



FINAL REPORT

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List of abbreviations

ATU	Autonomous Territorial Unit
EIA	Environment Impact Assessment
EoI	Expression of Interest
RES EC	Renewable Energy Sources (RES)
DRR Plans	Disaster Risk Reduction Local Plans
LPAs	Local Public Authorities
LPAC	Local Project Appraisal Committee
ME	Ministry of Environment
MDL	Moldova Lei
NEC	National Environment Centre NGO
NERDA	North-East Region Development Agency NGO
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
RAF	Results Framework
ResComWomEmp	Resilient Communities through Women Empowerment Project
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SIA	Strategic Impact Assessment
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

I. SUMMARY

Total duration	March 2020 – July 2024
Budget	Total cost: 3.160.492 USD¹
Objectives	<p>The <u>overall objective</u>: To build sustainable and inclusive resilient communities through empowering women to practice alternative livelihoods in the context of increased environmental degradation and vulnerabilities to extreme weather patterns.</p> <p>This was achieved by developing the technical skills and knowledge of regional and local LPAs, NGOs, and the target women. Furthermore, grants we given to recipient communities, small and medium women agricultural producers/ entrepreneurs, and women-headed households to implement projects that environmentally benefit them, promote climate change adaptation and generate additional income within their respective sectors.</p> <p>Women groups and local authorities from target communities from Nisporeni, Calarasi, Basarabasca, Leova districts, Gagauzia and Transnistrian regions, and the security zone currently benefit from improved knowledge and skills for building their resilience and to mitigate the climate change risks and effects. The women agri-producers were capacitated for sustainable and resilient agriculture and forest practices and to explore alternative income generation activities in the respective sectors in the context of increased environmental degradation and vulnerabilities to extreme weather patterns.</p> <p>All activities have been implemented by placing women’s empowerment at the center of all the efforts, connecting region’s authorities and structures to the local ones, facilitating dialogue and inclusion in the development of gender sensitive climate strategies, as well as consolidating the capacities of local NGOs to promote gender-responsive climate resilience and environmental agenda forward at national and local levels.</p> <p><i>It has been implemented under the following four Outcomes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 1: Sustainable, climate resilient and environmentally-sound livelihoods defined and local capacities & knowledge on environment, climate change and gender enhanced and implemented successfully;

¹ The Project has a total final budget of 3,175,389.24 USD, after approval of a top-up in 2022 amounting 699,403 USD to support more projects submitted by women with economic activity in their households, to accommodate the increased costs of products and energy due to the financial crisis, and finally the cost of a six-month project extension.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome 2: NGOs capacities to provide expertise to LPAs and women in the field of resilience to climate change, sustainable development and gender mainstreaming enhanced; • Outcome 3: Environment-friendly and climate resilient practices and projects implemented by women headed households, women agri-producers and communities; • Outcome 4: Sustainable and climate resilient practices and business models disseminated and replicated.
Key outputs/results	<p><i>1.0 Baseline Study and Endline study on level of awareness on climate change and environmental issues conducted;</i></p> <p><i>1.1. Three (3) regional environmental and climate vulnerability assessments in Gagauzia, Transnistria and Dubasari district from Security Zone) and four (4) environmental assessments in Leova, Basarabeasca, Causeni and Nisporeni districts) through gender mainstreaming carried out;</i></p> <p><i>1.2. Twelve (12) supported LPAs in integrating women's empowerment, environment and climate change concerns into their local development plans;</i></p> <p><i>1.3. Capacity and needs assessments for women entrepreneurs, and women-headed households in 6 districts conducted;</i></p> <p><i>1.4. Practical capacity development programme for women conducted and relevant knowledge products developed;</i></p> <p><i>2.1. Gap analysis/system-based audit of NGOs that expressed their interest to enroll in the institutional capacity development programme conducted;</i></p> <p><i>2.2. Elaborate and implement a dedicated institutional capacity development programme for 6 selected NGOs;</i></p> <p><i>2.3. a capacity building programme for NGOs on environment, climate change and gender topics designed and implemented;</i></p> <p><i>2.3.1. Study tours, exchange visits and participation in international dialogues for Project beneficiaries carried out;</i></p> <p><i>3.1. Grants to women-headed households and coaching and mentoring grants for NGOs awarded;</i></p> <p><i>3.2. Grants to women-led climate-resilient businesses and coaching and mentoring grants for NGOs awarded;</i></p> <p><i>3.3. Community grants and coaching and mentoring grants for NGOs;</i></p> <p><i>4.1 Communications plan implemented by sharing case studies, best practices, lessons learned and other relevant information on climate change adaptation solutions and resilient livelihoods from the pilot communities to a broad audience.</i></p>

Main activities

- **Outcome 1: Sustainable, climate resilient and environmentally-sound livelihoods defined and local capacities & knowledge on environment, climate change and gender enhanced and implemented successfully;**
- Support the elaboration of Climate Profiles for Leova, Basarabeasca, Calarasi and Nisporeni, Dubasari, Transnistria and UTAG;
- Assistance for development of Gender Mainstreamed Actions Plans on including Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Protection Measures in the Local Development plans of Nisporeni, Leova, Calarasi, Basarabeasca and Dubasari;
- User-friendly Guidelines for LPAs on the implementation of climate and environmental legislation locally, as well as on the gender - climate and environment nexus developed.
- Strengthen Local Public Administrations' (LPAs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) capacities to apply gender-sensitive environment and climate related legislation at local level;
- Conduct a Capacity Needs Assessment of women-led households and women and men agri-producers followed by a Capacity Development programme for the same target group.
- **Outcome 2: NGOs capacities to provide expertise to LPAs and women in the field of resilience to climate change, sustainable development and gender mainstreaming enhanced;**
- Institutional development and Capacity building support to environmental NGOs working at local and national level
- Conduct knowledge-sharing events for Environmental NGOs to strengthen their capacities for providing coaching and mentorship gender - climate and environment nexus for women agri-producers.
- **Outcome 3: Environment-friendly and climate resilient practices and projects implemented by women headed households, women agri-producers and communities;**
- Provide support aiming at contributing to the sustainable development and increased climate resilience of 30 communities in 30 communities in 7 target area;
- Support women-led businesses, including the provision of small grants for start-ups, and mentoring capacity development activities, for piloting environment-friendly and climate resilient practices and projects;
- Conduct knowledge-sharing/peer review events with similar municipalities and businesses from the target areas, as well as other relevant communities from the country and from other countries.
- **Outcome 4: Sustainable and climate resilient practices and business models disseminated and replicated.**
- Pertaining to project's communication and replication efforts, it was developed the Communication and Outreach Strategy and the Overall Communication Plan for the entire project period. In line with these, the Project elaborated its distinct visual identity

	<p>elements, produced the Project Leaflet and a set of visibility materials used in Project's activities and events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All project' communication endeavors articulated UNDP and SIDA's contribution in putting forward tangible climate change mitigation and adaptation measures while empowering women and local authorities in the target districts covered by the project, and beyond.
Partner(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional authorities from Nisporeni, Calarasi, Basarabasca, Leova, Gagauzia, Transnistrian region and security zone; • Ministry of Environment;
Target group(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental associations from the regions, as well as from Chisinau; • Municipal authorities; • Women groups • Community-based organizations
Final beneficiaries	Local population from target areas

II. CONTEXT

In Moldova, like in other countries, women are economically disenfranchised in rural areas, resulting in a poverty rate that is 7.5 times higher than for urban women. This imbalance is amplified by climate change related factors, where the most vulnerable, especially women-led households are most at risk falling even further into the poverty, which in turn exacerbate the discrimination patters. Therefore, the project's goal to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on gender in rural settings was urgently needed and very appropriate.

Moreover, since the project's inception, Moldova has been hit by various crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the 2022 drought, and domestic economic, energy, and refugee crises.

Despite these challenges, the project successfully adapted by adopting a prolonged approach to its activities and carefully addressing the evolving needs of beneficiaries within this volatile context.

Therefore, additional funding was provided by the donor to accommodate rising costs and ensure a six-month project extension. This enabled the project to effectively overcome the aforementioned challenges and achieve all of its objectives.

The project's support in terms of women economic empowerment, climate change adaptation solutions and environmental protection directly contributed to improving the livelihoods of the population in the project areas.

Special emphasis has been placed on the Transnistria region and the security zone to contribute to confidence-building efforts between both banks of the river.

In particular, the assistance provided for Transnistria included:

- A Climate Profile for the Transnistria Region was developed.

- Four communities on the left bank of the Nistru benefited from enhanced waste management infrastructure and wetland restoration along local rivers.
- Nineteen women in the Transnistria region received support to establish climate-resilient businesses, including household-level initiatives, along with training in climate-smart agricultural practices.
- Over 100 local stakeholders and agricultural producers from the left bank of the Nistru participated in capacity-building and knowledge-sharing events focused on environmentally friendly practices and measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Furthermore, authorities and business communities from all target regions, including UTAG and Transnistria, have actively participated in joint capacity-building activities, study visits, and events for sharing good practices. This has provided them with a platform for future cooperation and partnerships.

Additionally, throughout the project implementation, there was a thoughtful focus on intersectional approaches to gender and social inclusion, complementing the economic empowerment of women. This involved recognizing and addressing the diverse strengths and vulnerabilities of women, taking into account factors such as age, ethnicity, education, disability, and other identities that influence their access to opportunities and resources, as well as shape inequalities.

Hence, the dedicated capacity-building program and access to financial resources served as catalysts for empowering women as leaders of their businesses and as climate champions. These roles are particularly crucial in the current crisis context.

III. PROGRESS BY OUTCOMES AND ACTIVITIES

The Project managed to set up a good implementation path through the coordination of Project goals, strategies and implementation modalities with the major stakeholders and beneficiaries – such as SIDA, development partners, national Authorities as well as the authorities of the target districts district. This helped implement all activities in a smooth manner and adjust the strategy when appropriate.

The Final Evaluation of the ResComWomEmp Project (*Annex 1*), conducted by a team of one international and one national experts, ranked the implementation of the project as highly satisfactory mentioning that the project was well designed and implemented in a very capable manner. The project is well aligned with the goals of all stakeholders and benefits the neediest in Moldova in a very efficient manner. The project has made excellent use of its financial resources, bringing positive developments to many communities and consistently empowering women.

