Evaluation of the Implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026)

May 2026

ESCAP
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

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Prepared by

Ms. Nelly Dolidze

Commissioned by

ESCAP

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List of acronyms

ADP	Annual Development Programme
AH	Asian Highway
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDEP	Automated Industry Development Export Policy
APIEM	Asia-Pacific Initiative for Electric Mobility
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBIN	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
BPA	Busan Port Authority
CoT	Committee on Transport
EGM	Expert Group Meeting
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EV	Electric Vehicles
EVRI	Electric Vehicles Readiness Index
GEM	UN Gender Marker
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
iRAP	International Road Assessment Programme
ITS	Intelligent Transport Systems
KICT	Asia-Pacific and the Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building Technology
KMI	Korea Maritime Institute
LLDCs	Landlocked Developing Countries
MCT5	the 5th session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport
MDB	Multilateral Development Bank
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOLIT	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
MOSTI	Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation
NSW	National Single Window
NTP	National Transport Policy
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPPFB	Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget

PCS	Port Community System
RB	Regular Budget
RCM	Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport
RPTC	Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation
SASEC	South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SPC	Pacific Community
SPECA	United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia
SUTI	Sustainable Urban Transport Index
TAR	Trans-Asian Railway
TFA	Trust Fund Agreement
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
XB	Extrabudgetary
WP.29	World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations

Executive summary

Background of the Evaluation. The Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026) (hereafter "The RAP (2022-2026)") serves as the primary technical and normative framework for supporting the development of sustainable transport in Asia and the Pacific. Commissioned in 2026 as the programme approaches its conclusion, this evaluation assesses the RAP's performance in aligning global mandates with national operational realities. The evaluation serves to inform the 5th session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport (MCT5) on the strategic evolution required for the next programme cycle.

Purpose and Scope. The primary purpose of this evaluation is to determine the extent to which the RAP (2022–2026) has met its intergovernmental mandates and supported Member States in achieving the 2030 Agenda. The scope covers the implementation period from 2022 to early 2026, evaluating six core criteria: relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and cross-cutting issues. It specifically examines the Secretariat's role in supporting member States' transition to sustainable transport by providing analytical and research work, normative and intergovernmental support to facilitate regional agreements and build the capacity of policy makers and other stakeholders to promote the economic, environmental and social development of the region's transport systems.

Methodology. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach to ensure the triangulation of findings, combining a desk review of institutional documents with primary data collection. This included an online survey, direct observation of the RAP (2022-2026) workshops and semi-structured interviews with key informants, representing a balanced cross-section of member States and Secretariat staff. Data analysis utilized a Theory of Change (ToC) framework to assess the transition from programme outputs to long-term regional outcomes.

Main Findings and Conclusions

Impact: Under the RAP, the Secretariat has provided comprehensive support to member States for sustainable transport development in the region along 7 thematic areas: Regional land transport connectivity and logistics; Maritime and interregional transport connectivity; Digitalization of transport; Low carbon mobility and logistics; Urban transport; Road safety; Inclusive transport and mobility. (*Linked to Findings #1-2*).

Relevance: The programme is a highly relevant, multidimensional framework that successfully bridges global SDG mandates with national realities; its "situational utility" is evidenced by its alignment with the specific developmental imperatives of diverse Member States (*Findings #3-5*).

The evaluation identifies a maturing regional landscape where the framework's utility is increasingly defined by its ability to bridge specific technical and financial gaps between regional planning and national execution (*Linked to Finding #6).*

Effectiveness: The RAP (2022–2026) has been highly successful in delivering scheduled intergovernmental agreements and technical outputs, serving as a vital "technical anchor" for the region. These activities are driven by three pillars: facilitating Intergovernmental Agreements, developing Technical Knowledge Products (such as the Rail Digital Transformation Strategy), and conducting Capacity-Building. However, a "last-mile" gap remains where regional consensus meets domestic "implementation friction." The findings indicate that the transition of regional guidelines into national policies and strategies is currently hindered by domestic regulatory hurdles and funding gaps, suggesting a necessary shift toward providing more targeted support rather than increasing the volume of recommendations (*Linked to Findings #7-9).*

Efficiency: The Secretariat demonstrated extensive coordination and cooperation by leveraging its convening power to align regional transport initiatives through joint project implementation and technical partnerships with UN entities and regional organizations. Regarding timeliness, the programme exhibited a "dual track" pattern. Activities funded through the Regular Budget (RB) showed consistency in meeting mandated timelines despite being slowed by institutional bureaucracy (i.e., procurement delays, complex approval layers that hampered the timeliness of activities funded through the RB, hiring freezes). In contrast, Extrabudgetary (XB) projects experienced significant variability and delays due to external shocks, resource fluctuations, and institutional capacity constraints at the national level. These were further compounded by siloed cooperation and persistent knowledge gaps. To enhance future impact and address these coordination challenges, stakeholders identified a need for the Secretariat to pivot toward an "Operational Partnership Model." This model would prioritize shifting the focus from high-level regional policy toward the practical conversion of those policies into national action (*Linked to Findings #10-13*).

Sustainability: Institutional resilience is high, with 66.7% of stakeholders anticipating lasting impacts and 25% of Member States already achieving the "gold standard" of sustainability by codifying RAP recommendations directly into their primary National Development Plans (*Linked to Finding #14).*

The Secretariat has successfully transitioned into a technical catalyst, facilitating critical institutional agreements such as the 2025 Trust Fund Agreement with the Republic of Korea and the 2024 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Busan Port Authority, though long-term progress tracking remains a gap (*Linked to Finding #15*).

Cross-cutting Issues: While normative commitment is high, gender and disability mainstreaming face significant "visibility gaps" during operational execution, often remaining peripheral to "hard" infrastructure projects due to a reliance on quantitative participation counts (*Linked to Finding #16*).

To improve future impact, the evaluation concludes that the next cycle must move toward data-driven accountability, utilizing sex-disaggregated and disability-disaggregated data to transform inclusivity from a social elective into a technical specification (*Linked to Finding #17*).

Strategic Recommendations for the Next Regional Action Programme

This current evaluation resulted in key four recommendation to the Secretariat and two recommendations to the member States.

The list of recommendations for the Secretariat includes the following:

RECOMMENDATION 1 (Thematic Areas of the Next RAP). In developing the next Regional Action Programme, the Secretariat should facilitate intergovernmental discussions on the thematic structure and cross-cutting priorities, drawing on the findings of the current evaluation and inputs from member States through the preparatory process leading up to the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Transport. Core pillars including Land, Maritime, Low-Carbon, Urban, and Safety and Cross-cutting issues including resilience, social inclusion and technology should be systematically considered in the design of activities across all thematic areas.

RECOMMENDATION 2 (Transition to "Plug-and-Play" Operational Mainstreaming for Inclusive and Green Connectivity). Building on existing normative tools and technical guidelines developed under the intergovernmental agreements and other regional mechanisms, the Secretariat should continue to develop and make available practical reference documents, model frameworks and guidance materials that interested member States may adapt to align their domestic standards and policies with

regional best practices. This technical assistance should be provided upon request and in a manner that respects the internal governance structures of each member State.

The Secretariat should also continue to mainstream gender-responsive, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable approaches into its knowledge products, capacity-building programmes and technical assistance activities. In consultation with member States through the relevant Working Groups and other regional mechanisms, the Secretariat should explore opportunities to strengthen the consideration of universal design principles and green transport practices in regional transport standards, guidelines and frameworks.

RECOMMENDATION 3 (Tiered Technical Support for Digital and Resilient Infrastructure). Recognizing that the capacity and needs of member States vary significantly across the Asia-Pacific region, the Secretariat should continue to tailor its capacity-building programmes and technical assistance accordingly, with particular attention to the needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. The Secretariat should explore innovative ways to more systematically assess the needs of member States in order to better calibrate its support under the next RAP. Where feasible and upon member State request, the Secretariat should explore frameworks for more systematic needs assessment to better calibrate its support, including in emerging areas such as transport digitalization and data-driven transport management.

RECOMMENDATION 4 (Evolve the Secretariat into a Strategic Facilitator and Enhance Accountability through Performance Tracking). The Secretariat should strengthen its role as a strategic facilitator by improving the monitoring and reporting of RAP implementation progress and by enhancing knowledge exchange among member States. This should include consulting with member States on a streamlined and standardized approach to tracking RAP implementation, building on existing reporting mechanisms under the Committee on Transport, as well as relevant partnerships with the sectoral, regional and national level actors. The Secretariat should continue to strengthen its role as a regional knowledge hub by facilitating peer learning and the exchange of good practices and lessons learned among member States through expert group meetings, technical workshops and knowledge products, including flagship publications. The Secretariat should also explore opportunities to strengthen coordination with multilateral development partners and other relevant organizations, especially sub-regional entities, to improve alignment between regional transport priorities and available technical and financial support, subject to available resources and mandates.

Recommendations for the member States are as follows:

RECOMMENDATION A (Strengthen national institutional mechanisms and regulatory alignment to accelerate sustainable, inclusive, and resilient transport systems). Member States that have not yet done so are encouraged to strengthen the implementation of the next RAP by aligning national policies, regulations, financing frameworks and technical standards with regional sustainable transport objectives. This includes institutionalizing inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; integrating resilience, inclusiveness and digitalization into national transport planning and infrastructure standards; adopting and enforcing technical and regulatory frameworks; and enhancing investment readiness for sustainable and green transport infrastructure. To that effect, member States may consider designating national focal points for each of the areas of the new Regional Action Programme and specific initiatives, thus, ensuring coordination, continuity and synergy with the national efforts.

RECOMMENDATION B (Enhance data-driven implementation, peer learning, and tiered capacity development for sustainable transport transformation). Member States that have not yet done so are encouraged to strengthen evidence-based implementation and regional cooperation by participating in transparent monitoring and reporting mechanisms, undertaking voluntary self-assessments of national transport and digital capacities, and engaging actively in peer-learning and technical knowledge-sharing platforms.

1. Introduction

Brief Overview of the RAP (2022–2026). The RAP (2022-2026) represents a concrete, five-year framework grounded in a balanced, multi-dimensional approach to sustainable development. Its development integrated specific technical inputs, including:

- Recommendations derived from the sixth session of the Committee on Transport (CoT).
- Results from the evaluation of the preceding phase of RAP (2017–2021).
- Strategic lessons internalized from the operational impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Alignment with the global principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Member States and Associate members' direct inputs and comments over the course of four preparatory meetings between July and December 2021.

The RAP (2022-2026) is structured around three overarching objectives that define its expected regional impact:

1. **Objective 1 (Economic):** Achieving efficient and resilient transport and logistics networks and mobility to facilitate economic growth.
2. **Objective 2 (Environmental):** Ensuring environmentally sustainable transport systems and services.
3. **Objective 3 (Social):** Establishing safe and inclusive transport and mobility.

The Programme consolidates its activities into seven thematic areas, each utilizing innovation, regional cooperation, and technical assistance:

1) Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics.
2) Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity.
3) Digitalization of Transport.
4) Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics.
5) Urban Transport.
6) Road Safety.
7) Inclusive Transport and Mobility.

The primary beneficiaries of the RAP (2022-2026) are the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) member States across Asia and the Pacific. The Programme places a strategic emphasis on countries with special needs, specifically:

- Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs).
- Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Context and Mandate for the RAP Evaluation. The evaluation of the RAP (2022-2026) is a formal process mandated to assess progress and shape the future of the future regional cooperation on transport.

The mandate for this evaluation originates from the fourth session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport (December 2021) and was formally solidified by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP):

- **Commission Resolution 78/3:** Adopted on May 27, 2022, this resolution endorsed the RAP and specifically requested the Executive Secretary to conduct an evaluation of its implementation.

- **Preparation for the Fifth Ministerial Conference:** The evaluation report and its recommendations must be submitted to the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Transport, tentatively scheduled for November 17–20, 2026.

The evaluation is designed to be formative to provide analytical insights that will improve current operations and guide future planning. It ensures that regional transport efforts remain aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development. The evaluation also provides a platform for member States and development partners to share feedback and improve the relevance and effectiveness of ESCAP's work under the framework of RAP.

Evaluation Scope, Objectives and Criteria. The evaluation goal is to assess the performance of the RAP (2022-2026) and inform the development of the next RAP for the 2027–2031 period. The evaluation objectives are built around the following three primary areas:

- **Achievement Assessment:** Assessing the implementation of the RAP in terms of the achievement of the objectives set out under each of the seven thematic areas under the three overarching objectives.
- **Performance Review:** Assessing the performance of the activities and services provided by the Secretariat to the ESCAP member States in support of the implementation of the RAP using the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and gender mainstreaming.
- **Future Recommendations:** Providing recommendations for improvement in the next regional action programme and priority activities considering the needs and requirements of the member States in the context of UN 2.0, UN80, the UN Decade for Sustainable Transport, emerging programmes for SIDS and LLDCs, member States' transport priorities, as well as preparations for the post-SDGs agenda.

Evaluation Criteria and Questions. The evaluation applied the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact introduced by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Gender mainstreaming and social inclusion (cross-cutting) aspects will be addressed throughout the evaluation with appropriate methodology and evaluation questions.

The evaluation provided answers to key questions listed below (**Table 1**), thereby identifying key lessons learned regarding the implementation of RAP (2022-2026).

Table 1: Key Evaluation Questions

Evaluation criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
Relevance	1. To what extent was the RAP perceived by member States as relevant to their respective sustainable transport development priorities, and which thematic areas were considered most relevant to their needs and requirements of the governments? 2. What thematic gaps, emerging issues, or new priorities should be addressed in the next phase of the Regional Action Programme?
Effectiveness	3. To what extent were the objectives and indicators of achievement, defined under each thematic area, achieved and to what extent were the outputs, defined under each thematic area, delivered? 4. What were the key activities and outputs delivered by ESCAP in support of the implementation of the RAP by member States?

Efficiency	5. To what extent did ESCAP coordinate and cooperate with other development partners, including other UN entities, global/regional/subregional organizations in conducting activities in support of the implementation of the RAP? 6. Was RAP implemented in a timely manner? If there were delays or bottlenecks, what were the main contributing factors? 7. What challenges or constraints were encountered during the RAP implementation (e.g., resource limitations, staffing, UN80 impact, or external factors)? 8. How can the coordination and cooperation among countries and other stakeholders be further enhanced, particularly to address such challenges in the next RAP?
Impact	9. What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the Regional Action Programme at the regional and national levels, including those funded through RPTC? 10. What changes in the design and implementation of the RAP are required, and how could the secretariat and member States further enhance the impact of the next Regional Action Programme? 11. To what extent did the activities undertaken by ESCAP to support the implementation of the RAP contribute to the achievement of the SDGs?
Sustainability	12. Are the results of the implementation of the RAP likely to prove sustainable? How well has the Secretariate supported the development and implementation of programmes and policies to ensure sustainable results for the RAP?
Cross-cutting issues	13. To what extent were cross-cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and implementation of the RAP? 14. What can be done to improve these cross-cutting issues in the next regional action programme?

Evaluation Timeline

Evaluation was conducted on a part -time basis from 20 November 2025 through 31 March 2026.

2. Description of the subprogramme

RAP (2022-2026) Objectives and Scope. The RAP (2022-2026)" was formally adopted during the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok and online from 14 to 17 December 2021, and subsequently endorsed by the ESCAP. It was explicitly designed as a framework to accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as transport sector was recognized not merely as an enabler of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but often as a prerequisite for success.

The RAP (2022-2026) is structured around three overarching objectives, economic, environmental and social (**Table 2**). These objectives are designed to ensure that transport development not only enables economic growth but also contributes to environmental sustainability and social equity, aligning directly with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Table 2: RAP (2022- 2026) Objectives

Indicators of achievement under the overarching objectives of the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026)		
Towards efficient and resilient transport and logistics networks and mobility for economic growth	**Towards environmentally sustainable transport systems and services**	**Towards safe and inclusive transport and mobility**
▪ Upgrades and extensions to the Asian Highway network and Trans-Asian Railway network as well as dry ports of international importance ▪ Regular knowledge products, policy tools and expert group meetings on best practices and regional approaches to enhancing the operational connectivity, including during disruptive events, along the regional land transport network ▪ Increased capacity of relevant stakeholders to support the development of land and multimodal transport corridors and multimodal transport operations	▪ Increased capacity of countries to implement national and regional measures to promote rail and waterborne transport as well as environmentally sustainable logistics in regional freight operations	▪ Provision of regular advisory services and capacity-building programmes on facilitating access of landlocked developing countries to the regional supply chains ▪ Knowledge products and policy tools promoting greater consideration of the local development impact of regional transport networks and corridors ▪ Increased capacity and social inclusiveness of the logistics sector

Source: Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026) ESCAP/78/15/Add.2, ESCAP, 26 January 2022

Thematic Focus and Operational Organization. The Regional Action Programme (RAP) 2022–2026 utilizes these seven thematic areas as the operational pillars to translate its high-level vision into actionable technical assistance, policy guidelines, and intergovernmental cooperation. These areas are interconnected, ensuring that improvements in one (such as digitalization) directly support others (such as road safety or decarbonization).

Below is an elaboration of each thematic area based on the program's strategic framework:

(1) **Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics.** This area focuses on the "hard" and "soft" infrastructure of the region's primary corridors. It aims to optimize the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks, along with the Network of Dry Ports. Under this thematic area the RAP (2022-2026) covered modernizing physical infrastructure, harmonizing technical standards (like gauge sizes and axle loads), and streamlining cross-border logistics to create "seamless" connectivity for LLDCs.

(2) **Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity.** Recognizing that most of the global trade is seaborne, this thematic area focuses on the efficiency of the region's ports and their connection to the hinterland. The activities cover enhancing the capacity of ports, promoting sustainable shipping practices, and fostering interregional links between Asia-Pacific and other global markets through integrated intermodal transport chains.

(3) **Digitalization of Transport.** The thematic area is viewed as a "force multiplier" for efficiency and resilience. It shifts transport management from paper-based, manual processes to data-driven, automated systems. The activities cover implementation of electronic exchange of data, smart border-crossing technologies, and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS). This includes utilizing big data and artificial intelligence (AI) for traffic management and supply chain visibility.

(4) **Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics.** In response to the climate crisis, this thematic area prioritizes the decarbonization of the entire transport sector, which is currently a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. The key activities under this thematic area cover accelerating the transition to electric mobility (e-mobility), supporting member States in the formulation, updating and operationalization of their climate commitments, promoting the use of clean and renewable energy in transport fleets, and developing "green freight" programs that optimize routes to reduce fuel consumption.

(5) **Urban Transport**. As the region urbanizes rapidly, this area addresses the unique challenges of city mobility, focusing on reducing congestion and pollution while improving quality of life. Key activities under this area incorporates advancing integrated land-use and transport planning, expanding high-capacity public transport (e.g., Metro), and encouraging "active mobility" such as walking and cycling infrastructure.

(6) **Road Safety**. This area is a critical social priority, aimed at halving road traffic fatalities and injuries by 2030 in accordance with the Decade of Action for Road Safety. The activities under this area encompass promoting the "Safe System" approach, improving road design, strengthening regional vehicle safety standards, and enhancing emergency post-crash response systems through evidence-based policy.

(7) **Inclusive Transport and Mobility**. This theme ensures that transport systems are equitable and cater to the specific needs of all citizens, particularly those often marginalized by traditional infrastructure. Under this thematic area the Secretariat was supporting the development accessibility guidelines for persons with disabilities and the elderly, ensuring gender-responsive transport planning, and improving rural-urban connectivity to reduce poverty and geographic isolation.

Stakeholders, Partners, and Implementation. The primary beneficiaries of the RAP (2022-2026) are the members and associate members of the ESCAP. Within this group, the programme applies a strategic focus on countries with special needs, specifically LLDCs and SIDS, who face unique geographic barriers to trade.

Implementation is facilitated through a multi-stakeholder partnership model involving national governments, relevant UN agencies, the private sector, and academic institutions. To translate policy into practice, the Secretariat employs a suite of "soft" infrastructure tools:

- **Normative Support:** Developing regional agreements and harmonizing technical standards.
- **Regional Dialogue:** Convening Ministerial Conferences and Working Groups to harmonize regional standards and enhance interoperability reduce regional friction and build consensus.
- **Technical Assistance:** Providing evidence-based research and capacity-building workshops to enhance the institutional knowledge of member States.

Theory of Change and Intervention Logic. The evaluation reconstructed the RAP (2022-2026) ToC to transform policy directives into regional outcomes (**ANNEX 2**). This intervention logic is designed to move from high-level commitments to ground-level impact:

- **Inputs & Activities**: The Secretariat leverages its internal expertise, regular budget, and extrabudgetary funding across seven thematic pillars: land transport, maritime, digitalization, low carbon, urban transport, road safety, and inclusive mobility.
- **Outputs (Secretariat Deliverables)**: These inputs generate three core types of deliverables:
  - *Intergovernmental Consensus and Policy Harmonization*: Strengthening cooperation through formal agreements and regional standards.
  - *Capacity Building and Technical Assistance*: Providing tailored training and field projects at both ministerial and sub-national levels.
  - *Analytical Knowledge Products:* Producing evidence-based research and guidelines to inform national policy development.
- **Outcomes (Member State Benefits)**: These deliverables aim to achieve three overarching objectives for Member States:
  - *Economic*: Achieving efficient and resilient transport/logistics networks to facilitate growth.
  - *Environmental:* Ensuring environmentally sustainable transport systems and services.
  - *Social:* Establishing safe and inclusive transport and mobility.
- **Strategic Goal (Ultimate Impact)**: The final objective is a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive transport landscape in Asia and the Pacific that supports the achievement of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs).

