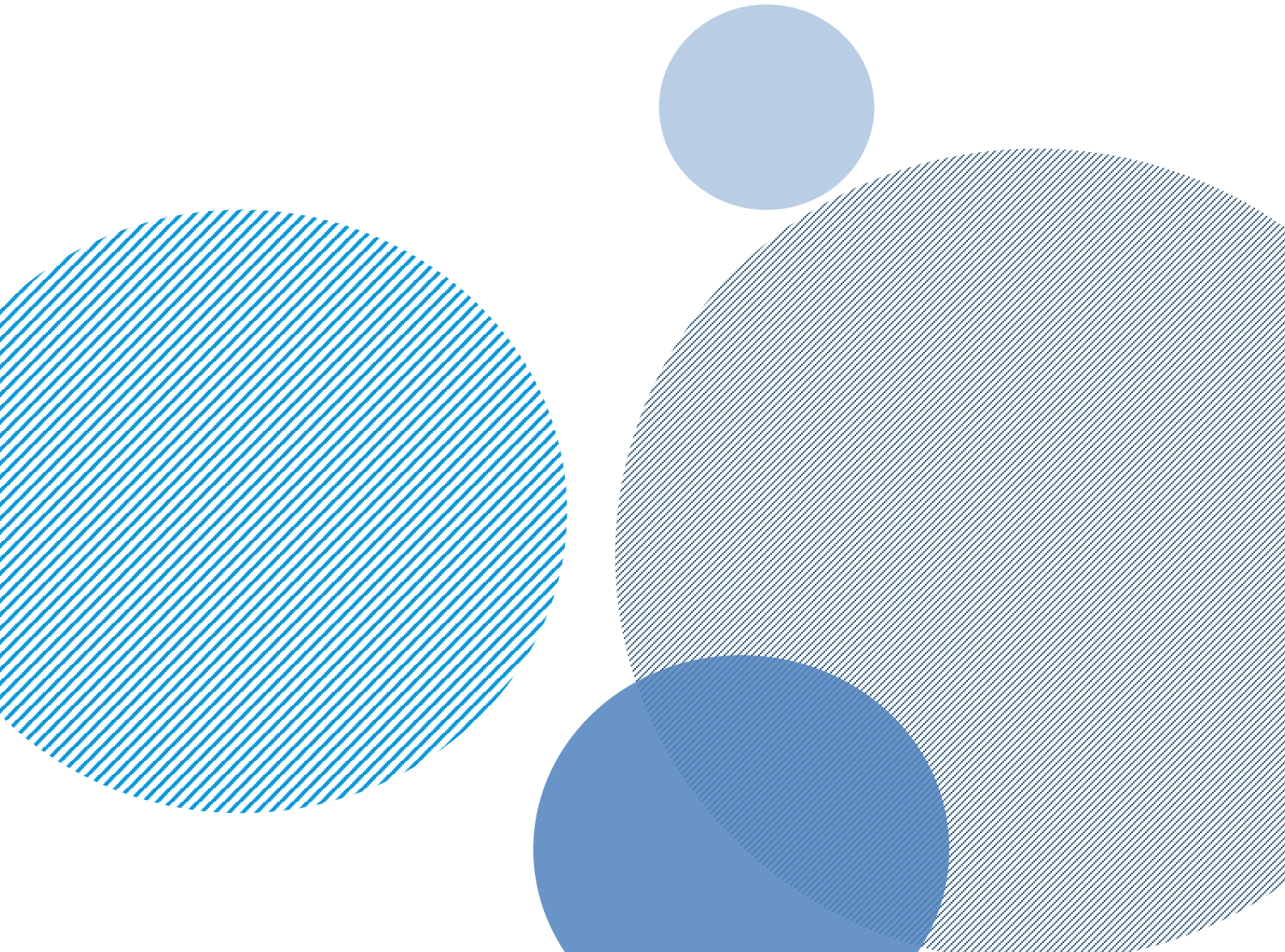
ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Evaluation of the project on Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific

Evaluation report | August 2026



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Commissioned by

ESCAP

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List of acronyms

ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
ADER	ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment
ADF	ASEAN Disability Forum
AERAP	Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific
AER WG	ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
APER	Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASOEN	ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment
AYF	ASEAN Youth Forum
CoP	Community of Practice
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EDD	Environment and Development Division
EHRD	Environmental Human Rights Defenders
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EPIL	Environmental Public Interest Litigation
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICJ	International Court of Justice
LGBTQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
RPA	Regional Plan of Action
RWI	Raoul Wallenberg Institute
SDD	Social Development Division
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SLAPP	Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation
SPC	The Pacific Community
SPMD	Strategy and Programme Management Division
SRO-Pacific	Subregional Office for the Pacific
SRO-SEA	Subregional Office for South-East Asia
ToC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly

Executive Summary

Background

Many Asia-Pacific countries still struggle to implement the procedural environmental rights—access to information, participation, and justice—outlined in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. To address this, a 2015 UN Human Rights Council report recommended that ASEAN adopt regional frameworks, specifically targeting environmental impact assessment principles. In alignment with this goal, the *Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific* project supports subregional legal frameworks to enshrine the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in South-East Asia as well as in the Pacific. This regional strategy ultimately drives crucial reforms in national policy, legislation, and judicial procedures.

Purpose and Scope

The project empowers Asia-Pacific stakeholders to accelerate environment-related SDGs by securing the right to a healthy environment through enhanced information access, public participation, and justice. Key milestones include adopting an ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Environmental Rights and securing a Pacific subregional strategy. Additionally, it establishes the Asia-Pacific Observatory on Environmental Rights to track progress and foster regional synergies.

Methodology

A theory of change approach, using the linear results chain option, was applied to understand the actual results achieved and the process of achieving results, guided by the results framework of the project and the actual implementation strategy and delivery of outputs. A desk review of relevant documents and reports was made augmented by consultations with relevant ESCAP secretariat staff and members of the Reference Group and the Evaluation Unit, SPMD. A survey was administered and individual online interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders, development partners, project participants, and concerned UN entities. The main users of the evaluation results are the ASEAN and Pacific countries, ESCAP, UNEP, OHCHR, Sida and implementing partners. The evaluation covered the period from 28 May to 15 August 2026.

Main Findings

Impact: The project made **highly satisfactory impact** in the ASEAN region with respect to strengthening the enabling conditions for the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Its outstanding outcome is the development and adoption of the "ASEAN Declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment" by the ASEAN leaders at the 47th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ESCAP, UNEP, OHCHR provided technical assistance and capacity development to ASEAN member States through the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights to enable this process. The support included funding through this project. The Declaration recognizes a safe, clean and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right. It includes elements, such as access to justice in environmental matters for vulnerable groups, like indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, women, children, as well as provisions for present and future generations and businesses and non-state actors.

Effectiveness: The project's implementation was **effective** in delivering its aim of strengthening regional frameworks for environmental rights, a success underscored by robust stakeholder participation. By addressing both procedural and substantive elements, the initiative advanced the sustainable management of ASEAN's natural resources while boosting regional policy momentum and dialogue. Furthermore, the diverse composition of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group—alongside inclusive drafting and consultation processes—galvanized regional organizations, stimulated public interest, and raised stakeholder expectations across the subregion.

Relevance: The project is **highly relevant** to both ASEAN and the Pacific, two of the world's most ecologically vulnerable regions. In South-East Asia, the initiative aligns with regional frameworks to improve governance, combat transboundary pollution and deforestation, and legally protect environmental defenders. In the Pacific, where climate change threatens existential survival, it builds local capacity to uphold the human right to a healthy environment. Ultimately, by bridging global standards with regional realities, the project drives cross-regional cooperation, empowers marginalized communities, and anchors environmental policy in climate justice and long-term resilience.

Efficiency: The project achieved **efficient** implementation by leveraging a multi-stakeholder partnership model that optimized resources and broadened regional impact. By partnering closely with UNEP and OHCHR, it blended expertise in environmental management and human rights law while avoiding institutional duplication. These strategic alliances, alongside co-funding modalities, streamlined activity delivery and generated cost savings. Furthermore, execution was accelerated by adopting a decentralized approach, using regional networks for targeted training and capacity building, and leveraging existing frameworks to fast-track consultations and secure buy-in without creating costly new administrative structures.

Sustainability: The project achieved **high sustainability** by embedding institutional reforms, legal frameworks, and local capacity directly into regional governance. By equipping judiciaries, human rights institutions, and civil society to uphold environmental rights independently, it moves beyond short-term interventions toward enduring environmental justice. Integrating the right to a healthy environment into national policies establishes a self-sustaining legal architecture that outlasts the project's lifecycle. Finally, its inclusive, multi-stakeholder approach ensures deep community ownership, empowering grassroots defenders and marginalized populations to protect their natural resources for future generations.

Cross-cutting Issues: The project modelled social inclusion in a **highly satisfactory** manner by integrating gender equality, disability rights, and youth action into regional environmental governance. Structural gender mainstreaming achieved a 55.4% female participation rate across 13 activities. Concurrently, collaborations with platforms like the ASEAN Disability Forum and the ASEAN Youth Forum ensured that marginalized groups and youth-led innovations directly shaped environmental policy, delivering a truly participatory, rights-based approach that leaves no one behind.

Conclusion

The overall performance of the project based on all the evaluation criteria was found to be **highly satisfactory** despite the challenges encountered during the early stage of the project. We conclude that the project has achieved its overarching objective to advance the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights as a foundation to enshrine the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all citizens at national level in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

Recommendations

To continue supporting the development of a Regional Plan of Action that implements the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.

Under the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, AICHR, in coordination with ASOEN and other sectoral bodies, is tasked with creating an ASEAN-owned and ASEAN-led Regional Plan of Action. To facilitate this, ESCAP can host cross-pillar regional consultations to serve as the development platform. In line with the Declaration's emphasis on multi-stakeholder cooperation, these dialogues can engage UN agencies, dialogue partners, academia, and

civil society. Ultimately, this collaboration will strengthen ties between AICHR and ASEAN entities, advancing a rights-based approach to environmental governance and community building.

To sustain ongoing collaboration and dialogue among all Pacific stakeholders, ensuring coordinated regional and international action to develop an environmental rights framework that addresses climate justice and environmental rights.
At the 2026 Pacific Climate Justice and Sea Level Rise Week in Suva, Fiji, participants underscored the critical need for coordinated global action. They called for sustained stakeholder collaboration and dialogue to translate legal clarity into meaningful political action, ensuring initiatives are firmly grounded in international law, human rights, and practical strategies. Maintaining this structured engagement ensures regional efforts remain legally robust, culturally informed, and contextually relevant. Ultimately, this ongoing dialogue is vital for developing regional framework for the Pacific to operationalize the right to clean, healthy and sustainable environment (or environmental rights), which could lay the groundwork for a new or amended regional agreement.

To further develop the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory as an interactive web portal that provides not only information and knowledge products but also online training and means to submit and respond to inquiries.
The project established the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory as a regional knowledge-sharing platform. ESCAP should now transform this repository into an active, capacity-building web portal. Integrating self-paced online courses will systematically democratize legal literacy and environmental advocacy skills for communities, civil society, and government officials. Additionally, implementing a dedicated query-and-response mechanism will bridge the gap between grassroots stakeholders and regional experts, fostering collaborative problem-solving and enhancing institutional accountability.

To catalyze and sustain a sustainable Asia-Pacific Community of Practice for environmental rights, institutionalizing the network through integrated digital infrastructure, intergovernmental dialogue, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.
To maximize project momentum, ESCAP can establish a sustainable Asia-Pacific Community of Practice (CoP) for environmental rights. This digital ecosystem bridges regional policy and local action, elevating environmental rights to a unified priority while fostering cross-border cooperation and high-level political commitment. Concurrently, structured peer-to-peer exchanges will enable member states and civil society to replicate successful legal frameworks, share strategies, and build collective climate resilience. By blending technical connectivity with collaborative diplomacy, this approach will transform a disparate network into a resilient, self-sustaining institution that systematically advances regional environmental justice.

To enhance capacity development among parliamentarians, legal professionals, the judiciary, and civil society organizations in environmental rights and related disciplines, encompassing both rights-holders and duty-bearers across ASEAN and the Pacific.
Building a sustainable future across ASEAN and the Pacific requires equipping regional actors to uphold environmental rights. Elevating the capacity of duty-bearers, such as parliamentarians, judges, and legal professionals, and civil society rights-holders ensures that environmental laws are effectively enforced and the protection and promotion of the human rights to clean, healthy and sustainable environment is strengthened. Specifically, parliamentarians need targeted training to draft robust legislation, while the judiciary must be empowered to apply these laws equitably, ensuring access to justice. Simultaneously, strengthening civil society organizations enables local communities to participate in decision-making and hold institutions accountable. By bridging gaps through education and shared disciplines, this initiative can transform abstract frameworks into actionable, localized protections, fostering compliance and resilience against escalating climate crises.

To support the development of an ASEAN framework agreement on Environmental Impact Assessment by building on agreed regional principles and establishing a mechanism for the gradual negotiation of specific protocols.

Adopting this recommendation can result in a phased, binding framework that bridges the gap between disparate national policies and transboundary accountability in South-East Asia. By establishing regional principles and a step-by-step mechanism for specific protocols, member states can harmonize environmental protections, ensure meaningful public participation, and shield human rights defenders. Such a framework institutionalizes access to information and public engagement as standards rather than voluntary practices. Furthermore, formalizing gradual, protocol-by-protocol negotiations allows states to establish realistic baseline commitments while steadily building consensus on sensitive, interconnected threats like transboundary haze, biodiversity loss, and climate displacement. Anchoring this roadmap in already-agreed principles respects national sovereignty while progressively driving legislative alignment, ensuring that civil society and corporate entities operate under clear, legally enforceable EIA standard.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the project

While positive legislative and policy frameworks continue to advance the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, many Asia-Pacific nations still struggle to implement procedural environmental rights—commonly known as access rights under Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. In a 2015 report to the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment outlined methods for fulfilling human rights obligations tied to a healthy ecosystem. The report recommended that ASEAN adopt regional agreements specifically proposing a framework agreement on environmental impact assessment principles and procedures. Such an accord would effectively complement the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights' ongoing efforts to integrate human rights perspectives into environmental and climate change policymaking.

A regional approach to safeguarding environmental rights paves the way for essential reforms in national policy, legislation, and judicial procedures. Drawing from precedents in the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean, a regional agreement on the right to a healthy environment strengthens national legal protections. It drives compliance through robust implementation mechanisms and targeted capacity-building. Furthermore, a cohesive regional framework streamlines policy design, helping member states and stakeholders identify and prioritize critical measures to enhance their institutional capacities.

The project, *Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific (AERAP)*, supports the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks to enshrine the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all citizens in South-East Asia. A primary goal is the adoption of an ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Environmental Rights. In the Pacific, the project seeks agreement on a subregional strategy to advance these rights. Additionally, this initiative lays the groundwork for an Asia-Pacific Observatory on Environmental Rights (APER), establishing a vital platform to foster intra-regional synergies and monitor environmental rights activities across all subregions, including ASEAN and the Pacific.

This evaluation was conducted from 28 May to 15 August 2026 and covered the entire implementation period of the AERAP project from 15 July 2023 to 31 May 2026, which spanned South-East Asia and the Pacific, with a total available funding of USD 988,198.26.

In adherence to ESCAP's evaluation policy, projects funded through extrabudgetary sources undergo independent assessment. This systematic process evaluates the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of projects, along with cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and disability rights. Recognizing the value of independent evaluation for enhancing organizational performance, ESCAP mandates the periodic assessment of its programmatic work

1.2 Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

Under ESCAP evaluation policy, selected projects funded through extrabudgetary sources must undergo an independent evaluation. This critical function systematically and objectively assesses a project's impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. Recognizing how independent evaluations drive performance and overall effectiveness, ESCAP mandates the secretariat to ensure periodic evaluations of its programmatic work.

The evaluation aims to foster accountability for results and promote institutional learning. Its findings will refine the design and execution of future initiatives, a process supported by a formal evaluation

management response and a subsequent action plan. The main users of the evaluation results will be ESCAP, particularly the implementing division(s) and the donor. Other expected users include the project participating countries and implementing partners.

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Assess the project performance against the evaluation criteria: impact, effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and cross-cutting issues, including gender equality, disability inclusion, as deemed relevant.
- Formulate lessons learned and action-oriented recommendations to inform management decision-making and improve future project design.

The evaluation assesses the project's performance by examining its outcomes through the project's results framework, its implementation processes, and relevant contextual factors. It aims to establish causal connections as much as possible, guided by the evaluation criteria and questions. The evaluation is conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation.

2. Description of the Project

2.1 Background

Since 2018, ESCAP has been collaborating with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to promote empowerment and participation of key stakeholders in Asia-Pacific to accelerate the delivery of environment-related SDGs (SDG 2, 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16) in the region, including through advancing access to information concerning the environment, public participation, the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and effective access to justice, to secure the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

During the 14th ASEAN-United Nations Summit in Vientiane, Lao PDR, the importance of collaborative efforts in the promotion and protection of human rights in the region including through capacity-building initiatives and sustained engagement between the AICHR and the United Nations were acknowledged, and the support from ESCAP, UNEP, and OHCHR were appreciated.