The Report highlighted the Project's achievements: *"The project implementation was **effective** and almost all project indicators were either met or exceeded. The original Project Document was comprehensive and well thought out, and all stakeholders can be commended on their close and productive collaboration.*

*The project was implemented in a **very efficient manner**, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the 2022 drought, and domestic economic, energy and refugee crises. The project adapted well to these challenges and can be lauded for seeking attentional funds to cover increasing costs, and for ensuring a six-month project extension. The PMU managed an impressive number of awareness raising and training activities, as well as more than 150 grants for demonstration projects over a large geographical area. This was achieved with limited resources and the PMU must have been very efficient.*

Sustainability - *The project's capacity building and awareness raising activities reached a wide audience, greatly boosting the understanding of gender, climate change, and environmental issues. These efforts are likely to have a long-term positive impact on how community leaders, as well as district and national organizers approach these issues at both the local and national level. Today, there are many more NGOs and citizens that recognize the importance of gender equality, climate change and the environment, ensuring that these are considered when laying national policy or planning the future of communities.*

Inception phase

In line with the ProDoc, the Inception Phase of the Project was set at six (6) months since the allocation of funds by the donor, i.e. from 10 March to 10 September 2020. A set of actions were established to be completed during the Inception Phase to ensure a smooth implementation of the Project. In line with the milestones for the Inception Phase set out in the Project Document, the Project developed and approved with the donor the Institutional Capacity Development Programme for the six (6) Environmental NGOs; refined and agreed with the donor on the working approach with respect to Gagauzia and Transnistria regions, and included the Security Zone, particularly Dubasari district as an additional target area.

In consultation with the donor, UNDP Moldova and UN RCO, it was agreed that no 'districts' shall be selected when it comes to Transnistria given the political sensitives concerning the region (i.e. by using the notion 'district' with respect to Transnistria would imply a tacit recognition of the administrative structure of the region used by the de-facto authorities, not recognized by Chisinau); To provide more leeway to the Project and facilitate the mainstreaming of climate change adaptation and environmental protection measures in local development plans of 6 districts, as mandated by the ProDoc (which can only be done within administrative units controlled by Chisinau, i.e. not possible in Transnistria), it was also decided to add the Security Zone to the Project's beneficiary areas. For the mainstreaming in local development plans activity, Dubasari district from Security Zone was selected (to replace the 'district' intended to be selected for this purpose from Transnistria region as required by the ProDoc), while for the other project initiatives, e.g. trainings, grant programmes, all administrative units that are part of the Security Zone will be invited to participate/express their interest.

When it comes to Gagauzia, given the special status of the region – regarded as 'one administrative unit', and also based on past UNDP experience in the region, it was agreed to consider Gagauzia as 'one' beneficiary region of the Project's intervention area, without pre-selecting any district. The relatively small size of Gagauzia, was an additional argument.

Therefore, the Project's initiatives –e.g. grant programmes and trainings, were opened to all interested beneficiaries from the respective regions to apply to/participate -i.e. entire Gagauzia and Transnistria regions, as well as the Security Zone.

Following the official launch, the Project conducted a information campaign about the Project goals, activities and objectives through series of events and meetings with heads of regional authorities, LPAs, businesses and representatives of the civil society.

OUTCOME 1: Sustainable, climate resilient and environmentally sound livelihoods defined and local capacities & knowledge on environment, climate change and gender enhanced and implemented successfully

Activity 1.0. Baseline and Endline study to determine the level of awareness about climate changes risks and environmental issues in target districts/regions

Concerning Activity 1.0, at the beginning of the project, the baseline situation regarding the level of awareness on climate change and environmental issues in the target regions was established through studies for each district/region. A similar end-of-project study was conducted in 2023 to establish the level of awareness on climate change and environmental issues at the end of the project with participation of 510 respondents including representatives of the general population (297 women and 213 men) and 101 local actors (77 women and 24 men)..

The aim of the final study was to determine the level of awareness of environment protection and climate change in the pilot districts (Calarasi, Nisporeni, Basarabasca, Leova, Dubasari, UTA Gagauzia, Transnistria) and the number of local public authorities (LPAs) in the pilot districts that apply Strategic Environmental Assessment Law. The results of the final survey were presented in comparison with the results obtained in the reference survey conducted in 2021. The data was collected throughout the period from August 21 to October 11, 2023.

Approximately half of the respondents (both the general population and local actors) have expressed the opinion that the local public administration generally copes with resolving socio-economic and environmental issues within the community. In particular, there is an observed increase in the proportion of respondents from the general population who believe that the mayor's office effectively addresses local problems compared to 2021.

Also, the majority of respondents have stated their willingness to participate in environmental issue-solving projects, a higher proportion being among local actors, both compared to the general population and to local actors interviewed in 2021. The two main environmental/pollution-related projects within the locality that respondents would be most interested in participating in remain tree planting and park landscaping.

The majority of respondents within the general population (67%), women households (88%), and local actors (97%) state they would be willing to participate in programs or activities to better understand the changes. Furthermore, local actors believe they have a significant or major impact on raising awareness of climate and environmental issues among the public (69%). The Law on environmental impact assessment is known by 43%, LPAS +2 p.p. compared to 2021. *Annex 2 and 3 - The Baseline and the Endline studies on the level of awareness of environment protection and climate change in the pilot districts*

Activity 1.1. Carry out district-level environmental and climate-change vulnerability assessment.

The goal of the activity was to conduct in-depth assessments of the climate vulnerabilities and environmental risks in the pilot districts/regions of the Project, and also explore the specific socio-economic vulnerabilities of women in the context of climate change and environmental degradation. An additional angle included in the assessment was the Covid-19 pandemic implications on the target regions/districts, particularly its impact on women who are already prone to climate change

vulnerabilities. Therefore, the Project looked into assessing the extent and nature of impact of the COVID-19 on the target districts in order to support timely recovery in local planning efforts. The assessment provided information to understand the impact of the complete/partial closure of local activities on employment, livelihoods and the potential knock-on effects on their families and communities.

Thus, within Activity 1.1., two (2) Climate Profiles – one each for Transnistria and Gagauzia Regions were produced, the (4) Climate Profiles for Calarasi, Nisporeni, Leova and Basarabeasca districts (previously developed under UNDP's concluded NAP- 1 Project) have been supplemented with an Environmental and Gender Component, and an additional (1) Climate and Environmental Profile with a Gender Component was developed for Dubasari district from the Security Zone.

To elicit the perspectives of women and inquire about their specific vulnerabilities in the context of climate change and environmental degradation, 6 dedicated consultations with the participation of 86 women have been facilitated by the Project. The outcomes of these gatherings have been incorporated into the Climatic Profiles.

Based on the findings elucidated by the Climate and Environmental Profiles (*Annex 3. Climate profiles Nisporeni, Calarasi, Leova, Basarabeasca, Dubasari, UTAG, Transnistria*, six (6) Gender Mainstreamed Actions Plans on including Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Protection Measures in the Local Development plans of Nisporeni, Leova, Calarasi, Basarabeasca, ATU Gagauzia and Dubasari districts were developed. The Action Plans were later debated with the set-up Working Groups which facilitated their adoption by the District/Regional Councils.

Activity 1.2. Mainstreaming of gender, environmental protection and climate resilience into local development strategies and capacity building of LPAs

The objective of this activity was to support the LPAs in the target regions and districts to mainstream climate change adaptation measures, environmental protection and gender equality into local development plans.

To deliver on this objective, two streams of sub-activities have been carried out as described below. *Activity 1.2.1 Establish partnerships with LPAs and support LPAs in integration of environment and climate change concerns into local development plans through promotion & advocacy activities.*

Under this sub-activity, the Project facilitated the creation of **6 Working Groups (WG)** in Calarasi, Nisporeni, Leova, Basarabeasca, ATU Gagauzia and Dubasari² districts comprised of LPAs and CSO representatives to drive the process of integrating environmental and climate change adaptation measures in local development plans. In the reporting period, **6 technical meetings of the WG** were convened with the participation of **114 representatives**, including **46 women**.

Therefore, on the platform of the WGs, based on the findings from the Climate, Environmental and Gender Profiles developed under Activity 1.1.- **Six (6) Gender Mainstreamed Actions Plans** for integrating Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Protection Measures in the Local Development plans of Nisporeni, Calarasi, Leova, Basarabeasca ATU Gagauzia and Dubasari districts were produced and adopted by the relevant authorities.

Activity 1.2.2. Support development of guides on environment and climate-related legislation

² A working group was not created in Transnistria since for objective reasons it is not possible to perform the mainstreaming in policies/strategies of the region. Instead, this action was performed in Dubasari district, from the Security zone.

Under Activity 1.2.2, four (4) Practical Guidelines for LPA (district/region and community level) with the goal of advancing the implementation of climate, environmental and gender legislation at the local level have been elaborated. The guides underwent consultation with pertinent stakeholders, including the Congress of Local Public Authorities and the Ministry of Environment. Following refinement, they were extensively promoted and disseminated.

These Guidelines are on:

- a) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) applied at the LPA level
- b) Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of LPAs development policies
- c) Implementation of Environmental and Climate legislation in local development plans
- d) Gender Responsive Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Measures in local development plans.

(Annex 4 - Four (4) Guides for Local Public Authorities (levels I and II) on application of environment protection measures for Sustainable Development and on gender mainstreaming in climate change adaptation policies).

The idea of the respective publications was to ‘translate’ the complex legal and regulatory framework (for e.g. SEA/EIA Laws) pertaining to Environment, Climate and Gender Equality into accessible Guidelines, by explaining in a visual and user-friendly manner the roles and responsibilities of LPAs (at district and community level) pertaining to the actual implementation of the respective legislation at local level.

Once finalised, the Guidelines have been published on the UNDP page, to enable their dissemination and use by other LPAs beyond the Project’s target regions/districts. On top of this, to extensively promote the four guidelines, the Project team actively participated in various events where informational flyers containing links to the UNDP webpage, where the materials can be accessed, were distributed.

In order to widely promote the four guidelines, as part of the same activity were designed four (4) video graphics which reflect and explain in an easy and structured way the information/messages presented in the above-mentioned guides:

<p>One (1) videographic on <u>Waste management and recommendations for LPAs</u></p> 	<p>One (1) videographic on <u>Water resource management and recommendations for LPAs</u></p> 
<p>One (1) videographic on <u>Gender equality and recommendations for LPAs</u></p>	<p>One (1) videographic on <u>Strategic environmental assessment.</u></p>



Under the Activity 1.2.3, 12 offline regional workshops for LPAs and CSOs carried out for a total of 306 local government officials (incl. 172 women) from 6 districts (Calarăși, Leova, Dubasari, Basarabeasca, UTAG and Nisporeni) to develop their skills to apply environment and climate related legislation at local level, SEA and EIA tools as well as a gender equality perspective to shape and execute climate change adaptation solutions locally.

The purpose of this sub-activity was to design and deploy a capacity building programme for LPAs at national and sub-national level, to enhance their skills and knowledge in the implementation of climate, environment and gender legislation locally.

Therefore, a series of workshops for LPAs have been designed focusing on two main components:

a) *Implementation of environmental and climate legislation in local development plans*. This part of the training focused on competences and actions of local public authorities in

climate change mitigation and adaptation, on one hand, and emphasizing the role and responsibilities of LPAs in ensuring that environmental protection becomes a national priority in the sustainable development of the community, focusing on the legislative-normative framework in environmental protection and use of natural resources and,

b) *Mainstreaming gender equality in local climate change adaptation policies* – included the objectives and general aspects of the activity of the local public authority in the context of developing and including the gender dimension in climate change adaptation policies, realizing that gender equality is an important component in the environmental protection strategy that becomes an integral element in the sustainable development of the community.