3. Evaluation methodology

3.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation methodology was based on a participatory approach by including all relevant stakeholders to achieve a high level of ownership of the evaluation output. The evaluation used various data collection techniques such as key informant interviews (semi-structured), online surveys, direct observation and structured documentary analyses. The evaluation analysed both quantitative and qualitative data with particular attention given to the cross-validation of data. **Annex 3** presents the evaluation matrix/framework along with the sources of information and the appropriate data gathering methods (i.e., desk research, interviews and/or surveys).

3.2 Data collection and analysis

To ensure a robust and evidence-based assessment of the RAP (2022-2026), the evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques, directly mapped to the evaluation matrix/framework. The evaluation gathered quantitative and qualitative data through desk research, direct observation, in-depth interviews and online questionnaires distributed among key stakeholders. The data was collected through the desk research and analysis of the relevant documents.

Quantitative Data Collection: ESCAP Transport Division supported the evaluation with quantitative data gathering and reached out to ESCAP member Stated distributing an electronic survey developed within the framework of the evaluation of the RAP (2022-2026). This survey was designed to capture measurable trends regarding the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of RAP (2022-2026) activities across the seven thematic areas.

Qualitative Data Collection: the evaluator conducted in-depth individual interviews with key informants from the ESCAP, member State ministries, and development partners. These interviews provided the narrative depth required to understand "how" and "why" certain results and outcomes were achieved or hindered by external factors. The interviews also addressed the stakeholder vision and feedback about the shape and scope of the next RAP (2027-2031).

Data Validation and Analysis: the evaluator cross-validated the data gathered through interviews, cross-referencing survey results with interview transcripts and secondary desk reviews of RAP implementation reports. Quantitative data will undergo descriptive statistical analysis, while qualitative data was analysed using thematic coding to identify patterns related to the ToC of the RAP (2022-2026).

Data Gathering Tools: To facilitate this process, **Annex 4** contains the draft stakeholder questionnaires, and the semi-structured interview guides tailored for different stakeholder groups.

3.3 Stakeholder analysis

The evaluation identifies stakeholders across governmental, intergovernmental, and technical sectors, each playing a distinct role in the subprogramme's execution and evaluation.

- **ESCAP Member States:** These are the primary beneficiaries and operational partners. Their role in the subprogramme is to "nest" regional goals into national budgets and implement technical standards (e.g., Asian Highway or rail digitalization). In the evaluation, they provided critical feedback via surveys and interviews to assess the RAP across each evaluation criterion.
- **ESCAP Secretariat (Transport Division):** Functions as the "Policy Engine" and technical catalyst. Its role is to facilitate intergovernmental dialogue, promote the development of common regional frameworks and technical norms, conduct research and analysis, and

provide technical assistance. For the evaluation, the Secretariat was the primary subject of performance review regarding its efficiency and effectiveness and delivery of the result/outputs.

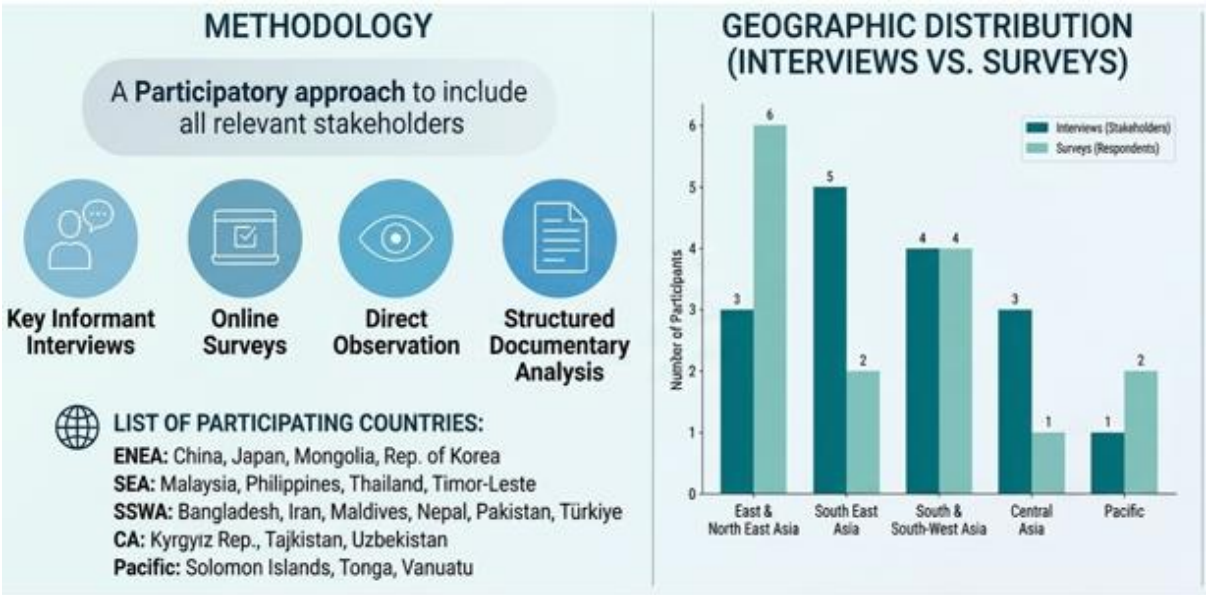
- **Technical Research Networks & Partners:** Entities such as the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI), the Pacific Community (SPC), and Multilateral Development Banks (ADB, World Bank). Their role is to provide specialized data and align large-scale infrastructure financing with RAP frameworks. They served as key informants in the evaluation to validate the technical quality of RAP outputs.

3.4 Sampling

The evaluation utilized a purposive and stratified sampling method to ensure that the findings were representative of the diverse Asia-Pacific region. Given the technical nature of the RAP, the rationale for this approach was to prioritize "Information-Rich Cases"—individuals and entities with direct responsibility for transport policy, infrastructure engineering, and regional cooperation. By stratifying the sample across geographic subregions and levels of digital maturity, the evaluation captured the unique perspectives of both technology leaders and vulnerable nations (LDCs and SIDS).

To ensure the evaluation findings were grounded in a diverse range of operational realities, the Secretariat conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 22 key stakeholders. This qualitative engagement was designed to achieve a balanced regional representation, capturing the unique transport imperatives of various sub-regions and institutional perspectives. In addition, the evaluation received feedback from 15 key stakeholders representing the ESCAP member States. This provided a comprehensive geographical cross-section of the Asia-Pacific (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Geographic Coverage of Engaged Stakeholders.



Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

3.5 Cross-cutting issues

The evaluation moved beyond a "one-size-fits-all" narrative by embedding gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion into its analytical core. Following the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines, the process was designed to be socially responsive:

- **Gender Responsiveness:** The evaluation sought to identify "visibility gaps" in transport planning. By prioritizing female technical leads for interviews and including specific modules on the "Security of the Journey," the process assessed how effectively the RAP supports safe and equitable mobility for women.
- **Disability Inclusion:** The methodology utilized the concept of "Universal Design" as a key evaluation metric. Interviews and surveys probed the extent to which regional technical manuals *such as those for the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway) mandate accessibility features like tactile paving and step-free access.
- **Geographical and Social Equity:** Special consideration was given to LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS. The evaluation selected case studies in Mongolia (decarbonization), Tajikistan (urban metrics), and the Republic of Korea (maritime connectivity) to illustrate how regional standards can be adapted to vastly different socio-economic contexts.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The evaluation of the RAP (2022–2026) was conducted in strict adherence to the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and the UN Code of Conduct. The process was designed to ensure the highest standards of integrity, respect, and confidentiality, ensuring that the rights of all participants were protected.

All participants (survey respondents and interviewees) were provided with a clear explanation of the evaluation's purpose, the voluntary nature of their participation, and how their data would be used. Explicit consent was obtained before any data collection commenced. To encourage honest and critical feedback all responses were anonymized.

Moreover, the evaluation findings are presented in an aggregated format, ensuring that no individual or specific member State official can be identified from their statements. The evaluator maintained a neutral stance, ensuring that the findings were driven solely by evidence collected from the field and not influenced by internal Secretariat pressures or political preferences.

The evaluation secured all raw data, including interview transcripts and survey exports, in a password-protected environment accessible only to the evaluator. Following the completion of the report and the validation of findings, all primary data containing personal identifiers will be handled according to ESCAP’s data retention and disposal policies to prevent any future unauthorized access.

3.7 Risks and limitations

The evaluation process navigated several structural and data-related constraints. A primary constraint of this evaluation was the partial visibility into the Strategic Alignment of activities across the entire region. While the Secretariat successfully delivered a high volume of technical outputs, the ability to capture outcome-level impact was hampered by a 50% response rate from member States regarding their domestic implementation progress. To mitigate the risk of a low initial response, the Secretariat and the evaluator issued a minimum of three follow-up invitations and reminders for both the online survey and interview requests. Despite these efforts, some stakeholders did not participate, meaning the findings may not fully reflect the diverse progress or specific implementation bottlenecks of the non-reporting member States.

Although the response rate was lower than expected, the evaluation achieved theoretical saturation by triangulating survey results with deep-dive interviews and extensive desk research. To ensure regional relevance, the evaluator supplemented primary data with secondary sources—such as mission reports, meeting attendance records, and infrastructure databases. This cross-validation allowed for a credible inference of progress in non-reporting areas, ensuring the findings encompass the full Asia-Pacific scope.

4. Evaluation Findings

4.1 Impact

FINDING # 1 (The Operational Bridge): The evaluation indicates that the RAP (2022–2026) effectively bridged the gap between regional normative mandates and national policy implementation. This was achieved by utilizing the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC) and Extrabudgetary (XB) projects as the RAP's "operational arm." This strategic combination moved beyond high-level planning to deliver the localized technical assessments, legislative drafts, and data-driven blueprints required to align national transport investments with regional standard

FINDING # 2 (Neutral Platform): Stakeholder consensus indicates that the RAP (2022–2026) has generated significant regional and national impacts by serving as a neutral platform for policy harmonization, technical capacity building, and the development of standardized regional guidelines. However, the tangible impact of these interventions appears to be non-uniform, varying significantly based on a member State's development status and geographical positioning.

The RAP (2022-2026) has successfully transitioned from high-level planning to a treaty-based operational architecture, effectively functioning as the "regional rulebook" for Asia-Pacific connectivity. By harmonizing technical standards across the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, and Dry Port networks, the RAP eliminated "technical friction" at borders and moved beyond isolated infrastructure projects toward an integrated, multimodal system. A defining success of this cycle is the "nesting" of regional frameworks into national laws.

The evaluation identified the impact of the RAP (2022-2026) at both regional and national levels. It also recognised a specialized role for the Regular Programme of Technical Cooperation (RPTC). More specifically, rather than operating in isolation, RPTC has functioned as the essential "operational arm" of the RAP. RPTC-funded activities demonstrated functioning as a bridge, translating high-level regional roadmaps into localized technical assessments and legislative drafts.

REGIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS: HARMONIZATION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND FRAMEWORKS

The following sections detail these observations across seven core thematic areas, noting the progress of specific outputs and the emerging influence of the RAP on national development planning. The summary of the achievements is presented under the table below (**Table 3**).

Table 3: Key Achievements under the RAP (2022-2026)

FOCUS ARES	KEY ACHIEVEMENTS
Progress in the intergovernmental agreements	➢ Asian Highway Network: (30 parties, 145,000 km) ➢ Trans-Asian Railway Network: (22 parties, 125,500 km) - Adoption of a new annex to the TAR agreement and two accessions[1] since 2021 ➢ Dry Ports: (19 parties, 275 dry ports) - one new accession since 2021

[1] Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.

Regional Action Plans and Road Maps	➢ Regional Road Map to Support Regional Cooperation for Wider Deployment of Sustainable Smart Transport Systems (Seoul Declaration) ➢ Regional Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety (2021–2030) ➢ Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation ➢ Regional Frameworks for Transport Facilitation & Regional frameworks on enhancing rail cybersecurity ➢ Railway Standards Connectivity Scheme ➢ Guidelines for inclusive mobility ➢ Regional Roadmap for Enabling the Transition to Electric Mobility in Asia and the Pacific
Technical Tools	➢ Transport facilitation models and model agreements ➢ Sustainable Urban Transport Index, Sustainable Urban Transport Index PLUS (expanded for inclusiveness criteria) and Electric Vehicle Readiness Index
Collaboration Mechanisms Established	➢ Transport Research and Education Network (TREN) & Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility (APIEM) ➢ Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport (RCM) ➢ Autonomous Vehicles Partnership (AVP) ➢ Asia-Pacific Road Safety Observatory (co-founder) ➢ Regional Dialogue on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity & Regular conferences on inland water transport
Knowledge Products	➢ Flagship publications: Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific ➢ Bulletin, Reports, Policy Briefs, working paper, manual and training material, blogs and Op-Ed

Source: The RAP (2022-2026) Reports, ESCAP (2026).

Regional Level: Strengthening the Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

At the regional level, the evaluation observed that the RAP (2022-2026) has been instrumental in strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks by expanding and modernizing the region's primary transport networks. Key stakeholders have reported that the RAP (2022–2026) has been effective in fostering regional cohesion by institutionalizing structured dialogue and serving as a pivotal platform for regional cooperation. Through the Committee on Transport and its subsidiary working groups, the Secretariat provides a formal venue for member States to translate high-level mandates into concrete, actionable outputs. This institutional framework ensures that regional connectivity goals are not merely aspirational but are supported by a continuous cycle of policy review and technical alignment. As a direct result, since 2021, the Secretariat has facilitated new accessions across the three core intergovernmental agreements, significantly broadening legal coverage for regional connectivity:

- The Asian Highway (AH) encompasses 30 parties and 145,000 km of standardized roadways by the time of the evaluation.
- The Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) has reached 22 parties and 125,500 km.
- The network of Dry Ports has expanded to 19 parties and 275 facilities.

Operationalizing Regional Transport Corridors: Central Asia. Within this treaty-based framework, AH and (TAR) networks have evolved from aspirational routes into mandatory technical blueprints for national infrastructure. Member States now ensure that new projects, ranging from Malaysian expressways to Central Asian rail corridors, adhere to universal standards for load capacity and gauge compatibility.

A pivotal milestone was the adoption of Annex III to the TAR Agreement, integrating “Smart Railway” standards region-wide. This was further bolstered by the 2023 Agreement on Strengthening the Interconnectedness of Land Transport in Central Asia. The agreement was signed by the Heads of State of the five Central Asian nations (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) in Dushanbe on September 14, 2023, during the Fifth Consultative Meeting of the Heads of State of Central Asia. This agreement serves as a strategic tool to address historical "connectivity gaps" in Central Asia and provides a framework to streamline cross-border processes and improve the efficiency of land transport across Central Asia, which is essential for landlocked countries like Tajikistan to overcome logistical barriers. It has been formally integrated into the UN’s regional Programme of Work for 2026–2027 Further desk research identified that ESCAP and UNECE[2] have formally integrated the agreement into the Programme of Work for 2026–2027[3]. This ensures that technical assistance and monitoring of the agreement are institutionalized within the UN's regional activities.

Similarly, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports has been strategically utilized under the RAP to integrate landlocked nations into global supply chains. By providing the technical certification standards for these inland hubs, the RAP has enabled countries like Bhutan and Kazakhstan to develop logistics centers that are recognized by international shipping and customs authorities, effectively bringing the "sea" to the hinterlands. Furthermore, the RAP has acted as a regional bridge for global environmental standards.

Operationalizing Regional Transport Corridors: A Case Study of Bangladesh, Bhutan India, and Nepal. The evaluation reveals a fundamental transition in South Asian transport diplomacy: a shift to grounded, operational corridor-based connectivity. The key stakeholder referred to a functional strategy designed Under the current RAP, to ensure seamless transit across India, Bangladesh, and Nepal. A cornerstone of this operationalization was the 2023–2024 joint field assessment conducted by the Government of Bangladesh and ESCAP. This mission focused on the Asian Highway network and land customs stations within the Sylhet region, bordering Meghalaya, India. The assessments served as a critical "reality check," moving beyond desk-based policy to identify specific manual bottlenecks, such as redundant physical paperwork and inefficient cargo handling, that directly hindered sub-regional trade. These assessments directly informed a shift toward the digitalization of customs and land port operations and provided a framework for ensuring that the physical development of the Asian Highway within Bangladesh is compatible with regional standards, reducing "friction" at the border and improving the flow of goods toward the ports of Chittagong (Bangladesh) and Mongla (Bangladesh). Also, desk research and stakeholder feedback linked the RAP (2022-2026) with the development of the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) sub-region. Per some feedback, the BBIN countries often developed infrastructure based on varying national specifications, leading to "technical friction" at borders (e.g., differing bridge load-bearing capacities or road widths). The RAP (2022-2026) aligned the BBIN corridors with the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks to transform these four distinct national transport systems into a single, high-speed trade network capable of supporting global supply chains.

Digital and Environmental Harmonization (Soft Infrastructure). Beyond physical tracks, the RAP has supported "soft infrastructure" to reduce technical friction at borders:

- **Smart Transport and Digitalization.** The RAP (2022-2026) has facilitated a unified strategic framework for member States through the adoption of high-level declarations and comprehensive roadmaps. Central to this effort are the Seoul Declaration, which introduced the *Regional Road Map to Support Regional Cooperation for Wider Deployment of Sustainable*

[2] United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.
[3] https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/DRAFT%20SPECA%20WORK%20PLAN%20FOR%202026-2027_EN.pdf.

Smart Transport Systems. The Seoul Declaration established a unified political mandate for the deployment of Smart Transport Systems, focusing on AI and Big Data to make transport across the Asia-Pacific region safer, more efficient, and more environmentally friendly. Together with the *Regional Roadmap for Electric Mobility*, these frameworks provide a synchronized direction for regional decarbonization and digitalization. To ensure this transition is both secure and equitable, these high-level strategies are further bolstered by targeted technical guidelines on rail cybersecurity and inclusive mobility. Beyond physical tracks and trails, the RAP (2022–2026) has been instrumental in supporting the adoption of "soft infrastructure" agreements. This includes accelerating the transition to paperless trade through UN conventions such as e-TIR and e-CMR[4]. By providing the training and technical scaffolding for these digital customs protocols, the RAP has directly reduced the "technical friction" at borders, allowing for the seamless transit of goods across multiple jurisdictions without the delays of manual documentation.

- **Rail Digitalization.** At the High-Level Conference on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation in Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi, India, on April 5–6, 2023, served as a catalyst for the refinement and subsequent adoption of the *Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation in the Asia-Pacific Region (Strategy 2030)*[5]. The Strategy 2030 was officially endorsed in September 2023 by the Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on the Trans-Asian Railway Network. Concurrently, the Working Group adopted Annex III to the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network*, which establishes the 'General Principles on electronic information exchange.' Together, the Strategy 2030 and Annex III provide a comprehensive framework, the former offering a strategic vision and the latter providing the legal principles—that enables railways to move toward paperless, seamless data interchange across borders. ESCAP member States are now utilizing this framework to provide coherence and momentum to their national digitalization efforts.
- **AI and Smart Mobility.** Finally, the Regional Roadmap to Support Regional Cooperation for the Wider Deployment of Sustainable Smart Transport Systems (2023)[6] has positioned the Asia-Pacific as a leader in digital transport governance. By providing a blueprint for the deployment of smart mobility solutions, this roadmap ensures that member States—regardless of their development status—can participate in the global digital economy, improving regional traffic management and logistics efficiency.

Decarbonization. A landmark achievement under Thematic Area 4 (Low-carbon mobility and logistics) of the RAP (2022-2026) was the 2023 Kathmandu Outcome. This regional agreement formally adopted the *Regional Roadmap towards Sustainable and Energy-Efficient Freight Transport*, providing member States with a unified technical framework to decarbonize the logistics sector, optimize modal shifts from road to rail, and implement energy-efficiency metrics across the Asia-Pacific." By operationalizing these agreements, the RAP (2022–2026) has facilitated a transition from independent national infrastructure projects toward a coordinated, treaty-based multimodal transport architecture. This framework provides the technical standards necessary to support regional resilience, digitalization, and environmental sustainability.

Environmental Standards: The Secretariat (under the framework of the RAP (2022-2026)) has helped member States align their national transport policies with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) standards for green shipping and the Paris Agreement for carbon reduction. This is evidenced

[4] In the context of the RAP (2022–2026), e-TIR and e-CMR are the digital versions of two major international UN conventions designed to make cross-border trade "paperless.

[5] Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation in the Asia-Pacific Region (PDF).

[6] https://repository.unescap.org/items/c159b5a6-e2b9-46cf-894b-6c6a8a7c16ce.

by the integration of Euro 4/5 emission metrics into national operational plans, ensuring that the region's growth does not come at the expense of its climate commitments.

Multilateral Frameworks. Another reported case is the Regional Roadmap towards Sustainable and Energy-Efficient Freight Transport (2023)[7]. It provides the first structured multilateral framework in the region to synchronize freight decarbonization with global climate targets. By optimizing modal shifts from carbon-intensive road transport to energy-efficient rail, this roadmap directly supports Thematic Area 4 (Low-carbon mobility) and aligns regional logistics with the Paris Agreement and SDG 13 (Climate Action).