The project on *Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific* aims to lay the groundwork for a regional environmental rights framework in Asia and the Pacific. This instrument is envisioned to mirror the scope and impact of Europe's *Aarhus Convention* and Latin America and the Caribbean's *Escazú Agreement*. This initiative leverages the strategic partnerships and operational frameworks established under previous Sida-funded projects, specifically "The Value of Empowerment and Participation in Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018–2021)" and "Strengthening Capacity of Regional Actors to Promote Human Rights, Accountability, Democratic Space, and Gender in the Asia-Pacific Region (2018–2024)."

ESCAP is the key implementing stakeholder for the project and works in collaboration with UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and UNEP Law Division, OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office. The primary target groups are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

2.2 Project theory of change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is a strategic methodology that elucidates how specific interventions drive targeted developmental progress, underpinned by evidence-based causal analysis.[1] This framework maps the intricate interdependencies and mutual influences among various project elements. It structurally encompasses five core components: activities, outputs, outcomes, immediate impacts, and long-term impacts. By delineating these causal pathways, a ToC clarifies the precise links between operational execution and ultimate strategic goals, visually illustrating how immediate actions trigger a chain of results that culminate in the intended impact.

While organizations generally utilize four primary frameworks to represent a Theory of Change (ToC)—linear results chains, outcomes hierarchies, triple columns or rows, and sets of principles—this evaluation adopts a linear results chain. This model is uniquely suited for initiatives where foundational activities trigger successive, sequential outcomes. Collectively, these interventions aim to advance subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights, establishing the necessary groundwork to guarantee a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all citizens across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. The reconstructed ToC flowchart for the AERAP project is detailed in Annex 2.

[1] United Nations Development Group, Theory of change, UNDAF Companion Guidance, https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/UNDG-UNDAF-Companion-Pieces-7-Theory-of-Change.pdf.

The project's linear architecture is directly mirrored in its execution: eleven activities, organized into three distinct clusters, yield three specific outputs to realize the central outcome. This primary outcome entails the collaborative development of a legal instrument on environmental rights by target stakeholders. Consequently, the immediate impact is the progressive advancement and implementation of these subregional legal frameworks, which serve as the bedrock for enshrining environmental rights. The long-term impact is the meaningful realization of the SDG targets.

2.3 Project strategies

This initiative seeks to empower regional governments to fortify environmental governance and rights, alignment with post-pandemic "build forward better" strategies. Central to this effort is the development of the ASEAN Framework on Environmental Rights and the Draft Strategy for an Environmental Rights Framework in the Pacific. By advancing these subregional legal frameworks, the project establishes a foundation for enshrining the universal right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment at the national level across South-East Asia and the Pacific.

The project unfolds across three distinct phases: (a) Preparation: Baseline assessment and strategic planning; (b) Development: Legal drafting and refinement of the framework instruments; and (c) Implementation: Institutional readiness and national enactment of the frameworks.

To achieve the primary outcome—the successful development of a comprehensive legal instrument on environmental rights—the project drives three core outputs: (a) Inclusive dialogue: Fostering multi-stakeholder engagement and consensus; (b) Capacity building: Providing targeted technical assistance and institutional strengthening; and (c) Intra-regional learning: Facilitating knowledge exchange and cross-border collaboration. The relationship between these activities and their respective outputs is elaborated below.

Output 1.1: Increased capacity of target stakeholders to develop legal instruments on environmental rights.

Activities in South-East Asia:

1.1 Produce two technical briefs, at least two, to inform delegates of the AER Working Group on the key substantive areas to be covered by the framework, as well as the procedural aspects for their consideration.

1.2 Consultations and dialogues to be held amongst ASEAN stakeholders, including right holders, to identify the most effective ways to provide inputs to the AER Working Group.

1.3 Support the organization of meetings and negotiations of the AER Working Group, including all necessary travel arrangements and logistics to create a dialogue-friendly atmosphere and a safe space for the exchange of perspectives. This would include the organization of two sessions of the AER Working Group each year (at least two sessions in 2023, and two sessions in 2024, one session in 2025 and one session in 2026).

Activities in the Pacific:

1.4 Produce technical briefs to inform the content of the draft strategy for an Environmental Rights Framework in the Pacific.

1.5 Consultation and dialogues to be held amongst Pacific stakeholders, including right holders, to identify opportunities through existing mechanisms and intergovernmental processes to advance environmental rights, and potentially, the establishment of an informal network.

1.6 Triggering and facilitating dialogue in the Pacific to advance environmental rights.

Output 1.2: Increased capacity of target stakeholders to support the development and implementation of legal instruments on environmental rights.
Activities: 2.1 Legal technical assistance to support the drafting of the instrument produced by the AER Working Group. 2.2 Capacity development with Parliamentarians, Lawyers, Judiciary and CSOs, including right holders and duty bearers from ASEAN and the Pacific, on the implementation of the framework instrument.
Output 1.3: Increased knowledge sharing and learning among target stakeholders on environmental rights.
Activities: A3.1 Conduct an intra-regional workshop to promote experience-sharing, best practices and learned lessons, for the mutual benefit of all regions, including different subregions within Asia-Pacific. A3.2 Conduct a two-day workshop on 26-27 September 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand, to facilitate collaboration among implementing partners in Asia-Pacific. Among others, the workshop will include a include a discussion on the "Asia-Pacific Observatory on Environmental Rights", to collect inputs from regional stakeholders for the creation of such an observatory. A.3.3 Conduct a two-day Sida-ESCAP partners meeting on 18-19 May 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand, to facilitate collaboration among implementing partners in Asia-Pacific.

An expected outcome of this project is to realize an ASEAN Leader's Declaration on Environmental Rights. In the Pacific, the expected outcome is to agree on a subregional strategy to advance environmental rights. Furthermore, this project contributes to the foundation of an Asia-Pacific Observatory on Environmental Rights, which will serve as a basis to facilitate intra-regional synergies, including through monitoring related activities in all subregions in Asia-Pacific, including ASEAN and the Pacific.

2.4 Innovative elements

The ESCAP initiatives advancing environmental rights across Asia and the Pacific employ highly innovative development methodologies and frameworks. Following the UN General Assembly's recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, ESCAP successfully translated this abstract concept into measurable regional and local policies. Central to these efforts is the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory, a specialized digital platform and monitoring tool. This platform serves as a localized clearinghouse for case studies, best practices, and legal trends, specifically tracking Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPPs) and compliance with Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) to strengthen the environmental rule of law.

Additionally, the formation of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group introduces a novel structural approach. By embedding experts from youth, biodiversity, indigenous, and disability rights groups directly into the drafting process of the ASEAN Regional Environmental Rights Framework, ESCAP and UNEP ensure that social equity is seamlessly integrated into the policy design from its inception.

An innovative highlight of the project was the capacity-building study visit and judicial dialogue held at the Administrative Court of Thailand in Bangkok in September 2024. During this engagement, the project team was granted access to one of the court's primary trial chambers to observe a live, active hearing on environmental law. This proceeding offered valuable, firsthand insight into how Thai administrative litigation resolves complex disputes concerning environmental degradation, regulatory permitting, and public harm. The delegation observed a highly structured, deliberate presentation of arguments, which placed significant emphasis on procedural compliance, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs), and human rights-based evidence.

Following the hearing, the team was welcomed into the judges' chambers by the distinguished justices who shared valuable practical insights, including:

- The historical development and mandate of the Administrative Court of Thailand.
- Specific nuances of Thai environmental jurisprudence and how the judiciary balances economic development with the right to a healthy environment.
- The procedural challenges Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) face in seeking access to justice and remedies in the region.

This field visit underscored the critical role of judicial actors in translating international environmental rights frameworks into domestic enforcement.

2.5 Beneficiaries, target countries and key partners

The UN ESCAP Environment and Development Division (EDD) is the responsible division in the implementation of the project. The other implementing division/offices include the Social Development Division (SDD), the Subregional Office for South-East Asia (SRO-SEA), and the Subregional Office for the Pacific (SRO-Pacific). The target countries/subregions include countries in South-East Asia (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam) and the Pacific countries, while the target groups include the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). The key external partners include the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and UNEP Law Division and the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office.

2.6 Resources

The project received USD 936,221.61 in voluntary contributions, which earned USD 51,976.65 in interest during implementation, bringing the total available funding to USD 988,198.26. As summarized below, total expenditures and commitments reached USD 900,766.06, leaving an unspent balance of USD 87,432.20 as of 30 June 2026.[2]

Expenditures & Commitments	Amount (in USD)
Staff and other personnel cost	194,037.05
Contractual Services	111,205.70
Travel	420,403.40

[2] There is an exchange rate gain of USD 384.53, resulting in a total unspent balance of USD 87,816.73.

Transfers and Grants	3,219.31
General Operating and Other Direct Costs	68,272.64
Indirect Support Costs	103,627.96
Total expenditure & commitments	900,766.06
Unspent balance as of 30 June 2026	87,432.20

Strategic partnerships forged and strengthened throughout the project cycle significantly enhanced activity delivery while yielding some cost savings. By championing co-funding models for meetings and operational support, the project maximized resource efficiency. Other notable examples include a training course titled “Strengthening Legal Responses to Environmental Harm: Advancing Environmental Justice and Human Rights in Southeast Asia” organized by ESCAP and UNEP in collaboration with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (September2025); the Regional Consultation on the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN (December 2025), which was co-funded by the Danish Institute for Human Rights; the Pacific Climate Justice and Sea Level Rise Week (May 2026), jointly supported by The Pacific Community (SPC) and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office; and the support provided by the USAID to the activities of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group during the early stages of the project. Furthermore, timely interventions were secured through complementary funding from UNEP and OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office. Ultimately, these collaborative efforts ensured a highly cost-effective implementation, delivering robust stakeholder support well within the projected budget.

Consequently, as of 2 July 2026, total expenditures and commitments amounted to only 96.21% or USD 900,766.06 of the total contributions of USD 936,221.61 (in line with the revised project budget outlined in Amendment No.1 to the Trust Fund Agreement No. 2023-010-EDD-003). The residual amount shall be returned to Sida, after the financial closure of the project in Q4 2026.

3. Evaluation Scope and Methodology

3.1 Evaluation scope

The evaluation assesses the project's performance by examining its outcomes through the project's results framework, its implementation processes, and relevant contextual factors. It aims to establish causal connections as much as possible, guided by the evaluation criteria and questions. The primary target countries are ASEAN (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam) and the Pacific. The evaluation is conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation.

The following evaluation criteria and questions to assess the project performance have been considered and further refined following consultations with project management and other stakeholders during the evaluation inception period.

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Impact	• What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the project at regional and national levels? Which project activities or outputs contributed to these results, and what evidence supports ESCAP's contribution? • How could the implementing division enhance the impacts of similar projects in the future?
Effectiveness	• How effective were the project's capacity-building activities, and what evidence demonstrates their effects on knowledge, skills, and institutional practices? • How could the implementing division make its future capacity-building activities more effective?
Relevance	• To what extent was the project's design aligned with the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries? • To what extent has the project ensured that the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities, were taken into account in the design and implementation of the project? • What adjustments, if any, were made to the project activities and modality, in response to evolving priorities/requirements of beneficiary countries?
Efficiency	• To what extent did the project achieve efficiency through stakeholder collaboration, leveraging comparative advantages, and creating synergies? • To what extent did partnerships with other organizations enable or enhance the achievement of results? • Was the project implemented in a timely manner and as planned? If delays occurred, what factors drove them? • To what extent did multi-agency partnerships strengthened the outcomes of the project and contributed to resource-efficiency?
Sustainability	• To what extent are the project's results likely to continue without further support from ESCAP or the donor?

Cross-cutting Issues	• To what extent were cross cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and implementation of the project? • Can these strategies/approached be replicated in future projects?

No significant revisions have been made to the evaluation scope, criteria, and questions in the Terms of Reference. The evaluation criteria include impact, effectiveness. relevance, efficiency, sustainability and cross cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion. The evaluation questions have been made more specific but are essentially similar or are directed towards basically the same type of information or subject. A detailed evaluation matrix has been prepared comprising the six evaluation criteria, key questions, sub-questions, indicators, sources of information, methods and assumptions (Annex 3).

3.2 Evaluation approach

This evaluation adopts a theory of change approach to analyze both the results achieved and the processes that drove them. This framework is informed by the project's results matrix alongside its actual implementation strategy and output delivery.

To ensure robust findings, the evaluation utilizes a mixed-method approach that integrates quantitative and qualitative analyses. Data collection relies on remote methods, including online interviews and observations. By triangulating information across these diverse sources, the evaluation enhances the validity and reliability of its conclusions. Furthermore, the methodology intentionally integrates gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive practices.

Data is disaggregated by sex and other relevant demographic categories. The evaluation follows a transparent, participatory process, engaging both male and female stakeholders — including the reference group, development partners, and target beneficiaries — across all critical stages.

Data analysis employs both qualitative and quantitative techniques, incorporating charts and direct quotes to substantiate the findings against the chosen criteria. Gender equality, disability inclusion, and human rights mainstreaming are central to this analysis, evaluated across three distinct dimensions: project design, implementation, and outcomes. Ultimately, this rigorous analysis yields actionable, evidence-based conclusions and recommendations. The entire evaluation process strictly adheres to the ethical principles outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection and analysis involved the following tasks:

Inception meeting

The project evaluation consultant participated in an inception meeting held online on 29 May 2026 in coordination with the focal points to discuss the background of the project, including insights into key stakeholders in ASEAN and the Pacific and agree on the timeframe for the evaluation.

Desk review of relevant documents

A desk review of relevant documents and reports was made including, among others, the documents and reports listed in Annex 6.

Consultations with relevant ESCAP secretariat staff and Reference Group

Consultations via video/audio call with relevant ESCAP secretariat staff and members of the Reference Group were conducted to get a better understanding of the various aspects of the project including its design and implementation and provide a useful basis for collecting other relevant data. The

consultant also regularly consulted the Evaluation Unit, SPMD, which manages and oversees the entire evaluation process, and the Environment and Development Division, which primarily implements the project.

Evaluation survey

An electronic survey was administered targeting the appropriate officials in participating countries, implementing partners, workshop participants and other stakeholders.

In-depth individual interviews

In-depth individual interviews via video/audio call were made with relevant officials, stakeholders, development partners, and project management. The list of individuals interviewed is presented in Annex 5.

The collected data and information were organized, validated, triangulated and analysed bearing in mind relevant cross-cutting issues.

3.4 Stakeholder analysis

The implementation of the AERAP project by ESCAP is in collaboration with key partners such as the UNEP Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and UNEP Law Division and the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office. The main target groups are the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, and the Pacific Islands Forum. Project funding is provided primarily by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The list of stakeholders and their type and level of involvement in the project and capacity assets are elaborated in the table below.

Stakeholders	Role in project	Capacity assets
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)	Provide funding for the project	The work of Sida is guided by strategies that are usually valid for a period of five years. They either have a geographic or thematic focus, such as human rights, democracy and rule of law.
AICHR Delegates	More than half of the AICHR delegations are represented as members of the AER Working Group	The terms of reference of the Working Group have been agreed upon and endorsed by AICHR in March 2023
Pacific Island Forum	This organization provides an entry point to trigger a Pacific process	The organization covers a large territory in the Pacific
Environmental Human Rights Defenders	EHRDs play a key role in providing inputs to the AER WG	On the ground expertise, with a comprehensive understanding of challenges in the region, including access to information, participation and access to justice and remedy

Parliamentarians and the Judiciary	The legislative and judicial branches play an important role in policymaking and in compliance/enforcement, respectively	Jurisdiction on environmental matters
Civil Society (Including youth, persons with disabilities, academia, business, the private sector and key constituents)	Civil society organizations provide insights to realize an inclusive dialogue and a comprehensive framework	Direct experience dealing with the barriers of access to information and public participation
Institutional Donors and Development Cooperation Agencies	Provide resources, including financial and in-kind to promote the sustainability of the process	Experience supporting comparative instruments/agreements in other regions
Women's Groups and stakeholders engaged in gender equality across the spectrum	Provide inputs to the process	Direct experience dealing with gender barriers and bias

3.5 Sampling

To maximize data availability and responsiveness, the evaluation draws performance and outcome data from interviews and surveys of project participants and stakeholders selected by the implementing ESCAP division, the Environment and Development Division. To ensure a rigorous and unbiased assessment, findings are triangulated and enriched using the data and information from stakeholder surveys, interviews, and supporting documentation. The evaluation engages a representative sample of respondents across primary and secondary target regions — including ASEAN and Pacific countries — alongside AERAP project partners, UN entities, and relevant national and international organizations.

The project implementer recommends survey participants based on three primary criteria: equitable geographic representation across participating countries, equal gender balance wherever possible, and prioritization of individuals who engaged in multiple project activities. This selection strategy explicitly incorporates geographical, gender, and other cross-cutting considerations. Where feasible, the gathered data are disaggregated by sex and other relevant demographic characteristics.