Key results 2020 |Outcome 1|

- ✓ 4 Climate Profiles for Leova, Basarabeasca, Calarasi and Nisporeni regions completed with Environment and Gender component
- ✓ 2 Climate Profiles for Transnistria and Gagauzia region produced
- ✓ 1 Climate and Environmental Profile for Dubasari district, Security Zone developed and completed with a Gender Component
- ✓ 6 Gender Mainstreamed Actions Plans on including Climate Change Adaptation and Environmental Protection Measures in the Local Development plans of Nisporeni, Leova, Calarasi, Basarabeasca and Dubasari districts developed
- ✓ 4 user-friendly Guidelines for LPAs on the implementation of climate and environmental legislation locally, as well as on the gender - climate and environment nexus elaborated
- ✓ 306 local government officials (incl. 172 women) improved knowledge and skills to effectively implement climate & gender legislation locally
- ✓ 1 Capacity and Needs Assessment Study of women-headed households & women & men entrepreneurs conducted
- ✓ 854 participants, including 811 women agri-producers and 43 men from all target regions/districts capacitated how to launch, develop, and finance climate resilient businesses locally
- ✓ 6 practical guides for women-headed households and women and men agri-entrepreneurs on creating and expanding climate resilient income-generating businesses locally drafted.

Under the same activity, a National Conference convened with 80 participants, including 48% women from targeted districts/regions. Representatives from local public administrations and civil society organizations engaged in thematic discussions on effective natural resource management and best practices in local waste management.

These conversations yielded valuable insights into improving local services organization. Particularly noteworthy was the experience shared by LPA Mereni, which received high praise from other local administrations, including those in the Transnistria region, where waste management services are in early stages of development.

The Conference agenda also addressed the involvement of Local Public Administrations (LPAs) in water resource management, including insights from two civic groups in Cahul and Soroca. These groups shared their experiences of engaging in open and inclusive participatory processes with local governments, underscoring the significance of meaningful partnerships in addressing local issues. Representatives from LPA Copceac (UTAG) and LPA Sireti (Straseni) further contributed by sharing their expertise on composting, plastics waste collection, and sorting. They emphasized the importance of community involvement for success in these endeavors.

In conclusion, participants reaffirmed their commitment to remaining actively involved and contributing constructively to the challenging yet crucial process of sustainable natural resource management, in accordance with national legislation.

Activity 1.2.4. Provide mentorship to LPAs on application of environmental legislation

As part of the Activity 1.2.4, the Project provided support for elaboration of gender-inclusive local climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans.

Twelve (12) such plans have been participatory developed, with women playing a vital role in their formulation, in acknowledgment of the fact that involving women in climate decision-making processes create more holistic and effective strategies. This initiative had dual objectives of promoting an awareness of environmental protection and climate change among women and men, and leveraging the voices and practical experiences of women in responding to climate change.

As result, twelve (12) localities integrated gender dimensions in environment and climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction Local Plans (DRR plans).

The selected LPAs responded to a call for expression of interest in receiving assistance in integrating environmental and climate change legislation and gender mainstreaming in local planning documents. The support consisted of guidance and mentorship during the consultative formulation of local plans, mainstreaming gender, environmental protection, and climate change.

For each community, UNDP organized technical meetings for members of the local working groups, approved by the local councils. Local authorities and those responsible for the environment also attended the workshops. To harness women's voices and perspectives in shaping gender-responsive climate change adaptation solutions at the sub-national level, UNDP created space for more than 110 women to engage in environmental debates and technical working groups in the 12 localities.

The participants were involved in identifying risks and opportunities from current climate conditions and trends as well as projections for future, long-term climate. The main stages consisted particularly of: (i) completing the SWOT analysis with climate and environmental risks where they

were missing (ii) updating strategic directions, programmes and projects, (iii) identifying the priorities, including those targeting empowerment and involvement of women. Additionally, it was ensured mentoring for application of legislations related to climate and environment provided at request.

The workshops resulted in a short- and medium-term Action Plan related to local projects to support the implementation of the Strategy, including the main objectives, actions, costs, time frame, responsible parties, partners, etc. All these additions were introduced in the local strategies in force and have started to be implemented.

The approved documents provide a strategic planning and a long-term institutional mechanism for managing climate risks and improve resilience to climate change for sustainable development and can be found in *Annex 5 Twelve (12) Local adaptation plans with gender elements mainstreamed*.

Totally, 169 people (125 – women, 44 – men) attended the workshops sessions in the 12 selected communities. Detailed information is shown in the table below.

The total of population representing 12 localities benefiting from Climate change adaptation and DRR measures is 35670, including 18295 women.

Activity 1.3. Conduct capacity and needs assessments for women entrepreneurs, and women-headed households in 6 districts

The goal of this activity was two-fold:

- a) to estimate the level of knowledge of the groups of women and men entrepreneurs and women headed households in the target in developing or starting-up environment-friendly and climate resilient income-generating operations, and
- b) to assess the existing capacities and needs of the beneficiary groups from target districts and regions in terms of their level of endowment and access to natural resources, including water sources, management and access to agricultural land, modern technologies in agriculture, access to financing, markets, impact of climate change and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the beneficiaries current and potential operations.

The capacities and needs assessment exercise was conducted in the form of a survey among women and men agri-eco entrepreneurs, and women-headed households from the target districts/regions of the Project. A total of **300 respondents** were surveyed, including **271 women and 29 men** from Călărași, Nisporeni, Leova, Basarabeasca, UTA Găgăuzia districts and from the Security Zone (Rezina, Ștefan Vodă and Dubăsari districts). The questionnaire included a number of questions organized in five chapters, as follows: (1) general information on beneficiaries; (2) economic empowerment; (3) eco practices; (4) climate resilience; (5) the impact of the covid-19 pandemic. The full report on the “**Capacity and needs assessment of women’s groups and men agri-producers**” can be found in *Annex 6*.

The key areas of interest expressed by the respondents of the needs’ assessment exercise were the following:

- the stages of opening an enterprise
- what are the benefits of starting a business in the agri-eco sector (including success stories)
- how to choose the direction of the business idea and the organizational-legal form
- access to finance (sources of microfinance and steps to use them)
- financial and fiscal management
- motivation and benefits of using Eco practices
- sidereal crops that can be used on land in the country

- irrigation, tillage and pest control solutions without the use of harmful chemicals
- promotion of agrotourism (inside and outside the country)
- steps to obtain Eco certificates, or who can really be called an Eco manufacturer
- compost, organic fertilizers; fruit crops resistant to drought, disease and high temperatures
- land irrigation methods and soil protection against erosion in the processing and irrigation process
- methods for protecting flora and fauna in entrepreneurial and household activity
- proper waste management
- methods of adapting activity during pandemics.

Identifying the needs and capacities of the groups of women and men entrepreneurs, but also of the women headed household in the target regions of the Project served as basis to develop a fully needs-based Capacity Development Program of the target groups delivered under Activity 1.4 described here below.

Activity 1.4. Carry out a practical capacity development programme for women and men agri-producers

The goal of this activity was to develop/raise the level of knowledge, skills and motivation among the women and men agri-producers with the purpose of enabling and empowering them to start-up or expand climate resilient and income generating operations locally, thus contributing to the overall sustainable development of their communities.

Therefore, grounded in the findings of the capacity and needs assessment conducted under Activity 1.3, a tailored '**Capacity Development Programme of Women and Men Agri-entrepreneurs and Women-Headed Households**' (see *Annex 7*) was formulated. The Capacity development programme consisted of two main components: (a) *Training Component* and (b) *Knowledge Products Component*.

The Training component includes two training courses of two days each - the first course is for the 'group of women and men entrepreneurs', the second for 'women headed households' group. The training courses consist of four modules and include the topics identified at the needs-assessment phase (Activity 1.3.)

The total number of beneficiaries targeted by the 35 training sessions is 854 participants, including 811 women agri-producers and 43 men from all target regions/districts of the project.

The training sessions included accessible information, practical examples and success stories and served as platform for beneficiaries to exchange knowledge and good practices among themselves, as well. All participants in the training courses received support materials and handouts.

As result, the participants gained valuable and practical experience for adapting their businesses to the climate change effects thus becoming more resilient to potential disasters and securing incomes for their families.

Under the Knowledge Products Components of the Capacity Building Programme, a total of six practical knowledge products (*Annex 8*) informed by the needs-assessment exercise were developed and widely disseminated, as follows:

- (1) First steps in launching an Eco business
- (2) Eco Practices in Agriculture
- (3) Climate Change Resilience Building
- (4) Energy efficiency methods for small farmers
- (5) Financial Management of a Business
- (6) Marketing and promotion of Eco products

OUTCOME 2: NGOs capacities to provide expertise to LPAs and women in the field of resilience to climate change, sustainable development and gender mainstreaming enhanced

Under Outcome 2, the Project worked on three main groups of activities in 2020, and the results achieved under each of them is presented below.

Activity 2.0. Selection of 6 Environmental NGOs for the Institutional Capacity Development Programme

To facilitate the active engagement of NGOs in advancing and implementing climate resilience measures and environmentally friendly practices at the local level, particularly in the target districts/regions, an **Institutional Capacity Development Program for environmental NGOs** was launched by the Project. In line with the ProDoc, the Project was tasked to select and capacitate six (6) environmental NGOs.

The preparatory stage prior to the design and implementation of the Institutional Capacity Development Program included several activities that enabled the competitive selection and subsequent Board endorsement of the six (6) beneficiary NGOs, as follows:

- *Preparation of application documents for potential beneficiaries of the Program.* For this purpose, the Applicant's Guide and the Expression of Interest Form were developed. These documents were developed based on the eligibility criteria and selection criteria in both Romanian and Russian and included detailed information on the conditions of application, the application period, the necessary documents and the selection process.
- *Publishing the announcement and informing potential applicants of the Program.* For more than a month (07.07.2020 - 10.08.2020) non-governmental environmental organizations had equal chances to apply to the competition: The announcement about the Program was largely disseminated including on UNDP Facebook page, Civic, Regional Development Agencies websites, Community of environment NGOs, NGOs partners of other UNDP projects and programs, district councils web pages and ATU Gagauzia administration web site. During the dissemination process, the database of NGOs from the Transnistria region was consulted and the information about the competition was sent to relevant NGOs from the region.
- *Organizing information sessions for potential applicants.* Informing potential beneficiaries of the Institutional Capacity Development Program through information sessions had an important role in spreading the word about the Program and the conditions of application from the first source. For this purpose the Project published and widely disseminated the announcement on the organization of information sessions (social networks, including specialized groups, the UNDP website where the selection competition was published). During the information process, the Project actively collaborated with LPAs from the target areas in order to motivate local NGOs to participate in the information sessions. As a result, between 14-15.07.2020, 2 online information sessions were organized (in Romanian and in Russian), in which 10 representatives of NGOs participated in the session in Romanian, and 16 representatives of NGOs.
- *Consulting and supporting NGOs on filling in and submitting application forms to the competition.* During the application period, NGO representatives had the opportunity to receive individual consultations to complete the application documents from the Project. At the same time, the representatives of the Project actively collaborated with the representatives of the district councils from the target areas, with the representatives of the administration from ATU Gagauzia, NGOs from Transnistria region, and the Security Zone

to encourage the NGOs to participate in the competition. In order to inform and distribute information about the competition, the Project team also collaborated and consulted other UNDP Projects and programs which are working with NGOs.