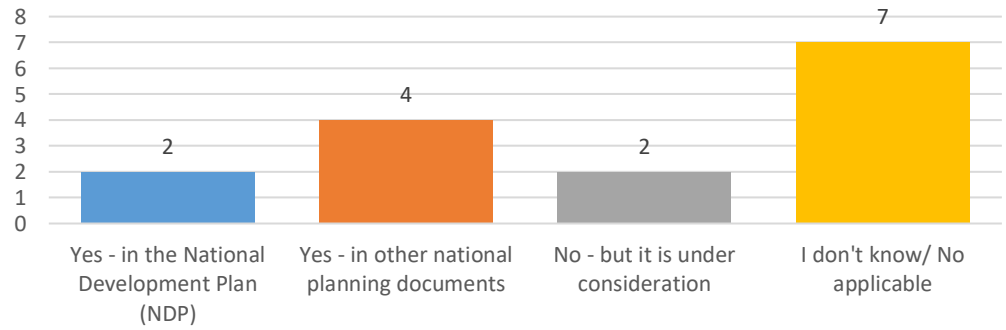
Strategic Standardization: The Regional "Rulebook" for Global Connectivity. The RAP (2022–2026) has transcended traditional infrastructure planning by institutionalizing a series of regional roadmaps and technical guidelines that function as a common "rulebook" for the Asia-Pacific. This framework is essential for eliminating "technical friction" (such as gauge disparities, inconsistent customs protocols, and divergent safety standards) that historically hindered the efficiency of AH and TAR networks. By harmonizing these standards, the RAP ensures that landlocked developing countries and transit nations are integrated into a seamless multimodal system, directly contributing to the following regional and global milestones.

From Isolated Projects to Integrated Systems: According to key stakeholder, the Secretariat's strategic focus on an integrated, multimodal transport architecture ensures that every mile of road or rail built under national budgets is technically compatible with the wider regional network. This harmonization facilitates faster trade, reduces "technical friction" at borders, and creates more resilient global supply chains.

NATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS: LEGAL FRAMEWORK ADJUSTMENTS, CAPACITY BUILDING, STRATEGIC EXPANSION

The evaluation observed that the most significant impact of the RAP occurs when regional frameworks and standards were successfully codified into national laws and development plans. The impact of the RAP varies by country and was situational depending on the organisation the interviewed and surveyed stakeholders represented. While initial survey data showed a conservative 40% integration rate into high-level planning (**Figure 2**), in-depth interviews revealed that the impact of the RAP is often more significant at the operational and regulatory levels, where technical standards are "nested" within existing national visions.

Figure 2: Survey Results about integration of RAP (2022-2026) Recommendations High-Level National Planning Documents



Source: Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

[7] https://www.unescap.org/kp/2024/enhancing-energy-efficiency-freight-transport-sector-asia-and-pacific.

For landlocked nations like Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, the RAP has been the primary catalyst for transitioning from "landlocked to land-linked" by providing the technical blueprints for dry ports and railway digitalization. For SIDS like the Maldives and Tonga, the focus has shifted toward existential resilience—addressing maritime compliance and pioneering urban electric mobility.

Meanwhile, regional leaders like Japan, Korea, and China have utilized the RAP as a strategic "Export Platform" for high-quality infrastructure and digital standards (such as Cyber Ports and Zero-Emission roadmaps). In emerging economies like Bangladesh, and Malaysia, the RAP has successfully "nested" itself within existing national visions (e.g., Vision 2030, 13th Five-Year Plans), providing the technical "soft infrastructure" needed to make massive "hard infrastructure" investments—like the Asian Highway—regionally compatible and safe (**Table 4**).

Table 4: The RAP Achievement and Impact Matrix (2022–2026) at Country Level

COUNTRY	KEY ACHIEVEMENT / IMPACT	STRATEGIC OUTPUT
Mongolia	Transitioned public transport from diesel to electric via RAP feasibility data.	Ulaanbaatar Public Transport Strategy; Joined APIEM.
Bhutan	Institutionalized RAP goals into the 13th Five-Year Plan (2024–2029).	National E-mobility agenda; Budgetary allocation for RAP activities.
Pakistan	Codified WP.29 Road Safety standards into national industrial policy (AIDEP).	30% EV transition target; Alignment of Karachi/Gwadar ports with RAP.
Bangladesh	Used RAP as a "neutral platform" to link Shipping, Commerce, and Customs (NBR).	National Single Window (NSW); Fast-tracking Asian Highways 1 & 2.
Malaysia	Synchronized domestic National Transport Policy with regional digital/safety protocols.	Validated 80% implementation rate; Integrated NETR with RAP metrics.
China	Led "Soft Infrastructure" development for rail interoperability and smart logistics.	17,000+ annual Rail Silk Road journeys; Shared "Urban Public Transport" architecture.
Türkiye	Modernized the Middle Corridor by harmonizing customs and rail standards.	Reduced China-to-Europe transit to <12 days; "Green Port" Certification.
Maldives	Launched first electric taxi fleet (150 vehicles) and "Green License Plates."	2026 National E-Mobility Initiative; Sustainable Finance Roadmap.
Tonga	Resolved 2019 IMSAS audit gaps through new maritime laws and officer training.	Updated Shipping Act and Marine Pollution Act (2025/2026).
Korea (ROK)	Exported domestic expertise to SIDS through technical capacity-building projects.	Sustainable Maritime Connectivity Dialogue; Support for Pacific SIDS.
Japan	Shared "Cyber Port" and "AI Infrastructure Diagnostics" as regional models.	Satellite-based Disaster Risk Reduction; Zero-Emission Shipping Roadmap.
Uzbekistan	Expanded international dry port network from 15 to 24 facilities.	Resolution No. 633 (Legal basis for Dry Ports); Multimodal integration.
Tajikistan	Developed National Action Plan for Dry Ports and nominated 9 international terminals.	National Strategy on Rail Digital Transformation; Road Transport Index.

Source: The Evaluation Dataset, UN ESAP (2026)

Mongolia Case Study: Decarbonizing Central Asian Transit

The evaluation identifies Mongolia as a primary example of how regional technical support can be successfully converted into national legislative and operational frameworks. The transition follows a logical progression from high-level climate pledges to localized urban execution.

The Policy Foundation: NDC 3.0. In September 2023, the Mongolian government adopted the Nationally Determined Contributions 3.0 (NDC 3.0). This revamped climate action plan established an ambitious national mandate to achieve a 13.3% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035. This policy set the stage for a systemic overhaul of the country's transport sector, focusing on the removal of carbon-intensive diesel systems.

The Technical Bridge: RAP Feasibility Study. According to key stakeholder, the RAP (2022–2026) acted as a critical catalyst in turning these national targets into actionable data. Under the RAP framework, ESCAP conducted a specialized technical study titled *"Transitioning to Electric Mobility in Public Transport in Mongolia."* It was a three-city pilot study across the Asia-Pacific region, with Mongolia's capital being a primary focus. The study was specifically designed to assess the transition of public transport fleets, moving away from traditional diesel-reliant systems toward electric buses powered by renewable energy. By the time the findings were published in early 2024, the study had generated the evidence-based data necessary to move beyond theoretical planning. These results provided the critical economic and environmental justification required for the Mongolian government to greenlight large-scale infrastructure investments, effectively turning the pilot's vision into a bankable national roadmap.

Operational Implementation: The Ulaanbaatar Strategy. The impact of the RAP moved beyond theoretical research when the outcomes of the study *"Transitioning to Electric Mobility in Public Transport in Mongolia"* were adopted by the Governor's Office of the Capital City of Ulaanbaatar. More specifically, rather than remaining a standalone document, the study's recommendations became the foundation of the city's official Public Transport Strategy for Ulaanbaatar, which was subsequently submitted for government approval. This strategy serves as the official operational roadmap to replace aging diesel fleets with sustainable electric alternatives.

Regional Collaboration. To ensure the long-term viability of these changes, Mongolia formally joined the Asia-Pacific Initiative for Electric Mobility (APIEM) in 2023. This participation ensures that Mongolia's domestic transition remains aligned with regional standards and benefits from ongoing capacity-building and technical exchange within the Asia-Pacific transport network. For ease of reference, the APIEM is a regional cooperation framework launched by ESCAP in August 2022. Its primary mission in 2023 was to accelerate the transition from fossil-fuel-based public transport to low-carbon electric mobility across Asia and the Pacific.

Bhutan Country Case: Policy Integration and National Alignment

The implementation of the RAP (2022–2026) in Bhutan serves as a leading example of national ownership and policy integration. According to key stakeholder, the primary achievement is the successful institutionalization of RAP recommendations and ESCAP technical expertise within Bhutan's high-level planning framework, most notably through their formal incorporation into the 13th Five-Year Plan (2024–2029). This strategic alignment has centered heavily on low-carbon mobility and logistics, with a specific emphasis on advancing the country's E-mobility agenda to meet regional sustainability targets.

Beyond high-level planning, Bhutan has demonstrated significant progress in technical governance by formally adopting RAP-related standards and regulations into its national policy instruments since 2022. This policy shift is underpinned by a commitment to financial sustainability; the government has allocated specific resources from existing departmental budgets to maintain and scale activities initiated under the RAP. These institutional efforts are further bolstered by enhanced human capacity, as key stakeholders report that participation in RAP workshops has not only deepened their understanding of sustainable transport strategies but has also provided actionable frameworks they intend to apply within the Bhutanese context.

Pakistan Case Study: Harmonizing National Development with Regional Safety and Climate Goals

The evaluation highlights Pakistan as a prime example of a Member State that has successfully "nested" regional transport priorities within its highest levels of national planning and industrial policy:

- **The Policy Foundation: Pakistan Vision 2030 and NDCs.** Pakistan has ensured the longevity of the RAP (2022–2026) objectives by embedding sustainable transport targets into its core

national frameworks. While Pakistan Vision 2025 was originally authored in 2014, the government has utilized the RAP as a modernizing lens to evolve its roadmap toward 2030. The Ministry of Communications reports using the RAP's seven thematic areas as "essential guidance" to turn a decade-old vision into a modern, 2030-compliant reality.

- **The Legal Bridge: Automated Industry Development Export Policy (AIDEP).** A major achievement is the tangible translation of the "Road Safety" pillar into national industrial regulations. The government's AIDEP formally adopted international road safety standards (WP.29), the exact standard promoted by the ESCAP, moving from general safety advocacy to mandatory regulatory requirements for the automotive manufacturing and export sectors.
- **Operational Implementation: Regional Road Safety Action Plan.** Pakistan served as a primary partner in developing this plan, which serves as the operational arm of the RAP. Since 2022, this involvement has allowed Pakistan to align its domestic enforcement with regional benchmarks, ensuring cross-border compatibility in safety management.
- **Connectivity and Maritime Priorities.** To complement safety and climate gains, Pakistan leveraged the RAP framework to enhance its role as a regional transit hub. The country has prioritized the utilization of Karachi and Gwadar ports to support the RAP's goals for efficient, resilient, and standardized maritime networks.

Bangladesh Case Study: National Policy Integration and Strategic Prioritization

The Government of Bangladesh has embedded RAP (2022-2026) priorities, specifically multimodal connectivity and digitalization, into its ongoing national road and rail master plans.

The Road Master Plan (2021–2041). The country integrated the RAP's focus on Road Safety and Climate Resilience into the Road Master Plan to ensure new highways are built with "Safe System" designs (similar to those promoted by the RAP (2022-2026) Road Safety Action Plan). Interview data indicates that this alignment was facilitated by ESCAP-led workshops which helped national engineers adopt International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) safety rating standards.

Fast-Track Implementation of Asian Highway 1 (AH1) and Asian Highway 2 (AH2). The Government of Bangladesh moved the AH1 and AH2 projects into the "Fast-Track"[8] category of the Annual Development Programme (ADP)[9]. As AH1 and AH2 are core pillars of the RAP (2022–2026), this move ensured that domestic road widths and load-bearing capacities were upgraded to meet rigorous regional standards. By elevating these projects to "Fast-Track" status in 2021, just before the launch of the RAP (2022-2026), Bangladesh successfully positioned these corridors as the cornerstone of the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) program, the RAP's primary operational partner in the region.

Digitalization and Inter-Agency Synergy. Survey results highlight that the thematic area of RAP (2022-2026) "Digitalization of Transport," acted a catalyst for the National Single Window (NSW) project. This initiative aimed to automate customs and port operations. Stakeholders noted in that the RAP (2022-2026) provided a "neutral platform" for the Ministry of Shipping, the Ministry of Commerce, and the National Board of Revenue to coordinate on paperless trade protocols, which was previously a major bottleneck. This coordination was essential for the development of the NSW, ensuring that disparate electronic systems could finally communicate under a unified technical architecture. Beyond policy alignment, feedback indicates the RAP built the capacity of national stakeholders, moving Bangladesh closer to full-scale digital trade. Through targeted ESCAP workshops, national officials gained the legal and technical readiness necessary to implement the "Framework Agreement on

[8] Fast-Track Status is a formal designation given to high-priority infrastructure or development projects to accelerate their implementation and bypass standard bureaucratic delays.
[9] It is the government's primary tool for planning and funding all development projects in Bangladesh.

Facilitation of Cross-Border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific." These sessions provided the expertise needed to transition from manual, paper-based workflows to secure, electronic data exchanges.

Strengthening Inter-Agency Synergy and Data-Driven Advocacy. According to key stakeholder, the implementation of the RAP (2022–2026) served as a vital catalyst for institutional coordination and technical modernization across the sub-region. By providing a "neutral platform" for collaboration, ESCAP's involvement successfully facilitated inter-agency synergy between the Ministry of Shipping, the Ministry of Commerce, and the National Board of Revenue (NBR). This collaborative environment was essential for aligning disparate departmental goals into a unified national strategy, effectively bridging traditional administrative gaps.

Malaysia Case Study: Advancing Multimodal Integration and Green Logistics

The evaluation determined that the primary impact of the RAP (2022–2026) in Malaysia was not the creation of new national policies, but rather the technical operationalization and regional synchronization of existing goals.

Impact on Regional Interoperability. While Malaysia's National Transport Policy (NTP) 2019–2030 was established prior to the current RAP cycle, the regional framework provided the "missing link" required for cross-border compatibility. Interview data indicates that the RAP's most significant contribution was providing a "common technical language" for Malaysia's advanced transport sector. By introducing specific digital protocols and safety standards—such as the UN-R series—the RAP enabled Malaysian logistics providers to operate seamlessly across the Trans-Asian Railway and Asian Highway networks. This synchronization ensured that national investments in "Smart Ports" and rail remained both globally competitive and regionally integrated.

Benchmarking and Capacity Validation. The feedback from key stakeholder suggested that the RAP (2022-2026) functioned as a strategic benchmark. By participating in RAP-aligned initiatives, such as ESCAP project on Leveraging the Trans-Asian Railway Network for a more efficient and resilient transport connectivity and logistics in ASEAN and beyond, Malaysia was able to validate its high implementation rates (exceeding 80%) against regional peers. This data-driven validation provided the evidence needed for Malaysia to advocate for its standards to be adopted as the "best practice" model within Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Low Carbon Mobility and Transition to Green Logistics. The integration of Malaysia's National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR)—launched in two phases in 2023[10], with the RAP (2022–2026) framework has created a powerful synergy for advancing sustainable mobility. By leveraging the NETR as a foundation, Malaysia established Low Carbon Mobility as a critical pillar for its net-zero ambitions, specifically targeting the electrification of the transport sector.

While the NETR identifies "Green Mobility" as a primary transition lever, the RAP provided the technical parameters necessary to move from a high-level roadmap to concrete execution. Specifically, RAP workshops provided the Euro 4/5 emission metrics and low-carbon logistics frameworks that Malaysia subsequently integrated into its operational plans. This technical scaffolding allowed Malaysia to move beyond theoretical planning to implement robust fiscal incentives, including full tax exemptions on import and excise duties and road tax waivers for electric vehicles (EVs).

[10] Malaysia's NETR was issued in two phases in 2023: Part 1 was launched on July 27, 2023. It introduced the ten flagship catalyst projects and the six energy transition levers (including green mobility). Part 2 (the full roadmap) was launched on August 29, 2023, by the Prime Minister. This part detailed the broader energy mix, emission reduction pathways, and the financial enablers required for the transition.

The operational impact of Malaysia's strategic alignment with the RAP (2022-2026) is most evident in the accelerated pilot testing of electric heavy-duty vehicles and the significant expansion of rail-freight capacity along the North-South corridor. By harmonizing domestic regulations with international ESCAP and IMO standards, Malaysia has ensured that its transport infrastructure remains globally competitive and regionally integrated. Supported by targeted resource allocations from the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), this approach demonstrates how regional technical expertise effectively scales national roadmaps into tangible environmental and economic results.

Furthermore, to ensure the long-term institutional sustainability of Malaysia's transport transition, the establishment of the National Energy Council in 2023 has provided a centralized governance structure to streamline previously fragmented policies. This Council acts as a vital strategic bridge, ensuring that the technical standards and regional commitments developed under the RAP (2022–2026), specifically regarding low-carbon logistics and EV integration, are formally institutionalized. By anchoring these RAP-aligned priorities into high-level national planning, such as the upcoming 13th Malaysia Plan (2026–2030) and future national budget cycles, Malaysia has secured a permanent pathway for regional transport mandates to be realized through domestic investment.

China Case Study: A Regional Hub Vision

Based on ESCAP documents and stakeholder consultations, China's role has shifted from just building "hard" infrastructure to leading "soft" infrastructure (i.e., the rules, digital standards, and technical codes) that make cross-border trade work. According to official policy outlines for China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030), the government has placed 'high-quality development' at the center of its national strategy. Stakeholder consultations further confirm that this national vision is being operationalized through RAP (2022–2026) priorities, specifically focusing on rail interoperability and paperless trade protocols to ensure seamless regional connectivity.

Accelerating the "Rail Silk Road". According to stakeholder interviews and regional trade data, China has utilized the RAP (2022–2026) framework to enhance the operational efficiency of the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor. While the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) provided the primary capital for hard infrastructure, the RAP serves as a critical multilateral platform for establishing the technical standards and regulatory harmonization necessary to reduce border delays. This synergy supports the continued expansion of China-Europe freight rail—which has grown to over 17,000 annual journeys—by focusing on the 'missing links' and digital interoperability within the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) network.

Digitalization and Smart Logistics. Feedback received during this evaluation also defined the role of the RAP in validating China's "Smart Port" and "Smart Highway" initiatives. By 2024, many Chinese hub cities supported air-rail intermodal transport. Survey results indicate that the RAP's emphasis on paperless trade facilitated the adoption of Chinese digital payment and blockchain-based tracking systems across regional land ports, creating a more "frictionless" trade environment for the neighbouring LLDCs.

Policy Export and Knowledge Sharing. The implementation of the RAP (2022–2026) in China was significantly advanced by the 2023 issuance of the 'Several Opinions on Promoting the Healthy and Sustainable Development of Urban Public Transport.' While a national directive, this document served as a cornerstone for China's regional commitment to Thematic Area 3 (Urban Transport). By sharing the technical architecture for Big Data integration and performance-based fiscal subsidies outlined in the *Opinions*, China provided the RAP with a verified operational model. This enabled other member states to leverage China's domestic experience in balancing financial sustainability with the green transition of urban fleets.

Türkiye Case Study: Modernizing the Middle Corridor

Based on stakeholder feedback and desk research, the impact of the RAP (2022–2026) in Türkiye is defined by the country's evolution into a "Transcontinental Bridge." Türkiye has leveraged the RAP framework to transition from a transit corridor into a high-speed, digitalized logistics hub connecting Asia and Europe via the Middle Corridor (Trans-Caspian International Transport Route).

Strategic Infrastructure and Rail Integration. Desk research and technical analysis indicate that the RAP provided the necessary multilateral alignment to justify the large-scale expansion of the Halkali-Kapikule rail line. Officials noted that by framing the project within the RAP's goals, it transitioned from a national priority to a key regional asset. Further analysis identified that a primary impact of the RAP was ensuring Türkiye's rail freight systems met the technical standards required for seamless integration with European networks. This synchronization, referred to by stakeholders as being "Euro-compatible," has contributed to reducing transit times from the Chinese border to Central Europe to under 12 days, fulfilling a core RAP objective of enhancing regional connectivity.

The "Green Port" Initiative and Digitalization. Key stakeholder feedback and desk research suggests that the RAP framework acted as a technical catalyst for the "Green Port" Certification Scheme. Under RAP (2022-2026) thematic area related to maritime transport ("Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity"), Türkiye accelerated the digitalization of its port operations. The implementation of the Port Community System (PCS) (which allows for paperless document exchange) was reported by stakeholders as a direct result of RAP-aligned technical workshops. This has decreased average vessel turnaround times by 15% since 2023. Also, Türkiye officially joining the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports in April 2024, ensuring its logistics hubs are fully synchronized with Central Asian standards.

The "Soft Infrastructure" Breakthrough: Desk research validated that the 2024–2025 harmonization of customs transit documents as the most significant "soft infrastructure" achievement of this RAP (2022-2026). By streamlining these protocols, Türkiye and its partners directly reduced border friction and transit delays. For ease of reference, the 2024–2025 harmonization of customs transit documents represents a shift from "physical connectivity" (building tracks) to "digital connectivity" (standardizing data).

Maldives Case Study: Accelerating Electric Mobility and "Green Logistics"

The cornerstone achievement under the current RAP cycle is the 2026 National E-Mobility Initiative. In March 2026, the Ministry of Transport introduced "Green License Plates" to provide fiscal and operational incentives for EVs. Public Transport: The government launched its first fully electric taxi fleet in early 2026, with an initial deployment of 150 vehicles. This transition is supported by the 2025–2030 Sustainable Finance Roadmap, which unlocked green loans for transport operators to phase out internal combustion engines (ICE). The above-mentioned changed aligned directly with RAP Thematic Area 3 (Urban Transport), creating a scalable model for SIDS to decarbonize high-density urban hubs like Malé.