3.6 Risks and limitations

The success of this evaluation depends heavily on the active cooperation of various informants and stakeholders during the survey and interview phases. Due to time and financial constraints, travel to participating countries for face-to-face consultations is not feasible. Consequently, the evaluation relied on online audio-visual interviews and electronic surveys to gather comprehensive feedback from the broader stakeholder constituency.[3] To ensure a well-balanced assessment, the selection of informants is carefully managed to eliminate bias and capture a diverse range of perspectives, both positive and negative. While the absence of site visits and face-to-face interactions presents a limitation, this is mitigated by conducting extensive digital consultations with a wide array of stakeholders — including other UN entities and implementing partners — and by triangulating data from multiple sources. Ultimately, while every effort is made to maintain the highest standards of diligence, a minimal risk remains that minor project adjustments may be inadvertently overlooked.

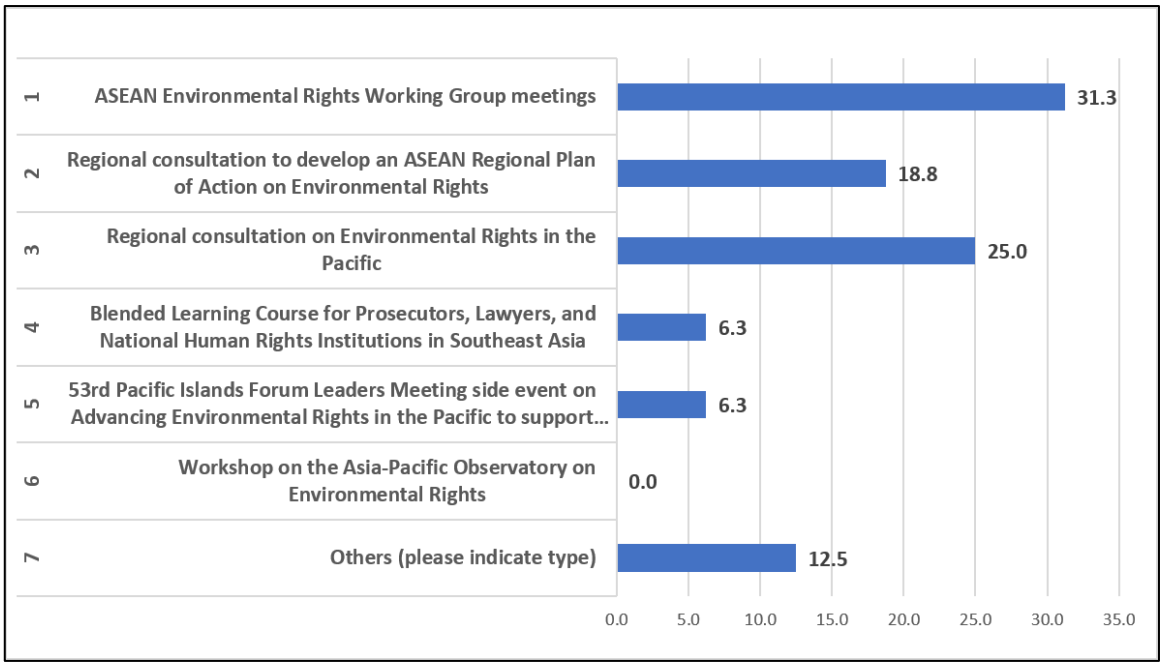
[3] The study benefited from a strong interview sample but faced limited survey participation.

4. Evaluation Findings

These findings are based on the review of relevant documents and reports (Annex 6) and the results of the interviews and survey (Annex 8).

The survey shows that 31.3% of the respondents participated in the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group meetings, 18.8% in the regional consultation to develop an ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Environmental Rights, 25.0% in the regional consultation on Environmental Rights in the Pacific, 6.3% in the Blended Learning Course for Prosecutors, Lawyers, and National Human Rights Institutions in Southeast Asia, 6.3% in the 53rd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting side event on Advancing Environmental Rights in the Pacific to support the implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and 12.5% in other activities. These are illustrated in the chart below.

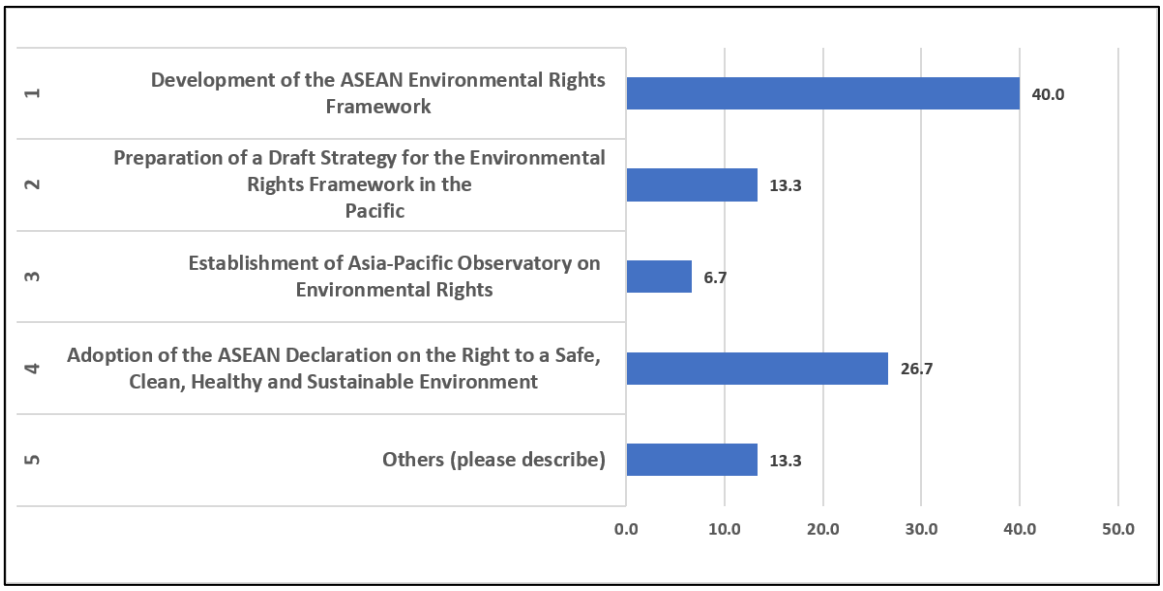
In which of the following types of activities did you take part?



4.1 Impact

The evaluation found evidence that this project made **highly satisfactory impact** in advancing environmental rights by promoting the implementation of environmental laws and multilateral environmental agreements.

What have been the most significant achievements or outputs of the project?



The interviews revealed that the project made significant impact (rated 4/5) on advancing environmental rights, primarily by championing the enforcement of environmental laws and multilateral agreements. These findings were corroborated by survey results, in which 66.7% of respondents highlighted the development of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Framework (40%) and the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment (26.7%), respectively, as the project's most significant accomplishments.

Finding 1: A crowning achievement under this project is the technical and consultative support that directly led to the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment by ASEAN Leaders.

The major and most impactful project milestone was the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment by ASEAN Leaders during the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 26–28 October 2025.

The historic adoption of the ASEAN Declaration represents a crowning achievement for the project. This landmark declaration elevates regional standards to match international frameworks, explicitly codifying substantive and procedural environmental rights while reinforcing protections against climate change and pollution. The project catalyzed this milestone by providing vital technical assistance to the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights, delivering rigorous analytical reporting, and facilitating comprehensive multi-stakeholder consultations throughout the drafting process.

Among its core commitments, the Declaration pledges to safeguard the right to a healthy environment for both present and future generations. To ensure accountability, it mandates AICHR—in close coordination with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, including the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment—to design and implement a regionally driven, ASEAN-led Regional Plan of Action.

The definitive breakthrough of this project remains the formulation and ultimate high-level adoption of this groundbreaking text. Aligning seamlessly with UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300, the Declaration formally recognizes a safe, clean, and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right. Crucially, it embeds progressive legal safeguards, ensuring robust access to environmental justice for highly vulnerable populations, including indigenous communities and persons with

disabilities, women, children, as well as provisions for present and future generations and businesses and non-state actors, like environmental impact assessments.

> *We adopted the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, which reaffirmed our commitment to advancing this human right for present and future generations by promoting the implementation of environmental laws, multilateral environmental agreements, to which all ASEAN Member States are parties, access to meaningful information, public participation, scientific research, and environmental education, while enhancing efforts to mitigate environmental degradation and ensure equal and effective protection of the rights of people in vulnerable situations. We looked forward to the development of an inclusive and sustainable Regional Plan of Action to follow up on this Declaration.* (Chairman's Statement of the 47th ASEAN Summit, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 26 October 2025).

Finding 2: The project successfully established the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory as a regional platform for strengthening environmental rights and promoting access to information, public participation, and access to justice.

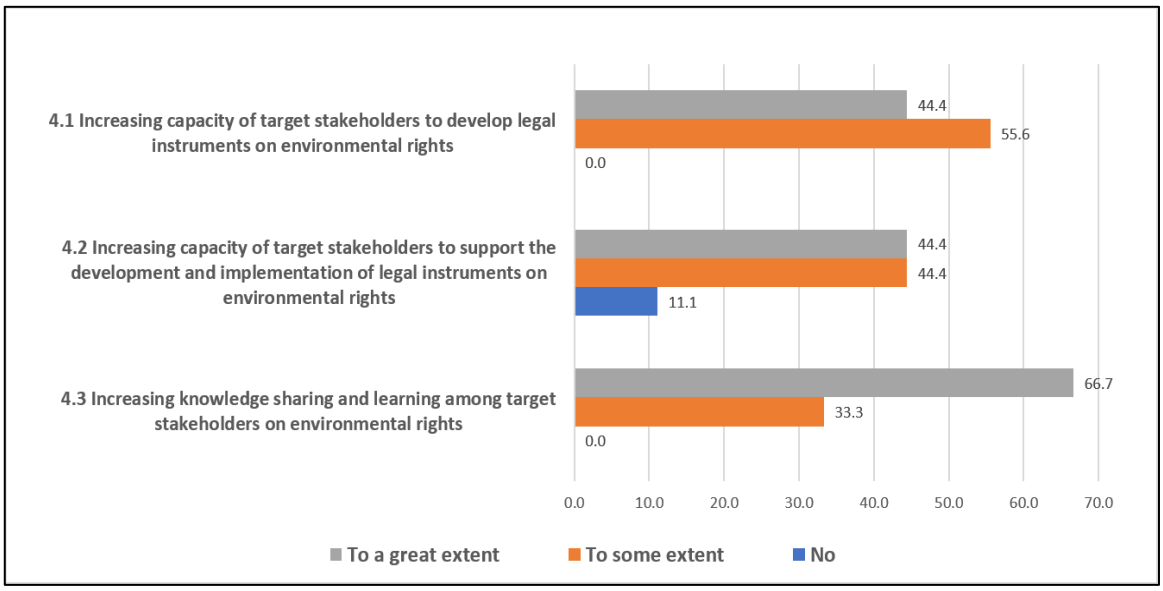
The project helped launch the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory, a dedicated platform that consolidates case studies, legal practices, and regional data on the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The observatory serves as a centralized platform to support, evaluate, and track regional environmental governance. The platform acts as a critical knowledge Hub to document the fulfillment of "access rights" (Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration) in Asia and the Pacific by:

- Tracking how effectively regional governments publish open data on environmental hazards and climate impacts.
- Documenting avenues for civil society and local communities to engage in environmental decision-making.
- Monitoring institutional and legal mechanisms available to individuals seeking redress for environmental damage.
- Mapping the growing patterns of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), which corporations and governments use to intimidate or silence environmental defenders.
- Identifying emerging national anti-SLAPP frameworks and legal strategies that have effectively dismissed weaponized lawsuits.
- Gathering case studies demonstrating the critical importance of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) to protect Indigenous land tenure and preserve regional biodiversity.

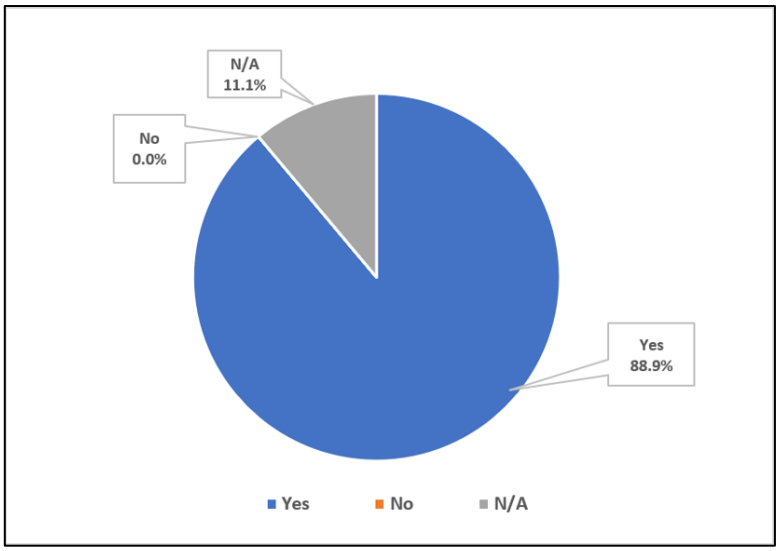
The establishment of APER Observatory actively underpins several broader intergovernmental initiatives by (a) providing analytical assessments to assist the AICHR in drafting a dedicated regional environmental rights declaration; and (b) evaluating how courts leverage the fundamental "right to life" to enforce better air, soil, and water quality outcomes despite weak local regulatory compliance.

This finding is supported by the results of the survey showing that 66.7% of the respondents believed that the project contributed to a great extent to increasing knowledge sharing and learning among target stakeholders on environmental rights. Furthermore, 44.4% reported a similarly substantial impact on their capacity to develop legal instruments on environmental rights and support their implementation. Notably, 88.9% of survey respondents agreed that the project had a sound communication and dissemination strategy, reflecting the positive impact of the Observatory.

To what extent has the project contributed to any of the following?



Did the project have a sound communication and dissemination strategy?

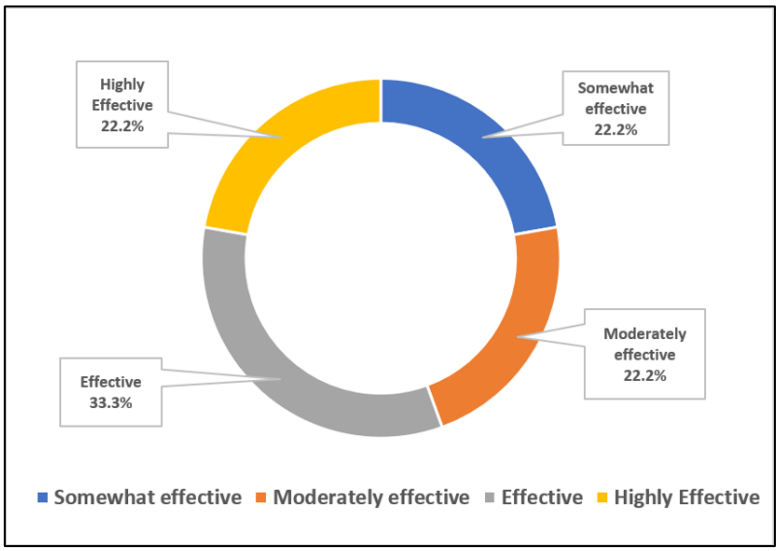


4.2 Effectiveness

The evaluation found evidence that the project's implementation was **effective** in delivering its aim of strengthening regional frameworks for environmental rights, such as access to information, public participation, and access to justice.

The interviews indicated that the project successfully achieved its goal of strengthening regional frameworks for environmental rights (rating: 3.9/5). Survey results corroborated these findings, with 33.3% of respondents deeming the initiative highly effective, 22.2% as effective, and 44.4% as moderately or somewhat effective in advancing the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks.

How effective has the project been in enhancing the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights?



Finding 3: The project has strengthened regional frameworks for environmental rights, such as access to information, public participation, and access to justice, following global models like the Aarhus and Escazú agreements.

The project spearheaded the development of the ASEAN Regional Environmental Rights Framework, a collaborative effort that culminated in the formal adoption of a landmark ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment. Transitioning this declaration into definitive action, ASEAN member states are currently developing a Regional Plan of Action (RPA) to standardize environmental protection across the bloc.

Drawing structural inspiration from the Aarhus and Escazú models, the project targeted specific regional compliance gaps. Comprehensive analytical assessments were published to identify legal vulnerabilities across Asian and Pacific nations, offering governments strategic guidance on the transparent disclosure of environmental impact data. Consequently, this ensures citizens can review vital information before development projects commence. Furthermore, these initiatives have established meaningful avenues for youth, indigenous groups, and marginalized communities to actively shape climate and biodiversity policies. Central to these efforts was the launch of the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory, a platform for tracking SLAPPs while advising states on constructing robust anti-SLAPP legal safeguards that mirror Escazú's pioneering protections for human rights defenders.

Remarkably, as shown earlier in the bar chart above (no. 4.3), 66.7% of survey respondents acknowledged that the project effectively contributed to increasing “to a great extent” knowledge sharing and learning among target stakeholders on environmental rights.

Finding 4: Capacity building in the project occurs organically across all stages of engagement, expanding beyond formalized training workshops to include working group meetings and multi-stakeholder consultations.