- *Evaluation of applicants.* As a result of the competition, 17 NGOs from different regions of the country submitted their application. The submitted documents were evaluated against the eligibility and selection criteria during the period 11.08.2020 - 17.09.2020. Preliminarily, the applicants were assigned to target areas of the Project in order to be able to select for the NGOs Program from each beneficiary district and region. In case of two applicant NGOs (NGO "Vis si Realitate" Leova district, Sarata Noua village and NGO "Umanitate-Bărboieni", Nisporeni district, Bărboieni village) there was requested additional information about the organization and references from their partners. Following the final evaluation, the Project team prepared an extensive informative note about all participating NGOs and proposed the final list for consultation and approval by the Project Board. (*Annex 9*)

Thus, 6 NGOs were approved as beneficiaries of the Institutional Capacity Development Program, as follows:

1. NGO "ATOS", Sadaclia village, Basarabeasca district
2. NGO "OT Comrat MEM", Comrat town, ATU Gagauzia region
3. NGO "Vitality", Tiraspol municipality, Transnistria region
4. NGO "Umanitate-Barboieni", Barboieni village, Nisporeni district
5. NGO "Vis și Realitate", Sarata Noua, Leova district
6. NGO "PROGRESUL DENDROLOGIC", Chisinau municipality

The NGOs selected for the Institutional Development Program were having a medium level of development and institutional capacity, at the same time they proved to be strongly motivated to strengthen their institutional capacities.

Later on, all 17 NGOs that participated in the competition have been invited to participate in the Thematic Capacity Development Program for NGOs in the areas of environmental protection, climate change and gender equality offered under the Project under the Activity 2.3.

Activity 2.1. Conduct institutional capacity assessment of environmental NGOs

To conduct the institutional capacity analysis (System-based Audit) of the 6 selected environmental NGOs and design and implement the Institutional Capacity Development Program for NGOs (see Activity 2.2) the Project selected, on a competitive basis, an International Company - the North-East Regional Development Agency from Romania (NERDA).

The institutional capacity assessment exercise included the analysis of organizations' profiles, strategic documents, business plans and other documents and aspects of NGO activity. As a result, a detailed System-Based Audit (SBA) was performed for the 6 NGOs that included the following areas: project management capacities; administrative capacity including procurement, contract management, recruitment and human resources management; financial management and internal control capacities; communication and promotion; advocacy and strengthening partnerships; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The **SBA Report of the 6 NGOs** is presented in *Annex 10*.

The SBA report for the 6 NGOs included the identified gaps and specific remedial recommendations to be addressed by training the staff of organizations, providing technical assistance tailored to developing the capacity of NGO staff and developing strategic documents, as well as coaching and individual mentoring on internal management, administrative, financial systems, staff and tools. As a result, all these recommendations were included and addressed in the NGO Institutional Capacity Development Programme.

Activity 2.2. Carry out a core capacity development programme for the selected NGOs

Therefore, based on the gaps identified during the system-based audit, the **Institutional Capacity Development Program for the six NGOs** (see *Annex 11*) was developed and its implementation commenced in the reporting period (December 2020) and will continue through May 2021.

The Institutional Capacity Development Programme was structured around three major organizational development pillars (with relevant sub-components) addressing the following areas: (1) Project management (including managerial skills and functions, skills and technical knowledge); (2) Administration (including procurement, contract management, recruitment and human resources management); (3) Financial management and internal controls.

The Programme delivery methods are comprised of joint training activities, individual coaching, mentoring and specific assistance on the development and review of specific documents and tools pertaining to internal management, administrative, financial systems of the 6 beneficiary organizations. Therefore, a joint work plan on the implementation of the Program, but also individual plans for each of the 6 beneficiary NGOs were developed. As the SBA Report concludes that most of the needs of NGOs are common, the first part of the program, launched in December 2020, included joint mentoring and training activities. During this period, **5 days of training and 6 days of mentoring** were organized for all beneficiary NGOs. The activities took place online, a total of **22 NGO representatives (19 women and 3 men)** have enhanced their level of knowledge and skills in the aspects of Project Management Capacities, Administrative Capacities (incl. Procurement, contract management, recruitment, and human resources management), Financial Management Capacities and Internal Controls, Communication, Promotion and Advocacy, Partnership building.

As part of the same program, individual activities with each of the 6 NGOs and assistance provided in the elaboration of various documents and internal procedures of the organizations have been provided during a period of 2 months (January-February 2021). The program schedule was designed in a way that enabled each of the organizations to participate in individual online sessions.

The work plans of each of the implementation stages of the Program elaborated by NERDA were coordinated with the Project team and agreed with the beneficiary organizations. Importantly, the ResCom WomEmp Project has arranged and provided Russian – Romanian - Russian translation of written documentation and during the training/coaching/ mentoring/assistance activities provided to the NGO to ensure the smooth implementation of planned activities and an inclusive approach.

The program concluded in April 2021 with an online Graduation/final event for 5 Environmental NGOs³ participating in the Program where participants could reflect and share the learning and added value from the Institutional Development Programme. Each organisation has received a Certificate of Completion for successfully completing the six – months duration Program.

³ The Vitality NGO (Transnistria) decided to drop out from the Programme, due the lack of human resources and time to dedicate to the program's activities, thus the organization did receive partial assistance from the Project. The project team analyzed the context, and it was decided to redistribute the remaining assistance for this NGO to other 5 NGOs.

Activity 2.3. Design and implement a capacity building Programme for NGOs on environmental and climate-change related legislation, challenges and response measures

The main goal of this activity was to strengthen environmental NGOs' capacities and their motivation to engage in environmental and climate actions, natural resources management and decision-making processes locally, regionally but also nationally.

Therefore, a comprehensive **Capacity Building Programme for NGOs** on environmental, climate change and gender equality nexus was developed, and its implementation started in December 2020 continuing through April 2021. The Capacity Building Programme consists of 4 (four) Modules delivered in one-week (i.e. five-days) courses and has been successfully implemented in partnership with National Environment Center (CNM).

Thus, the organisation conducted a total number of five (5) one-week courses, including one (1) in Russian with participation of 77 NGOs who have strengthened their technical and advocacy capacities to promote a gender responsive climate resilience and environmental agenda forward at national and sub-national levels.

In total, 313 participants attended the respective trainings and as result, representing NGOs from all levels - national, regional and local, including from Gagauzia and Transnistria regions.

At the end of the course, the participants have been equipped with skills, knowledge enabling them with advanced capabilities to create stronger and more sustainable partnerships with sub-national and national government structures in tackling environmental and climate change issues, more mindful of the gender equality nexus as well.

The complementarity of these programs allowed the emergent NGOs to transition into fully-fledged and local or national associations capable of ensuring continuous support to different target groups on environmental issues in local development matters.

Activity 2.3.1. Study tours, exchange visits and participation in international dialogues for the selected NGOs and project beneficiaries

As part of the Institutional Development program, the selected NGOs benefited of an online study visit, having the chance to interact with Romanian peers.

Thus, the NGOs representatives were familiarised with the Romanian SMART village concept that perfectly fits to the Moldovan NGOs activity in their communities. Also, two (2) Romanian NGOs - Tinutul Zimbrului and Ecoland shared their experience and good practices in implementing environmental initiatives in their region and shared their contact details and expressed their openness for future trans-border projects.

Furthermore, as part of Activity 2.3.1, a series of study tours, exchange visits, and participation in local and trans-border dialogues for project beneficiaries have been organized. **A total of 86 participants, including 66 women**, representing project beneficiaries and partner NGOs, benefited from **four (4) in-country study** visits aimed at familiarizing them with sustainable and resilient practices.

Moreover, **two (2) international exchange visits** were conducted for both communities and women agri-producers (**54 participants, including 44 women**) to learn about best practices in efficient water, land, and waste management.

The main outcome of these visits was the establishment of partnerships with Romanian counterparts for further collaboration and the exchange of good practices.

OUTCOME 3: Environment-friendly and climate resilient practices and projects implemented by women representing households, women agri-producers and communities

As a continuation of the capacity-development effort for local authorities, women agri-producers and NGOs carried out in 2020-2021, and to ensure the practical application of the training received, the Project provided technical and financial support to 30 communities, 121 women-led businesses at household level and 11 women-led agriculture enterprises to put in place climate change adaptation measures.

Overall, approximately one-third of the Project budget was spent on the implementation of local interventions that further the project's objectives. This was done through **a total of 162 grants to communities, women-led households and women entrepreneurs** to help these implement projects that empowered women, forwarded climate change adaptation and protected the environment.

The financial assistance was coupled with mentorship and coaching provided by **eleven (11) environmental NGOs** (see Annex 12) engaged to act locally and support them in implementing their projects and advise them in building resilience to climate change, sustainable development, and gender equality. These included sustainable energy solutions and climate change adaptation measures.

Key results 2023 Outcome 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 30 communities, 121 women-led businesses at household level and 11 women-led agriculture enterprises assisted to put in place climate change adaptation measures. ✓ 11 Environmental NGOs engaged for providing on-the-ground support in the form of mentoring and coaching to the grant beneficiaries. ✓ Sustainable land management with the total surface of 216 ha enabled ✓ 10.41 million MDL of additional income generated as result of the seed funding provide to the households' producers. ✓ Over 30,000 people are benefiting from rehabilitated territories through afforestation of 17 ha in 8 localities, of which 14.4 ha represented degraded land where were planted 59,263 trees; ✓ 100,000 people are benefiting from rivers cleanup activities in four (4) communities on a total length of approximately 8000 meters (Sipoteni - 2.700, Bender - 553, Gisca - 2.300 and 2.300 m of canal from Seliste village, Nisporeni district); ✓ 19,500 people are benefiting from alternative energy systems, including in public institutions and local services providers. ✓ More than 100 households and public institutions equipped with composting bins to initiate composting activities; ✓ 61 metallic containers for collection of plastic recyclables (PET) installed. ✓ 18 localities have modernized their local waste management service by expanding their local service.