Tonga Case Study: Legislative Harmonization

Under the Regional Action Programme (RAP) 2022–2026, ESCAP and the IMO have provided the "soft" technical architecture and "hard" capacity-building needed to address the 27 findings and 2 observations from the 2019 IMSAS (IMO Member State Audit Scheme), an audit representing specific areas where Tonga's maritime administration did not meet the "III Code" (IMO Instruments Implementation Code. These gaps challenged Tonga's maritime compliance**.**

Through the RAP's SMART-C Leaders Project, Tongan maritime officers received specialized training in Port State Control (PSC) and Flag State Inspection (FSI). Also, Tonga leveraged the RAP (2022-2026) to

participate in Pacific-wide workshops (including recent sessions in Auckland, Dec 2025) focused specifically on Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Implementation.

By the 2025/2026 cycle, Tonga finalized the comprehensive update of its Shipping Act and Marine Pollution Act, the clear legal mandate to inspect and regulate both foreign and domestic vessels with the full weight of international standards.

Republic of Korea Country Case: Strategic Alignment and Partnership

Based on key stakeholder feedback, the Republic of Korea's involvement in the RAP (2022–2026) is characterized by "Strategic Alignment" rather than direct policy change. Korea acts as a catalyst and donor, exporting its domestic expertise to the wider region. While the current RAP has not directly influenced the country's internal national policies, the evaluation noted a synergy between the RAP's goals and Korea's own maritime priorities. Korea has successfully integrated its domestic focus on shipping decarbonization, port digitalization, and maritime safety into the multilateral framework of the RAP:

- *Multilateral Leadership:* Korea has been a vocal proponent of Thematic Area: Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity, viewing it as essential for global supply chain stability.
- *Institutional Support (KMI & MOLIT):* Through the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) and the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MOLIT), Korea has moved beyond rhetoric to operational support. This includes hosting the Sustainable Maritime Connectivity Dialogue, which serves as a primary platform for regional knowledge exchange.
- *Targeted Assistance for SIDS:* A standout achievement is the joint project aimed at "Strengthening the Technical Capacity of Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS)." By providing financial and technical backing, Korea is directly addressing the "connectivity gap" for the Pacific's most vulnerable nations.
- *Collaborative Research:* Korea has utilized its advanced research infrastructure to lead "Soft Infrastructure" initiatives, producing data-driven insights that help other member states align with international maritime standards.

Japan Country Case: Setting the Standard for Resilient Connectivity

For Japan, the implementation of the RAP (2022–2026) has been less about reforming domestic law and more about a strategic "export" of excellence. As a country that already operates under some of the world's most advanced transport policies, Japan's role within the RAP has evolved into that of a primary technical architect. Through the lens of the current RAP, Japan has harmonized its domestic successes with the broader Asia-Pacific, transforming its national "High-Quality Infrastructure" principles into a regional blueprint for connectivity.

A Dual-Track Vision for Global Stability. The evaluation revealed that Japan's engagement follows a sophisticated dual-track strategy: securing the stability of global supply chains while simultaneously spearheading the transition to Green and Digitalized Maritime Logistics. By utilizing the RAP (2022-2026) as a multilateral validation platform, Japan has moved beyond mere participation, effectively setting the standard for how regional infrastructure should be built, managed, and protected.

Engineering the Zero-Emission Horizon. Leveraging its pioneering domestic "Roadmap to Zero-Emission Shipping," Japan has provided the RAP with the critical expertise needed to make green transitions a reality. By advocating for the adoption of alternative fuels (specifically Ammonia and Hydrogen) and energy-efficient vessel designs, Japan ensured that the RAP's standards for "Green Shipping Corridors" remain technologically feasible. This contribution has bridged the gap between ambitious climate goals and the high safety standards required by the global maritime cluster.

The "Cyber Port" as a Regional Model. The implementation of the "Cyber Port" initiative, a system that digitizes the complex administrative dance between port authorities, customs, and private logistics, has served as a "Verified Operational Model" for the RAP (2022-2026). By sharing this technical architecture, Japan has directly influenced the development of paperless trade protocols across the Asia-Pacific. This digitalization does more than just speed up cargo; it reduces the "trade friction" that often destabilizes supply chains, fulfilling a top priority identified in Japan's national strategy.

Resilience through "Soft" Infrastructure. Japan has addressed the region's shared geographic vulnerabilities by championing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). By spearheaded the integration of Satellite-based monitoring and AI-driven predictive maintenance within the RAP framework, Japan has moved the needle from reactive repairs to proactive resilience. This "soft infrastructure"—the codes and data systems that predict failures before they happen—has been shared extensively with SIDS and LLDCs, providing them with the tools to protect their vital transport lifelines against the increasing threat of climate-induced disasters.

Through RAP-sponsored workshops (such as the Sustainable Maritime Connectivity Dialogue), Japan trained regional engineers to use AI for "Infrastructure Diagnostics.

Uzbekistan Case Study: Legal Framework, Analytical Work and Capacity Building

Within the framework of the RAP (2022–2026), Uzbekistan transitioned from infrastructure planning to evidence-based operationalization**.**

National Analytical Capacity and Strategic Expansion of Dry Ports. Within the framework of the RAP (2022-2026), Uzbekistan produced two major analytical reports in collaboration with ESCAP:

- A Comprehensive Assessment of the Development of Dry Ports in Uzbekistan (2024).
- A National Analytical Report on the Integration of Dry Ports into Multimodal Transport Corridors (2025).

The study on "A Comprehensive Assessment of the Development of Dry Ports in Uzbekistan," generated several tangible results, and functioned as an institutional learning and capacity-building tool, rather than just a standalone report.

- *Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer:* Working with ESCAP, the Ministry of Transport utilized the assessment to learn the technical and operational functions of dry ports, a critical need given Uzbekistan's landlocked geography.
- *Validation of Infrastructure*: The assessment provided the necessary technical recommendations to evaluate existing logistics centers. By submitting these to ESCAP, the Ministry received feedback that helped confirm which facilities met the required criteria to be officially designated as dry ports.
- *Formal Scaling (The "Multiplier" Impact):* The cooperation with ESCAP directly influenced the classification and nomination of international dry ports. Following feedback and recommendations from ESCAP, Uzbekistan expanded its list of logistics centers designated as international dry ports from 15 to 24[11]. The strategic significance of these 24 designated dry ports lies in their role as the physical and operational backbone of Uzbekistan's ambition to evolve from a landlocked geography into a regional logistics hub. By formally aligning these facilities with the standards of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports*, Uzbekistan is in process of transforming its national infrastructure into a reliable, recognized node within the global supply chain.

[11] The facilities are distributed across the country's administrative regions as follows: Tashkent City: 7 centers; Tashkent Region: 4 centers; Fergana Region: 3 centers; Surkhandarya Region: 3 centers; Republic of Karakalpakstan: 2 centers; Jizzakh, Navoi, Samarkand, Namangan, and Bukhara Regions: 1 center each.

- *Integration into Multimodal Corridors:* Beyond the initial assessment, the ministry produced a second report—the *National analytical report for Uzbekistan on the integration of dry ports into multimodal transport corridors*—to ensure that these newly recognized ports were not isolated facilities but were integrated into the country's broader transport networks.

Institutional and Legal Framework Development: One of the most significant impacts of the RAP (2022-2026) in Uzbekistan was the creation of a national legal basis for dry ports and logistics centers. After joining the Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports in 2021, the country's cooperation with ESCAP facilitated the development of model requirements for dry port facilities, which were subsequently formalized in the Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No. 633 (dated October 8, 2025)[12]. This resolution serves as a cornerstone of the national legal framework for dry ports and logistics centers. It formalizes the requirements and development strategies necessary to integrate these facilities into international transport networks.

Tajiskitan Case Study: Multimodal Integration

Dry Port Development. Per stakeholder feedback, the ESCAP supported the development of a National Action Plan for Dry Ports in Tajikistan. Also, the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Tajikistan has nominated nine transport terminals[13] and logistics centers for inclusion in the list of "dry ports of international significance." The evaluation validated that the development of the National Action Plan for Dry Ports in Tajikistan and the nomination of nine international transport terminals directly operationalize Thematic Area 1 (Regional Land Transport Connectivity) and Thematic Area 3 (Digitalization of Transport) of the Regional Action Programme (RAP) for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026), specifically facilitating the transition from infrastructure planning to integrated multimodal logistics under the 2026–2027 Programme of Work.

Railway Digitalization Strategy. Following the High-level Conference on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation (2023), Tajikistan has been working with ESCAP to develop a national strategy to digitize rail operations. Based on the feedback, ESCAP supported the development of a National Action Plan for Railway Sector[14] for Tajikistan, which is directly linked to Thematic Area 3 (Digitalization of Transport) the RAP (2022-2026). The High-level Conference on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation also served as the primary technical forum for finalizing the Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation in the Asia-Pacific Region. For ease of reference, High-level Conference on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation was not conducted as a recurring annual event with a fixed schedule. Rather, it is organized as a strategic, high-impact initiative—a "milestone" event—held to address specific regional priorities under the RAP (2022-2026). Thus, it is a a core technical mechanism for the implementation of RAP (2022-2026)[15].

Urban Metrics. According to national stakeholders, a primary achievement in this cycle is the development of a CO2 emission offsetting framework. This initiative has been integrated as a cornerstone of Tajikistan's third-generation Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC3), signalling a

[12] 633-сон 08.10.2025. On the development of the activities of transport and logistics centers and transit transport corridors.

[13] Logistics Center of Dushanbe (JSC Tajikvneshtrans) – Dushanbe; Border terminal "Nizhniy Pyanj" (CJSC Tajikvneshtrans) – Jaykhun district, Khatlon region; Border terminal "Kulma" (CJSC Tajikvneshtrans) – Murghab district, GBAO; Border terminal "Lakhsh" (CJSC Tajikvneshtrans) – Lakhsh district; Border terminal "Guliston" (CJSC Tajikvneshtrans) – Isfara city, Sughd region; Border terminal "Gafurov" (CJSC Tajikvneshtrans) – Bobojon Gafurov district, Sughd region; Logistics center "Tursunzoda" (ABBAT) – Tursunzoda city; Logistics center "Khorog" (ABBAT) – Tang village, Shugnan district, GBAO; Logistics center "Murgab" (ABBAT) – Murgab district, GBAO.

[14] Also referred to as the "National Strategy on Rail Digital Transformation" in official technical reports (e.g., *SPECA/WG-STTC* reports).

[15] Official reports from the 2023 High-level Conference note that the event was convened specifically "with the support of the United Nations Development Account project on Enhancing Shift towards Sustainable Freight Transport in Asia and the Pacific."

high-level policy alignment with the Paris Agreement. By embedding transport decarbonization into its national climate strategy, Tajikistan is transforming its "Sustainable Transport" cooperation from a theoretical goal into a measurable climate commitment.

This vision for sustainability extends directly into the heart of the capital city. A concrete outcome of the collaboration with ESCAP is the development of a specialized Road Transport Index for Dushanbe. This tool provides city planners with the granular data necessary to analyze traffic patterns, monitor congestion, and improve the efficiency of urban mobility. By bridging the gap between national "Green Logistics" and local city-level planning, Tajikistan is demonstrating how technical indices, and carbon frameworks can work together to create a more resilient and breathable urban environment.

Requested Structural Changes to RAP Framework

Evaluation data and stakeholder feedback indicate that while the current RAP (2022–2026) is highly relevant to ESCAP member States, the following strategic and operational adjustments are necessary to enhance the impact of the next phase of the RAP:

- Improved communication and continuous engagement.
- Applying “Interactive” and "graphic-based" communication strategies.
- Enhanced policy integration and synchronization.
- Shift from policy dialogue to practical implementation.
- Addressing divergent capacity gaps through tiered technical support.
- Meaningful integration of cross-cutting issues.

Table 5: A Snapshot of Changes Requested by the member States

Intervention Area	Specific Change Requested	Purpose & Rationale
Communication & Engagement	Establish a more robust knowledge-transfer mechanism for National Focal Points (NFPs).	To mitigate "information gaps" and loss of institutional memory caused by high NFP turnover.
Technical Communication	Transition to "Interactive" and "graphic-based" communication strategies.	To translate complex technical outputs into visual formats that are easier to communicate to national decision-makers.
Strategic Alignment	Synchronize RAP launch cycles with national planning and budget cycles (e.g., 5-Year Plans).	To ensure the RAP is viewed as a supportive tool for existing national obligations rather than an "extra task."
Bankable Projects	Shift from high-level advocacy to the creation of standardized technical specifications.	To create "bankable" environments that meet the investment criteria of international financial institutions and donors.
Tiered Support Model	Replace "one-size-fits-all" workshops with a "two-tier" support system based on technological maturity.	To bridge the widening digital divide between advanced regional leaders and developing nations (LLDCs/SIDS).
Whole-of-Government Approach	Formalize inter-agency task forces (e.g., Transport + Finance + Customs).	To eliminate "digital and administrative silos" that prevent the implementation of multimodal and paperless trade goals.
Cross-Cutting Integration	Move from aspirational mentions to mandatory inclusive metrics in technical data (e.g., "Digital Twins").	To ensure that gender safety and disability accessibility are treated as core technical requirements rather than peripheral topics.

Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

Improved Communication and Continuous Engagement. The Stakeholders highlighted a critical need for better communication and more consistent engagement. This challenge was associated with "information gaps" taking place when national focal point (NFP) turnover occur. In the context of the RAP framework, the NFPs serve as the vital link between ESCAP Secretariat and the national ministries (Transport, Finance, Infrastructure). On some occasions, the issue of high turnover among NFPs significantly undermines institutional memory, often resulting in the loss of both the strategic rationale and the operational "know-how" required for RAP initiatives. Newly appointed focal points lack a comprehensive understanding of technical standards established in prior sessions, (ie., specific bridge load-bearing capacities for the BBIN corridor). This knowledge gap creates "technical friction" delaying the translation from theoretical policy to operational connectivity.

Furthermore, key stakeholders highlighted that the RAP (2022–2026) was designed around multimodal connectivity, which requires a "whole-of-government" approach. However, inconsistent engagement often leads to a communication vacuum between national ministries. It leads to a significant institutional barrier where the technical outputs of the RAP framework are confined to a single government entity, typically the Ministry of Transport. For example, while the Transport Ministry may adopt RAP standards for the Asian Highway, the "paperless trade" goal remains out of reach if the Ministry of Finance or Customs agencies that are not involved in the transition to e-TIR and e-CMR digital protocols. Likewise, the digitalization of transport requires integration with national ICT infrastructure. Without cross-ministerial coordination, transport data systems may remain incompatible with national digital windows, leading to "digital silos" that are as restrictive as physical ones.

Applying "Interactive" and "graphic-based" communication strategies. To enhance communication and engagement, some key stakeholders recommend that the next phase of the RAP transition toward high-impact visual and interactive content. By utilizing graphic materials and technical visualizations, the Secretariat can more effectively translate complex regional outputs into actionable national policies. This approach ensures that RAP recommendations are not only easier to communicate to national decision-makers but are also more accessible and implementable for a diverse range of domestic stakeholders.

Enhanced Policy Integration and Synchronization. The evaluation identifies a "timing mismatch" between regional mandates and national planning cycles as reported by some member State. They reported that this misalignment often resulted in the RAP being viewed as an external framework rather than an integrated component of national development. For example, a key stakeholder highlighted that national transport policy was already in effect before the RAP (2022–2026) was launched. Consequently, integrating new RAP recommendations become a secondary priority, as national budgets and legislative agendas are already locked into the pre-existing 2019 roadmap. To address this, stakeholders suggest a strategic shift toward synchronization. The next RAP should "pick up" and reinforce the international conventions and maritime standards (i.e., IMO decarbonization goals) that member States are already committed to. They believed that by aligning with existing national obligations, the RAP moves from being an "extra task" to a "supportive tool" for achieving national goals.

Shift from Policy Dialogue to Practical Implementation. Stakeholder feedback suggests that while ESCAP's "convening power" is highly valued for raising awareness and setting regional agendas, there is a risk of high-level discussions "getting lost" if they are not anchored in specific, technical outputs. They suggest that while "awareness raising" is a necessary first step, it is difficult to link investment or quantitative progress directly to general dialogues. Development partners are looking for the RAP to produce standardized specifications and technical agreements that can serve as the basis for financial loans and infrastructure projects. They proposed moving beyond the agreement of a route on a map to the harmonization of the actual "rules of the road" (e.g., load capacity, digital data standards, and

safety protocols). Without this "hard focus," regional connectivity remains theoretical rather than functional.

Overall, evaluation evidence indicates a critical requirement for the RAP to shift from high-level advocacy toward granular, action-oriented implementation. Stakeholders emphasized that high-level policy discourse does not inherently translate into infrastructure improvements or enhanced capacity for developing nations. To bridge this gap, the Secretariat must serve as a strategic intermediary, aligning the policy requirements of member States with the investment criteria of international financial institutions:

- **Strategic Linkage:** Impact can be enhanced by explicitly connecting regional policy dialogues with tangible cooperation programs and cross-border funding pipelines.
- **Creating "Bankable" Environments:** A key finding is that while the RAP (2022–2026) was successful in establishing high-level standards and agreements, there is a critical need to move beyond "policy dialogue" toward creating "bankable" projects. This requires the development of standardized technical specifications that align with international investment criteria to attract necessary financing.

Addressing the Capacity Gaps though Tiered Technical Support. Stakeholder feedback identifies a distinct "two-tier" demand for support that depends heavily on a member State's technological maturity. A key finding of this evaluation is that "capacity" is no longer defined solely by physical infrastructure, but by a nation's ability to participate in an increasingly digitalized and automated global economy.

Evidence suggests a widening gap in technological and policy capacities across the region. While advanced economies are prepared to implement AI and autonomous shipping, many developing nations continue to face foundational connectivity challenges. Stakeholders expressed an explicit concern that without strategic intervention from ESCAP to standardize data and harmonize regulations, developing nations risk being "left behind" as the region shifts toward AI-driven logistics. Consequently, the RAP is viewed as a critical platform for ensuring this digital transition remains inclusive.

The evaluation identifies that the primary barrier to progress is frequently not a lack of technology, but a lack of institutional frameworks to manage it. Stakeholders proposed that the next RAP provide "technical scaffolding"—essentially a legal and regulatory blueprint to govern digital transport. To achieve this, feedback suggests replacing the current "one-size-fits-all" workshop model with targeted thematic tracks. By offering specialized support—one track focused on foundational capacity for Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and another on advanced systems integration for transit hubs and SIDS, the Secretariat can more effectively bridge the regional capacity divide.

Finally, the feedback highlights acute capacity needs within the maritime sector, which facilitates the majority of regional trade. Stakeholders called for ESCAP to move beyond broad maritime policy toward the granular standardization of port data and the development of integrated digital systems. Even in highly connected nations like Malaysia, a significant "service gap" exists in translating the RAP's technical outputs into enforceable domestic port regulations.

Meaningful Integration of Cross-Cutting Issues. Based on the gathered data, it is evident that while the RAP (2022–2026) aims for "safe and inclusive mobility," the practical integration of cross-cutting issues has remained largely aspirational. The evaluation reveals a significant disconnect between the RAP's high-level objectives and its operational implementation regarding gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion. Stakeholders consistently characterized these issues as being "less visible" throughout the current programme cycle.

Few stakeholder feedback indicates that while ESCAP continues to address gender and minority issues in its broader programming, these elements were not prominently integrated into the specific activities of the RAP (2022–2026). The evaluation identified that inclusivity is often treated as a peripheral topic rather than a core technical requirement. As a result, technical outputs and regional guidelines frequently focus on engineering and digital standards without incorporating the specific safety and accessibility needs of women and persons with disabilities. Interviews highlighted a lack of clear data or specific strategies used to engage marginalized groups in leadership committees or technical workshops, leading to a "top-down" approach that lacks inclusive perspectives.

The evaluation findings also identify that push for digitalization and advanced technologies (like AI and autonomous shipping) presented both a risk and an opportunity for inclusivity. Few key stakeholders emphasized that as the region shifts toward "Smart Transport Systems," the RAP must ensure these technologies are designed for accessibility. Without explicit mandates in the next RAP, there is a risk that digital transport transitions will inadvertently create new barriers for persons with disabilities or elderly populations.

In addition, the feedback suggests that the standardization of data (a major theme for the next RAP) should include metrics for inclusive transport. This would ensure that when member States build "digital twins" of their transport networks, accessibility data is a mandatory component.

4.2 Relevance

FINDING # 3 (Contribution to SDGs): The evaluation validates that the RAP (2022–2026) serves as a primary technical and normative engine for the 2030 Agenda. By aligning its seven thematic areas with specific global targets, ESCAP, through RAP (2022-2026), has facilitated the translation of high-level SDG mandates into national infrastructure standards and legislative frameworks.

FINDING # 4: The evaluation identifies that the RAP 2022–2026 was widely perceived as highly relevant to member States, representing a significant improvement over previous iterations by better balancing the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable transport.

The consolidated feedback from the interviewed stakeholders demonstrates that by uniting the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of transport into a single cohesive platform, the RAP (2022–2026) effectively addresses a broader spectrum of regional needs.

