichab. Women were encouraged to initiate environmentally focused activities such as agricultural monitoring, creating spaces for autonomy and agency among underrepresented groups (Review Report para. 296i). A pilot microfinance initiative for women enhanced resilience and adaptive capacity under challenging socio-economic conditions, reinforcing the practical relevance of gender mainstreaming in natural resource management (Review Report para. 296i). Awareness-raising efforts engaged partners on the importance of including women and youth in decision-making processes. Training and meetings promoted inclusive participation, though gender balance in formal governance bodies (e.g., PSC) was not fully achieved due to structural disparities in Mauritania (Review Report para. 296iii).

Nevertheless, the project advanced gender mainstreaming and laid a foundation for more inclusive environmental governance. Women's participation in project activities was significant, even if representation in governance bodies remained uneven (Review Report para. 296iv). Gender-focused initiatives, such as microfinance and educational activities, contributed to equity and resilience. Finally, the project raised awareness of gender and human rights at the national level and integrated these considerations into environmental policies and institutional frameworks (Review Report para. 297).

D. Knowledge Management

The project successfully implemented a comprehensive Knowledge Management Approach, delivering 10 outputs that strengthened environmental data governance, institutional capacity, and stakeholder engagement. Key achievements included the State of the Environment Report, a sustainability strategy, and the operationalization of an Environmental Information System (EIS) now used by national institutions. Around 30 technical reports and knowledge products were produced, complemented by six workshops and Training of Trainers sessions that reached over 200 stakeholders through targeted programs on environmental assessment, GIS, and data management. Demonstration projects were fully implemented, including a climate-resilient agriculture prototype and a microfinance initiative for women. Education and awareness activities engaged 11 schools and 1,500 students, supported integration of environmental education into national curricula, and disseminated awareness products via mass media. In total, 37 environmental indicators were collected, supporting long-term monitoring and informed decision-making (Review Report paras. 121 - 161).

While the project made strong efforts to prioritize knowledge management and communication, some aspects could be further enhanced in future initiatives. The communication plan outlined at CEO Approval provided a solid foundation but could have benefited from more detailed strategies to engage marginalized and gender groups (Review Report paras. 319 and 323). Feedback mechanisms were limited, with only one workshop including a survey to assess impact and monitoring focused mainly on process indicators rather than outcome-based metrics. (Review Report paras. 324 and 327). Additionally, communication activities slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the timing of some stakeholder engagement activities (Review Report para. 326).

Despite these constraints, the project achieved notable success in generating and disseminating knowledge. Key audiences were well-informed about the project's objectives, and communication activities were frequent, interactive,

and adequately resourced. The State of the Environment Report served as a strategic knowledge product, providing accessible information for decision-makers and linking environmental issues to poverty reduction (Review Report para. 322iii). Public awareness initiatives, such as school-based programs, national environmental events, and media campaigns, were recognized as good practices for promoting environmental knowledge and behavioral change (Review Report paras. 322 iv and 325). Capacity-building activities strengthened technical skills for EIS use and knowledge management, contributing to institutional ownership and sustainability (Review Report para. 326). Lessons learned highlight the value of inclusive communication strategies, integrating feedback mechanisms, and complementing process indicators with outcome-based metrics to better assess impact. The project demonstrated that proactive engagement, experience-sharing, and transparent dissemination are essential for fostering collaboration and ensuring the long-term relevance of knowledge systems (Review Report paras. 321, 323, and 327).

III. Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
			112

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
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Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
			112

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
Benichab						112.00			

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female				2,140
Male				1,745
Total	0	0	0	3,885

IV: Co Financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO(\$)	Materialized at MTR(\$)	Materialized at TE(\$)
Recipient Country Government	Mauritania	Grant	Recurrent expenditures	50,000.00		50,000.00
Recipient Country Government	mauriatania	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	100,000.00		100,000.00
GEF Agency	UNEP	In-kind	Recurrent expenditures	200,000.00		200,000.00
Total Co-financing				350,000.00	0.00	350,000.00

Comments

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
			Low

Measures to address identified risks and impacts

At CEO Approval, the project was classified as low risk, with no activities expected to generate significant environmental or social impacts (Section A.5; Annex M - UNEP ESERN Checklist). The Safeguards Plan included a comprehensive risk analysis and mitigation measures aligned with UNEP's Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework (ESSF). Given its focus on policy development and capacity building, no physical interventions were planned that could pollute, degrade ecosystems, or harm wildlife, reinforcing the appropriateness of the safeguards approach (Review Report paras. 299 and 301).

During implementation, the project consistently maintained its low-risk classification, as confirmed in the 2022 and 2023 PIRs. All safeguard categories (SS1-SS9) were rated low risk, and no mitigation plans were required. UNEP's ESSF principles, covering resilience, human rights, gender equality, accountability, and inclusion, were applied throughout implementation. Grievance mechanisms were established, and complaints from partners and communities were addressed promptly. Special attention was given to marginalized groups, including women's associations and rural indigenous communities involved in demonstration projects (Review Report paras. 302 and 303).

Risk monitoring was systematic and documented through a comprehensive risk log included in the 2023 PIR (Section 4), which tracked risks identified at CEO endorsement and during implementation. A medium-level risk was identified in the management structure due to the transition of CNOEZA, which temporarily disrupted roles and responsibilities (Review Report paras. 304 and 305).

Although the project successfully avoided major environmental or social risks, there are opportunities to further strengthen risk management performance in future initiatives: (1) Enhancing continuity measures: While mitigation strategies were applied, introducing backup focal points may help reinforce institutional resilience and minimize disruptions during organizational transitions; (2) Refining monitoring approaches for pilot activities: Developing systematic methodologies and indicators for initiatives such as ecosystem-based adaptation and women-led microfinance could provide deeper insights into indirect risks and support long-term sustainability planning (Review Report paras. 300 and 306).

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Prefix	Title
M and E Document	Terminal Evaluation (TE)	Terminal Review Report