Detailed information on the Grants' budget distribution is shown in the table below:

Grants Budget		
Beneficiaries' category	# Projects	Total budget USD
Communities ⁴	30	600.000
Women entrepreneurs	11	207.000
Women with economic activity/households (cohort I)	64	262.500
Women with economic activity/households (cohort I)	57	240.000
Total Grants Budget	162	1.309.500

Activity 3.1. Grants to women-headed households and coaching and mentoring grants for NGOs

The Grants program has been conceptualised based on clear methodology and selection criteria and intended to support women with economic activity at household level in implementation of climate-smart agri-practices, animal husbandry, and other related activities that would contribute to food security at the household level and income generation regardless of the changes in the rainfall patterns and extreme weather events. The projects should also promote the environmental sustainability at the community level.

The competition for selecting the beneficiaries was launched in November 2021. For this purpose, two dedicated web pages, one in Romanian (www.axa.md/rescom-beneficiare) and one in Russian (www.axa.md/rescom-beneficiare-ru) were developed in order to inform potential applicants about the steps to be taken.

During the application period, more than 70 individual consultations were offered by the representatives of the implementation partners, as well as by the representatives of the Partner NGOs.

Four outreach events conducted by the Project team (in Leova, Calarasi, Basarabasca and Nisporeni) gathered more than 140 participants.

Additionally, were organised 2 online intensive training sessions in Romanian for the potential applicants from 1) Basarabasca and Leova districts and 2) from Calarasi and Nisporeni districts. Similar intensive training sessions have been organised on in Russian language for potential applicants from Gagauzia region, as well as from Security Zone and Transnistrian region. The events provided to potential applicants detailed information about the grant competition and informed the applicants on correctly filling out the application documents.

Based on the promotional and informational activities conducted, there have been collected 255 applications from potential beneficiaries:

- 104 from the Project target area 1 (Basarabasca, Leova, Calarasi and Nisporeni districts),
- 48 from the Project target area 2 (Gagauzia)
- 103 from the Project target area 3 (Security Zone and transnistrian region).

⁴ Thirty communities were selected for financial support, including four from Transnistria, five from the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (UTAG), and five from the Security Zone.

According to the project proposals, rural women have shown a clear preference for agriculture businesses that align with both climate resilience and economic sustainability objectives. Greenhouse construction appears to be the most popular choice among the projects, with 78 requests for support. This reflects a strategic response to the challenges posed by climate change, as greenhouses offer controlled environments that can mitigate weather-related risks and extend growing seasons. Additionally, greenhouses contribute to food security by ensuring consistent crop yields despite changing climatic conditions.

Following closely behind, beekeeping infrastructure garnered 61 requests for support. This indicates a strong inclination towards apiculture-related ventures among rural women. Beekeeping offers various benefits, including relatively low startup costs, minimal land requirements, and the potential for high-value products such as honey, beeswax, and pollination services.

Expansion of animal farms received 30 requests for support, making it the third most sought-after agriculture business among rural women.

Beyond providing income from the sale of livestock and animal products, such as meat, milk, and wool, animal farming contributes to local food production and self-sufficiency. Additionally, livestock farming contributes to sustainable land management practices, such as rotational grazing and manure recycling, which promote soil fertility and ecosystem resilience.

The small grants (valued at up to \$4,300⁵) to women-led households have provided a distinguished and highly valued by the beneficiaries' facility that proved to be accessible, tailor-made, and supportive of climate-change adaptation. These are representing small-scale pilots but with deep impact – consisting in supporting women-led households with the reasonable adaptation to their conditions and needs (no juridical status or registration required). This represented a unique opportunity for disadvantaged women, as there are no similar programmes currently carried by state or other actors.

As per Project Document, it was planned to be selected minimum 60 projects. However, in 2023, additional resources were allocated by the donor to finance another cohort of fifty-seven (57) women-led economic projects at the household level from the Reserve List, totalling \$240,000 USD. (*Annex 13. List of selected women with economic activity at household level*).

This enabled that Project to help more women farmers benefit from the implementation of renewable energy and climate-smart technologies, bringing the total number of beneficiaries to 121⁶.

The diversified range of projects included: mini dairies, greenhouses vegetable growing, a bakery, clothes manufacturing from recycled fabric, beekeeping and apitherapy, flowers growing, essential oils manufacturing, fruit drying, mushroom growing, etc.

In line with the support provided to women, six (6) grants have been provided to five (5) Environmental NGOs for providing on-the-ground support in the form of mentoring and coaching to the grant beneficiaries, as it follows:

Cohort I – 64 beneficiaries

⁵ According to the project document, the maximum grant amount per household was initially set at US\$3,500. Following the to-up up funds provided by the Donor, the grants ceiling the grant ceiling has been increased by 25% to a maximum of up to \$4,300.

⁶ A total of 121 projects were selected for financial support, with 17 from Transnistria, 25 from the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (UTAG), and 29 from the Security Zone.

- For the Zone I – Progresul Dendrologic NGO – grant award 16,000 USD – to provide coaching and mentorship to 40 beneficiaries from Calarasi, Nisporeni, Leova, Basarabeasca districts;
- For the Zone II – “Moms in Action NGO” – grant award – 7,000 USD - to provide coaching and mentorship to 12 beneficiaries from ATU Gagauzia;
- For the Zone III – LuRenOm NGO – grant award – 7,000 USD - to provide coaching and mentorship to 12 beneficiaries from Security zone (6) and Transnistrian region (6).

Cohort II - 57 beneficiaries

- For the Zone I - Ecological Movement Stefan Voda – grant award 6,000 USD – to provide coaching and mentorship to 10 beneficiaries from Calarasi, Nisporeni, Leova, Basarabeasca districts;
- For the Zone II - A.O. Association for the Protection and Restoration of Ecological Balance "The tree of Life" – grant award – 8,000 USD - to provide coaching and mentorship to 13 beneficiaries from ATU Gagauzia;
- For the Zone III - A.O. Association for the Protection and Restoration of Ecological Balance "The tree of Life" – grant award – 16,000 USD - to provide coaching and mentorship to 34 beneficiaries from Security zone (23) and Transnistrian region (11).

In total, the partner NGOs conducted 306 monitoring visits across the three zones, providing beneficiaries with mentoring and coaching to enhance their resilience and advocate for eco-friendly practices. The assistance included individual sessions, online training, and masterclasses, addressing specific needs such as sustainable land management, resilient crops, efficient irrigation systems and explored different regenerative practices that have great potential both in food production and in healing the land.

Key Results of the Grants Program:

- Direct Beneficiaries: A total of 502 individuals, including 274 women and 228 men (family members), are directly benefiting from program assistance.
- Financial Security Improvement: The financial security of 121 families has improved, resulting in additional revenue of 7.91 million MDL.
- Food Security: Food security has been ensured through the construction of greenhouses with a total surface area of 8871 m².
- Climate Change Adaptation: Sustainable solutions for climate change adaptation have been implemented, including the installation of Drip Irrigation covering a total surface of 10992 m².
- Electricity Cost Savings: Annual savings on electricity costs amount to approximately 502,000 lei as result of installation of the solar panels with the total capacity of 87 kw.

- Carbon Emissions Reduction: Carbon emissions have decreased by 28 tons annually, thanks to facilitated access to clean, affordable, and sustainable energy for six businesses at the household level.

Long-term impact

- Women's Empowerment: One hundred twenty-one women, one-third of whom are either unemployed or on maternity leave, are benefiting from grants to develop their rural businesses. As a result, they have transitioned into active professionals, taking on managerial responsibilities in their respective ventures. Through their hands-on professional experiences, these women have not only gained confidence but also garnered respect and recognition for their services. A noteworthy outcome is that some of them have emerged as primary breadwinners for their households, exerting significant influence on decisions related to household expenditures.
- The quality of life for the children of the beneficiary's receiving support has notably improved due to the consistent income generated from their mothers' livelihoods. An illustrative example is a beneficiary with eight children who previously struggled to meet their needs, relying solely on her husband's income. Following the development of her beekeeping business, supported by the Project, she now engages in a thriving economic activity. Furthermore, the beneficiary recognized the project's impact on her personal development. She has overcome communication barriers, attributing this growth to her participation in diverse training and coaching sessions.
- Women are actively involved in enhancing local supply chains. Through the elevated level of their activities, the Project beneficiaries now make a meaningful contribution to the local supply chain. For instance, they supply vegetables, honey, and milk products to a community guest house, playing an active role in bolstering the local economy.

Sustainability of the supported Initiatives:

- Informal Women's Groups: Created to share knowledge, identify opportunities, and build market linkages.
- Cooperation with EcoLocal: Facilitated the collaboration of women agri-producers to sell products in the EcoLocal market.
- Legalization of Activity: Emphasis on legal assistance to formalize activities, enabling access to new markets and development funds.
- Marketing – Guidance on eco-labelling and marketing strategies for accessing new markets, both in online and offline settings
- Cooperation – Promotion of associations, as an engine in enabling small-scale producers to access new markets and expand their agricultural endeavors.

Activity 3.2. Grants to women-led climate-resilient businesses and coaching and mentoring grants for NGOs.

The Grant Programme for women entrepreneurs aimed at offering complex assistance to women entrepreneurs (technical assistance in capacity building, mentorship and guidance) in order to strengthen their capacities to adapt to climate changes and develop income generating activities, sustainable and resilient to climate change,

According to the project document, the maximum grant amount per project was initially set at up to US\$ 18,000. Following the to-up up funds provided by the Donor, the grants ceiling has been increased by 25% to a maximum of up to \$22,500.

The call for applications for women-led SMEs has been conducted in November 2021, and as result of the evaluation against the selection criteria, eleven (11) support grants were provided which have generated 38 new jobs, out of 22 are for women. Three (3) of the beneficiaries were start-ups. (*Annex 14. List of selected women entrepreneurs*).

To note that, the UNDP/Sweden budget of \$207.000 was supplemented with \$54.661 by the 11 women entrepreneurs, surpassing the 20% minimum contribution requirement.

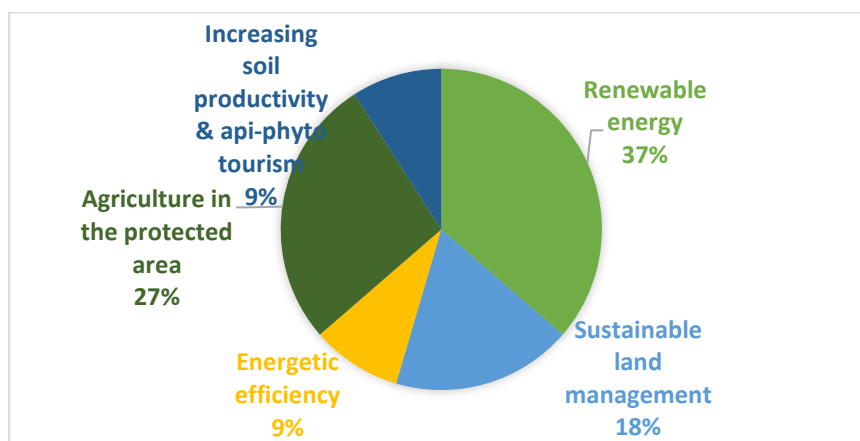


Chart 1. Distribution of selected projects by areas of intervention

As per above chart, the access to renewable energy emerges as the most prevalent need, with 37% of the projects focusing on this aspect. This reflects the critical importance of renewable energy sources in enhancing operational efficiency, reducing costs, and mitigating environmental impact. By investing in renewable energy solutions, such as solar or biomass, women agri-producers can achieve significant savings on energy expenses while also contributing to the reduction of CO2 emissions.