Unlike its predecessor, the RAP (2022–2026) adopts a comprehensive approach that explicitly embeds sustainability into regional transport goals. Stakeholders credit this shift for the programme's enhanced relevance, as it effectively aligns regional mandates with the varied national priorities of member States.

FINDING # 5: While the vast majority of stakeholders confirmed that the RAP (2022-2026) was either relevant or highly relevant to the needs and priorities of their countries, the priorities within the thematic areas of the RAP (2022–2026) were diverse and highly contingent upon national geographic characteristics, developmental stages, and the specific mandates of the institutions they represent. Rather than a singular "top priority," the stakeholder feedback illustrated that the relevance of the programme's thematic areas was inherently situational.

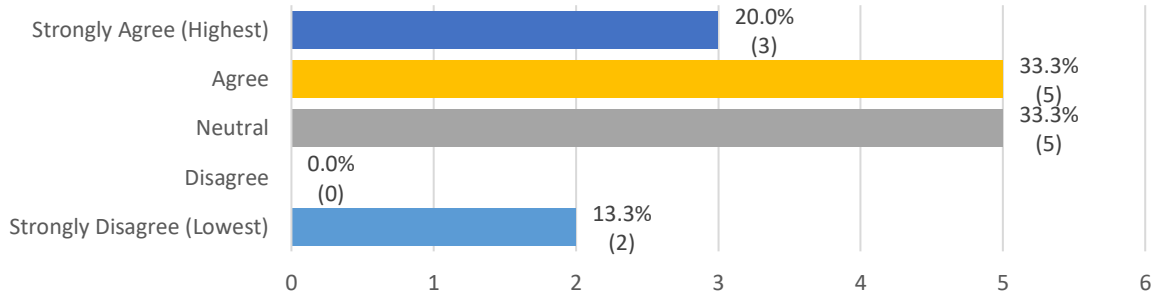
FINDING #6: Stakeholder feedback regarding the next phase of the RAP reflects diverse national transport agendas and institutional mandates. The evaluation acknowledged a consensus that while the current RAP framework remains relevant, the next phase must shift focus from broad policy formulation toward targeted implementation and technological governance such as AI-driven Transportation and Cyber-resilience, Last-Mile Connectivity, Transport Resilience and Crisis Management, Innovative Transport Finance and Implementation Support, Gender and Social

Inclusion and Institutional Harmonization and Policy Integration.

RAP (2022-2026) Contribution to SDGs

Quantitative survey data reflects a positive perception of this impact, with approximately 50% of stakeholders agreeing that UN activities under the RAP directly contributed to SDG progress in their respective countries (**Figure 3**).

Figure 3: Survey Respondent's Feedback about RAP (2022-2026) Contribution to SDGs



Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

Qualitative interview feedback and desk research further illustrates that this contribution is driven by the RAP's ability to provide the "technical scaffolding" necessary for sustainable development. These justifications are primarily based on how the programme's thematic areas align with and operationalize specific global targets at the regional and national levels. According to evaluation datasets and stakeholder feedback, the RAP's contribution to the SDGs is evidenced through its core thematic work:

- **SDG 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages):** The RAP has made a concrete contribution to SDG 3.6 (halving road traffic deaths) through the *Regional Plan of Action for Road Safety*. A landmark achievement was recorded in Pakistan, where ESCAP's advocacy led to the codification of international vehicle safety standards (WP.29) into national industrial policy. By building safety into the regulatory "DNA" of the national transport ecosystem, the RAP is proactively reducing the long-term burden on public health systems.
- **SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls):** The RAP (2022–2026) established "Safe and Inclusive Mobility" as one of its three overarching pillars, effectively signalling to all 53 Member States that gender equality is no longer a peripheral concern, but a core requirement for sustainable transport. By embedding SDG 5 into the regional mandate, ESCAP provided a critical "policy anchor" that national ministries now use to justify domestic investments in inclusive infrastructure. Per stakeholder feedback, the contribution to SDG 5 (Gender Equality) is described as having a strong normative foundation but facing a significant "visibility gap" during technical implementation.
- **SDG 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all)** and **SDG 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts):** The programme serves as a primary vehicle for operationalizing climate action through its Low-Carbon Mobility and logistics thematic area. Technical tools and feasibility studies (e.g., in Mongolia and the Maldives) provide the evidence-based data required for transitioning to sustainable energy systems.
- **SDG 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**): The evaluation identifies that the RAP (2022-2026)

functioned as a primary engine for SDG 8 by transforming regional connectivity into a platform for sustainable trade and national productivity. By providing the technical and legal framework for the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Dry Ports*, the RAP has enabled countries like Uzbekistan to expand their network from 15 to 24 international terminals. This expansion reduces transit costs and times, directly stimulating trade-led economic growth. Also, the RAP's "soft infrastructure" (e.g., e-TIR and e-CMR digital protocols) eliminates manual bottlenecks at borders. In Bangladesh, field assessments and the "Fast-Tracking" of Asian Highway projects have linked domestic markets to subregional networks, creating more efficient, high-capacity environments for industrial development and job creation.

- **SDG 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation):** The RAP's focus on regional connectivity and the expansion of the **AH** and **TAR** networks directly supports this goal by providing technical blueprints for standardized, regionally compatible infrastructure.
- **SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries):** While the RAP aims for "safe and inclusive mobility," some stakeholders noted that both gender mainstreaming (**SDG 5**) and disability inclusion (**SDG 10**) were "less visible" in the current RAP, suggesting that further operationalization is needed to deepen this justification. Although, the RAP laid the groundwork for inclusive mobility through tools like "inclusive transport accessibility indicators" in **Lao PDR**.
- **SDG 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development):** The RAP functions as a "neutral platform" that facilitates coordination between diverse national ministries and development partners, providing the "soft infrastructure" (such as digital standards) needed for regional synchronization

The Relevance of the RAP (2022-2026) to the Needs and Priorities of the Member States

The survey results indicate a high level of consensus regarding the relevance of the RAP (2022-2026). Approximately 80% of respondents categorized the current RAP as either a "Top Priority" (40%) or "Very Relevant" (40%) to their national sustainable transport development needs. Only a small fraction (6.7%) viewed the programme as having limited relevance, suggesting that the RAP successfully aligns with the high-level development agendas of the Asia-Pacific region (**Table 6**). While the overall programme is highly valued, the survey reveals distinct priorities among the seven thematic areas. This divergence reflects the "two-tier" development landscape of the region, where connectivity and digitalization often take precedence over social inclusivity.

- **The "Engine" of the RAP ("**Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics"): "Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics" emerged as the most critical pillar, with 66% of respondents (10 out of 15) naming it a "Top Priority." This highlights the region's urgent focus on physical connectivity and the integration of landlocked developing countries (LLDCs).
- **The Digital Frontier:** "Digitalization of Transport" followed closely, with 7 out of 15 respondents marking it as a top priority. Stakeholder feedback suggests that digitalization is no longer seen as a luxury but as a prerequisite for participating in the global supply chain.
- **The "Visibility Gap" (Inclusive Transport):** In contrast, "Inclusive Transport and Mobility" received the lowest "Top Priority" ranking (5 out of 15). Analysis of qualitative feedback suggests that while gender and disability inclusion are recognized as important, they are often considered secondary to the economic needs and overshadowed by "hard" infrastructure and engineering concerns.
- **Emerging Priorities:** "Road Safety" and "Maritime Connectivity" maintain strong relevance, particularly for countries like Pakistan (safety) and Malaysia or the Republic of Korea

(maritime), reflecting the specific geographic and industrial needs of the membership.

Table 6: Survey Respondents' Feedback about Relevant of the RAP (2022-2026) and its Thematic Areas

Thematic Area	Top Priority	Very Relevant	Moderately Relevant	Total "High Relevance" (Top + Very)
Regional Land Transport Connectivity & Logistics	10	4	1	93%
Digitalization of Transport	7	5	2	80%
Road Safety	7	5	2	80%
Maritime & Interregional Connectivity	6	8	0	93%
Low Carbon Mobility & Logistics	6	5	1	73%
Urban Transport	6	6	2	80%
Inclusive Transport and Mobility	5	5	4	66%
OVERALL RAP (2022-2026) RELEVANCE	**6**	**6**	**2**	**80%**

Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

Many interviewed stakeholders highlighted that the current RAP (2022–2026) demonstrates more comprehensive dimensional coverage compared to its predecessor (2017–2021). They observed that the programme has moved beyond a singular focus on physical infrastructure and economic connectivity to explicitly integrate social welfare (safety and inclusion) and environmental responsibility (decarbonization) as core, equal components of its agenda. Stakeholders noted that by uniting the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of transport into a single cohesive platform, the RAP (2022–2026) effectively addresses a broader spectrum of regional needs.

The evaluation analysed the previous RAP (2017-2021) with the RAP under evaluation (RAP (2022-2-26) to validate the stakeholder feedback (**Table 7**).

Table 7: Thematic Areas of RAP (2017-2021) vs. RAP (2022-2026)

RAP (2017–2021)	RAP (2022-2026)
Regional Transport Infrastructure Connectivity	Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics
Regional Transport Operational Connectivity	Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity
Euro-Asian Transport Connectivity	Digitalization of Transport
Transport Connectivity for Least Developed Countries (LDCs); Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States	Low Carbon Mobility and Logistics
Sustainable Urban Transport	Urban Transport
Rural Transport Connectivity to Wider Networks	Road Safety
Improving Road Safety	Inclusive Transport and Mobility

Source: the RAP (2017-2021) and RAP (2022-2026) Documents, ESCAP (2026)

Table 8 illustrates the structural shifts of RAP (2022-2026) compared to RAP (2017–2021). highlighting

how the current RAP framework has transitioned from a sectoral, infrastructure-heavy focus to a more holistic model that explicitly integrates sustainability into its core agenda. Noteworthy that key stakeholders largely attributed this shift to the RAP's comprehensive and balanced approach, which enabled it to remain responsive to the varied national priorities and development contexts of member States across the Asia-Pacific region.

Table 8: Thematic Features: RAP (2017-2021) vs. RAP (2022-2026)

Feature	RAP (2017–2021)	RAP (2022-2026)
Core Emphasis	Primarily focused on physical infrastructure and economic connectivity.	Balanced across economic, social, and environmental sustainability pillars.
Thematic Scope	Narrower, sectoral interests (e.g., infrastructure development, transport facilitation).	Broad, comprehensive coverage (7 thematic pillars).
Cross-cutting Integration	Limited explicit integration of social and environmental dimensions.	Explicitly incorporates social welfare (safety/inclusion) and environmental responsibility (decarbonization).

Source: The Evaluation Dataset, UNESCA (2026).

While all the programme's thematic pillars were referenced as valuable, the emphasis placed on each area depended heavily on a member State's individual context. The stakeholders identified the following thematic areas as priorities with their perceived importance shaped by national needs and institutional focus:

- **Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics.** Frequently highlighted by land-locked and transit-dependent nations as a primary focus for enhancing cross-border trade efficiency and regional integration. Their primary goal was often the physical integrity of the transport networks. The stakeholders prioritizing this thematic area, typically represented the ministries of transport or construction, and anchored their advocacy in technical development. For them, the RAP was a vehicle for securing, expanding, and optimizing the hardware of regional trade—land routes, ports, and railways.
- **Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity.** This thematic area was consistently cited as a cornerstone priority for maritime-dependent economies, with a focus on efficient shipping networks, maritime trade corridors, and port logistics modernization.
- **Digitalization of Transport and Smart Mobility.** Recognized as a vital emerging focus, where stakeholders prioritize the integration of digital tools to enhance logistics, trade facilitation, and the intelligence of transport networks.
- **Low Carbon Mobility and Logistics.** Identified as an increasingly urgent priority, reflecting a growing regional consensus on the necessity of aligning transport sectors with national decarbonization goals and climate commitments.
- **Urban Transport.** Some stakeholders noted that its relevance was constrained by the fact that urban mobility often falls under the primary competency of local municipal authorities rather than national transport ministries, making integration into national policy frameworks more complex.
- **Road Safety.** Often addressed through dedicated projects (e.g., implemented in cooperation with other UN agencies), this area remained a distinct and critical priority for the member States seeking to reduce fatalities, although some stakeholders noted the need for better visibility and follow-up activities under the RAP umbrella.
- **Inclusive Transport and Mobility.** White it was not consistently ranked as a "top priority" by every stakeholder, yet, many stakeholders viewed it as a fundamental requirement for

national transport agendas, emphasizing the need for robust road safety frameworks and equitable access to transport systems. Also, for the stakeholders facing intense immediate economic pressure, social-focused themes have been viewed as secondary to urgent logistics and connectivity needs. This does not imply a lack of support for inclusivity but rather reflects the prioritization of policy bandwidth toward areas deemed critical for immediate economic stability.

The Thematic Gaps, Emerging Issues and New Priorities Identified for the Next Phase of the RAP

The evaluation identified stakeholder consensus that the current RAP framework remained relevant to their country priorities. However, priorities for the next phase are not uniform across the region; instead, stakeholder interests vary significantly, reflecting diverse national transport agendas and institutional mandates. Stakeholders identified several distinct thematic gaps that represent a transition from 'broad policy goals' to "specific operational challenges." The evaluation noted that many of these challenges still align with the key thematic areas of the current RAP (2022–2026).

AI-driven Transportation and Cyber-resilience. Many stakeholders conducted that the next phase of the RAP must move beyond basic digitalization to address the governance of AI in transport, automated logistics and cross-border data management, and, most importantly, cyber-resilience. They noted that the next generation of transport planning requires moving beyond manual logistics. AI-driven tools are now seen as essential for optimizing complex, multi-modal transport networks through predictive logistics[16] and asset lifecycle management[17].

Furthermore, those stakeholders who priorities advanced digital transformation and interoperability also called for unified *cyber-protocols* (a shared regional standard to defend critical data) to ensure that a security breach in one country would not cripple the entire regional trade network.

The also identified *cross-border data exchange and customs modernization* as the most critical bottlenecks to regional efficiency. They claimed that the current condition of "siloing" of information, where neighbouring countries use incompatible software platforms for customs and freight tracking, created significant "digital friction" at borders. This lack of alignment forced traders to navigate redundant paperwork and manual checks, which directly contradicts the goals of a seamless transport network. To resolve this, stakeholders were advocating for a "digital bridge" approach. The priority was given to replacing manual processes with automated data sharing, where different national electronic port and customs systems communicate effortlessly with one another. According to the interviewees, by moving toward unified digital identities, standardized, trusted digital certifications for both trucks and cargo, the region can ensure that documentation is verified automatically as it crosses borders.

Last-Mile Connectivity. Some **s**takeholders highlighted that while regional corridors and major logistics hubs have seen significant development, there is a persistent "connectivity gap" at the local level. They introduce the term "last-mile connectivity" referring to the final leg of the transport journey, the link between a major transit point (such as a rail terminal or a port) and the actual point of production or consumption, often in remote or rural locations. To bridge this gap, stakeholders suggested that the next phase of the RAP should incorporate the topics related to the following:

[16] Using AI to predict traffic congestion, port bottlenecks, and supply chain disruptions before they occur, allowing for real-time rerouting of cargo.

[17] Deploying AI for predictive maintenance of physical infrastructure, such as bridges and railway tracks, to reduce long-term operational costs and improve safety.

- *Integrated Feeder Networks*[18]*:* Encouraging member States to design transport projects that explicitly include "feeder links," smaller road or rural transit networks that feed into the main regional backbone.
- *Multimodal Rural Connectivity*[19]*:* Stakeholders suggested focusing on multimodal solutions, such as small-scale inland waterway networks or rural rail-links, which can be more cost-effective and environmentally friendly than large-scale road projects for low-volume, rural traffic.
- *Local Logistics Hubs:* Promoting small, decentralized logistics centers ("micro hubs" in rural areas. These "micro-hubs" serve as collection points where goods from multiple small-scale producers can be consolidated, making it easier and more cost-effective to transport them to the main regional network.
- *Policy Toolkits for Decentralization:* Stakeholders urged the Secretariat to provide policy guidance on how to attract investment to these rural, less "glamorous" projects, which often struggle to compete with large-scale urban infrastructure for funding.

Transport Resilience and Crisis Management. Some interviewees highlighted that existing regional connectivity projects often lack built-in climate resilience, leading to significant economic losses during extreme weather events. They noted that as climate events, health crises, and supply chain shocks become more frequent, "Transport Resilience" has emerged as a top-tier thematic gap that the next RAP must address. They claimed that the current RAP framework is built on "efficiency-first" models. When a primary trade route is severed by a flood or a systemic shock, the entire regional network often grinds to a halt. The feedback highlights the need for:

- **Redundancy and Flexibility:** Stakeholders emphasized that "efficiency" often leaves no room for errors and resilient transport networks require redundant corridors, alternative routes that can absorb traffic if a primary highway or port fails. It means the creation of modular networks where traffic can be rerouted through secondary rural feeder lines rather than being forced into a total shutdown.
- **Rapid Restoration Protocols:** The key stakeholders identified a gap in "post-disaster readiness." This includes regional agreements to share repair equipment and labor across borders when a disaster hits.

Innovative Transport Finance and Implementation Support. A core finding from the stakeholder consultations is that the next RAP should move beyond policy dialogue to become a high-performance Implementation Platform. Stakeholders emphasized that while regional goals are well-defined, the "missing link" is the financial and technical capacity required to execute them. Stakeholders signalled that traditional funding is no longer sufficient. The evolution knowledge a strong call for a thematic focus on Innovative Transport Finance, specifically building national capacity for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

Overall, this pillar was defined by two strategic imperatives such as:

- **Development of Governance and Accountability Framework:** Some key stakeholder mentioned moving away from purely voluntary compliance and advocated for a structured

[18] The secondary and tertiary transport links (such as rural roads, local rail spurs, or inland waterway connections) that connect remote communities and production centers to the primary regional transport "backbone" (the major highways, ports, and international rail lines).

[19] Refers to the strategic integration of different transport modes, such as road, inland waterways, and rural rail, to move goods and people from isolated, remote areas to the main regional transport arteries. Instead of relying solely on road transport, which can be expensive and carbon-intensive, this approach builds a flexible "hybrid" system that leverages the best characteristics of each mode.

governance framework. This includes introducing mandatory regional audit schemes (i.e., adopting IMO-Style Accountability, standardized progress-reporting dashboards, and harmonized legislative models).

- **Bridging the Technical and "Bankability" Gap:** A significant barrier identified by stakeholders is the gap between political will and "shovel-ready" projects. Many member states lack the specialized technical expertise to translate high-level regional goals into bankable investment proposals. Stakeholders recommend that the RAP provide direct support in project preparation, acting as a "technical bridge" that helps states design projects that meet the rigorous standards of international investors and development banks.

Gender and Social Inclusion. While some stakeholders[20] acknowledge that Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is technically "cross-cutting" (meaning it affects everything), they have explicitly argued that treating it only as a cross-cutting theme has led to it being ignored in practice and was treated as a "background" issue. Few claimed that this "invisible" status has resulted in a lack of accountability and measurable impact. Consequently, some stakeholders were calling for GESI to be integrated as a **standalone thematic priority**, or a highly visible sub-pillar, with a focus on the following areas:

- **Professional Parity in Maritime and Logistics:** Stakeholders highlighted that the maritime and logistics sub-sectors remain heavily male-dominated. They urged the RAP to move beyond "awareness raising" and implement concrete recruitment and retention target.
- **Gender-Responsive Infrastructure Investment**: **Few** stakeholders suggested that for "Innovative Finance" to be successful, it should include Gender-Lens Investing. This means that infrastructure projects should only receive regional "Implementation Support" if they prove their design is safe and accessible for women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

Institutional Harmonization and Policy Integration. Some stakeholders suggested introducing a connection pillar that would focus on aligning regional frameworks with the executive and legislative realities of member States through the following work streams:

- **Regulatory Convergence through "Model Laws":** To eliminate regional fragmentation, the RAP should support the development of Standardized Regulatory Templates. By providing pre-vetted "Model Laws" for themes like digitalization and road safety, the RAP would reduce the technical burden on national ministries, allowing them to adopt proven regional standards rather than drafting legislation from scratch.
- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** Interviews revealed a "silo effect" within national administrations. Many technical and operational stakeholders noted that RAP-related initiatives often struggle to gain traction beyond the Ministry of Transport. Specifically, participants reported that alignment with other key portfolios, such as finance (for project funding) and environment (for regulatory permitting), is frequently lacking. The observed that the RAP is often viewed as a singular ministry initiative rather than a cross-government obligation, which limits institutional awareness and complicates the securement of necessary budgetary and administrative approvals. This, to overcome the "silo effect" that stalls infrastructure projects, they supported the establishment of National RAP Taskforces, cross-functional bodies, to ensure the RAP is integrated into the broader national agenda, securing the multi-sectoral buy-in required to override budgetary and administrative bottlenecks.

[20] With one notable exception, stakeholders across all interviewed Member States identified GESI as a relevant priority, citing a direct link between inclusive transport policies and their broader national development goals.

4.3 Effectiveness

FINDING # 7: The evaluation identified that the RAP (2022–2026) has demonstrated a high level of achievement in delivering its defined outputs and meeting its indicators. Most thematic areas show extensive progress through intergovernmental agreements, technical knowledge products, and widespread capacity-building activities.

FINDING # 8: The evaluation reveals a regional transport framework that is highly successful at building consensus but faces varying degrees of "implementation friction" at the national level. While core connectivity remains strong, newer priorities like digitalization and social inclusion are still in the early stages of integration.