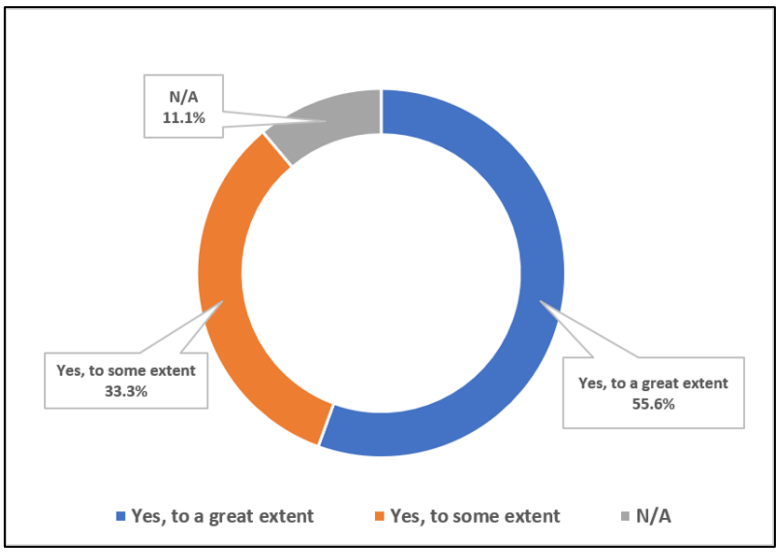
The project’s capacity-building initiatives proved effective in establishing regional baseline standards and fostering cross-border collaboration. The project significantly heightened awareness of the nexus between human rights and the environment among regional policymakers, civil society, and the

judiciary. The project broadened capacity building beyond traditional training by embedding it into working groups and stakeholder consultations. This continuous, participatory approach fostered regional cooperation, empowered marginalized voices (such as Indigenous Peoples and youth), and directly informed the development of legal frameworks across Asia and the Pacific. By involving local communities, women, and environmental human rights defenders, the project ensured that capacity building is context-driven and addresses regional realities.

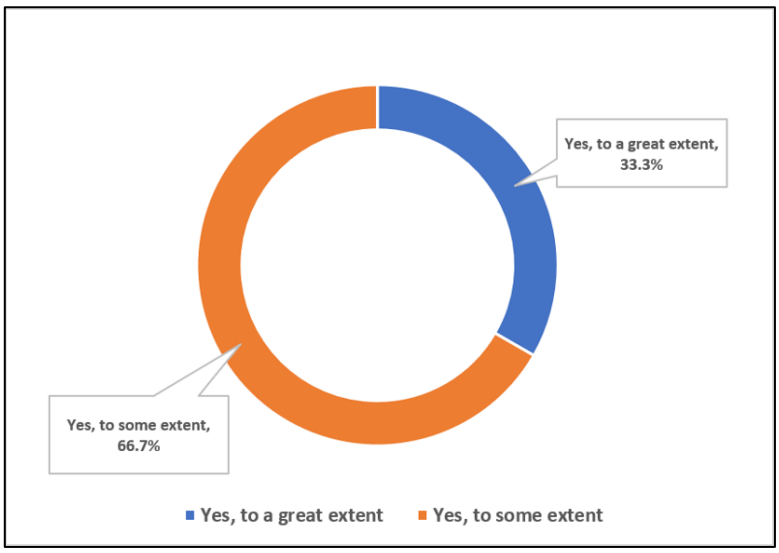
As representatives debated text for intergovernmental documents, they built practical diplomatic capacity, learning how to hardwire "access rights" into binding regional agreements. Bringing public officials, private finance sectors, and environmental human rights defenders together forced a comprehensive alignment of economic agendas with local rights protections. Consultations broadened the project's ecosystem, bringing marginalized groups, indigenous communities, and youth into the policy dynamic. Participants benefited from shared best practices and technical toolkits (e.g., Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory), translating international human rights standards into practical, national governance. Ultimately, this multi-tiered architecture ensured that environmental rights capacity development is continuous, collaborative, and deeply tied to real-world policy application.

When asked if project activities enhanced their capacity to develop and implement legal instruments on environmental rights, a clear majority of 55.6% of survey respondents reported a high level of effectiveness ("to a great extent"). However, this stood in stark contrast to their actual application of these gains because when asked if they had actively utilized the skills or knowledge acquired, 66.7% responded doing so only "to some extent."

Did your participation in the project activities increase your capacity to develop and support the development and implementation of legal instruments on environmental rights?



Did you apply the skills and/or knowledge you acquired through participating in the project activities, including, but not limited to, the capacity development with parliamentarians, lawyers, judiciary and CSOs in ASEAN and Pacific countries?

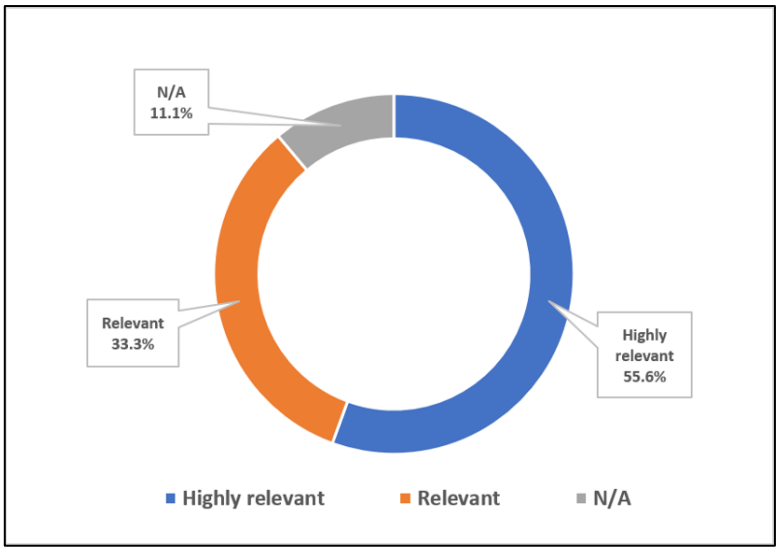


4.3 Relevance

The evaluation found evidence that the project was **highly relevant** to the region's need for enforceable actions and national law implementations aligned with international accountability mechanisms.

The interviews revealed that the project was highly relevant (rating: 4.8/5) to the region's need for actionable, enforceable laws aligned with international accountability mechanisms. Survey results mirrored this consensus, with a combined 88.9% of respondents viewing the project as either highly relevant (55.6%) or relevant (33.3%) to advancing the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights in the ASEAN and Pacific regions.

How relevant was the project in the context of enhancing ASEAN's and Pacific countries' development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights?



Finding 5: The project's design was highly aligned with the specific priorities and institutional needs of target beneficiaries across the region.

The project's design features were directly informed by demand from member states to narrow the region's environmental governance and resource gaps. Its design directly reinforces national priorities by assisting member states in operationalizing the 2022 UN resolution that recognizes the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The project successfully mirrored the requirements of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights by providing the empirical data and analytical tools needed to construct the ASEAN Regional Environmental Rights Framework

By actively engaging networks of Indigenous Peoples and Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs), the project ensured that regional policy remains rooted in lived, frontline experiences. Implementation adhered strictly to mandates for equality and disability inclusion, ensuring that early-warning systems, environmental data, and disaster mitigation strategies address the disproportionate vulnerabilities faced by women and persons with disabilities.

In response to the rise of SLAPP as a structural barrier to justice, the consultations expanded their scope to formulate anti-SLAPP measures and safeguard civic space. Ultimately, the consultations shifted away from isolated interventions, pivoting toward a holistic paradigm that connects climate, biodiversity, and pollution reduction within a framework of just transitions.

> *Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, Minister for Climate Change Adaptation, Energy, Environment, Meteorology, Geo-Hazards and Disaster Management, Vanuatu, highlighted the need for embedding the right to a healthy environment in domestic legal systems and operationalizing the ICJ ruling through regional and national strategies led by Pacific stewardship. Data presented to ICJ underscored the urgent need for enforceable actions and national law implementations aligned with international accountability mechanisms.* (Second Regional Consultation on Environmental Rights in the Pacific (Pacific Climate Justice & Sea-Level Rise Week), 25-28 May 2026).

> *Mr. Ropate Green, Solicitor-General of Fiji, highlighted the region's longstanding advocacy for climate action and environmental protection, noting that "together, we can ensure that the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is not only recognised in principle, but realised in practice for every Pacific Islander."* (Summary Report of the Consultation Meeting: "Advancing Environmental Rights in the Pacific" 3–4 November 2025, Suva, Fiji)

Finding 6: The relevance of the project lies in its aim to protect environmental rule of law and to secure the three foundational pillars of sound environmental governance as demonstrated by the integration of the access to information, public participation, and access to justice in the ASEAN Declaration.

The project on advancing environmental rights is highly relevant because it targets the root legal and procedural bottlenecks causing environmental decline. The project bridges the gap between global frameworks and local realities by assisting in developing the ASEAN Regional Environmental Rights Framework. This is crucial for the region, where a significant portion of countries still lack constitutional or statutory recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. With climate pressures mounting, the project's focus ensures that environmental protection is not treated in isolation but is integrated with human rights and regional action programs. The project's relevance is further enhanced by focusing heavily on three procedural pillars originally established in the Rio Declaration: (a) Access to Information: Ensuring local communities understand

the environmental risks of large industrial and infrastructure projects. (b) Public Participation: Involving civil society early in environmental impact assessments to prevent resource conflict. (c) Access to Justice: Promoting legal measures so citizens can legally challenge environmental damage without fear of retaliatory litigation.

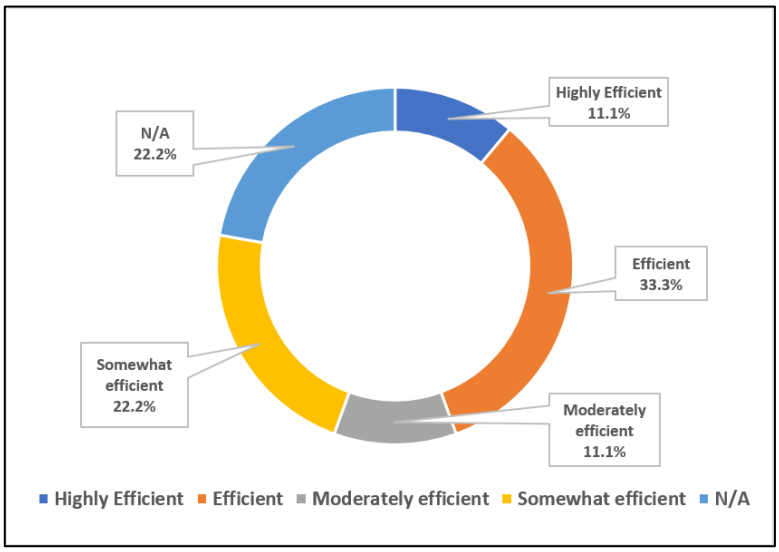
> *Ms. Anne-Sophie Vivier, supporting the Government of Vanuatu, highlighted the imperative need to operationalize and coordinate efforts towards climate justice within the Pacific region. She emphasized the significance of constitutional reforms recognizing environmental rights as a foundational step towards legal protection for future generations.* (Meeting Report, Pacific Climate Justice and Sea Level Rise Week).

4.4 Efficiency

The evaluation found evidence that the project's implementation was **efficient** in delivering its objectives despite initial challenges arising from the rotation of AICHR delegates and logistical hurdles in scheduling, particularly across the Pacific.

Although interview feedback rated the project as "highly efficient" in achieving its objectives (averaging 4.2 out of 5), survey data revealed a more critical perspective. Only 11.1% of respondents viewed the initiative as "highly efficient", while a 33.3% plurality deemed it "efficient" in supporting ASEAN and Pacific nations to develop a regional instrument on environmental rights.

How efficient was the project in the context of supporting ASEAN and Pacific countries to develop a regional instrument on environmental rights?



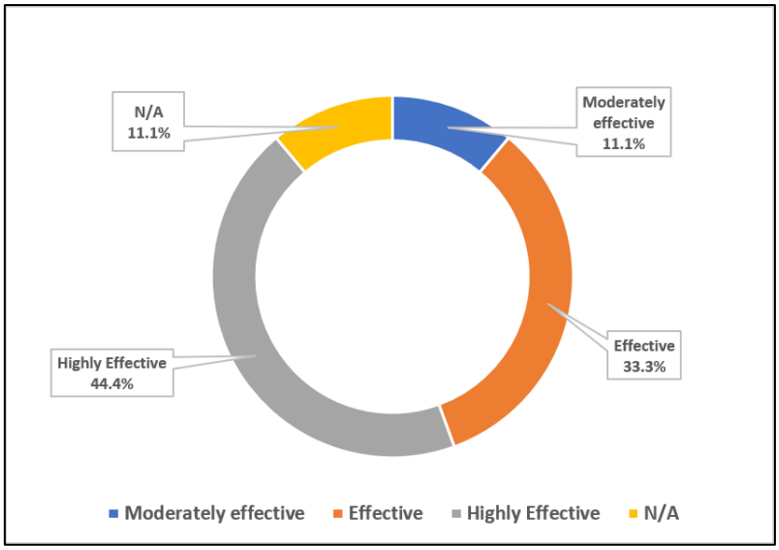
Records indicate that the project officially commenced on 15 July 2023, with an initial projected completion date of 30 June 2025—allowing for a 24-month implementation phase following the receipt of funds. It was subsequently granted a first extension to 31 December 2025, extending the timeline to 29.5 months. The implementation period was later revised a second time, bringing the total duration to 34.5 months with a new completion date of 31 May 2026. It is reported that project timelines were primarily extended due to the rotation of AICHR delegates and logistical hurdles in scheduling, particularly across the Pacific. To mitigate these delays, ESCAP, UNEP, and OHCHR provided sustained technical assistance and capacity-building to enable incoming delegates to quickly integrate and contribute meaningfully.

Finding 6: There is documentary evidence that both human and financial resources were efficiently utilized to deliver outputs and achieve results.

The project successfully delivered its goals within budget by optimizing assets through strategic institutional partnerships and joint programming. It successfully maximized its human and financial footprint by co-leading initiatives alongside organizations like UNEP, OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office, and AICHR to develop an ASEAN Regional Environmental Rights Framework and other activities in the Pacific. The efficient use of available resources enabled the project to produce comprehensive analytical assessments regarding access to information, public participation, and justice in environmental decision-making. These outputs provided the foundational data necessary to push for the recognition of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment across Asia-Pacific countries.

Evidence demonstrates that the project successfully optimized and efficiently utilized human and financial resources through strategic institutional partnerships and joint programming. Specifically, the survey revealed that 77.7% of respondents viewed the implementing partners favourably, with 44.4% rating their guidance and support to ASEAN and Pacific countries as highly effective, and 33.3% rating it as effective.

How effective were the implementing partners in guiding and supporting ASEAN and Pacific countries in the implementation of this project?



Project audits and expenditure tracking showed high-budget execution rates, meaning funds were fully and transparently disbursed to support capacity-building, technical assistance, and regional policy forums. The project maximized human capital by organizing cross-sectoral networks, for example, engaging the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights to drive policy drafting forward efficiently. Inter-agency collaborations allowed the project to execute regional activities—such as developing the ASEAN Regional Environmental Rights Framework—without absorbing the full operational cost independently. The project integrated financial streams with co-implementing partners like the UN Environment Programme and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Regional Office for South-East Asia and Pacific Regional Office, which minimized overhead duplication.

Partnerships built and strengthened throughout the implementation of the project enabled a more efficient delivery of activities, and significant savings. The project promoted co-funding modalities in the organization of meetings and other support to activities. For example, the Regional Consultation: Advancing the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN (Manila,

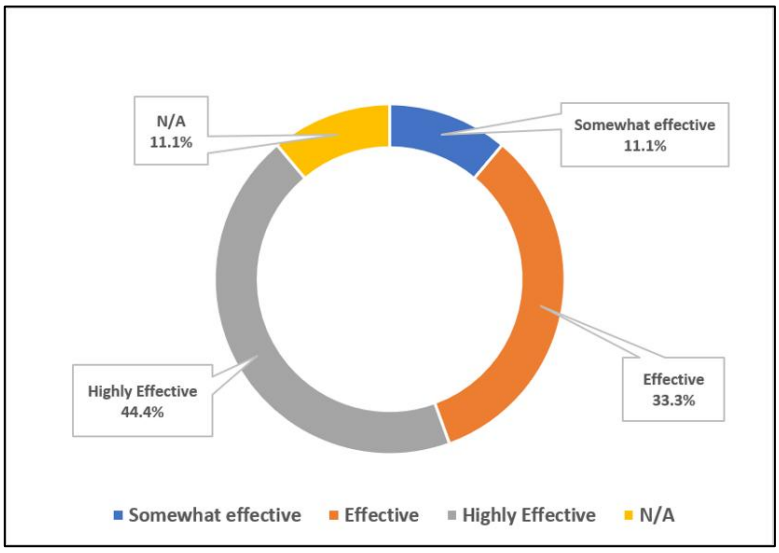
December 2025) was co-funded by the Danish Institute for Human Rights; and the Pacific Climate Justice and Sea Level Rise Week (May 2026) was co-funded by SPC, PIFS, and OHCHR Pacific Regional Office (utilizing funding from the UN Trust Fund for Human Security) also co-funded the conference to enable civil society organizations and NHRIs to join. Overall, this resulted in a cost-efficient implementation of the project, delivering robust support to target stakeholders within and below the proposed budget.

As of 2 July 2026, total expenditures and commitments amounted to 96.21% or US$900,766.06 of the total contributions of US$ 936,221.61. The residual amount shall be returned to Sida, after the financial closure of the project in Q4 2026.