Following closely behind is the expansion of greenhouses for protected agriculture, chosen by 27% of the projects. This indicates a strong demand among women agri-producers for technologies that provide a controlled environment for crop cultivation. Greenhouses offer protection against adverse weather conditions, pests, and diseases, enabling year-round production and higher-quality yields. By expanding greenhouse infrastructure, women agri-producers can enhance their productivity and market competitiveness in agricultural markets.

Sustainable land management solutions are also a notable focus, with 18% of the projects opting for this approach. This underscores the recognition among women agri-producers of the importance of preserving and enhancing natural resources for long-term agricultural sustainability. Sustainable land management practices, such as soil conservation, water management, and agroforestry, help optimize land productivity, improve soil health, and protect ecosystems. By adopting sustainable land management techniques, women agri-producers can strengthen their resilience to climate change, enhance environmental stewardship, and ensure the viability of their agricultural operations.

At the conclusion of the grants program, eleven (11) business projects led by women agri-producers have received technical and financial support, out of which two from Transnistria and two from UTAG. This assistance has enabled them to implement, enhance, and advocate for climate-resilient practices with significant adaptation impact. These projects span various sectors including almonds processing, berries and vegetable cultivation, establishment of an eco-guest house, operation of a vertical farm for salad production, beekeeping, and cultivation of crops, among others.

As a result of the installation of 3 photovoltaic systems with an installed capacity of 20kW - 43kW, cut down in the energy bills was observed with over 500.000 lei annually from the production of over 105.000,00 kW of green energy. At the same time, it is expected to reduce CO2 emissions by approximately 37 tons/year. Moreover, the new energy system allows the women agri-producers to generate their own reliable, sustainable and low-maintenance source of energy, and by this getting 100 % energy autonomy. This will allow to save costs that may be redirected to other needs.



Olga Agapie, women agri-producer, received assistance to establish five greenhouses, each spanning 500 square meters.

Zinaida Plămădeală, the founder of a vertical farm startup specializing in salad cultivation, utilizing renewable energy sources.

Picture #1 Women entrepreneurs benefiting from Grants program for building their resilience to climate and energy crisis.

Besides the access to alternative sources of energy the women entrepreneurs engaged in piloting other green technologies such as: small scale wastewater treatment system with the 1500 l capacity of wastewater treatment per day, greenhouses with a total surface of 4215 m² and resource efficient irrigation systems with a total surface of 4215 m². Also, two women entrepreneurs are benefiting now from no-till equipment and an equipment for crop residue chopping and spreading that has direct positive impact on sustainable land management with the total surface of 216 ha (18 ha In Leova and 198 ha in Nisporeni).

The supported projects brought such important benefits as increased resilience of private infrastructure to climate change, providing additional income for the rural women, and demonstrating practices of sustainable and efficient management of natural resources and systemic adaptation to climate change with high replication potential.

From the economic point of view, the estimated revenue is about 2.5 million lei as result of the Project's investments.

As related to the social impact, the beneficiaries, besides developing their entrepreneurship skills, have changed their own attitudes by becoming themselves strong examples of the benefits of adapting an environment friendly behaviour and role models for other women agri-producers in their region.

Last but not the least, partnerships with civil society and businesses have been the main vehicle of the component implementation. In addition to the non-refundable financial support, the eleven (11) entrepreneurs benefited from free mentoring and coaching, which allowed them not only to develop sustainable businesses, but also to increase their competitiveness, production capacities and create more jobs, including for women and socially vulnerable people.

Study visits, online trainings, and an on-going, tailored made assistance has been facilitated by the three engaged NGOs to enhance women's access the knowledge and information on resilient management of natural and agricultural resources and sustainable and resilient development of their business.

Target zones	NGO	Nr of visits to beneficiaries	Nr of consulting sessions provided
Zone 1	AO "WISDOM" in partnership with "PROGRESUL SUD"	24	26
Zone 2	AO "MAME ÎN ACȚIUNE"	6	12
Zone 3	AO "POMUL VIEȚII"	38	31

Table 3. Technical assistance provided by the environmental NGOs

All beneficiaries underwent coaching based on Coaching Plans devised and executed by experts from NGOs. Consequently, each beneficiary updated their existing Business Plans, integrating environmentally friendly solutions as a direct outcome of the assistance received.

Activity 3.3. Grants to communities and coaching and mentoring grants for NGOs

Grant Programme for Communities aimed at contributing to the sustainable development and increased climate resilience of thirty (30) communities in the Republic of Moldova – beneficiaries selected by providing non-reimbursable financial assistance (grants) for the co-financing of innovative projects in this area.

The call for applications for the local communities (LPAs) was conducted in November 2021 and seven (7) information sessions were organized to inform the potential applicants on the grant competition (about 127 participants), to enable a larger number of potential beneficiaries to submit competitive applications.

As a result, a total of forty-three (43) dossiers have been received and evaluated, as follows: 21 from area 1 (districts of Călărași, Nisporeni, Leova and Basarabasca), 10 from area 2 (Gagauz

Territorial Administrative Unit) and 12 from area 3 (Transnistria region and security area (Dubăsari district)).

For piloting the 'Environmental and mitigation measures to climate change risks', the project selected five (5) urban and 25 rural municipalities covering all target areas, including the Security Zone and the Territorial-Administrative Unit of Gagauzia, to be key-partners and beneficiaries of the project. The selection was based on a competitive, transparent and inclusive process, according to a set of evaluation criteria and emphasis on the interest of participating LPAs. These LPAs were identified as the most pro-active and appropriate for championing a sustainable approach, aiming to create viable national models of resilience and Environmental protection. (Annex 15. List of selected LPAs).

The UNDP/Sweden budget of 600,000.00⁷ USD was supplemented with USD 111,427 USD (or 18.5 % of overall projects budget) by local stakeholders, surpassing the 10% minimum local contribution requirement.

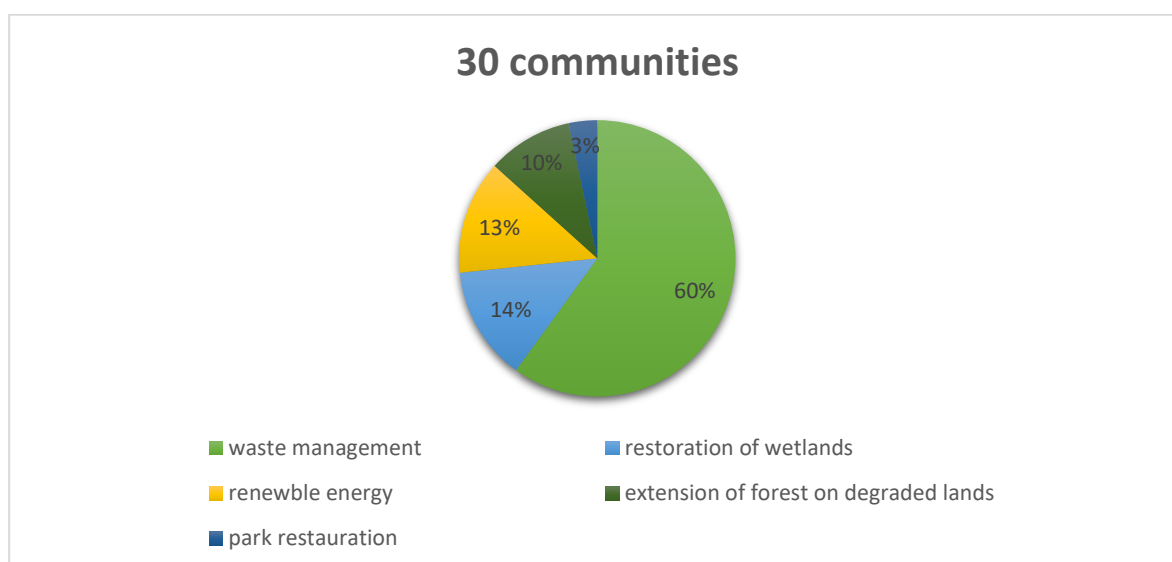


Chart 2. Intervention areas, community projects

As per above chart, the largest part of the projects is in the area of waste management – 18 out of 30 selected. Therefore, dedicated assistance was provided for the building and/or consolidating the integrated waste management practices at the local level through engagement with Local Public Authorities from the districts of Leova, Calarasi, Basarabasca, Dubasari, Nisporeni, Transnistria region and UTAG.

In that sense, connection of 6015 households to the centralized waste collection systems has been facilitated through provision of waste bins and other relevant equipment which ultimately reduced the amount of waste illegally dumped leading to the water and soil pollution. At the same time, the

⁷ According to the Project Document (ProDoc), the support allocated for Local Public Authorities (LPAs) was initially set at \$480,000, funding 30 projects at \$16,000 each. This total budget was later increased to \$600,000 following a 25% budget increase approval.

Grant program encouraged waste segregation practices, as well as partnerships between the LPAs and the private sector such as in the case of Borogani community where the collected plastic is subject to recycling and productive use.

In terms of ecosystems, as many as 17 ha of degraded land in the communities of Nisporeni and Ustia has been afforested for preventing soil erosion and biodiversity degradation and loss. Moreover, 4 communities from the districts of Leova, Dubăsari (security zone), Basarabeasca, have engaged in demonstration of renewables technologies in the 14 public buildings and 230 residential buildings which will bring 500 tonnes CO₂ emissions reduction annually. In these districts as many as 19548 people will benefit from improved access to renewable energy, out of which 100 are female headed households.

Main results of the Grants program for communities:

- 110,000 people have access to a modernized waste management system in 18 communities;
- 8387 households are connected to the centralized waste collection systems;
- 11 public institutions equipped with metallic bins for connection to local waste management service;
- 30 unauthorized landfills have been liquidated as result of afforestation in the target areas;
- Over 30,000 people are benefiting from rehabilitated territories through afforestation of 17 ha in 8 localities, of which 14.4 ha represented degraded land where were planted 59,263 trees;
- About 100,000 people are benefiting from rivers cleanup activities in four (4) communities on a total length of approximately 8000 meters (Sipoteni - 2.700, Bender - 553, Gisca - 2.300 and 2.300 m of canal from Seliste village, Nisporeni district);
- 19,500 people are benefiting from alternative energy systems, including in public institutions and local services providers;
- 4 public institutions became energy autonomous by switching to alternative energy sources
- 9 public–private partnerships developed for plastic recycling as result of 61 containers installed, with Project support;
- 117,600 kw produced yearly from renewable sources, contributing to saving a total of 563,352 MDL from the local budgets of 4 communities.
- Photovoltaic systems with a total capacity of 98 kw are contributing to over 32 tonnes CO₂ emissions reduction annually.