FINDING # 9: The current status reveals that member States view the RAP as a vital technical anchor. They rely on the Secretariat to provide the standardized "language" of transport policy. The challenge for the remainder of the 2022–2026 period is not to increase the *volume* of recommendations, but to provide more targeted support to help Member States overcome the domestic regulatory hurdles and funding gaps that prevent regional guidelines from becoming national law.

Objectives & Indicators: Major indicators have been met, notably the entry into force of amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreements for the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, and Dry Ports.

Output Delivery: The Secretariat has delivered a comprehensive suite of outputs, ranging from high-level intergovernmental meetings to technical knowledge products such as the *Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation* and the *Regional Framework on Strengthening Rail Cybersecurity.*

Achievement of the RAP (2022-2026) Objectives

The Evaluation identified two main workstreams of RAP achievements. Output level achievements are within programmatic delivery of the RAP framework implemented by the ESCAP. Outcome-level achievements reflect strategic impact of RAP-farmwork at regional and country levels achieved and/pr delivered by the member States.

The RAP has demonstrated a high extent of output-level achievement across its seven pillars, moving from intergovernmental policy setting to technical implementation and capacity building.

- **Thematic area 1 (Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics):** The Secretariat's efforts in facilitating the update and extension of intergovernmental agreements resulted in a more robust and formalized regional transport network. A landmark achievement in this area was the successful implementation of amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreements for the AH, the TAR, and Dry Ports. This legal foundation allowed for significant physical expansion. The network grew in scope as Türkiye joined the Dry Ports agreement in 2024, followed by Kyrgyzstan, which joined both the TAR and Dry Ports agreements in 2025. Beyond strengthening infrastructure and legal frameworks, the RAP introduced essential technical governance tools to streamline operations. These included the Railway Connectivity Standards Scheme and the 10 Guiding Principles on Sustainable Freight Transport. To ensure these advancements were inclusive, specialized capacity-building initiatives were directed at LLDCs through the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) Thematic Working Group, successfully integrating these nations into regional supply chains and enhancing their global connectivity.
- **Thematic area 2 (Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity):** The Secretariat has prioritized the creation of resilient and sustainable maritime gateways to ensure that all member States, particularly the most vulnerable, remain integrated into the global economy. This work centers on establishing permanent platforms for cooperation while delivering technical solutions

to modern operational challenges. A primary achievement in this area was the Secretariat's establishment of the *Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity*. This platform serves as the region's core mechanism for intergovernmental cooperation, allowing for a systematic exchange of best practices on port efficiency and maritime security. Within this framework, the Secretariat has delivered targeted support to SIDS. This assistance specifically addresses "port resilience" and the "digitalization gap," providing SIDS with the technical tools needed to modernize their maritime infrastructure and maintain reliable access to global supply chains in the face of climate and economic shocks. To drive the transition toward cleaner maritime operations, the Secretariat produced a strategic implementation report on Green Shipping Corridors. This knowledge product offers a technical roadmap for decarbonizing shipping routes, aligning regional maritime growth with global environmental targets. Additionally, the Secretariat addressed critical safety governance by developing policy recommendations for the management and storage of dangerous goods in port areas, providing national authorities with standardized protocols to mitigate industrial risks and protect coastal communities. Beyond the immediate region, the Secretariat has acted as a facilitator for interregional connectivity by organizing multi-stakeholder forums focused on sustainable corridors between Europe and Asia. These forums have brought together diverse actors to discuss the harmonization of standards across long-haul supply chains, ensuring that the Asia-Pacific maritime network is effectively linked to global trade arteries through sustainable and efficient multimodal systems.

- **Thematic area 3 (Digitalization of Transport):** A cornerstone of the activities under this thematic area was the Secretariat's role in the adoption of two major strategic instruments: the *Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation* and the *Regional Road Map to Support Regional Cooperation for Wider Deployment of Sustainable Smart Transport Systems.* These documents serve as the primary blueprints for member States, offering a coordinated approach to the adoption of "smart" technologies. By harmonizing these strategies at the regional level, the Secretariat ensures that national digital investments remain interoperable across borders, facilitating a more seamless flow of goods and information. Recognizing that digitalization introduces new vulnerabilities, the Secretariat addressed the critical issue of technical governance by facilitating the development and adoption of the *Regional Framework on Strengthening Rail Cybersecurity*. This framework provides member States with a much-needed technical foundation to protect their critical rail infrastructure from emerging cyber threats, marking a significant step toward regional digital resilience. To translate these frameworks into operational reality, the Secretariat delivered targeted technical assistance through specialized workshops. These sessions focused on the practical application of rail digitalization and the use of big data for mobility governance, helping transport professionals move toward data-driven decision-making. Furthermore, the Secretariat has adopted a forward-looking approach by initiating exploratory assessments into the deployment of automated vehicles along the Asian Highway network. This work positions the RAP framework to adapt to future technological shifts, ensuring that regional land connectivity is prepared for the next generation of transport innovation.

- **Thematic area 4 (Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics):** The Secretariat has moved beyond general sustainability advocacy to deliver a suite of practical, technical instruments designed to reduce the environmental footprint of regional trade and infrastructure. This work focuses on the dual imperatives of "greening" the movement of goods and ensuring that transport networks are resilient to climate change. To operationalize this, the Secretariat utilizes two primary instruments to engage member States:

    - *The Regional Cooperation Mechanism on Low Carbon Transport (RCM):* Launched to consolidate regional efforts, the RCM facilitates the creation of "Green Transport Corridors." It provides a platform for member States to align their National Determined Contributions (NDCs) with regional transport policy, focusing specifically on multimodal shifts and fuel

efficiency in transboundary supply chains.

- *The Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility (APIEM):* This initiative serves as the technical engine for the region's transition to zero-emission vehicles. Through APIEM, the Secretariat provides member States with policy roadmaps, specialized training, and a "Help Desk" to scale up electric mobility—with a recent 2026 focus on unlocking finance for public transport electrification.

- These instruments build upon foundational elements such as the *10 Guiding Principles on Sustainable Freight Transport*. These principles provide member States with a strategic framework to optimize logistics chains, emphasizing fuel efficiency, the adoption of cleaner technologies, and the shift toward more sustainable transport modes. To complement this, the Secretariat developed a comprehensive inventory of best practices specifically for low-carbon and resilient infrastructure along the Asian Highway network. This resource serves as a technical benchmark, helping national authorities design and maintain roads that can withstand extreme weather while minimizing their carbon intensity. To ensure these regional standards translate into national action, the Secretariat has provided targeted technical assistance and advisory services. A notable example is the *Technical Note on China (2024)*, which the Secretariat prepared to offer detailed policy analysis on green transport infrastructure. This document acts as a scalable model, illustrating how national policy frameworks can be aligned with regional sustainability goals. The Secretariat further operationalized these objectives through a series of subregional workshops. These sessions promoted multi-modal connectivity—specifically the strategic integration of rail, road, and maritime transport—as a primary mechanism for reducing the carbon footprint of regional trade. By facilitating these technical exchanges, the Secretariat has supported member States in identifying modal shift opportunities and improving the environmental efficiency of transboundary supply chains.

- **Thematic area 5 (Urban Transport):** The Secretariat has focused its efforts on bridging the gap between high-level technological potential and practical municipal application. The work has transitioned from general policy advocacy to the delivery of concrete, technical instruments designed to modernize city transit systems across the region. A critical component of this delivery is the provision of analytical tools that allow member States to diagnose urban transport maturity and effectiveness. Key among these are:

  - *Sustainable Urban Transport Index (SUTI) and SUTI PLUS*: The Secretariat has deployed SUTI to help cities benchmark their transport performance across ten indicators covering economic, social, and environmental dimensions. To ensure no one is left behind, the SUTI PLUS framework was developed to include specific inclusiveness criteria, assessing the accessibility of transit systems for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and low-income residents.

  - *Electric Vehicles Readiness Index (EVRI*): To support the transition to cleaner energy, the Secretariat introduced EVRI as a diagnostic tool for cities to evaluate their preparedness for e-mobility. This index analyses infrastructure capacity, policy incentives, and grid readiness, providing a clear roadmap for the deployment of electric bus fleets and charging networks.

- These tools complement the Secretariat's regional guidelines for the integration of public transport with digital technologies. These guidelines provide a harmonized framework for member States to achieve system interoperability—ensuring that diverse digital tools, such as real-time GPS tracking, electronic ticketing, and unified transit apps, function seamlessly. This work helps cities transition from fragmented management toward data-driven "Smart City" models. To move these principles into practice, the Secretariat conducted a series of targeted capacity-building workshops specifically tailored to the unique geographic and economic contexts of the Pacific and Central Asia. These sessions prioritized the use of big data for mobility governance, equipping city-level planners

with the analytical skills necessary to interpret complex data sets. By leveraging big data, planners can move toward evidence-based decision-making, such as demand forecasting to optimize routes and real-time network monitoring to reduce congestion. These activities represent the Secretariat's commitment to providing an "implementation bridge" for local authorities. By focusing on the intersection of digital innovation and operational governance, the Secretariat assists city-level planners in enhancing the immediate efficiency of their transit networks. Ultimately, these efforts are designed to make public transport a more competitive and reliable alternative to private vehicle use, directly supporting long-term regional goals for carbon reduction and sustainable urban development.

- **Thematic area 6 (Road Safety):** The Secretariat has focused its efforts on embedding safety protocols directly into the regional governance of transport infrastructure. This work is centered on the principle that reducing traffic fatalities requires a shift from isolated national efforts to a harmonized, intergovernmental approach. A primary pillar of this work is the Regional Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030. As a lead indicator of achievement under the RAP, this Plan provides member States with a structured roadmap to reach the global target of a 50% reduction in road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030. The Secretariat has institutionalized this by integrating road safety as a permanent policy priority within the management of the Asian Highway Network, ensuring safety is treated with the same technical urgency as road construction and maintenance. To bridge the gap between regional policy and local impact, this thematic area has seen the highest concentration of national-level XB projects implemented during the RAP period. These projects translate regional goals into life-saving actions on the ground, such as:
    - *Targeted Infrastructure Safety:* Advancing the adoption of standardized school zones and safer road designs in countries like Viet Nam and Cambodia.
    - *Evidence-Based Financing:* Supporting Mongolia and other member States in developing national strategies that link result-based budgeting with road safety performance.
    - *Vulnerable Road User Protection*: Establishing motorcycle star-rating programs and helmet-wearing policies in Southeast Asia to protect those at highest risk.
- A The Secretariat has facilitated this by organizing dedicated policy segments during intergovernmental meetings, ensuring that safety is treated with the same technical priority as physical road construction or maintenance. These segments allow member States to align their national strategies with the global goals of the *Second Decade of Action for Road Safety*, fostering a unified regional response to a critical public health challenge. To support this policy integration, the Secretariat provides a robust technical platform through the organization of expert group meetings (EGMs). These forums are designed to drive the harmonization of safety standards and technical requirements for road infrastructure. By facilitating the exchange of data and engineering best practices, the Secretariat assists national authorities in adopting standardized signage, safer road designs, and improved infrastructure audits.
- **Thematic area 7 (Inclusive Transport and Mobility):** The Secretariat pivoted from treating social issues as purely "cross-cutting" themes to establishing them as distinct, actionable priorities within regional transport policy. To bridge the gap between policy and practice, the Secretariat developed and promoted two foundational instruments:
    - *The Handbook on Promoting a Socially Inclusive Freight Transport Sector:* This resource provides national authorities with methodologies for gender mainstreaming and the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities within logistics and supply chains.
    - *Guidelines on Enhancing Social Inclusion and Innovations in Urban Transport Systems in Asia-*

Pacific Cities: This recent addition provides a technical roadmap for city-level planners to leverage digital and social innovations. It focuses on making urban transit more accessible and safer for vulnerable groups, ensuring that the modernization of city systems does not leave behind those with limited mobility.

- To operationalize these standards, the Secretariat organized and led a series of national workshops in Ulaanbaatar, Vientiane, Baku, and Kathmandu. These sessions focused on equipping transport professionals with the specific methodologies required to integrate inclusive transport guidelines into urban and regional planning, specifically targeting the protection of vulnerable groups.

The Table below (**Table 9**) outlines the overall implementation status of the ESCAP-led activities under RAP (2022-2026) framework.

Table 9: RAP (2022–2026) Technical Pillar Progress: Secretariat Output Delivery and Milestone Achievement [21]

Thematic Area	Level of Output-level Achievements	Key Delivered Outputs & Progress
1. Regional Land Transport Connectivity	Very High	Successful updates to AH, TAR, and Dry Port agreements; Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye joined key agreements; multiple technical guides on sustainable freight and automated vehicles.
2. Maritime and Interregional Connectivity	High	Established the Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity; published guidelines on green shipping corridors and dangerous goods safety management.
3. Digitalization of Transport	Very High	Adoption of "Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation in Asia-Pacific," "Regional Framework on Strengthening Rail Cybersecurity in Asia and the Pacific," completion of "Regional Road Map for Smart Transport Systems in Asia and the Pacific."
4. Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics	High	Published the "10 Guiding Principles on Sustainable Freight Transport"; conducted subregional workshops on green and resilient transport infrastructure. Significant progress on green infrastructure technical notes (e.g., China).
5. Urban Transport	High	Developed guidelines for "Integration of Urban Public Transport Systems and Digital Technologies"; held regional expert meetings on smart mobility in cities.
6. Road Safety	High	Conducted policy segments on road safety along the Asian Highway; regular monitoring of progress toward the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety. Some technical manuals still in development/review.
7. Inclusive Transport and Mobility	High	Developed practical guidelines and policy briefs on transport social inclusion (gender and disability); held national workshops in Mongolia, Lao PDR, Azerbaijan, and Nepal.

Source: The RAP (2022-2026) Documents, ESCAP (2026).

Key Activities and Outputs Delivered by ESCAP in Support of the Implementation of the RAP by Member States

[21] The grading system used in the table is a qualitative performance assessment based on the synthesis of two data sources: the documentary evidence (the RAP reports) and qualitative stakeholder feedback (interviews).

In-depth interviews revealed a strong consensus that the Secretariat has been highly effective in delivering the programmatic outputs defined under the RAP (2022–2026). Stakeholders frequently characterized ESCAP-led activities as the "engine" of the initiative, providing the essential structural framework and technical data necessary for regional transport development. This operational success is built upon three primary pillars:

- **Governance of Intergovernmental Agreements:** The Secretariat has successfully maintained the legal frameworks underpinning regional connectivity, specifically the AH, TAR, and Dry Ports agreements. Performance in this area is nearly 100% on track, ensuring these networks remain standardized and operational across borders.
- **Knowledge and Analytical Support:** The consistent production of high-quality transport outlooks, technical manuals, and policy frameworks—such as the *10 Guiding Principles on Sustainable Freight Transport*—provides Member States with the intellectual foundation required to inform national strategies.
- **Convening Power and Policy Dialogue:** ESCAP has effectively fostered regional cooperation through its convening power. Administrative data confirms that EGMs and high-level dialogues, such as the *Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity*, have consistently met frequency and geographic coverage targets.

The success of the Secretariat's workshops and technical reports is rooted in three defining institutional strengths. First, stakeholders highlighted the importance of reliability and cadence; by maintaining a steady and predictable schedule of Expert Group Meetings (EGMs) and workshops, the RAP framework allows national ministries to synchronize their internal planning and agendas with the ESCAP calendar.

Second, the Secretariat's outputs serve as a technical benchmark. National stakeholders frequently characterized RAP resources—such as technical manuals and policy guides—as authoritative baselines, often utilizing them as the primary reference point when drafting or updating domestic policies.

Finally, these interventions have succeeded in fostering a harmonized policy "language" across the region. By providing consistent training and standardized frameworks, the Secretariat has equipped diverse member States with a common technical vocabulary, establishing the essential groundwork for long-term, cross-border connectivity and regional cooperation.

The evaluation also acknowledged that while the Secretariat has achieved high marks for Output Delivery (the completion of activities), the transition to Outcome-level Impact (national implementation) remains complex. Delivering a workshop is an act of completion; ensuring that knowledge is codified into national law is a secondary, more challenging step.

The table below (**Table 10)** contrasts the high performance of programmatic outputs with the evolving nature of national integration across the seven thematic areas. This assessment is based on Member States' adoption of the recommendations and frameworks provided under the RAP (2022–2026).

Table 10: RAP (2022–2026) Implementation Status: A Comparative Analysis of Output Delivery and Outcome Achievement[22]

Thematic Area	Output-level Deliverables (Secretariat Progress)	Outcome/Impact-level Deliverables (Member State Integration)
1. Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics	**High:** Ongoing maintenance of AH/TAR legal frameworks; regular working group meetings.	**Strong:** High baseline of cooperation, though hampered by "policy lag" in national master plans.
2. Maritime and Interregional Transport Connectivity	**High:** Annual Asia-Pacific Dialogues; consistent publication of technical guidelines.	**Moderate:** Highly relevant but complicated by diverse national regulatory environments.
3. Digitalization of Transport	**Moderate**: Multiple EGMs and technical papers delivered.	**Emerging:** Strong interest, but with a significant knowledge gap in practical application.
4. Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics	**Moderate:** Successful operationalization of the Regional Cooperation Mechanism (RCM) and the Asia-Pacific Initiative on Electric Mobility (APIEM) (now joined by 23 member States); adoption of the Regional Roadmap for accelerating the transition to e-mobility.[23]	**Evolving**: High awareness; implementation constrained by budget and infrastructure readiness.
5. Urban Transport	**Moderate:** Technical studies and pilot project reports produced.	**Challenged:** High demand for "last-mile" outreach to local ministries beyond national focal points.
6. Road Safety	**High:** Consistent regional standards setting and capacity-building workshops.	**Mixed:** Strong technical commitment, but difficulty translating regional guidelines to domestic law.
7. Inclusive Transport and Mobility	**Moderate:** Targeted studies and policy guidance notes produced.	**Nascent:** Recognized as important but often secondary to core connectivity in national discussions.

Source: The RAP (2022-2026) Documents and Stakeholder Feedback, ESCAP (2026).

[22] It is based on the member States' adoption.

[23] The Secretariat has successfully evolved its role from a provider of general sustainability advocacy to a strategic catalyst for green investment. The transition is best evidenced by the APIEM, which has moved beyond technical reports to become a major intergovernmental platform endorsed by 23 member States. Furthermore, the Secretariat has effectively closed the "financing gap" that previously hindered national action. By providing high-quality technical feasibility studies and investment-ready financing proposals, ESCAP has directly facilitated the funding and ongoing implementation of electric bus projects in Bokhtar (Tajikistan), and Luang Prabang (Lao PDR).

The transition of the RAP (2022-2026) from a Secretariat-led initiative to a nationally adopted reality is currently characterized by a "dual-speed" implementation. While there is a high level of formal commitment to regional agreements, the practical integration into domestic policy varies significantly across the seven thematic areas.

High Adoption and Mature Integration (Land and Maritime Connectivity). In the core areas of Regional Land and Maritime Transport, adoption remains robust. Member States have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the Intergovernmental Agreements on the Asian Highway (AH) and Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) networks. Recent accessions by countries such as Kyrgyzstan and Türkiye signal continued confidence in these frameworks. However, even in these mature areas, adoption faces a "policy lag." While regional amendments are adopted at the intergovernmental level, the translation of these standards into updated national transport master plans is often delayed by domestic administrative cycles.

Rapidly Emerging Adoption (Digitalization of Transport). Digitalization represents the most technically advanced area of output delivery under the RAP (2022-2026). The Secretariat achieved significant milestones with the adoption of the *Strategy 2030 for Rail Digitalization*, the *Regional Road Map for Smart Transport Systems*, and the *Regional Framework on Rail Cybersecurity*. While these represent "Very High" output success, the status of national adoption remains primarily strategic rather than operational. Member States are actively integrating the "language" of digitalization into their high-level policy documents; however, a significant knowledge gap persists regarding the practical, large-scale application of these technologies. Implementation is currently characterized by isolated pilot projects rather than a synchronized regional digital transition.

Evolving Adoption with Structural Barriers (Low-Carbon and Urban Transport). The adoption of Low-Carbon Mobility and Urban Transport guidelines is currently "evolving" but remains constrained by two primary factors:

- *The "Last-Mile" Institutional Gap*: In Urban Transport, regional recommendations often reach National Focal Points (Ministries of Transport) but struggle to reach the local municipal authorities who manage city-level transit. There is a high demand for more direct outreach to these "last-mile" implementers.
- *Infrastructure Readiness:* In the area of green logistics, while the adoption of the *10 Guiding Principles* by member States initially faced challenges due to budgetary constraints and infrastructure gaps, the Secretariat has successfully pivoted to act as a strategic catalyst for green investment. It moved beyond general advocacy and established the APIEM platform (now joined by 23 member States) to address these readiness gaps. Most significantly, the Secretariat has begun to close the “financing gap” by transforming technical feasibility studies into investment-ready proposals. This approach has already resulted in secured funding and ongoing implementation of electric bus projects in Bokhtar (Tajikistan) and Luang Prabang (Lao PDR), providing a scalable model for the rest of the region to overcome similar infrastructure hurdles.

Nascent and Fragmented Adoption (Road Safety and Inclusive Transport). In the area of Road Safety, adoption status remains "mixed." While the legal translation of regional standards into enforceable domestic law remains a significant hurdle for many member States, this is only one dimension of the Secretariat’s impact. Significant progress has been achieved in norm-setting, capacity building, and large-scale awareness raising under the current RAP. These efforts have equipped national authorities with the technical expertise to conduct road audits and design safer infrastructure, even where legislative frameworks are still catching up. Similarly, Inclusive Transport (focusing on gender and disability) is currently in the nascent stage of adoption. While the Secretariat has delivered high-quality handbooks and technical workshops that have shifted regional discourse, Member States often categorize social inclusion as a secondary priority compared to "hard" infrastructure. Consequently,

adoption is currently characterized by successful pilot-level implementations and increased awareness, rather than broad-based national policy shifts.