Finding 7: The project efficiently facilitated collaboration and increased knowledge sharing among target stakeholders on environmental rights.

The project enhanced knowledge sharing and collaboration through multi-stakeholder workshops, gender-responsive capacity building, and the development of regional action frameworks. Notably, 44.4% of survey respondents rated the collaboration between the implementing partners and the cooperating institutions as "highly effective". These activities established vital communication channels between governments, UN agencies, and local environmental defenders. Examples may be cited. The tripartite partnership of ESCAP, UNEP, and OHCHR pulled together cross-agency expertise to address environmental rights comprehensively and efficiently facilitating collaboration and increasing knowledge sharing. The project actively supported the AICHR to develop a regional framework thereby bringing together subregional state actors to align environmental principles. By developing the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory, the project established an analytical case studies and best practices repository focusing on legal trends, such as SLAPPs, which serves as an open-access platform for regional knowledge sharing.

How effective was collaboration between the implementing partners with you or your institution?



4.5 Sustainability

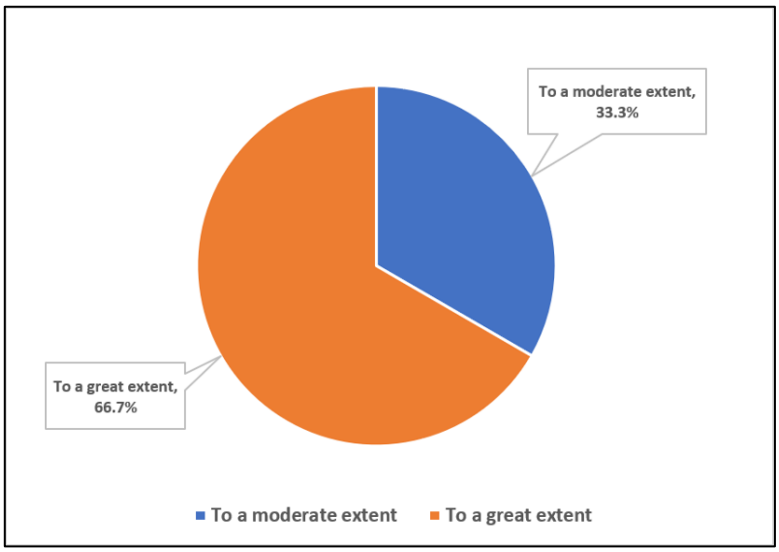
The sustainability of the project is further enhanced by the decisions of the 9th Session of the Committee on Environment and Development held at the ministerial level in Bangkok, Thailand from 1-3 July 2026. Convened by the United Nations ESCAP, the meeting adopted the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific 2026, together with the Regional

Programme of Action on Advancing Synergies for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, 2026–2030. In the Ministerial Declaration, members resolved to support inclusive and effective environmental governance, as well as participatory approaches to environmental protection, including through appropriate access by citizens to information concerning the environment and decision-making processes and access to judicial and administrative proceedings, in accordance with national legislation[4].

Finding 8: The close collaboration of ESCAP with the participating institutions and the establishment of the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory contributed to enhance the project's sustainability.

Impressively, two-thirds (66.7%) of survey respondents viewed the extent of collaboration of the implementing partners with other international and national organizations as "great", signalling a strong foundation for sustainability. Nevertheless, sustaining the momentum generated by this project will require continued attention to resourcing and institutional anchoring, including through ASEAN mechanisms and partner UN entities to ensure that the implementation of the Declaration and the Regional Plan of Action is not interrupted.

To what extent did the implementing partners collaborate with other international and national organizations, including UN agencies to ensure sustainability?



The adoption of the Declaration marks an important milestone, yet its sustainability will ultimately depend on the substance and ambition of the forthcoming ASEAN Regional Plan of Action and on genuine implementation at the national and regional levels. Ensuring that the Plan of Action retains robust references to the more contested elements including environmental human rights defenders, business accountability, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and that its development remains open to the meaningful participation of civil society and rights holders, will be essential to realizing the Declaration's promise.

Finding 9: The transition from policy-drafting to an implementation-focused advisory mechanism, shifting the focus toward enforcement and building national legal capacities, bodes well for project sustainability.

[4] https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/ESCAP-CED9-7-Add1E.pdf

Following the Declaration at the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur (2025), the project immediately adjusted its modality from a policy-drafting body to an implementation-focused advisory mechanism. Resources were pivoted toward enforcement, building national legal capacities, and holding private sector actors accountable for environmental harm. ASEAN advanced its collective efforts to give effect to regional human rights and environmental commitments through the Regional Consultation on Advancing the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in ASEAN, held on 15–16 December 2025 in Makati City, the Philippines.

Led by the Office of the Representative of Thailand to the AICHR, the consultation constituted the first region-wide initiative following the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration marking an important step in moving the Declaration from political commitment to structured and practical implementation. Representatives of ASEAN sectoral bodies and entities emphasized the importance of close cross-sectoral collaboration and alignment with existing sectoral workplans and the broader ASEAN Community Vision. In this regard, the Representative of the Chair of the ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN) highlighted opportunities for aligning the RPA with the forthcoming ASEAN Strategic Plan on Environment Post-2025. Participants stressed that strengthened cooperation between human rights and environmental sectoral bodies is essential to ensure policy coherence, avoid duplication, and translate regional commitments into tangible outcomes.

The consultation further highlighted that the development of the RPA should build upon existing ASEAN mechanisms and initiatives, foster shared ownership among ASEAN Member States, and promote practical cooperation without creating additional institutional burdens. The outcomes of the discussions will inform the continued work of AICHR, ASOEN, and relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies towards the development of a feasible, inclusive, and action-oriented Regional Plan of Action to advance the implementation of the Declaration.

> *Mr. Augustine Sokimi, Legal Counsel for the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations Office in Geneva, underscored the necessity for immediate actions to ensure alignment and uphold this position with pride. These discussions highlighted the complexities involved in translating legal clarity into effective political action, underscoring the need for continued dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders.* (Second Regional Consultation on Environmental Rights in the Pacific (Pacific Climate Justice & Sea-Level Rise Week), 25-28 May 2026.)

Finding 10: The project results are likely to continue in the case of ASEAN, but the Pacific will need continued technical or financial support from ESCAP and the donor network.

Shortly after the adoption of the ASEAN Declaration, representatives from ASEAN sectoral bodies and entities, the ASEAN Secretariat, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, academia, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and organizations of persons with disabilities exchanged views on strengthening rights-based approaches to environmental governance. Discussions addressed, inter alia, access to environmental information, meaningful public participation, access to justice, the protection of people in vulnerable situations, responsible business conduct, and the importance of anchoring regional action in the lived experiences of affected communities.
The consultation underscored that environmental protection, and the enjoyment of human rights are indivisible and mutually reinforcing, particularly in the context of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, which continue to have disproportionate impacts on people in vulnerable situations. Participants reaffirmed that while the adoption of the Declaration represents a landmark regional achievement, its credibility and impact will ultimately depend on effective, inclusive, and sustained implementation, notably through the development of a Regional Plan of Action.

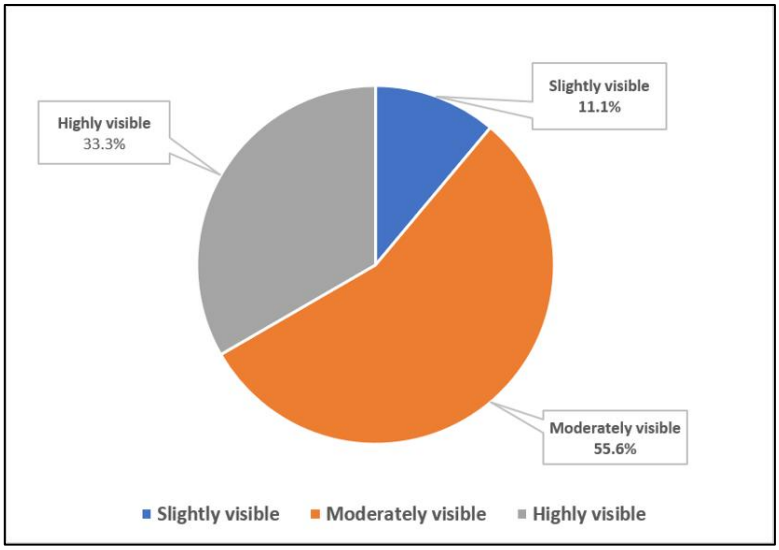
While the Declaration underscores ASEAN's commitment to support and provide adequate resources to advance its environmental frameworks, the Pacific landscape presents distinct operational realities. Notably, stakeholders at the Consultation Meeting on Advancing Environmental Rights in the Pacific (Suva, Fiji, 3-4 November 2025) explicitly recommended to: "Mobilize regional and international support—technical, financial, and legal—to assist Member States in drafting, harmonizing, and implementing national and regional environmental rights frameworks."

> *WE, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) …. HEREBY DECLARE OUR COMMITMENT TO …. Task the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in consultation with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, including ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment (ASOEN), to develop an ASEAN-owned and ASEAN-led Regional Plan of Action to follow-up on this Declaration.*
> *Assure the continuous support and provision of adequate resources for AICHR and the relevant ASEAN Bodies, Entities and centres to follow-up on this Declaration and related activities and programmes.* (ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, 47th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 26-28 October 2025).

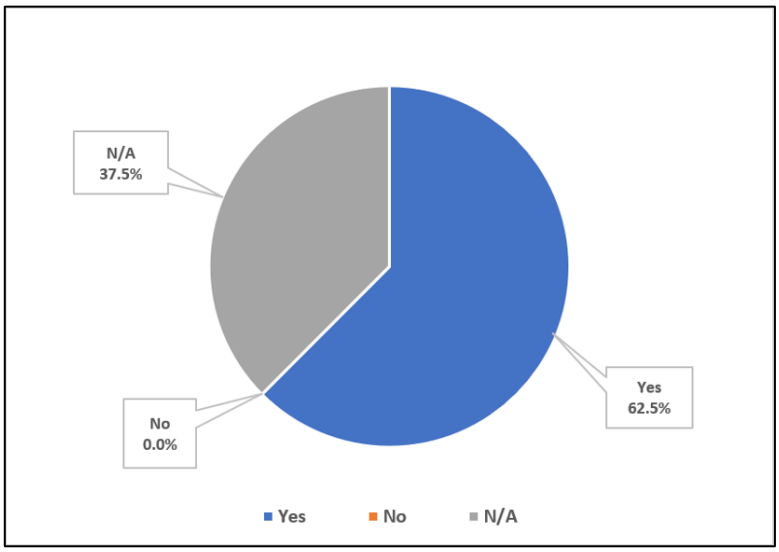
> *Access to predictable, adequate and grant-based finance remains critical. Climate-vulnerable countries should not face additional financial burdens in responding to a crisis we did little to create.* (Statement by Minister Ali Shareef, Chair, 9th session of the ESCAP Committee on Environment and Development, Bangkok, Thailand, 1-3 July 2026; reflected in positions advanced by Pacific member states during the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration and Regional Programme of Action).

Project sustainability appears assured from survey results which indicate that 33.3% of respondents viewed the project as highly visible, while 55.6% perceived it as moderately visible. Furthermore, 62.5% identified viable strategies to secure the support and commitment necessary to advance the project's outcomes. Consequently, a substantial majority (77.8%) recommended that the initiative be sustained or replicated in other subregions, such as South Asia.

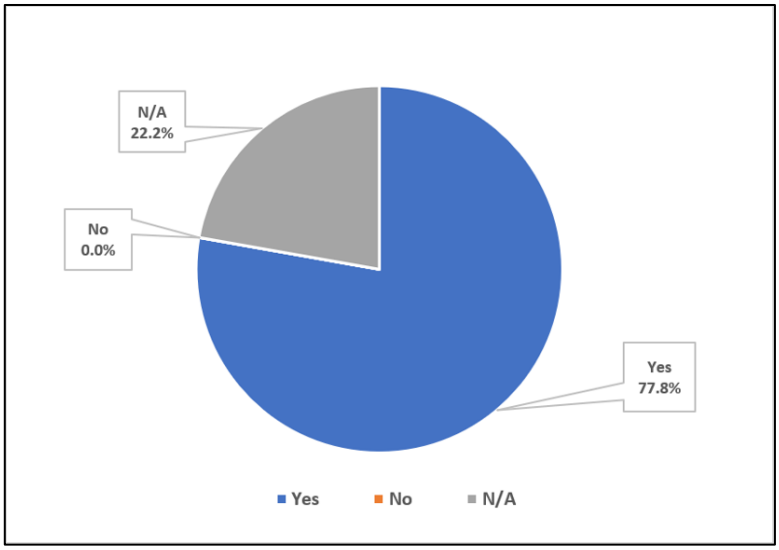
How visible has the project been?



Are there any approaches to ensure support and commitment to take forward the project outcome?



Should this project be followed up or replicated in other subregions (e.g., South Asia)?

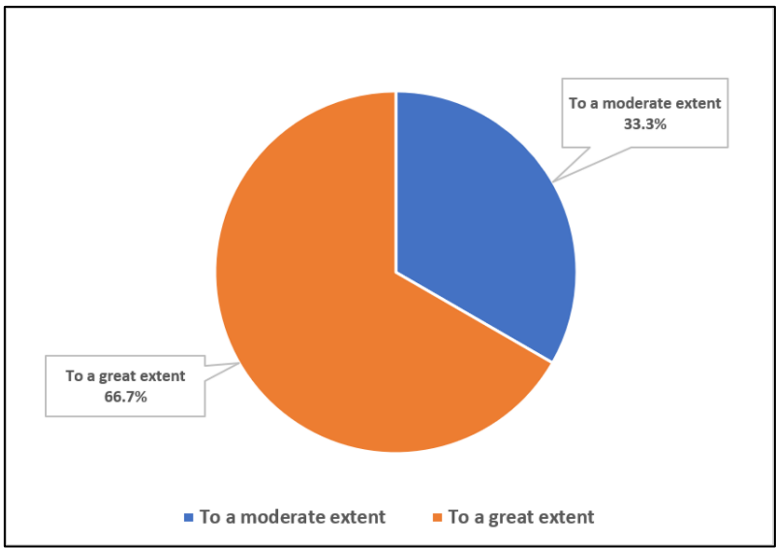


4.6 Cross-cutting Issues

Finding 11: The project achieved its gender mainstreaming objectives, having been designed with gender equality and women's empowerment as significant goals (GEM 2a), while successfully integrating disability inclusion and other cross-cutting issues.

Survey data shows that 66.7% of respondents found gender equity and human rights were reflected "to a great extent" in project activities and results. Project documents also show that across 13 project activities implemented between 2023 and 2026, female participation averaged 55.4%, varying from a minimum of 42.1% to a maximum of 84%. This finding is consistent with documentary evidence that gender considerations were fully integrated throughout the lifecycle of this GEM 2a-rated project.

To what extent is gender equity and human rights reflected in the activities and results?



To bridge existing disparities and amplify diverse voices in public governance, the initiative mandated the adoption of gender-responsive policies. Key gender mainstreaming strategies included:

- Guaranteeing the representation of women and diverse gender identities within the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group.
- Increasing the active participation of women and diverse gender expressions across all meetings and workshops.
- Empowering women and marginalized gender identities by engaging them as expert resource persons in capacity-building initiatives.
- Advancing gender-inclusive text within the Strategy for the Pacific and the ASEAN Declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment.

Within the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, female representation was systematically promoted and secured. To deepen the integration of gender issues, technical expertise was provided by sectoral bodies like the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC). Furthermore, grassroots partners actively championed diversity; the ASEAN Youth Forum, for instance, appointed delegates representing various gender expressions, including transgender women.

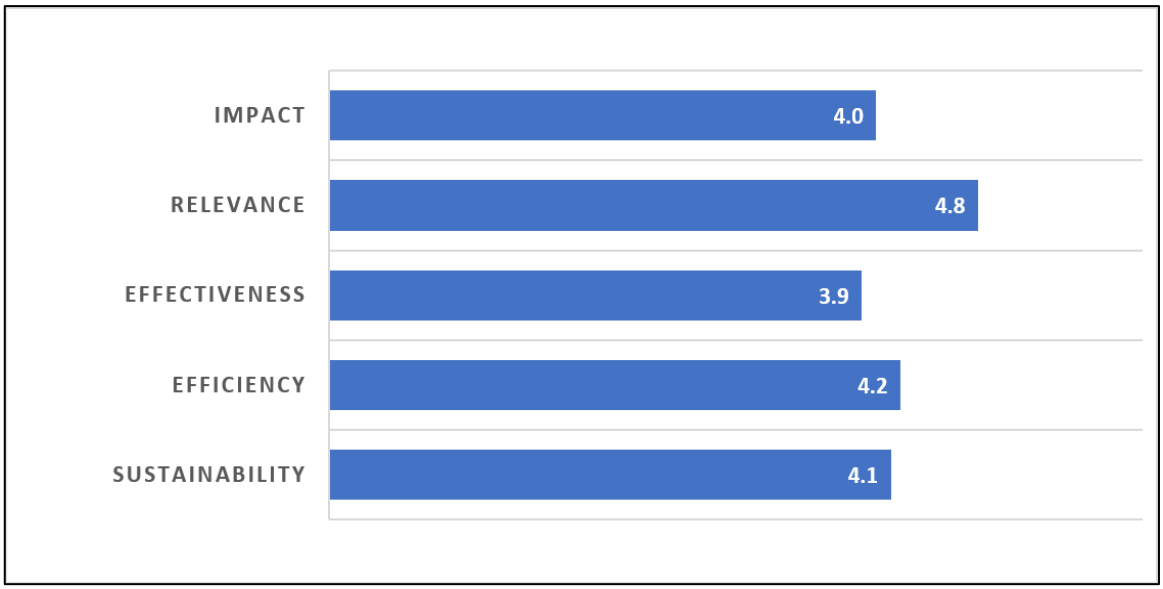
Furthermore, the ASEAN Disability Forum secured membership within the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, with its delegate actively participating in all working group meetings from 2022 to 2024. This momentum carried into 2025, where continued support enabled the ADF's involvement in the 1st Consultation for developing the Regional Plan of Action of the ASEAN Declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, held in Manila on 15–16 December 2025.