Besides, the financial and technical assistance, the Project, throughout NGOs engagement (NGO ProEntrans, NGO Ecological Movement Comrat and NGO Dnestr Enterprise) enhanced sustainability of the results, by promoting relevant local policy and community-action measures and by ensuring engagement of all relevant stakeholders in continuation of local development solutions for building resilient communities. This effort resulted in participatory elaboration of sustainability plans for all implemented grants. (*Annex 16 Sustainability plans*)

Complementary measures to ensure sustainability of community projects.

After consulting with the Local Public Authorities (LPAs), and following the Donor's approval, savings totaling \$44,255 were reallocated to finance sustainability measures associated with the awarded project. Each LPA prioritized one measure from their plan, resulting in the identification of various measures for which support was requested.

The most requested measure was the implementation of a video monitoring system for landfills, with 13 localities expressing this need. Following this, 9 localities have prioritized the provision of composting containers for households, with each locality requiring approximately 12 containers.

The third most common measure was the installation of containers for the disposal of plastic bottles, with 5 localities identifying this as a priority. This measure involved the placement of 3 units per locality.

In addition, one locality has expressed the need for a video monitoring system for a kindergarten. Another locality has requested for 30 units of street garbage bins. Lastly, one locality has identified the need for a GPRS-smart monitoring system for a water pump.

By implementing these additional actions, communities have been empowered to pilot new practices, adding value to the support already provided, with the potential for scalability and replication on a larger scale within the communities.

Capacity building events for the thirty partner Communities

Concurrently with the granting scheme, a dedicated capacity building program has been conducted for the thirty selected communities.

Thus, in order to implement a tailor-made assistance program, an assessment needs and the current status of LPAs in waste management area was completed, recommendations and conclusions being provided. The results of the evaluation confirmed that most LPAs (70%) do not practice separate collection of recyclable waste, very few compost organic waste, including in many cases a low share of the population that pays the waste collection tariff is also attested.

Also, the assessment identified the need for additional assistance to the Local Public Administrations (LPAs) on improving the local waste management service needs, as well as improving the capacities in respect of planning, implementation, and ensuring sustainability of environmental protection measures.

To address these needs, a complex capacity development platform has been implemented throughout the 2022 year, where participants got the opportunity to engage with experts in different areas through online webinars. Assignments, exercises, and peer sharing across the different modules of the course benefited the participants and added to their learning.

A total of 6 thematic workshops were organized in the framework of The ResCom Training Platform in the period 2022- 2023. To facilitate access to information, all informational materials have been published in [ECO-LIBRARY](#).

Topics covered during the online trainings included:

Workshop 1. Organization of the waste management service	Workshop 2. Collection, purification and use of rainwater (rainwater) for the needs of households in the country
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Workshop 3. Practical aspects regarding the implementation of energy efficiency projects and valuation of renewable energy sources in the public and private sector	Workshop 4. Organic waste composting: the simplest example of how the circular economy works
Workshop 5. Community Mobilization for Afforestation	Workshop 6. Efficient Solutions for Decreasing Pollution with Plastic

As result, more than 316 participants (90 % women) from target groups benefited from knowledge acquired during the organized online workshops.

Furthermore, to ensure the sustainability of the community projects, several local events were organized in 2022 with the participation of community members. These events aimed to highlight the importance of composting organic waste and educate attendees on the relevant rules. Such activities were conducted in Holercani, Abaclia, Sadaclia, and Nisporeni.

Additionally, to make easier for LPAs the promotion of composting, was elaborated an infographic and distributed in a printed form and via email to all beneficiaries.

See *Annex 17* for detailed information on the supported actions and results of all 162 projects, parts of the Grants program.

In the context of the available budget resources, as part of the Project it was provided technical assistance to the **Ministry of Energy** in analysing the potential for implementation of the energy cooperatives in Moldova and potential local barriers that could challenge piloting this practice in Moldova.

In this regard, a concept note was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Energy for review and approval. The note outlines the key activities required to create an enabling environment for the energy community concept in Moldova, with the potential for future pilot projects.

Following the endorsement of the Ministry of Energy the following activities have been implemented in the reporting period:

1. International Study visit, 2-6 April 2024

Destination countries – Slovenia and Austria

The study tour was organized for key stakeholders in the energy sector, including representatives from the Ministry of Energy. The tour, which took place in Slovenia and Austria, aimed to acquaint the participants with the operation of Renewable Energy Source (RES) communities within the European Union. The visit also provided insights into the legal framework, major challenges, lessons learned, and best practices in this area.

Agenda

1. Good practices in setting up LPAs led community energy initiatives in Slovenia (visit to Energy community in Hrastnik and in Luče) aiming at learning from EU experience and at identifying possibilities for collaboration between LPAs in Moldova and these localities
2. Cooperation models of energy communities in Slovenia, lessons learned and challenges in the process of establishing the energy cooperatives
3. Visit to energy innovation hub (PV, storage, smart meters, etc.) Seestadt, Viena

4. RES legal framework with focus on energy communities in Austria – meeting with E-Control - National Energy Regulatory Authority in charge of renewable energy communities

Next steps are to approve the regulation on energy communities by ANRE by the end of the year, coordinated by Ministry of Energy. Also, the effort should focus on establishing the proper mechanisms to create energy communities through LPA`s and private companies, consumers of electricity. National and local campaigns to be launched on promoting renewable energy communities, the advantages of the members of this communities, to expand the best practices in Moldova.

2. Elaboration of Policy Paper on creation of Viable Energy Communities

With the support of UNDP-Sweden, a policy paper was formulated - Policy Recommendations for Viable Community-led Renewable Energy Sources (RES) Cooperatives in Moldova (*Annex 18*).

The document offers guidelines for the creation of sustainable Energy Communities, drawing on European experiences and insights gathered from discussions with over 70 local stakeholders, including representatives from local authorities, businesses, and community organizations.

As part of this initiative, three (3) workshops were conducted across the South, Center, and North regions of Moldova. These workshops engaged beneficiaries of the ResComWomEmp' project, including local public administrations, businesses, and households from the target areas. The events aimed to familiarize and consult local stakeholders on the concept of energy communities, share good practices from the EU, and explore potential applications in Moldova.

As a result, concerns and recommendations regarding this mechanism were collected. The main discussions focused on determining the appropriate legal status for an Energy Community (EC). Legal barriers exist that prevent local authorities from founding certain types of entities, such as associations, which in turn restricts their ability to participate in an Energy Community.

The document encompasses a series of policy recommendations and aims to assist Moldovan authorities in designing the Rulebook for the implementation of community-led RES cooperatives.

The Policy Paper underscores the crucial role of local engagement and participation in the establishment of energy cooperatives, alongside efforts to raise awareness and educate communities on the topic. This support lays a solid foundation for further advancing the topic, both in terms of secondary legislation and investments.

3. High Level Policy Dialogue Event on Energy Communities in Moldova (27 May 2024)

The event marks a significant milestone in the deployment of energy communities in Moldova. It aimed to facilitate high-level dialogues under the leadership of the Ministry of Energy, highlighting the potential of energy communities in Moldova and raising awareness about their importance for energy security and economic development.

Fifty (50) participants attended the event, including fifteen (15) women, representing key national stakeholders and decision-makers involved in the development and implementation of energy policy and regulatory frameworks. During the event, the main findings and results of studies conducted by UNDP Moldova and the MESA project on legal barriers to implementing energy

cooperatives in Moldova, as well as the policy paper on the Rulebook for the operationalization of Energy Communities (ECs), were presented. A dedicated session focused on discussions and planning the next steps to be undertaken by all involved parties, including the Ministry of Energy, ANRE, electricity distribution operators, and development partners.

Shortly after the event, the Rulebook/Regulation for the functioning of Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) was published for consultations and is expected to be approved by the end of July.⁸

OUTCOME 4: Sustainable and climate resilient practices and business models disseminated and replicated

Under the Outcome 4 the “Sustainable and resilient communities through women empowerment” Project implemented several communication activities to promote joint Sweden and UNDP assistance in accordance with the approved communication and outreach strategy and communication plan, such as direct communication activities (public events, info sessions, interpersonal communication, etc.), and outreach communication activities (press releases/articles, success stories, video stories, TV/Radio shows, visibility materials, social media posts, etc.).

From March 2020 to July 2024, the ResComWomEmp organized and participated in more than **20 public events** of different formats (official inaugurations of the community and business projects, conferences, press trips, roundtables, trainings, field visits) where it succeeded in communicating directly with large and diverse target groups in order to promote the Sweden support for the people living in the targeted regions, as well as its results and impact.

The Project staff regularly participated in various public events organized by the partners, providing informative messages about the Project’s work, achieved results and perspectives for the future. For example: EcoGreen Expo Panel Discussions, Environment Festival, EcoStart Youth forum, etc.

During the entire period, there were elaborated and distributed **54 press releases** and articles.

All the events were widely and intensively promoted in the media, on social media, on the UNDP and on partners’ web pages.

In order to increase the Donor visibility and to promote the Project aim widely, **31 digital products** were elaborated (video success stories about project beneficiaries, presentation of the project results by a video dedicated to the Sweden National Day, video about grant award ceremony).

In order to promote the results of Grants competitions, the Project **organized four (4) Award Ceremonies** with participation of high-level representatives, grant beneficiaries, project partners, NGO representatives, and project team.

A large number of creative visibility materials have been produced and distributed: informational plaques for all financed projects (162 plaques); annual block notes, T-shirts, bags, banners,

⁸ Doc - #994 [Proiecte supuse consultării publice \(anre.md\)](#)

stickers, umbrellas, posters, USB flash drives bearing the project' symbol, eco-friendly bags, roll-ups and flyers presenting the grants' programs.

Additionally, during the reference period, **the Project carried out more than 5 wide Informational Campaigns**, to promote grant competitions for NGOs, women entrepreneurs, communities, and for women with economic activity in households (banners and posts in two languages on social media, promotion through TV and Radio shows, press releases and announcement distributed to media, banners on partners' websites, dedicated landing page for competitions, direct communication with target groups, by email, phone, letters, info sessions, etc.).

In order to promote the activities and the results of the Project and to involve more people in their activities, we **systematically updated the UNDP social media pages**. We also used the UNDP Twitter account to promote our key messages and results to external audiences – donors, partners, etc. e.g. about the result of the institutional capacity development program for NGOs, project training, competition, etc. In terms of **Social Media communication**, the Project has used the following (16) channels and platforms to disseminate project related announcements and events:

- UNDP Moldova Facebook Page
- Dezvoltare regionala in Moldova
- Green Moldova
- Agricol.md
- Agrobiznes Club
- Plastic Donor Community
- Jurnalism de Mediu
- Mediu curat pentru o viata sanatoasa
- Clubul Oamenilor de Succes
- Jurnalistii Nostri
- Mass media pentru egalitatea de gen
- Migratie si dezvoltare locala
- Clubul Jurnalistilor din Moldova
- Granturi Moldova
- Societatea civila din Republica Moldova
- Poduri peste Nistru - Мосты доверия через Днестр etc.