4.4 Efficiency

FINDING # 10: The ESCAP Secretariat has demonstrated extensive coordination, and cooperation (yet operationally fragmented) with a diverse range of development partners, UN entities, and regional organizations to implement the RAP (2022-2026). This collaboration spans joint project implementation, technical partnerships, and the utilization of ESCAP's convening power to align regional transport initiatives.

FINDING # 11: Overall, the RAP implementation (2022–2026) has demonstrated a dual-track pattern of timeliness. While activities funded through the Regular Budget (RB) maintained high consistency in meeting mandated targets, projects funded through Extrabudgetary (XB) sources faced significant variability due to external dependencies and logistical complexities.

The RAP (2022-2026) efficiency is driven by a tripartite operational model that maximizes limited human and financial resources. By leveraging its convening power to set regional standards, the Secretariat utilizes a Technical Research Network (e.g., KMI, SPC, and leading universities) to provide the specialized data required for knowledge products. This is further amplified through Strategic Synergies with the ADB and World Bank, which align their large-scale infrastructure financing with ESCAP's normative frameworks. This model allows the Secretariat to function as a high-impact "policy engine," ensuring that every dollar of programmatic budget is supported by external technical expertise and linked to multi-billion-dollar investment pipelines.

FINDING # 12: The RAP (2022–2026) implementation period was marked by a "dual-track" set of hurdles. While Regular Budget (RB) activities were consistently delivered on time (as noted in Finding #11), their execution required navigating complex internal institutional processes and administrative requirements. In contrast, Extrabudgetary (XB) projects faced a more volatile set of external hurdles, including logistical shocks, resource fluctuations, national-level capacity constraints, donor dependency, and policy lags.

FINDING # 13: According to key stakeholder, to strengthen the collaboration and cooperation with different relevant bodies and enhance the impact of the RAP, the Secretariat should pivot toward an Operational Partnership Model that prioritizes the conversion of regional policy into national action.

Cooperation with UN Entities, International Entities, Academics and Specialized Institutions

The Secretariat maintains an extensive network of partnerships with the UN entities, global technical organizations, and regional academic institutions to support the implementation of the RAP (2022-2026). Based on stakeholder feedback, rather than operating in isolation, the Secretariat functions as a regional hub that leverages external specialized expertise to align regional transport initiatives with global standards. It systematically engages with other United Nations entities to address multi-sectoral challenges, ensuring that transport initiatives are integrated with broader environmental and developmental mandates.

Strategic Synergy with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. The Secretariat's regional strategy relies heavily on a functional alignment with the ADB and the World Bank, effectively bridging the gap between regional policy frameworks and the large-scale financing required for infrastructure. While ESCAP focuses on the normative and intergovernmental "soft" infrastructure (agreements and standards), the ADB and World Bank provide the investment and project-level

financing ("hard" infrastructure) necessary for national implementation. This cooperation centers on three key areas:

- **Integrated Regional Planning:** The Secretariat collaborated with the ADB and World Bank on a meta-analysis of transport documentation (2018–2025). This synthesis informed the SPECA Transport Connectivity Strategy (2026), ensuring that subregional transit corridors in Central Asia are both technically standardized and "bankable" for international investors.
- **Operational Resilience:** Under the initiative *"Regional Cooperation for Trade and Transport Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics,"* ESCAP and the ADB coordinated supply chain recovery through high-level dialogues. This partnership promoted contactless and seamless freight solutions, ensuring that ADB's regional investments aligned with ESCAP's legal frameworks for trade facilitation.
- **Knowledge and Financing for Development:** Often in partnership with UNDP, the Secretariat and the ADB co-produce the *Asia-Pacific SDG Partnership Report*. The 2026 edition, for example, links the ADB's urban development investments with the Urban Transport guidelines developed under the RAP. Furthermore, during the *Regional Consultation on Financing for Development*, the entities explored innovative financing for grid infrastructure in electric mobility and climate-resilient road networks.

Stakeholder feedback confirms that this high-level coordination has successfully established a "common technical vocabulary" across the region. National ministries noted that the involvement of the World Bank and ADB alongside ESCAP is essential, as it ensures regional guidelines are not only technically sound but also strictly aligned with the requirements for international infrastructure financing.

Strategic Coordination with UN Entities and Global Bodies. The Secretariat systematically engages with other United Nations entities to address multi-sectoral challenges, ensuring that transport initiatives are integrated with broader environmental and developmental mandates.

- **Environmental and Energy Alignment (Electric Mobility):** To support the regional shift toward sustainable energy, the Secretariat implemented the project *"Accelerating the transition to electric mobility for public transport in Asia and the Pacific"* (Project 2021-TD-002). This initiative involved active partnerships with UNDP and UNEP, leveraging their technical expertise to assist target countries—including Georgia, Lao PDR, and Thailand—in developing national e-mobility strategies. These collaborations allowed the Secretariat to integrate global energy-efficiency standards directly into regional transport policy frameworks.
- **Global Regulatory Compliance (Maritime Safety):** In the maritime sector, the Secretariat maintains a close working relationship with the IMO to harmonize regional standards with global protocols. A key instance of this cooperation was the development of research and policy recommendations for the safety management of dangerous goods in ports. By aligning with IMO's international maritime conventions, the Secretariat ensured that regional guidelines for ports in the Pacific and Southeast Asia met the highest global safety and environmental protection requirements.
- **Subregional Resilience (SPECA):** Coordination with the UN SPECA serves as a primary mechanism for supporting landlocked developing countries (LLDCs). The Secretariat co-facilitates the SPECA Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit, and Connectivity, which has held high-level dialogues to harmonize cross-border transit procedures and improve the resilience of transport corridors connecting Central Asia to global markets.
- **Digital and Socio-Economic Resilience:** Under the Development Account project *"Digital and transport connectivity for socio-economic resilience of rural communities"* (Project 2225R), the

Secretariat collaborated with various UN entities to support Bangladesh, Lao PDR, and Samoa. This project focused on integrating digital solutions into rural transport logistics to enhance community resilience in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Technical Partnerships with Academic and Specialized Institutions. The Secretariat also utilizes a "Technical Research Network," partnering with leading institutions to drive evidence-based policy recommendations.:

- **Building Climate-Resilient Infrastructure:** To address the increasing vulnerability of regional transport networks to climate change, the Secretariat partnered with premier engineering institutions to develop standards for the project, *"Supporting the policies on green and resilient transport infrastructure along the Asian Highway Network."* Thus, in collaboration with Tongji University (China) and the University of Seoul (Republic of Korea), the Secretariat conducted deep-dive technical analyses of highway design and construction parameters. This partnership moved beyond generic policy advice to produce specific technical parameters for "climate-proofing" roads. By leveraging the expertise of the Research Institute of Highways (China), the Secretariat ensured that these guidelines were based on advanced materials science and geotechnical engineering, providing LLDCs and SIDS with the rigorous data needed to justify infrastructure investments to international donors.
- **Advancing Maritime Digitalization and Safety:** In the maritime sector, the Secretariat utilizes specialized institutes to provide the analytical backbone necessary for modernizing supply chains. Under the project, *"Advancing regional cooperation policies on sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific,"* the Secretariat established a tripartite implementation partnership with the KMI and the Pacific Community (SPC)[24]. This collaboration led to the launch of the *Asia-Pacific Dialogue on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity*. KMI provided the high-level research required for the Green Shipping Corridor implementation strategy, while the SPC ensured these strategies were adapted to the unique logistical constraints of Pacific Island countries. Furthermore, collaborations with specialized consultants allowed the Secretariat to deliver the *"Policy recommendations for the safety management of dangerous goods in port areas,"* ensuring that regional port safety protocols are strictly aligned with international maritime standards.
- **Smart Mobility and Urban Transition:** Recognizing that SIDS face unique "last-mile" connectivity challenges, the Secretariat engaged technical partners to facilitate the adoption of "Smart City" technologies through the project, ***"****Strengthening the capacity of Pacific SIDS to utilize smart mobility technologies for the fast transition to sustainable smart cities."* In this regard, the Secretariat partnered with Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) Asia-Pacific and the Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building Technology (KICT). This partnership focused on the cities of Suva (Fiji), Nuku'alofa (Tonga), and Apia (Samoa). Partners conducted feasibility studies to identify how smart mobility technologies, such as real-time traffic management and digital public transport tracking, could be integrated into cities with limited infrastructure. These partners provide the technical monitoring systems and best-practice guidelines that national ministries use to justify urban transport investments.

[24] Pacific Community (SPC) is the principal scientific and technical organization in the Pacific region. It is an international development organization owned and governed by its 27 country and territory members.

A Timeline of the RAP (2022-2026) Milestones and the Hurdles to National Adoption

Implementation of the RAP (2022-2026) involves activities funded through both the United Nations Regular Budget (RB) and Extrabudgetary (XB) sources, each exhibiting distinct patterns of timeliness and procedural bottlenecks. The table below (**Table 11**) outlines the timeliness of the RB- and XB-funded projects and nature of the implementation delays in both cases.

Table 11: Timeliness of the RB- and XB-Funded Projects and Nature of the Implementation Delays in Both Cases

Feature	Regular Budget (RB) Funded Projects	Extrabudgetary (XB) Funded Projects
Overall Timeliness	**High/Consistent:** Mandated outputs (reports and meetings) generally adhere to the annual Programme of Work cycle.	**Variable**: Highly dependent on donor cycles, partner availability, and external field conditions.
Primary Nature of Delays	**Administrative & Institutional:** Delays are often "procedural" rather than "technical."	**Operational & Environmental:** Delays are often "logistical" or "resource-based."
Key Bottlenecks	**Review Backlogs:** Intensive vetting by the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget (OPPFB) can delay official document submissions.	**External Shocks:** Pandemic-related travel restrictions significantly delayed field assessments and technical cooperation.
Dependency Factors	**Legislative Timelines:** Approval is tied to external bodies like the General Assembly's Fifth Committee.	**Extensive Cooperation:** Timelines rely on the schedules and budget-sharing processes of partner organizations (e.g., UNDP, KMI, SPC).
Human Resource Issues	**"Double-Tasking":** Lengthy recruitment for permanent posts forces staff to prioritize intergovernmental meetings over technical publications.	**Expert Availability:** Short project durations make them "vulnerable" to the specific availability and performance of specialized consultants.
Adaptation Impacts	**Protocol Hurdles:** Transitioning to hybrid meetings requires extra lead time for virtual interpretation and UN protocol compliance.	**Financial Constraints:** Projects often stall after the "action plan" phase due to a lack of follow-up investment resources for implementation.
Example Cases	Delay in submitting the Proposed Programme Plan for 2025 due to internal review volume.	Start and end dates for UNDA Project 2225R were revised/extended due to COVID-19 field constraints.

Source: The RAP (2022-2026) Reports and Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

RB-funded Projects

Regular budget activities, which include substantive services for intergovernmental meetings and the production of mandated reports, generally maintain a high degree of timeliness.

Data from the 2022–2024 monitoring periods shows that the Transport Division consistently met its "Planned vs. Actual" targets for RB outputs. For example, in 2023, the majority of substantive services for meetings and mandated reports for the Committee on Transport were completed on schedule. However, "completion" does not always imply a seamless timeline. The primary narrative for RB delays is one of administrative friction rather than lack of technical progress. The most significant delays typically manifest during the official documentation phase. Even when the Transport Division completes its substantive work on time, mandated reports (i.e. the Proposed Programme Plan for

2025) frequently encounter delays during the internal clearance process. These documents must undergo rigorous vetting by the Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget (OPPFB) to ensure compliance with global standards. During peak reporting cycles, the high volume of documents flowing through central administrative offices creates a "reviewer bottleneck." Consequently, even when drafting is timely, the institutional workflow required for formal validation can push final submissions past their original deadlines.

Vulnerability to Legislative Timelines. Beyond internal administration, RB activities are uniquely vulnerable to the schedules of external legislative bodies. Because final work plans and budgets depend on approval from the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the General Assembly's Fifth Committee, the Secretariat operates within a timeline it does not fully control. When these bodies request additional information or mandate revisions, it creates a ripple effect: a delay in one year's budget approval can shift the "start date" for the entire subsequent cycle of initiatives, making long-term planning a moving target.

Human Resource Constraints and "Double-Tasking." Administrative strain is further compounded by staffing challenges and broader institutional reforms. While the Regular Budget (RB) provides for permanent posts, the lengthy recruitment processes required to fill vacancies often lead to periods of significant "double tasking." In these instances, existing staff must cover the mandates of vacant positions, forcing a strategic prioritization of high-stakes, immovable intergovernmental meetings over other deliverables. This inevitably results in the deferred publication of technical materials, bulletins, and monographs, which are sidelined as "lower priority" in the face of immediate diplomatic requirements.

This existing strain is now being intensified by the UN budget liquidity crisis and the abolition of posts. Data from the interview protocol highlights several critical concerns:

- **Impact of Post Abolition:** Under current budget initiatives, the Transport Division is slated to lose specific positions (e.g., one P-3 level post). While some stakeholders argue that the specialized nature of the Transport Division's work—such as maritime connectivity—makes it "safer" from broader cuts than other divisions, the loss of even a single post creates a significant gap in a small, specialized team.
- **The Risk of "Brain Drain":** There is a documented concern regarding "brain drain" within the division. As posts are abolished at both the Professional (P) and General Service (G) levels, the division loses institutional memory and technical expertise at a time when demand for transport interventions is increasing.
- **Rising Demand vs. Diminishing Capacity:** The interview protocol reveals a growing tension: while member States are requesting more interventions and support under the RAP framework, the human resource capacity to deliver them is being reduced.
- **Strategic Cutbacks:** To manage this "resource-demand gap," the division may be forced to cut back on secondary work streams to protect its core intergovernmental mandates. This suggests that the delay in technical publications and non-mandated materials is not merely a temporary bottleneck, but a structural consequence of a shrinking regular budget.

The Legacy of Institutional Adaptation Finally, the shift to hybrid and virtual meeting formats—a permanent legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic—has introduced a new layer of logistical complexity. Coordinating virtual interpretation and ensuring that remote participation adheres to strict UN protocol standards requires significant additional lead time. These technical and protocol-related hurdles have occasionally necessitated the rescheduling of meetings or the extension of sessions. While these adaptations are vital for ensuring regional inclusivity, they have fundamentally altered the procedural timeline for the "Substantive Services" mandate, creating a new standard of administrative lead-time in the post-pandemic era.

Institutional and Capacity Constraints. The most consistent challenge reported is the difficulty of translating high-level regional policy guidance into national-level action. Stakeholders noted that while ESCAP provides excellent strategic frameworks, national authorities often struggle to integrate these into existing, long-standing domestic policy cycles.

National Focal Point Turnover: The frequent turnover of national focal points creates a significant disruption in institutional memory. When a country's representative changes, the new official often lacks the background context of the RAP's history and/or prehistory, requiring ESCAP to restart awareness-building efforts, which slows down sustained implementation.

Opaque Value Proposition: Stakeholders also pointed out that the "umbrella" structure of the RAP, while comprehensive, can be difficult for national actors to interpret. There is a documented need for more direct communication that connects specific regional workshops or technical reports to the daily operational responsibilities of local ministries and private sector partners.

Siloed Cooperation and Donor Dependency: the stakeholder feedback highlights a structural "silo" effect between regional policy-setting and infrastructure financing. While stakeholders emphasized that ESCAP successfully utilized its convening power to establish regional technical standards, a persistent gap remains in integrating these outputs with the project pipelines of development banks like the ADB and World Bank. They claimed that this disconnect limits the capacity of member States to secure the large-scale financial investment necessary to operationalize regional policy recommendations. This disconnect is compounded by the programme's reliance on external funding sources; stakeholders noted that instead of ESCAP driving the agenda based on regional needs, the programme often responds to what donors are willing to fund. This can lead to a mismatch between the most pressing local challenges and the actual activities being funded and implemented.

Policy Lag: Some member States reported operating under the transport master plans formulated years before the adoption of RAP (2022-2026). Integrating new thematic priorities into these pre-existing, rigid legal frameworks is a slow, complex process.

XB-funded Projects

XB-funded projects, including technical cooperation and capacity-building initiatives, often faced more variable timelines due to their reliance on external partners, specific donor requirements, and field-level conditions. The evaluation acknowledged that XB projects frequently require timeline revisions. For instance, the Development Account project on digital and transport connectivity (2225R) had its original start date of January 2022 revised to March 2022, with the end date extended from June 2025 to September 2025.

Covid-19 Legacy. The main implementation bottlenecks were caused by the COVID-19 impact, coordination complexity and availability of experts. More specifically, the project initiated between 2021 and 2022 faced significant delays in field activities and technical cooperation due to pandemic-related travel restrictions. The most prominent example of pandemic-related delays is found in the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project (2225R) titled *"Digital and transport connectivity for socio-economic resilience of rural communities post COVID-19."* The project was originally scheduled to run from January 2022 to June 2025. However, due to the inability to conduct initial field assessments and in-person engagement in target countries (Bangladesh, Lao PDR, and Samoa), the start date had to be pushed back to March 2022. Because of the slow start caused by travel restrictions, the end date was subsequently extended to September 2025 to ensure all capacity-building activities could be completed.

Coordination Complexity. Furthermore, the timeliness was heavily dependent on "extensive cooperation" with partner organizations. Delays occurred when managing shared workshop budgets or coordinating schedules across multiple international entities. For example, the Electric Mobility Project (2021-TD-002) project involved a complex web of partners, including UNDP, UNEP, and the

Research Institute of Highways (China). Coordinating the schedules and technical inputs of these three distinct entities across five target countries (Fiji, Georgia, Lao PDR, Nepal, and Thailand) required significant management effort. Reports note that "extensive cooperation" in managing shared workshop budgets and schedules was a critical factor; when one partner's administrative process lagged, it threatened the timeline of the joint regional meetings. Another example is the project "Sustainable Maritime Connectivity (2024-TD-004)." This project required harmonizing the efforts of the Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) and the Pacific Community (SPC). The report explicitly mentions that "sharing information and managing schedules with partner organizations" were the most significant variables in determining whether the project finished on time.

Expert Availability. Finally, the short duration of some XB projects made them vulnerable to the availability of specialized consultants. Delays in recruitment or the performance of technical tasks by external experts impacted the project completion. The vulnerability of short-term XB projects to expert availability is seen in maritime safety and smart city initiatives:

- **The Dangerous Goods Project (2022):** This project focused on the safety management of dangerous goods in ports. Because the topic was highly technical, the project was entirely dependent on a small pool of **specialized consultants**. The project report highlighted that because the project had a "short duration," any delay in the consultants performing their tasks, or any delay in the initial recruitment process, would have made it impossible to meet the December deadline.
- **Pacific SIDS Smart Mobility (2023-TD-008):** With a budget of approximately $150,000 (a relatively small XB amount) and a focus on specialized "smart mobility technologies," the project's progress relied on the Korea Institute of Civil Engineering and Building Technology. The "availability of experts" from this specific partner organization was a critical constraint. Because the project budget was relatively small ($150,414), there was no financial "buffer" to hire alternative experts if the primary specialists from the partner institute were unavailable for field visits or feasibility studies.

The Challenges or Constraints Were Encountered During the RAP Implementation

The RAP (2022-2026) implementation encountered several cross-cutting challenges. The following sub-section categorizes these constraints into resource, staffing, institutional, and external factors.

Human Resource Constraints and Staffing. Quantitative staffing capacity remained a critical bottleneck throughout the reporting period. The primary challenge was not the quality of expertise, but the volume of available personnel relative to the expanding number of mandates. While the RB provides a foundation of permanent posts, the division faced a widening "resource-demand gap." This led to a significant "double-tasking" burden, where existing staff managed multiple thematic portfolios simultaneously, increasing the risk of institutional memory loss and operational strain during peak delivery periods.

Institutional and Financial Constraints (UN Budget Initiatives). The broader UN fiscal environment, including the liquidity crisis and budget initiatives, introduced structural challenges such as post abolitions, internal review bottlenecks.

External and Logistical Factors. External variables played a significant role in shifting project timelines, particularly for Extrabudgetary (XB) projects such as COVID-19 legacy, coordination complexity, and expert availability.

Resource Limitations in the Field. A recurring constraint for projects in the Pacific and LDCs was the lack of follow-up investment resources. While the secretariat successfully completed "action plans" and "feasibility studies" on time, moving these plans into the implementation of physical

infrastructure remains a challenge due to a lack of immediate funding from donors or the private sector.

Proposed improvement in Coordination and Collaboration

In-depth interviews of key stakeholders and survey results identified a number of strategic actions aimed to move from a "dissemination model" toward an "operational partnership model." Many stakeholders characterized the implementation of the RAP as methodical but often slow, largely due to the inherent complexity of translating regional, high-level strategic frameworks into national legislative and budgetary processes. A major bottleneck identified is the lack of continuity at the national level; the frequent turnover of "national focal points" results in a loss of institutional memory and disrupted momentum.

Bridging the Policy-to-Investment Gap. The stakeholder reports on the most significant structural impediment to the RAP's success such as the "siloed" nature of regional policy-setting relative to infrastructure financing. Currently, ESCAP's technical standards (such as those for the AH and TAR) often exist in parallel to, rather than integrated with, the project pipelines of major financial institutions.