Beyond providing extra-budgetary financial aid, the project institutionalized disability inclusion throughout its lifecycle through several targeted initiatives:

- Funding a dedicated companion to assist the delegate before, during, and after transit.
- Mandating wheelchair accessibility—including ramps and adaptable layouts—in all venue selection processes.
- Specifying strict technical requirements for aircraft, airlines, and ground transfers to seamless accommodate wheelchair passengers.
- Arranging designated, accessible seating configurations within all meeting spaces.

5. Conclusions

The results of the interviews, the data from the survey, and the information gathered from the review of relevant documents and reports are generally consistent. And of the 16 individuals interviewed, 14 provided comprehensive ratings across the five evaluation criteria, which reflect the survey data and document review. The chart below shows their average overall ratings.[5]



Based on the analysis of interview results, survey data, and document review, this evaluation draws the following conclusions on the six criteria:

- Impact – highly satisfactory
- Effectiveness – effective
- Relevance – highly relevant
- Efficiency – efficient
- Sustainability – highly satisfactory
- Gender equity – highly satisfactory.

The overall performance of the project based on all the evaluation criteria was found to be **highly satisfactory**[6] despite the challenges encountered during the early stage of the project. We therefore conclude that the project has achieved its overarching objective to advance the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights as a foundation to enshrine the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all citizens at national level in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

[5] The interviewees were asked to give their overall rating for the evaluation criteria as follows: 1 - not satisfactory, 2 – somewhat satisfactory, 3 – moderately satisfactory, 4 – satisfactory, and 5 – highly satisfactory. Two interviewees did not give their overall ratings on the five parameters.

[6] With four parameters rated highly satisfactory and two parameters satisfactory, the overall rating is closer to "highly satisfactory".

It is evident from these findings that the project has achieved the following desired outputs:

- ***Increased capacity of target stakeholders to develop legal instruments on environmental rights.*** Through targeted technical assistance, regional judicial dialogues, and specialized training workshops, the project equipped policymakers, legal professionals, and civil society actors with the necessary tools and regional best practices to draft robust environmental frameworks. This enhanced capacity directly manifested in the formulation of more comprehensive national policies and the reinforcement of rights-based approaches to environmental governance. By bridging the gap between international environmental principles and localized legal enforcement, the initiative ensured that stakeholders could independently design, advocate for, and implement enduring statutory mechanisms that protect both the environment and vulnerable communities across the region.

- ***Increased capacity of target stakeholders to support the development and implementation of the legal instruments on environmental rights.*** The project successfully enhanced the capacity of target stakeholders to develop and implement legal instruments on environmental rights by equipping judiciaries, legal professionals, and civil society with specialized knowledge and institutional tools. Through targeted regional training, technical assistance, and policy dialogues, these key actors gained a deeper understanding of environmental jurisprudence and human rights frameworks. This strengthened capacity directly translates into more robust enforcement of existing regulations, accelerated development of new environmental laws, and improved public access to environmental justice across Asia and the Pacific.

- ***Increased knowledge sharing and learning among target stakeholders on environmental rights.*** The project successfully fostered increased knowledge sharing and learning, empowering target stakeholders to actively defend and promote environmental justice. Through regional workshops, collaborative platforms, and localized training sessions, civil society organizations, policymakers, and marginalized communities exchanged critical insights, legal strategies, and best practices. This robust exchange directly strengthened institutional capacities, bridges the gap between regional environmental policy and grassroots enforcement, and equips stakeholders with the practical tools needed to advocate for sustainable governance. Consequently, this collaborative learning environment has solidified a unified regional network capable of proactively addressing climate vulnerabilities and upholding constitutional environmental guarantees.

The project achieved strong demonstrable impact in the ASEAN region with respect to strengthening the enabling conditions for the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, in line with UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300. The outstanding outcome of this project is the groundbreaking development and adoption of the “ASEAN Declaration on the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment” by the ASEAN leaders at the 47th ASEAN Summit and Related Summits in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Declaration recognizes a safe, clean and sustainable environment as a fundamental human right. It includes elements, such as access to justice in environmental matters for vulnerable groups, like indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, women, children, as well as provisions for present and future generations and businesses and non-state actors, like environmental impact assessments.

The effectiveness of project implementation is evident in the robust stakeholder participation. As the declaration and related activities in this project encompass both procedural elements (access to information, public participation and access to justice on environmental matters) and substantive elements (clean air, safe climate, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity, safe and sufficient water, healthy and sustainable food, non-toxic environment), this process has further contributed to improved conditions for sustainable management and use of natural resources across the ASEAN subregion. This project boosted a regional policy momentum and enriched dialogue across the region. A diverse group of stakeholders was included in the composition of the ASEAN Environmental Rights

Working Group. The process to draft the declaration and the open consultation process galvanized organizations across the region, encouraging them to submit inputs to the draft text, triggering public interest in realizing this declaration, and raising stakeholder expectations in the ASEAN region.

The project is highly relevant to both ASEAN and the Pacific because these regions are among the most vulnerable in the world to climate change, severe biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation. For ASEAN, the project directly supports regional frameworks, enhancing governance and equipping member states to address transboundary pollution, deforestation, and legal protections for environmental defenders. For Pacific Island nations, where climate change poses an existential threat to livelihoods, culture, and sovereignty, the initiative strengthens local capacities to implement the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. By bridging global standards with regional realities, the project fosters crucial cross-regional cooperation, empowers marginalized communities, and ensures that environmental policies are grounded in human rights, climate justice, and long-term climate resilience.

Efficiency in implementation is attained by leveraging collaboration. Partnerships built and strengthened throughout the implementation of the project enabled efficient delivery of activities, and significant savings. By collaborating closely with UNEP and OHCHR, the project avoided institutional duplication and blended distinct expertise in environmental management and human rights law. The project promoted co-funding modalities in the organization of meetings and other support to activities. Implementation efficiency was further driven by a decentralized approach, utilizing regional networks to deliver targeted technical assistance, judicial training, and capacity-building workshops directly to member states. Digital platforms and virtual knowledge hubs were heavily integrated to streamline information sharing and policy dialogue, drastically reducing operational costs while ensuring continuous engagement. Furthermore, the project built directly upon existing regional frameworks which allowed it to fast-track stakeholder consultations and maximize institutional buy-in without the need to establish new, resource-intensive administrative structures.

The project achieved long-term sustainability by embedding institutional reforms, legal frameworks, and local capacity directly into regional governance. Rather than relying on short-term interventions, the project fosters enduring environmental justice by equipping judiciaries, national human rights institutions, and civil society with the tools to uphold environmental rights independently. By integrating the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment into national policies, it creates a self-sustaining legal architecture that persists beyond the project's lifecycle. Furthermore, its inclusive multi-stakeholder approach ensures deep-rooted community ownership, empowering marginalized populations and grassroots defenders to protect their natural resources for future generations. Achieving lasting sustainability depends on preserving the project's current momentum. This necessitates dedicated resourcing and deep institutional integration within ASEAN frameworks and partner UN bodies to ensure implementation of the Declaration and Regional Plan of Action.

The implementation of the project has successfully modelled social inclusion by prioritizing gender equality, disability rights, and youth-led action. Gender equality was structurally built into the project from its inception through comprehensive gender analysis and mainstreaming guidelines, resulting in female participation averaging 55.4% across 13 project activities. Intersecting with these gender-responsive efforts, the project actively champions disability inclusion by providing dedicated platforms for dialogue and advocating for rights-based frameworks, including, among others, the active participation of the ASEAN Disability Forum in project activities. Concurrently, youth participation (e.g., ASEAN Youth Forum) has been robustly mobilized through high-profile, region-wide engagement mechanisms, which formally integrate the innovation and advocacy of young people into environmental policies.

6. Recommendations

The evaluation offers the following six (6) action-oriented recommendations addressed to ESCAP management:

Recommendation 1: To continue supporting the development of a Regional Plan of Action that implements the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.

The ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment tasks the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights in consultation with relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies, including ASEAN Senior Officials on Environment, to develop an ASEAN-owned and ASEAN-led Regional Plan of Action to follow-up on this Declaration. ESCAP could catalyse and facilitate the convening of regional consultations to serve as the platform for the development and preparation of the Regional Plan of Action. The consultations can provide a cross-pillar platform for AICHR, ASEAN sectoral bodies, entities, and stakeholders to advance coordinated, rights-based strategies for environmental governance and sustainable development in ASEAN. It should aim to enhance understanding of the Declaration's principles, promote cross-sectoral coordination, and strengthen ASEAN's shared responsibility to safeguard the environment for present and future generations. The consultation must also engage Dialogue Partners, UN agencies, academic institutions, and civil society organizations, in line with the Declaration's encouragement for multistakeholder cooperation and knowledge exchange. Such consultations can also enhance cooperation between AICHR and relevant ASEAN Sectoral Bodies and Entities on the implementation of ASEAN's commitment to build an environmentally friendly ASEAN Community through a rights-based approach to environmental decision-making.
[Supported by Findings 1, 2, 3, 9, 10]

Recommendation 2: To sustain ongoing collaboration and dialogue among all Pacific stakeholders, ensuring coordinated regional and international action to develop an environmental rights framework that addresses climate justice and environmental rights.

According to survey data, a substantial 77.8% of respondents favor replicating the initiative in other subregions, for example in South Asia. Although such expansion remains a viable future prospect, immediate efforts must center on sustaining collaboration among Pacific stakeholders. This ongoing dialogue is vital to cultivating a framework to operationalize environmental rights in the Pacific, which may ultimately lay the groundwork for a new regional agreement or the amendment of an existing accord.

The revised project document states that "In the Pacific, the expected outcome by 2025 is to agree on a subregional strategy to advance environmental rights" and among the project indicators is that "Pacific stakeholders agree on a Draft Strategy for the Pacific." While this has not materialized in the form of a Declaration like in the ASEAN region, the roadmap has been identified through the Pacific Island Forum. Two Regional Consultations on Environmental Rights in the Pacific were successfully held, the first in November 2025 and the second in May 2026. At the second consultation (Pacific Climate Justice and Sea Level Rise Week held in Suva, Fiji in 2026), the participants: (a) underscored the critical need for coordinated regional and international action to address climate justice and environmental rights in the Pacific; (b) called for continued collaboration among all stakeholders to leverage upcoming opportunities and ensure that legal clarity translates into meaningful political action to address climate justice and sea level rise; and (c) called for continued dialogue among all stakeholders to ensure that climate justice initiatives are robustly grounded in international law, human rights principles, and practical implementation strategies.

The Pacific region stands at the absolute frontline of the global climate crisis, facing existential threats from rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and severe ecosystem degradation. Addressing these unprecedented challenges requires a unified approach that bridges national borders and connects diverse actors, including governments, civil society, indigenous groups, and international bodies. Sustaining structured, ongoing collaboration and dialogue among all Pacific stakeholders ensures that regional initiatives are legally robust, culturally informed, and contextually relevant. By institutionalizing this collective engagement, the region can effectively dismantle fragmented approaches, pooling together resources and shared traditional knowledge to champion a unified, powerful voice in global climate diplomacy.
[Supported by Findings 2, 5, 7, 8, 10]

Recommendation 3: To further develop the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory as an interactive web portal that provides not only information and knowledge products but also online training and means to submit and respond to inquiries.

The right of access to environmental information underpins the overall scheme of environmental protection, as without access to relevant information on environmental matters, efforts to protect the environment will not be targeted, face opposition and be less effective. The project established the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory to serve as a regional platform to facilitate knowledge sharing and raise awareness on environmental rights across the Asia-Pacific. The Observatory organizes information and resources by subregion, enabling users to navigate activities, initiatives, and emerging developments related to both substantive and procedural rights. It also provides a space for partners and stakeholders to share materials, supporting wider visibility and a deeper understanding of regional progress on environmental rights.

ESCAP should consider further developing the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory as an interactive web portal that provides not only information and knowledge products but also online courses and means to ask questions. It could offer self-paced learning modules and an interactive query-and-response portal on environmental rights and related subjects designed to build the capacity of stakeholders in the region.

Scaling the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory into an interactive web portal is a critical step toward transforming regional environmental governance from a passive information repository into an active, capacity-building ecosystem. Environmental challenges in the Asia-Pacific region are deeply complex and localized, requiring not just accessible data, but the practical knowledge and responsive mechanisms to act upon it. By integrating online training modules, the platform will systematically democratize legal literacy and environmental advocacy skills, empowering local communities, civil society, and government officials alike. Furthermore, establishing a dedicated, bilateral mechanism to submit and respond to inquiries bridges the critical gap between grassroots stakeholders and regional expertise, ensuring timely support, collaborative problem-solving, and enhanced institutional accountability. Ultimately, this digital evolution shifts the Observatory from a static knowledge clearinghouse to a dynamic catalyst for real-world environmental justice and compliance across the region.
[Supported by Findings 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8]

Recommendation 4: To catalyze and sustain a sustainable Asia-Pacific Community of Practice for environmental rights, institutionalizing the network through integrated digital infrastructure, intergovernmental dialogue, and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

To capitalize on the momentum of the project, ESCAP can establish a sustainable Community of Practice (CoP). Because the long-term success of a CoP depends heavily on institutional integration and localized legal anchors, this strategy assumes ESCAP will embed the CoP directly within its intergovernmental framework to maximize regional buy-in.

The institutionalization of an Asia-Pacific Community of Practice for environmental rights is a critical imperative to bridge the gap between regional policy and localized action. Establishing an integrated digital infrastructure will democratize access to vital environmental data, legal precedents, and compliance tools, ensuring that grassroots defenders, legal practitioners, and policymakers operate from a shared foundation of knowledge. When paired with formal intergovernmental dialogue, this digital ecosystem elevates environmental rights from isolated national concerns to a unified regional priority, fostering high-level political commitment and cross-border cooperation. Furthermore, structured peer-to-peer knowledge exchange enables member states and civil society organizations to replicate successful legal frameworks, share mitigation strategies, and build collective resilience against shared climate vulnerabilities. By blending technical connectivity with collaborative diplomacy, this tripartite approach transforms a disparate network into a resilient, self-sustaining institution capable of systematically advancing environmental justice across the Asia-Pacific.

ESCAP can sustain this Community of Practice through the following structural steps:

- Align the CoP's focus with the implementation of the landmark ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment.
- Use the CoP to build capacity around the "three pillars" of environmental access rights: information, public participation, and access to justice.
- Frame discussions around operationalizing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) for Indigenous Peoples and local communities.
- Build out the Asia-Pacific Environmental Rights Observatory as the CoP's digital hub for case studies and analytical tools.
- Link the CoP with existing networks, such as the Asia-Pacific SDG Localization Platform, to connect human rights defenders with local authorities.
- Deploy ESCAP's internal expertise in systems analysis and policy coherence to help members resolve complex environmental challenges.

[Supported by Findings 4, 5, 7, 9]

Recommendation 5: To enhance capacity development among parliamentarians, legal professionals, the judiciary, and civil society organizations in environmental rights and related disciplines, encompassing both rights-holders and duty-bearers across ASEAN and the Pacific.

To build a sustainable future across ASEAN and the Pacific, it is essential to equip regional actors with the knowledge and tools to uphold environmental rights. Elevating the capacity of both duty-bearers—such as parliamentarians, judges, and legal professionals—and rights-holders within civil society ensures that environmental laws are not just written but effectively enforced and defended. Parliamentarians require targeted training to draft robust, forward-looking legislation, while the judiciary and legal professionals must be empowered to interpret and apply these laws equitably to guarantee access to justice. Simultaneously, strengthening civil society organizations enables local communities to actively participate in decision-making and hold institutions accountable. By bridge-building through education and shared disciplines, this initiative transforms abstract legal frameworks into actionable, localized protections, fostering a culture of compliance and resilience against the region's escalating climate and ecological crises.