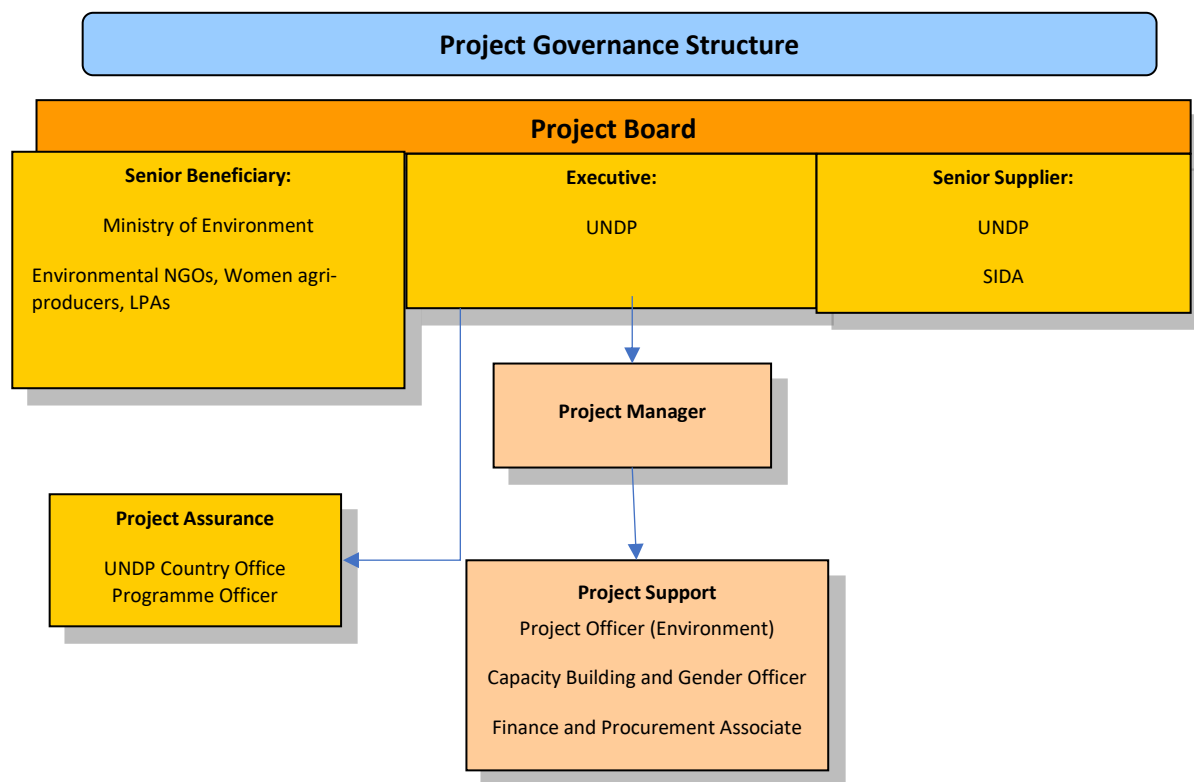
The Project culminated with the **Final Event** that gathered all partners and beneficiaries with a Final Event that brought together all partners and beneficiaries to celebrate its achievements and promote best practices and lessons learned.

11 Knowledge and information products have been developed in accordance with the visibility rules of Sweden and UNDP and widely disseminated and promoted among project beneficiaries.

In the last year of the project, **the Project's brochure** with success stories and project results was published and disseminated: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-03/brosura_rescom_ro.pdf.

The full list of communication and visibility materials is presented in the *Annex 19*.

OUTCOME 5: Project Management



The Project has been governed by the Project Board, composed of representatives of the Sweden Embassy, UNDP, the Ministry of Environment, CALM, IDIS Viitorul, Gender Centre, Association of Environmental Journalists. The Board's role was to provide guidance and take strategic decisions, through approving the Project's goals, stages and implementation pace, annual plans and progress reports as well as the evaluation criteria and the selection of Project's beneficiaries. The selection and recommendations to the Project Board for financing of projects was ensured by the Selection Committees which included Donor, UNDP and Environmental NGOs representatives. Detailed Minutes of all fourteen Project Board Meetings held during the reporting period are presented in *Annex 20*.

At the operational level, the project's timeline **was extended three times without additional costs**: initially until December 2023, then until May 31, 2024, and finally by an additional two months until July 31, 2024.

The first extension was necessary to allow more time for implementing the second cohort of beneficiaries approved by the Donor.

In December 2023, the Steering Committee approved the use of accrued savings to support the Ministry of Energy in advancing Moldova's energy transition goals. This included piloting the Renewable Energy Communities (RECs) mechanism in the country.

Under this additional activity, technical assistance was provided to the Ministry of Energy to analyze the potential for implementing energy cooperatives in Moldova and to identify local barriers that might challenge this initiative.

The final extension was required to ensure a smooth transition to the new phase of the Project from an operational standpoint, including the transfer of assets.

I. Project Results Framework

The status reporting against the Results Framework is presented in *Annex 21*.

II. Sustainability of results

The project's sustainability is robustly supported by several key factors.

Outcome 1 has established long-term institutional mechanisms for managing climate risks and promoting sustainable development through gender-inclusive local development plans. The involvement and empowerment of key government actors, along with strengthened partnerships with women's groups, have ensured a holistic approach to sustainability. Online knowledge products have further extended the project's reach, making complex concepts accessible to a broad audience.

Outcome 2 has built a foundation of empowered community organizations and environmental NGOs capable of guiding women's groups in adopting environmentally friendly practices. The project's extensive capacity-building efforts have created a critical mass of skilled practitioners, bolstered by continuous training, peer-to-peer learning, and on-farm demonstrations, which have promoted the adoption and replication of adaptation technologies.

Outcome 3 has fostered ownership and commitment through resource contributions from women farmers and local public authorities towards project-supported investments. This shared investment has reinforced the dedication to sustaining these measures.

Under Outcome 4, active participation in national events and platforms has enabled the dissemination of best practices related to women's empowerment and resilience building, fostering scalability to other regions.

Overall, the project's comprehensive approach to capacity building, stakeholder involvement, and resource sharing ensures the long-term sustainability of its interventions, securing ongoing benefits for local communities and the environment.

III. Finances

The table below outlines the expenditures by year:

Year	Amount, USD
2020 (Disbursed)	382,970.42
2021 (Disbursed)	1,040,571.40
2022 (Disbursed)	1,013,513.83
2023 (Disbursed)	636,678.87
2024 (Disbursed)	80,582.88
Budget balance	21,071.84 ⁹
Total budget	3,175,389.24

IV. Project Risks and Issues

The ResComWomEmp project was initiated in March 2020, coinciding with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In response to the new circumstances, the Project Management Unit (PMU) redirected all efforts towards transitioning the project activities to an online format. Given that the inception phase necessitated interactions with a variety of local and national stakeholders, there were potential risks in ensuring a seamless project launch. Nevertheless, the inception process was meticulously restructured, and diverse formats for the launching activities were chosen – online meetings, hybrid formats, and small gatherings in compliance with the Government's protective measures.

As the Covid restrictions began to ease in mid-2021, best conditions were established for conducting outreach campaigns, reaching out to potential beneficiaries, site visits, and stakeholder interactions.

However, the onset of the Russian war in Ukraine led to a series of crises and challenges in the Republic of Moldova that required urgent resolution. Moldova received the highest per capita influx of Ukrainian refugees (17 percent of the total population), with about 100,000 refugees (4 percent of the total population) still residing in Moldova. Furthermore, the events in February intensified the energy crisis and necessitated the exploration of alternative gas supply routes and power sources.

Consequently, the security situation disrupted social and economic life in unforeseen and unpredictable ways, necessitating additional team efforts to mitigate and adapt to the emerging constraints and risks.

Inflation, driven by escalating food and energy prices, surged beyond the target band. From January to November 2022, the inflation rate was 29.26%, and it was 31.4% for 12 months. Concurrently, the economy experienced a downturn. In the 3rd quarter of 2022, the GDP volume

⁹ The final budget balance will be calculated after closure of the Project, once all operational costs will be deducted

decreased by 10.3% in real terms compared to the 3rd quarter of 2021, and the seasonally adjusted GDP decreased by 11.8%.

This unstable context posed significant risks to the project activities, particularly the Grants program, as prices soared and the market was disrupted. Following a thorough analysis of procurement needs and supply chains, a 25% increase in the Grants program budget was identified to accommodate the price increase, which was covered by a top-up budget provided by the donor.

When the energy crisis unfolded in November 2022, a supply shortage of renewable energy equipment was observed, leading to some project implementation delays.

As a result of mobilization and outreach efforts, various contractors specializing in the energy sector were engaged to ensure successful project implementation.

In conclusion, despite the ongoing challenges of the socio-economic, climate, and energy crisis, the Project managed to make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of rural communities, specifically agri-producers..

V. Lessons learned

The key lessons learned by the Project in the reporting period are listed below:

- The level of flexibility allowed by the Project design and the donor's openness and strategic inputs to the conceptualization and adjustment of activities allowed the project to stay relevant and respond to the pandemic situation imposed by COVID-19 and other unfolded crisis, while progressing towards the agreed objectives by applying alternative methods of implementation (e.g. on-line delivery of activities, revising the project's coverage principles, etc.).
- Consultations with project's stakeholders, including the donor, NGOs, MARDE and specialized agencies contributed to the enrichment and refinement of the project's approaches and strengthened cooperation.
- The strategic coordination with relevant initiatives - UNDP Projects, NGOs, as well as other donor-funded Projects shall be maintained to avoid overlapping and seek synergies for higher level impact.
- Prompt risk identification, incorporation of risk mitigation measures in ToRs and contracts and swift implementation of required adjustments has proved crucial in ensuring that the project remained on track despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and security context.
- Assertive efforts in disseminating procurement announcements and targeting of potential bidders enabled the project to identify reliable partners to support the implementation.

- Use of interactive and innovative methods in the on-line delivery of trainings contributed to a high level of engagement of participants and efficient delivery of the envisaged learning and skill building elements of the trainings.
- Oftentime, the women entrepreneurs coming from rural areas are facing difficulties in filling project proposals and NGOs role was crucial in assisting interested beneficiaries and receive a high number of applications.
- In order to develop meaningful environmental and focused on building community's resilience to climate change projects, the LPAs representative need more trainings and coaching at planning phase. The comprehensive assistance provided by the three partner NGOs was essential in preparation of well-argued, based on the community needs, project proposals.
- Strategic communication is the core element for creating synergies between the main intervention domains of the project. The project team adopted this approach in order to ensure wider results for all the beneficiaries.
- Creating meaningful synergies represent added value to project interventions. However, for the coordination to be truly efficient, a thorough mapping of interventions shall be made and joint action shall focus on specific topics/communities to be supported.