The program should treat capacity building not as general training, but as a mechanism to map specific duties to specific actors. Parliamentarians could focus on translating the regional framework into binding national legislation, allocating domestic budgets for environmental enforcement, and embedding human rights-based approaches into national climate policies. Judiciary and Lawyers could focus on applying specialized judicial remedies—such as SLAPP protections and continuous mandamus orders—to fast-track cross-border environmental litigation. CSOs and Right Holders could cover empowering indigenous peoples, women, and frontline environmental human rights defenders to use regional reporting mechanisms safely without fear of legal or physical retaliation. It could include

training state regulators, corporate actors, and law enforcement on their legal obligations regarding Free, Prior, and Informed Consent. Collaboration among ESCAP, UNEP and OHCHR and the relevant subregional bodies could deliver sub-regional roundtables that align ASEAN mechanisms with parallel initiatives in the Pacific. This approach prevents fragmented policies by connecting local public interest litigation directly to the broader UN SDG targets.
[Supported by Findings 2, 4, 7, 9]

Recommendation 6: To support the development of an ASEAN framework agreement on Environmental Impact Assessment by building on agreed regional principles and establishing a mechanism for the gradual negotiation of specific protocols.

A comparison of the EIA regimes in ASEAN member states leads to the conclusion that there are enough commonalities to develop an ASEAN approach to EIA. By establishing binding regional principles and a step-by-step mechanism for specific protocols, member states can harmonize transboundary environmental protections, ensure meaningful public participation, and protect human rights defenders. A phased, protocol-based approach is highly justified for the following reasons: (a) It is essential for managing shared resources and mitigating cross-border ecological impacts; (b) It allows Member States to align their national laws with regional goals without compromising state sovereignty; and (c) It ensures procedural rights are guaranteed for vulnerable and marginalized communities during development projects

Adopting this recommendation is vital because a phased, treaty-based framework bridges the gap between disparate national environmental policies and the urgent need for transboundary accountability in South-East Asia. Legally binding regional frameworks ensure that access to environmental information and public participation become institutionalized standards rather than voluntary practices. By formalizing a mechanism for gradual, protocol-by-protocol negotiations, ASEAN member states can establish realistic baseline commitments while steadily building consensus on sensitive, interconnected threats like transboundary haze, biodiversity loss, and climate displacements. Anchoring this roadmap in already-agreed-upon principles allows the region to respect national sovereignty while progressively driving legislative alignment, ensuring that civil society and corporate entities operate under clear, legally enforceable EIA standards.

The ASEAN framework agreement on EIA would identify the key principles and mechanisms for EIA in ASEAN, including Transboundary EIA, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Climate Change integration in EIA. By recognising key principles of EIA, the ASEAN framework agreement on EIA would then become the basis of further strengthening of procedural as well as substantive rights. Such an approach would recognise the value of establishing a platform of harmonized domestic EIA arrangements that draws on best-practice principles, from which further efforts can be undertaken to pursue enhanced regional arrangements.[7]
[Supported by Findings 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9]

[7] As recommended in the Technical Report and Recommendations to Strengthen Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures in ASEAN by ESCAP, UNEP, Sverige, Sida.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation TORs

Terms of Reference
Evaluation of Extrabudgetary-funded Project

Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific

29 May 2026
ESCAP

1. INTRODUCTION

The ESCAP project "Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific" funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) aims to advance the development and implementation of subregional legal frameworks on environmental rights as a foundation to enshrine the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment for all citizens at the national and regional level.

ESCAP's evaluation policy[8] requires selected projects funded through extrabudgetary sources to be subject to an independent evaluation. Evaluation is an important function that seeks to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of a project. Recognizing the value of an independent evaluation in guiding efforts to improve ESCAP's overall performance and effectiveness, ESCAP mandates the secretariat to ensure that its programmatic work is evaluated periodically.

2. EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

2.1 Evaluation purpose and use

The purpose of the evaluation is to support accountability for results and to enable learning. The evaluation results will be used to improve the design and implementation of future projects facilitated through the formulation of an evaluation management response and follow-up action plan. The main users of the evaluation results will be ESCAP, particularly the implementing division(s). Other expected users include the project participating countries and implementing partners.

2.2 Evaluation objectives

The objectives of the evaluation are to:

1) Assess the project performance against the evaluation criteria: impact, effectiveness, relevance, efficiency, sustainability and cross-cutting issues, including gender equality, disability inclusion, as deemed relevant.
2) Assess the effectiveness and modality of collaboration of multi-agency partnerships in the delivery of the activities.
3) Formulate lessons learned and action-oriented recommendations to inform management decision-making and improve future project design.

The evaluation assesses the project's performance by examining its outcomes through the project's results framework, its implementation processes, and relevant contextual factors. It aims to establish causal connections as much as possible, guided by the evaluation criteria and questions. The evaluation will be conducted in line with ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards for evaluation.

2.3 Evaluation Scope

The evaluation will assess the project's design, strategy, and implementation over its entire duration, from July 2023 to May 2026, covering all participating countries and implementation modalities, including workshops, training and knowledge products.

[8] ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines, 2023, available on the ESCAP webpage at https://www.unescap.org/monitoring-and-evaluation/home

2.4 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The evaluation questions to assess project performance will be refined in consultation with project management and stakeholders during the evaluation's inception phase.

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Impact[9]	• What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the project at regional and national levels? Which project activities or outputs contributed to these results, and what evidence supports ESCAP's contribution? • How could the implementing division enhance the impacts of similar projects in the future?
Effectiveness	• How effective were the project's capacity-building activities, and what evidence demonstrates their effects on knowledge, skills, and institutional practices? • How could the implementing division make its future capacity-building activities more effective?
Relevance	• To what extent was the project's design aligned with the needs and priorities of the target beneficiaries? • To what extent has the project ensured that the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities, were taken into account in the design and implementation of the project? • What adjustments, if any, were made to the project activities and modality, in response to evolving priorities/requirements of beneficiary countries?
Efficiency	• To what extent did the project achieve efficiency through stakeholder collaboration, leveraging comparative advantages, and creating synergies? • To what extent did partnerships with other organizations enable or enhance the achievement of results? • Was the project implemented in a timely manner and as planned? If delays occurred, what factors drove them?

[9] Impact criterion is defined by the OECD as the extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. OECD suggests that impact criterion can be used loosely to mean "results" in the broadest sense. It also clarifies that the use of impact criterion should not be confused with the term "impact evaluation", which refers to specific methodologies for establishing statistically significant causal relationship between the intervention and observed effects. ESCAP uses the impact criterion to assess its contribution to changes in policies, strategies, norms, and standards in its member States in the medium term. Examples of impact include: (1) Five pilot countries adopted and implemented national strategies and programmes with assistance from the project; (2) Several countries put in place a new system or procedures with support from the project; (3) Countries increase the use of renewable energy sources for sustainable development.

	• To what extent did multi-agency partnerships strengthened the outcomes of the project and contributed to resource-efficiency?
Sustainability	• To what extent are the project's results likely to continue without further support from ESCAP or the donor?
Cross-cutting Issues	• To what extent were cross-cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and implementation of the project? • Can these strategies/approached be replicated in future projects?

3. PROJECT OVERVIEW

3.1 Background

The project focuses on ASEAN countries and Pacific Island Forum members by facilitating inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue, capacity building, and technical assistance to strengthen procedural environmental rights while promoting gender equality and stakeholder engagement. Key outputs include the development of an ASEAN Environmental Rights Framework, a draft strategy for the Pacific, and the establishment of an Asia-Pacific Observatory on Environmental Rights to enhance regional cooperation and knowledge sharing.

1. EVALUATION OUTPUTS

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

1. Inception report, including an evaluation work plan and framework detailing the methodology and approach, based on the ESCAP inception report template.
2. Results of data collection exercise
3. First draft evaluation report, based on the ESCAP evaluation report template.
4. PowerPoint presentation summarizing key findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
5. Final evaluation report
6. Two-page ESCAP evaluation brief

The reference group will review the draft evaluation report, including preliminary findings and recommendations, against the ESCAP standard quality criteria used to review evaluation reports (Annex 1). The final evaluation report will be posted on ESCAP's public website.

2. OVERALL EVALUATION APPROACH

In assessing the results achieved, the evaluation will make use of a theory of change approach to understand the actual results achieved and the process of achieving results. The development of the theory of change should be guided by both the project's results framework and the actual implementation strategy and delivery of outputs.

The evaluation will apply a mixed-method approach through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to inform findings. The evaluation will apply multiple methods, triangulating information from various sources to ensure confidence in the findings. Special care should be taken to ensure that the methods are gender-sensitive and disability-inclusive.

The evaluation process will involve several phases as outlined below:

Phases
a) **Inception and scoping phase** • Preliminary review of documentation • Interviews with members of the reference group to understand their expectations and requirements • Preparation of an evaluation inception report detailing the evaluation's scope, criteria, methodology and workplan • Meeting with the evaluation reference group to present the inception report and seek clearance to proceed • Preparation of questionnaires and interview guides
b) **Desk review of project documents.** The following documentation will be provided to the consultant: • List of stakeholders (name, title, affiliation, gender and email address) including project team members, partners and beneficiaries • List of project publications, research papers, and other knowledge products • Press releases • Mission reports • Approved project document • Documentation related to extensions and revisions, if any • Relevant agreements (e.g. with project partners) • Progress reports, including documents referred to in the report
c) **Survey of project stakeholders** • Online survey, targeting beneficiaries and implementing partners • Data analysis
d) **In-depth individual interviews (video/audio call)** • Governmental stakeholders • Development partners • Project management
e) **Preparation of the evaluation report and presentation of findings** • Preparation of a brief note containing the preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation • Meeting with the reference group to present (using PowerPoint) and discuss the preliminary evaluation results • Preparation of a draft evaluation report and review of the draft report by the evaluation reference group • Finalization of the evaluation report along with an evaluation brief (3-page summary) following a standard format to be provided by ESCAP

Data will be disaggregated by sex and other relevant social categories. The evaluation will undertake a transparent and participatory evaluation process involving male and female stakeholders identified

in the stakeholder analysis, including: the reference group, development partners and target beneficiaries in all key evaluation tasks.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Evaluation reference group

To support the independence of the evaluation, the Evaluation Unit, SPMD will manage and oversee the entire evaluation process. An evaluation reference group will be established to support the evaluation and will comprise the following members: the Director and/or Section Chief of the implementing division/office (Chair), project officer, evaluation officer from the Evaluation Unit, SPMD and, optionally, additional members from partner ESCAP division/office (internal) or organization (external).

The reference group provides technical and methodological guidance to the evaluation process; reviews and approves the selection of the consultant based on a short list to be provided by the Evaluation Unit/SPMD, terms of reference and inception report; provides quality control of the evaluation report and validation of recommendations; and ensures adherence to ESCAP Evaluation Policy and Guidelines and the use of evaluation outputs, including the formulation of the evaluation management response and follow-up action plan.

6.2 Evaluator

An evaluation consultant will be recruited to undertake the evaluation.

The consultant will assume overall responsibility for carrying out the evaluation in an objective and independent manner. This includes, among other activities, managing the work plan, ensuring the quality of interviews and data collection, preparing the draft report, presenting the draft report, and producing the final report based on review comments in line with standard templates provided by ESCAP. The evaluator must have:

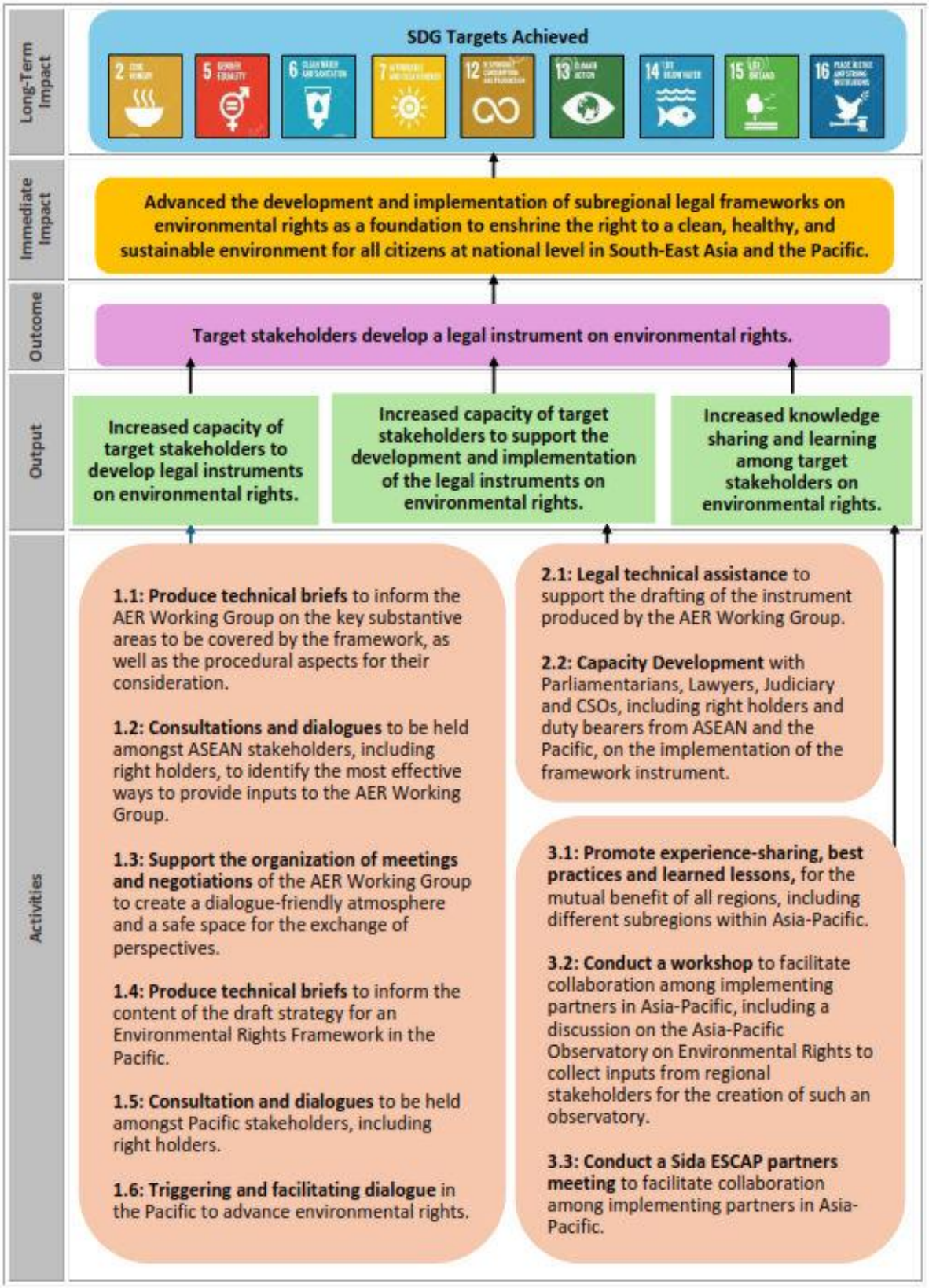
- A strong professional and technical foundation in evaluation, including familiarity with UNEG norms and standards. This includes a robust understanding of evaluation design, approaches, methods, and analytical skills necessary for interpreting findings and crafting conclusions and recommendations, demonstrated through years of experience conducting evaluations for both UN entities and other international organizations. The ability to prepare evaluation reports that adhere to UNEG quality standards is a key aspect of this expertise.
- The evaluator must have knowledge of the United Nations System and its principles, values, goals and approaches. ESCAP also seeks to find evaluators who have some experience in the subject matter being evaluated.
- To avoid conflict of interest and undue pressure, evaluators must not have been involved in the design, management, and implementation of the project being evaluated, nor expect to be in the future.

ESCAP adheres to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for evaluation, and all staff and consultants involved in evaluation are required to uphold these standards. To this end, ESCAP has developed a Consultants Agreement Form (Annex 2), which evaluators are required to sign and comply with upon entering into a consultancy contract.

7. Timeframe

The evaluation will be conducted from May-August 2026.

Annex 2: Project's theory of change



Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Criteria	Key Question	Sub-Questions	Indicators	Source of information	Methods	Assumptions
Impact	What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the project?	How could the implementing division enhance the impacts of similar projects in the future?	Easily accessible tools and services are available to and customized for the ASEAN and Pacific countries. Sustained technical and knowledge support for promoting policy coherence are available for high-risk, low-capacity countries in ASEAN and the Pacific. Awards or recognitions received by the project, if any.	Survey questionnaire Consultation with concerned secretariat staff Interview with key informants Reference group consultations Relevant documents and project reports	Analysis of freshly collected survey data to generate trends and conclusions Qualitative analysis of interview and consultation outcomes Review of relevant documents and project reports	Sufficient time to conduct all needed survey and interviews Survey data are available Stakeholders and informants support the process Availability of the desired information in the relevant documents and reports
Relevance	To what extent was the project designed based on needs of the target beneficiaries?	What adjustments, if any, were made to the project activities and modality, in response to the new priorities/requirements of target beneficiary countries? What evidence exists to demonstrate that the project's products and services were used by the target countries?	Number of stakeholders in participating countries stating that project outputs and activities respond to their countries' needs.	Survey questionnaire Consultation with concerned secretariat staff Interview with key informants Reference group consultations Relevant documents and project reports	Analysis of freshly collected survey data to generate trends and conclusions Qualitative analysis of interview and consultation outcomes Review of relevant documents and project reports	Sufficient time to conduct all needed survey and interviews Survey data are available Stakeholders and informants support the process Availability of the desired information in the relevant documents and reports

		How were the needs and requirements of the target groups assessed or identified? What are/will be the key obstacles for the target groups to utilize the project's outputs?				
Effectiveness	What evidence exists to demonstrate that the project has achieved its objective and expected accomplishments?	How effective were the project's capacity-building activities? How could the implementing division make its future capacity-building activities more effective? What were the key factors that contributed to the achievement or non-achievement of project objective and expected accomplishments? What could have been done better to improve the effectiveness of the project in achieving its results?	Policymakers in ASEAN and Pacific countries have demonstrated capacity to promote coherence in policy and practice. ASEAN and Pacific countries have incorporated environmental rights into policies, plans and strategies both in the medium and long-term. Evidence of government officials and technical staff attended relevant trainings, workshops, or activities.	Survey questionnaire Consultation with concerned secretariat staff Interview with key informants Reference group consultations Relevant documents and project reports	Analysis of freshly collected survey data to generate trends and conclusions Qualitative analysis of interview and consultation outcomes Review of relevant documents and project reports	Sufficient time to conduct all needed survey and interviews Survey data are available Stakeholders and informants support the process Availability of the desired information in the relevant documents and reports

Efficiency	To what extent did the project achieve efficiency in implementation through the combination of project stakeholders involved, making use of comparative advantages and the creation of synergy?	Were the resources (human and financial) effectively utilized to deliver outputs and achieve results? How was the project managed in terms of timeliness? Did synergies gained from partnership with other organizations result in cost-efficiency and savings?	Stakeholders in participating countries recognizing efficient project implementation. Documentary evidence that project was implemented within budget.	Survey questionnaire Consultation with concerned secretariat staff Interview with key informants Reference group consultations Relevant documents and project reports	Analysis of freshly collected survey data to generate trends and conclusions Qualitative analysis of interview and consultation outcomes Review of relevant documents and project reports	Sufficient time to conduct all needed survey and interviews Survey data are available Stakeholders and informants support the process Availability of the desired information in the relevant documents and reports
Sustainability	To what extent can the results of the project be continued without ESCAP's further involvement?		Level of utilization and number of unique views of the Observatory. Reports, news articles and publications have used the tools and analytics of the Observatory to report on relevant issues	Survey questionnaire Consultation with concerned secretariat staff Interview with key informants Reference group consultations Relevant documents and project reports	Analysis of freshly collected survey data to generate trends and conclusions Qualitative analysis of interview and consultation outcomes Review of relevant documents and project reports	Sufficient time to conduct all needed survey and interviews Survey data are available Stakeholders and informants support the process Availability of the desired information in the relevant documents and reports
Cross-cutting Issues	To what extent were cross cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and		Percent of women participating the project activities, e.g., workshops, seminars, etc. Project meets the assigned	Survey questionnaire Consultation with concerned secretariat staff Interview with key informants	Analysis of freshly collected survey data to generate trends and conclusions Qualitative analysis of interview and	Sufficient time to conduct all needed survey and interviews Survey data are available Stakeholders and informants

	implementation of the project?		GEM2a marker, as well as inclusion of gender disaggregated data in the Observatory.	Reference group consultations Relevant documents and project reports	consultation outcomes Review of relevant documents and project reports	support the process Availability of the desired information in the relevant documents and reports

Annex 4: Data collection instruments

The data collection instruments included an inception meeting, desk review of relevant documents, stakeholder survey, individual interviews with stakeholders, and consultations with relevant ESCAP secretariat staff and Reference Group.

➢ Inception meeting

The project evaluation consultant participated in an inception meeting held online on 29 May 2026 in coordination with the focal points to discuss the background of the project, including insights into key stakeholders in ASEAN and the Pacific and agree on the timeframe for the evaluation.

➢ Desk review of relevant documents

A desk review of relevant documents and reports was made including, among others, the documents and reports listed in Annex 6.

➢ Consultations with relevant ESCAP secretariat staff and Reference Group

Consultations via video/audio call with relevant ESCAP secretariat staff and members of the Reference Group were conducted to get a better understanding of the various aspects of the project including its design and implementation and provide a useful basis for collecting other relevant data. The consultant also regularly consulted the Evaluation Unit, SPMD, which manages and oversees the entire evaluation process, and the Environment and Development Division (EDD), which primarily implements the project.

➢ Evaluation survey

An electronic survey was administered targeting the appropriate government officials in participating countries, implementing partners, workshop participants and other stakeholders. A total of 9 responses were received.

➢ In-depth individual interviews

In-depth individual interviews via video/audio call were made with relevant government officials, stakeholders, development partners, and project management. There were of a total of sixteen interviewees.

Annex 5: List of individuals interviewed

Name and Position

1. Ms. Anne-Sophie Vivier
   Consultant (Pacific), University of Vanuatu
2. Prof. Ben Boer
   Emeritus Professor in Environmental Law, University of Sydney, Australia
3. Ms. Le Thi Nam Huong
   Head of Human Rights Division, ASEAN Secretariat
4. Ms. Windi Arni
   Regional Director, RWI Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Jakarta, Indonesia
5. Prof. Amara Pongsapich
   Former Chair, ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, AICHR Thailand
6. Mr. Lim Puay Tiak
   Chairman, ASEAN Disability Forum, Singapore
7. Ms. Kate Alliot
   Governance and Human Rights Adviser, Pacific Community, SPC
8. Ms. Elisa Mongera
   UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change & Human Rights, UK
9. Mr. Wen Chen
   Legal Officer, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Suva, Fiji
10. Mr. Rocky Guzman
    Deputy Director, Asian Research Institute for Environmental Law, Bangkok, Thailand
11. Ms. Astrid Fuentes
    UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Healthy Environment, Pacific Process
12. Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum
    Researcher, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam
13. Ms. Garvita Sethi
    Technical Support, UNV, ESCAP
14. Prof. John Knox
    Henry Lauerman Professor of International Law, Wake Forest University
15 Mr. Veerawit Tianchainan
    SEA Executive Director, Greenpeace
16. Mr. Jharas Boonrak
    Consultant, ASEAN

Annex 6: List of documents reviewed

AER WG, Draft ASEAN declaration on environmental rights, 7 March 2024.

AICHR Thailand/AICHR Malaysia, Concept Note, Regional Closed-Door NHRI Strategy Workshop on Developing a Common Template and Methodology for National Inputs to Inform the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 29–30 April 2026.

AICHR Thailand, The Right of Access to Environmental Information in the ASEAN Norms: Understandings and Practices, 2025.

Amendment No.1 to the Trust Fund Agreement No. 2023-010-EDD-003 between the United Nations

and Sweden, represented by Swedish International Development Agency, Sida, 14 July 2023, Bangkok.

Amendment No.2 to the Trust Fund Agreement No. 2023-010-EDD-003 between the United Nations

and Sweden, represented by Swedish International Development Agency, Sida, 12 December 2024, Bangkok.

ASEAN, Concept Note, Regional Consultation: Advancing the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN, Makati, Philippines, 15-16 December 2025.

ASEAN, Concept Note, Regional Dialogue and Consultation: Advancing the development of environmental rights in ASEAN, ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, Indonesia, 7-8 November 2024.

ASEAN Malaysia, ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, 26 October 2025.

ASEAN, Summary Report Regional Dialogue and Consultation: Advancing the Development of Environmental Rights in ASEAN, Jakarta, Indonesia, 7-8 November 2024.

Asia Pacific Network of Environmental Defenders, Environmental Rights in the ASEAN, 19 April 2024.

ESCAP, Annex 5. Proposed Work plan and Budget for Activities in 2026, Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific, 2026.

ESCAP, Disability inclusion, EDD-EDPS, 10 February 2026.

ESCAP, Gender considerations, EDD-EDPS, 8 May 2026.

ESCAP, Meeting Report, Pacific Climate Justice and Sea Level Rise Week, Suva, Fiji, 2026.

ESCAP, Misson Report, Scoping mission in the Pacific and Co-facilitation of the Judicial Training Program, 7 December 2023.

ESCAP, Mission Report: Multiple Meetings in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur: (a) 3rd Meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group (27-28 February 2024), (b) 4th meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, (6-8 May 2024, Jakarta), (c) 5th meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group (1-3 July 2024, Kuala Lumpur), and (d) Regional Consultation: Advancing the development of environmental rights in ASEAN (7-8 Nov 2024, Jakarta), 9 November 2024.

ESCAP, Mission Report, Panel discussion during the International Day for Universal Access to Information 2025: “Ensuring Access to Environmental Information in the Digital Age” (29-30 September 2025), 22 October 2025.

ESCAP, Mission Report, Consultation Meeting: “Advancing Environmental Rights in the Pacific” in Suva, Fiji (3-4 November 2025), 18 November 2025.

ESCAP, Mission Report, Regional Consultation: Advancing the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN in Makati, Philippines (15-16 December 2025), 19 December 2025.

ESCAP, Mission Report, Regional National Human Rights Institutions Strategy Workshop: “Developing a Common Template and Methodology for National Inputs to Inform the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment”, 29-30 April 2026, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 15 May 2026.

ESCAP, Project Document, Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific (revised).

ESCAP, Project Progress Report: July 2023 – December 2023, Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific, 2023.

ESCAP, Project Progress Report: January 2024 – December 2024, Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific, 2024.

ESCAP, Project Progress Report: January 2025 – November 2025, Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific, 2025.

ESCAP, (Interim) Final Project Report: July 2023 – May 2026, Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific, 2026.

ESCAP, Request for Extension and Budget Reallocation of the Project “Advancing Environmental Rights in Asia and the Pacific” (ESCAP 2023-EDD-003/Sida contribution 16394), 8 December 2025.

ESCAP, Summary Report of the Consultation Meeting: “Advancing Environmental Rights in the Pacific”, Suva, Fiji, 3-4 November 2025.

ESCAP/UNEP, Feasibility Study on the Legal and Institutional Context in the Pacific: Towards the Development of a Sub-regional Instrument on Access Rights, December 2021.

ESCAP/UNEP, Technical Report and Recommendations to Strengthen Environmental Impact Assessment Procedures in ASEAN, December 2021.

Ferry, Anna, Regional Consultation: Advancing the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in ASEAN, Opening Remarks of Ambassador of Sweden to the Philippines, Makati, Philippines, 15 December 2025.

Muavesi, Maria-Goreti, Recognition and Implementation of Environmental Rights in Pacific Island Countries (Analysis of Constitutional, Framework, and Sectoral Legislation in the Pacific Region), 2024.

PIF, Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise, Pacific Islands Forum, 6 August 2021.

PIF, 2023 Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons in the Face of Climate Change Related Sea-Level Rise, Pacific Islands Forum, 6 August 2023.

PIF, 2050 Strategy Implementation Plan 2023-2030: Phase I - 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, Pacific Islands Forum, 2022.

PIFS, 53rd Pacific Islands Forum Communique, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Vava’u, Tonga, 26-30 August 2024.

RWI/UNEP/ESCAP, Strengthening Legal Responses to Environmental Harm: Advancing Environmental Justice and Human Rights in Southeast Asia, Activity handhouts 1-6, *Blended Learning Course for Prosecutors, Lawyers, and National Human Rights Institutions in Southeast Asia,* Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 September 2025.

UNEP, Enhancing the Role of Environmental Public Interest Litigation to Advance Environmental Rights in Southeast Asia, Briefing Report, EarthRights International, November 2023.

UNEP, Environmental Rule of Law and Human Rights in Asia Pacific: Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC): Summary for Decision-makers, July 2023.

UNEP, Environmental rule of law and human rights in Asia Pacific: Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), Summary for Decision Makers, July 2023.

UNEP, Environmental Rule of Law and Human Rights in Asia Pacific: Supporting the Protection of Environmental Human Rights Defenders, Working Paper, February 2023.

UNEP/ESCAP, An Assessment of Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Decision-Making in Asia-Pacific, April 2021.

UNEP, Mission Reports: (a) 10th Asia Pacific Mediation Forum: Regional Challenges, Regional Solutions, Global Outcomes: Using Mediation to Resolve Environment and Climate Change Disputes, 19-21 August 2024, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; (b) Training for UN Country Team in Papua New Guinea on Human Rights and the Environmental Rule of Law: Upholding the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, 22-23 August 2024, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; and (c) Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Meeting, 26-30 August 2024, Nuku'Alofa, Tonga, 12 September 2024.

UN Women ROAP, Final Evaluation Report, Enhancing Access to Justice for Women in Asia and the Pacific: Bridging the Gap Between Formal and Community-based Systems Through Women's Empowerment, 24 January 2024.

Vanuatu Climate Justice Program, Concept Note, Advancing the right to a healthy environment in Vanuatu and in the Pacific region, no date.

Annex 7: Other data tables

Table A8.1. Activities and participants

No.	Activities	Participants			
		M	F	Total	% F
1	1st Meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, Bangkok, Thailand, 21-22 August 2023	24	19	43	44.2
2	2nd Meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, Bangkok, Thailand, 21-22 November 2023	22	16	38	42.1
3	3rd Meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, Manila, Philippines, 27-28 February 2024	22	16	38	42.1
4	4th Meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, Jakarta, Indonesia, 6-8 May 2024	22	16	38	42.1
5	5th Meeting of the ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1-3 July 2024	22	16	38	42.1
6	53rd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, Nuku' Alofa, Tonga, 26-30 August 2024	10	20	30	66.7
7	ASEAN Sectoral Body Consultation, Jakarta, Indonesia, 7-8 November 2024	36	47	83	56.6
8	Blended Learning Course for Prosecutors, Lawyers, and Human Rights Institutions in Southeast Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, 2-4 September 2025	18	20	38	52.6
9	Regional Consultation on Environmental Rights in the Pacific, Suva, Fiji, 3-4 November 2025	13	27	40	67.5
10	Regional Consultation Advancing the right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in ASEAN, Manila, Philippines, 15-16 December 2025	30	30	60	50.0
11	Regional NHRI Strategy Workshop on Developing a Common Template and Methodology for National Inputs to Inform the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 29-30 April 2026	7	18	25	72.0
12	Sida Regional Asia and Pacific Partner Meeting – From Phase-Out to Future-Forward: Leveraging Lessons to Shape What's Next, Bangkok, Thailand, 18-19 May 2026	16	84	100	84.0
13	Second Regional Consultation on Environmental Rights in the Pacific (Pacific Climate Justice and Sea-Level Rise Week), Suva, Fiji, 25-28 May 2026	49	69	118	58.5

Average % female = 55.4%

Table A8.2. List of Interviewees

Name and Position
Ms. Anne-Sophie Vivier Consultant (Pacific), University Vanuatu
Prof. Ben Boer Emeritus Professor in Environmental Law, University of Sydney, Australia
Ms. Le Thi Nam Huong Head of Human Rights Division, ASEAN Secretariat
Ms. Windi Arni Regional Director, RWI Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Jakarta, Indonesia
Prof. Amara Pongsapich Former Chair, ASEAN Environmental Rights Working Group, AICHR Thailand
Mr. Lim Puay Tiak Chairman, ASEAN Disability Forum, Singapore
Ms. Kate Alliot Governance and Human Rights Adviser, Pacific Community, SPC
Ms. Elisa Mongera UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change & Human Rights, UK
Mr. Wen Chen Legal Officer, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Suva, Fiji
Mr. Rocky Guzman Deputy Director, Asian Research Institute for Environmental Law, Bangkok, Thailand
Ms. Astrid Fuentes UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Healthy Environment, Pacific Process
Ms. Yuyun Wahyuningrum Researcher, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University, Rotterdam
Ms. Garvita Sethi Technical Support, UNV, ESCAP
Prof. John Knox Henry Lauerman Professor of International Law, Wake Forest University
Mr. Veerawit Tianchainan SEA Executive Director, Greenpeace
Mr. Jharas Boonrak Consultant (ASEAN)

Table A8.3. Ratings by interviewees

Interviewee No.	Impact	Relevance	Effectiveness	Efficiency	Sustainability
1	3.5	5	4	4,5	3.5
2	4	5	4.5	4.5	4
3	4	5	3	3	4
4	5	5	4.5	4.5	5
5	4	4	3	3	4
6	2.5	4	3.5	4	3.5
7	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
8	4	5	4	4	5
9	4.5	5	4	5	5
10	2	4	2	2.5	2
11	4	5	4	5	4
12	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.	n.r.
13	5	5	4.5	5	5
14	5	5	5	5	5
15	4	5	4	4	3
16	5	5	5	5	5
Average	4.0	4.8	3.9	4.2	4.1

The interviewees were asked to give their overall rating for the evaluation criteria as follows:
1 - not satisfactory, 2 – somewhat satisfactory, 3 – moderately satisfactory, 4 – satisfactory, and 5 – highly satisfactory. Two interviewees did not give their overall rating (n.r. = no rating).

Table A8.4. Respondents to survey questionnaire

Number	Gender	Position/Organization
ID2	F	N.A.
ID3	F	Human Rights Officer, OHCHR Regional Office
ID4	F	Regional Director, Asia Pacific (a.i.), Raoul Wallenberg Institute
ID5	F	N.A.
ID6	M	Vice Chair, ASEAN Disability Forum
ID7	F	Adviser, The Pacific Community (SPC)
ID8	F	Legal Officer, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
ID9	M	Assistant to Al CHR Representative, AICHR
ID10	M	Professor Emeritus, University of Sydney

Note: Most of the seven identified respondents were also interviewed.