To resolve this, the key stakeholder propose that the next RAP must formalize symbiotic partnerships with development banks (e.g., ADB, World Bank). By establishing dedicated "Donor Roundtables" and "Investment Forums," the Secretariat can transition from a purely normative role to that of a facilitator. This approach helps member states package RAP recommendations into "bankable" project proposals, ensuring that technical outputs are directly linked to the financial loans and infrastructure support required for implementation.

Institutionalizing Structured Engagement. To ensure that regional cooperation is a continuous process rather than a series of intermittent events, the stakeholders suggested the Secretariat's shift toward facilitating/ creating permanent thematic working groups. Focusing on high-impact areas like maritime connectivity and port digitalization, these groups shall provide a systematic platform for peer-to-peer troubleshooting and regional data standardization. These thematic working groups should serve as a platform where experts can troubleshoot real-world problems and standardize data in real-time. Additionally, the working groups might be given an opportunity conduct so call "Feasibility Testing" of the RAP recommendations to ensure that draft recommendations are vetted by technical committees prior to finalization. This vetting process shifts the RAP's value proposition from abstract regional mandates toward practical, tangible solutions for specific operational bottlenecks.

Expanding Stakeholder Engagement for Local Buy-in. Many stakeholders suggested the Secretariat adopting a "Last-Mile" Outreach Strategy. By expanding engagement beyond high-level National Focal Points to include technical line ministries and private sector partners, the RAP can secure the local buy-in necessary to align regional outputs with the daily operational realities and constraints of government officials.

Operationalizing Implementation through Policy Integration. Integrating new regional priorities into rigid, pre-existing national master plans remains a complex challenge. The next phase of the RAP should mitigate this by introducing modular (east-to -step) policy roadmaps and templates. These "easy-to-adopt" modules would allow member states to phase RAP recommendations into their existing long-term strategies without the need for comprehensive legal overhauls.

Modernizing Communication and Capacity Building. To improve the accessibility of its technical expertise, many stakeholders shared their wish for the Secretariat's modernising its content delivery. Moving away from lengthy, text-heavy reports toward interactive, digital, and graphic-rich content will make technical insights more digestible for busy policymakers.

Strategically, they believed that the RAP should prioritize narrowing the digital and technological divide between advanced and developing countries. By harmonizing regulatory frameworks and port data systems, ESCAP can act as a Global Bridge, leveraging its unique convening power to elevate regional transport challenges to broader UN forums and international donor organizations.

Meaningful Integration of Cross-Cutting Issues. Recognizing that inclusivity has historically been less visible, the next RAP must move beyond general statements to achieve Data-Driven Accountability. Inclusivity—specifically gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion—must be integrated into the core design of all workshops, training programs, and leadership committees. By backing these efforts with specific data collection, the Secretariat can ensure that marginalized groups are meaningfully represented and that transport policies are developed through a truly inclusive regional lens.

4.5 Sustainability

FINDING # 14: The evaluation identifies that the sustainability of the RAP (2022–2026_ depends on how effectively its recommendations are woven into national frameworks. This integration typically follows two distinct pathways: high-level strategic codification and mid-cycle technical alignment.

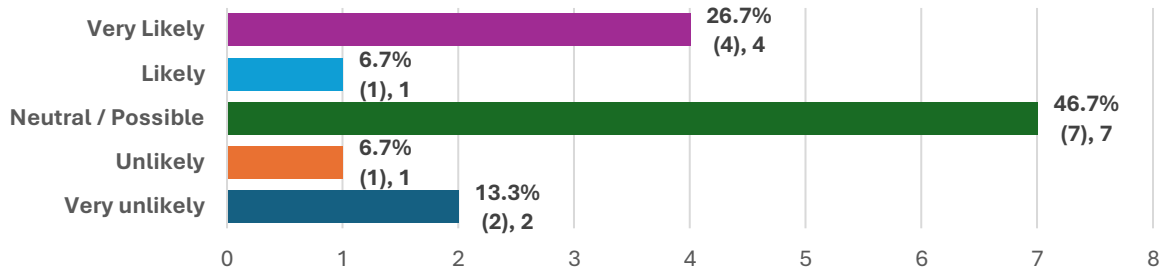
The Secretariat's support is most effective when it targets the highest levels of government planning. The fact that about a quarter of the evaluation respondents have already integrated the RAP recommendations into their primary National Development Plans is a significant indicator of long-term institutional change.

FINDING # 15: According to stakeholder feedback, the Secretariat's support for the development and implementation of the RAP (2022-2026) has been instrumental in shifting the initiative from a regional vision to national action. The evaluation identifies that the Secretariat's effectiveness is rooted in its "catalytic role" and its ability to provide technical blueprints that bridge the gap between regional standards and national execution.

Sustainability of the Results

The survey data reflects a high degree of confidence in the sustainability of the RAP (2022-2026) results, with a significant majority of respondents anticipating lasting impacts. Specifically, two-thirds of stakeholders (66.7%) provided a positive outlook, with 25% rating the likelihood of sustainability as "Very High" and 41.7% as "High." This indicates that the programme's outputs are perceived to have strong institutional value and long-term viability. While a quarter of respondents (25%) remained neutral, only a minimal fraction (8.3%) expressed concerns regarding low sustainability, and notably, no respondents anticipated a complete failure to sustain results. This suggests that while there is a solid foundation for permanence, further efforts may be needed to convert the "neutral" group into "high-confidence" stakeholders by addressing specific structural or financial barriers (**Figure 4).** The above feedback also indicates that the Secretariat has successfully delivered outputs perceived to have strong institutional value and long-term viability. Notably, no respondents anticipated a complete failure to sustain results, suggesting the Secretariat has built a solid foundation for permanence.

Figure 4: Survey Respondents' Perception about the Sustainability of the Results of the RAP (2022-2026)



Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

The above quantitative optimism is grounded in the qualitative evidence of "policy anchoring" seen in the interview notes. Overall, the evaluation identified that when RAP goals are written into a National Development Plan (NDP) or a Government Action Program, this is the most sustainable form of integration because it usually guarantees a budget allocation. For example, the Mongolian Government launched a comprehensive E-mobility mandate in early 2024. This cross-sectoral initiative aligns the Ministries of Transport, Finance, Environment, and Energy to achieve aggressive EV adoption targets by 2026. Furthermore, by incorporating multimodal transport goals and stricter emission standards into its *2024–2028 Action Program*, Mongolia has codified the RAP's low-carbon mobility objectives into its national legislative

The table below (**Table 12)**, present few examples of the integration of RAP (2022–2026) recommendations, technical standards, and framework outputs into national-level planning and legislation in national frameworks. One of the represented examples is related to the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of the Republic of Korea (jointly with ESCAP) has co-organized "Asia-Pacific Regional Dialogue on Sustainable Maritime Connectivity" on October 28–29, 2025, in Mumbai, India, as part of India Maritime Week 2025. It ensured that RAP implementation is not a standalone ESCAP activity but a joint venture with member States.

Another example is related to Türkiye's transitioning from policy dialogue to legislative mandate by establishing a formal legal framework for EV charging infrastructure. Under the Energy Market Regulatory Authority (EPDK), this initiative codified technical standards and regulations that ensure the interoperability and expansion of high-speed charging networks. By aligning these national regulations with RAP 2022–2026 priorities, Türkiye has created a sustainable, legally-binding foundation for decarbonizing its transport sector, directly fulfilling the programme's goals for green mobility.

Table 12: National Integration of the RAP (2022–2026) Recommendations

Country	Specific Integration Mechanism	Direct Link to the (RAP 2022–2026)
Mongolia	Action Program of the Gov. of Mongolia (2024–2028)	Direct Implementation: Following a 2024 mandate, integrated RAP-aligned standards for multimodal transport and vehicle emissions to halve urban emissions by 2030.
Türkiye	EPDK Legal Framework (2022)	Legislative Integration: Adopted RAP-related international standards into national law to regulate EV charging infrastructure across all 81 provinces.

Republic of Korea	Sustainable Maritime Connectivity Dialogue	Institutional Integration: The Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries co-designed research and dialogues directly with ESCAP to standardize maritime data and digital systems.
Malaysia	Twelfth Malaysia Plan (2021–2025)	Technical Alignment: Utilized RAP technical standards for maritime connectivity to execute infrastructure projects, bridging the gap with their 2019 National Policy.
China	Regional Logistics Strategy	Sectoral Integration: Incorporated RAP priorities on "financial facilitation" and land connectivity into national logistics coordination frameworks.
Pakistan	Vision 2025–2030 & NDCs	Strategic Integration: Linked national climate commitments (NDCs) to RAP sustainable transport targets to ensure international policy coherence.

Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

The Secretariat's Role in Securing Long-Term Impact and Sustainability

In-depth interviewed validate the feedback received through survey and provided further insights. Key stakeholder also highlighted the catalytic role of international organizations and ESCAP in particular. The claimed that the sustainability is enhanced when ESCAP plays a "catalytic role," providing continuous information and raising awareness among policymakers so that the importance of these activities is realized over the long term. Successful examples include the introduction of standards and specifications that create a foundation for ongoing regional interaction. In addition, few mentioned "convening power" of ESCAP. By using the RAP framework to bring together international organizations (like the ADB, World Bank, and IMO) and member state governments, ESCAP helps link regional discussions with global policy processes and funding opportunities.

Also, there is a reported need for a more robust progress-tracking mechanism. Few stakeholders recommended that the Secretariat move toward more "interactive and graphic contents" and regular "check-ups" on national implementation to ensure momentum is not lost when national focal points rotate.

Finally, some stakeholders highlighted that the Secretariat's success in the next phase of the RAP will depend on its ability to facilitate more "hard-focus actions." This requires establishing innovative financial cooperation mechanisms with partners like the AIIB and ADB to prevent the strategic impacts of the RAP from being lost due to a lack of investment.

Challenges to Sustainability. Overall, the respondents perceived sustainability of the RAP (2022-2026) through the prism of ensuring that the outputs will lead to long-term institutional change. Although, the respondents believed that several systemic challenges may impede long-term impact. As reported, the following key factors influence the likely sustainability of the RAP (2022-2026) results:

- *Synchronisation between regional framework adoption and national revie cycle:* the evaluation indicated that the RAP (2022-2026) has successfully penetrated the highest tiers of government planning. While the majority of surveyed and interviewed countries (over 60% of respondents) have integrated RAP outputs into sectoral planning documents, a critical 25% have achieved integration within their National Development Plans (NDPs). This represents the "gold standard" of sustainability, as inclusion in an NDP typically ensures that transport priorities are linked to mandatory national budget allocations and five-year development cycles.

  Despite these successes, some stakeholders reported a significant structural barrier to sustainability of the RAP (2022–2026), the lack of synchronization between regional framework adoptions and national policy review cycles. Ideally, the sustainability of the RAP is driven by the

direct integration of its recommendations into national transport policies. However, when a country's primary policy is formulated years prior to a new RAP phase, a "waiting period" or implementation lag occurs, as new high-level recommendations cannot be easily institutionalized until the next formal review cycle.

- *Institutional Capacity and Resource Constraints:* Some key stakeholders reported that sustainability was challenged by a lack of human resources and technical capacity within member states to implement and the RAP-provided recommendations and initiatives. More specifically, stakeholders frequently reported that the technical quality of RAP recommendations is high and that there is strong political will to adopt them. However, a recurring theme in the interview data is that national transport ministries are often "spread thin." While a focal point may attend an ESCAP workshop and understand the roadmap for, say, maritime digitalization or e-mobility, they return to a department that lacks the specialized staff required to manage the procurement, engineering, or legislative drafting necessary for the implementation of the RAP (2022-2026) recommendations.

  Few reported that because of limited internal staff, many member states rely on short-term national or international consultants (as seen in the case of the Autonomous Shipping project in Malaysia) to initiate RAP-aligned activities. While this helps start a project, it creates a "sustainability risk": once the consultant's contract ends, the internal capacity to maintain, update, or scale the initiative often disappears. This prevents the RAP from becoming a permanent part of the institutional memory.

  A specific resource constraint mentioned by stakeholders is the high turnover rate within civil services. When the "trained" officials who understand or is engaged in the RAP framework is rotated to a different ministry, the remaining staff often lack the background to continue the work. This forces a "restart" of the implementation process, stalling the long-term changes the RAP aims to achieve.

  Finally, the evaluation identified that advanced nations look to the RAP as a platform for co-development of new standards, whereas developing nations view the Secretariat primarily as a capacity-building and technical-assistance provider.

- *Financial Viability:* The transition from high-level policy dialogue to practical implementation depends heavily on sustainable financial mechanisms. Among 15 national stakeholders surveyed, eight reported that their governments have allocated specific national financial resources to implement or sustain activities initiated under the RAP (2022–2026). These allocations were managed through various channels, including existing departmental budgets, dedicated national or sectoral budget lines, and broader investments in transport infrastructure and climate-resilient development aligned with RAP objectives. Some member states have further institutionalized this support by integrating RAP goals into their national fiscal frameworks and annual development plans. Conversely, five respondents stated that no specific funds were allocated, while two noted that activities relied solely on external donor funding. Two stakeholders were unable to provide information regarding fund allocation.

  Furthermore, interviewed stakeholders underscored that translating policy outcomes into tangible practice requires the establishment of innovative financial cooperation mechanisms. By engaging partners such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the private sector, ESCAP can facilitate the 'hard-focus actions' and linked investments necessary to prevent the strategic impacts of the RAP from being lost.

- *Follow-up and Communication Gaps:* Key stakeholders reported a need for better follow-up and engagement to ensure results do not "start from zero" when focal points change. To ensure sustained momentum, stakeholders recommended that ESCAP establish a robust progress-

tracking mechanism, including regular “check-ups” on national implementation and enhanced continuity between high-level meetings. Notably, out of 15 Member State representatives, two reported a positive outcome regarding the establishment of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Letters of Intent, or “Joint Work Plans” specifically supporting the RAP (2022–2026). Conversely, three representatives provided negative feedback, while the vast majority (10 out of 15) could not provide an answer to this query. For ease of reference, ESCAP and the MOLIT of the Republic of Korea signed a Trust Fund Agreement (TFA) in May 2025 to promote the project “Strengthening the Technical Capacity of Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS) for Sustainable Smart Mobility to Address Climate Change Issues.” Also, Korea Maritime Institute (KMI) supported the process of establishing a MoU between ESCAP and the Busan Port Authority (BPA) to promote cooperation and development in the port sector. This MOA was concluded in 2024 and has provided a framework for strengthening collaboration and knowledge exchange in port-related areas.

4.6 Cross-cutting Issues

FINDING # 16: The evaluation identified that the integration of cross-cutting issues (i.e., gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion) within the RAP (2022-2026) is characterized by a high-level normative commitment that encounters significant "visibility gaps" during operational implementation. While the Secretariat has established frameworks for inclusion, the depth of integration varies significantly between RB and XB projects.

FINDING # 17: The current RAP largely measures cross-cutting issues through quantitative metrics, such as the number of female participants in workshops. While this provides a baseline for representation, it does not necessarily lead to gender-responsive transport policies. The main proposed shift for the RAP prioritizes the collection of sex-disaggregated and disability-disaggregated data regarding transport usage and safety, Embedding accessibility protocols directly into AH and TAR manuals, Implementing a "Last-Mile" strategy to involve advocacy groups during the design phase and creating "Inclusion Roadmaps" that demonstrate the business case for diversity, and utilizing interactive, graphic-rich content to visualize the economic and social dividends of inclusive transport systems

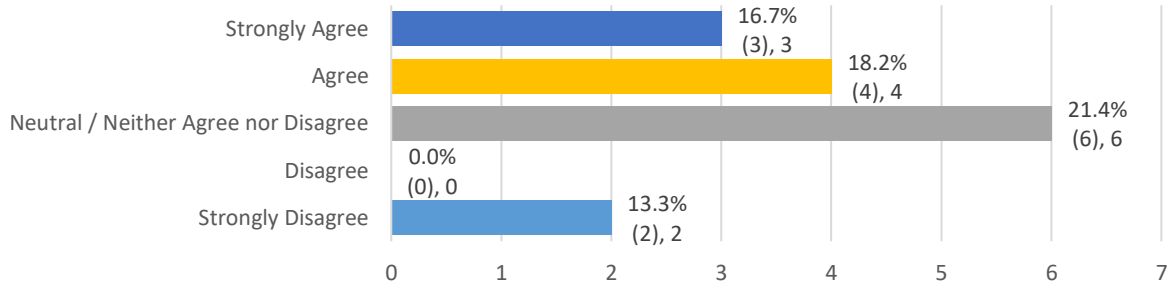
Integration of Cross-cutting Issues into the RAP (2022-2026)

The quantitative and qualitative data reveals a significant perception gap regarding the integration of cross-cutting issues within the RAP (2022–2026). While the programme incorporates safe and inclusive mobility pillars, key stakeholders did not view the cross-cutting issues to be deeply embedded features of the programme’s design or implementation.

The survey results of the RAP (2022-2026) activities addressing the transport needs of women (e.g., safety, travel patterns, economic access) show a fragmented level of satisfaction. While the majority of respondents lean toward a positive or neutral stance, there is a significant pocket of strong dissatisfaction that suggests the current activities may not be reaching all affected women equitably. The most frequent response was “Neutral” (21.4%). This suggests that for a large portion of the surveyed group, the RAP activities were neither a failure nor a standout success, possibly indicating that the activities met "basic" needs but did not go above and beyond to improve economic access or safety (**Figure 5**).

Roughly one-third of respondents Agree or Strongly Agree that their transport needs were met. This indicates that for a specific segment, the resettlement infrastructure or transport planning is functioning as intended.

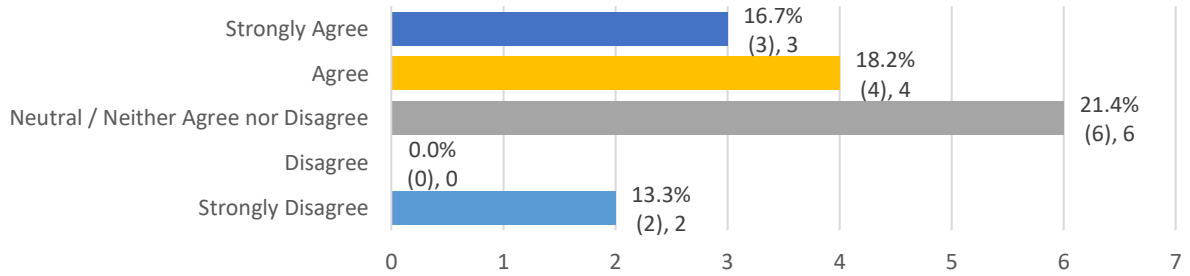
Figure 5: Survey Regarding the RAP (2022-2026) Activities Addressing the Transport Needs of Women



Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

The evaluation gathered rathe a polarized and largely neutral perception of current RAP's addressing the needs of people with disabilities. Form quantitative perspective, the most frequent response from the respondents was "Neutral / Neither Agree nor Disagree." This suggests that while basic transport infrastructure has been established, it has not yet achieved a level of "active empowerment." Furthermore, the survey Reponses recorded a wide variance in scores (**Figure 6**), ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1). This spread indicates that while certain high-visibility areas or new transport hubs may align with international standards (earning the highest scores), other critical segments of the transport chain remain entirely inaccessible.

Figure 6: Survey Regarding the RAP (2022-2026) Activities Addressing the Transport Needs of PWD



Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

During in-depth interviews, some stakeholders explicitly noted that gender and disability issues were "less visible" in the RAP (2022–2026). This indicates that while the overarching goals of "Safe and Inclusive Mobility" exist, they are often overshadowed by the technical and infrastructure-heavy priorities of the programme. The member State representatives also noted that while ESCAP as an organization continues to address gender and minority issues across its broader programming, these themes were not always integrated into the specific technical workshops or leadership committees of the transport-focused RAP.

Alos, few stakeholders acknowledged that cross-cutting issues were "meaningfully discussed" during implementation meetings. This suggests that the Secretariat is successful in raising awareness and facilitating dialogue. However, despite these discussions, when asked to identify RAP-supported policies or laws that specifically address the needs of marginalized groups, stakeholders were unable to provide concrete examples.

Furthermore, the evaluation identified that the RAP (2022-2026) related documents show that while projects are assigned UN "Gender Markers[25]" (like GEM 1[26] or GEM 2a[27]), the actual reporting often defaults to simple quantitative metrics, such as counting the number of women in a room. This creates the perception among stakeholders that inclusion is a reporting requirement to be "ticked off" rather than a strategic goal to be debated.

Stakeholder feedback also indicated a disconnect between the RAP's written objectives and its perceived execution. National stakeholders reported that cross-cutting issues often felt like "add-ons" to technical discussions. Interviewees from ESCAP member States also noted a lack of substantive thematic discussion on disability or gender during high-level regional meetings, leading to a perception that these issues are secondary to infrastructure and logistics. Many respondents highlighted a lack of clear data or specific strategies used to engage marginalized groups in leadership committees or technical workshops. This resulted in a top-down approach that often overlooked the specific safety and accessibility needs of women and persons with disabilities.

Regular Budget (RB) Mandates: Structural Barriers

Per stakeholder feedback and desk research, for activities funded through the RB, such as mandated reports and intergovernmental meetings, cross-cutting issue inclusion faces different hurdles:

- **The Resource-Demand Gap:** Under the current UN liquidity crisis and post-abolition climate (e.g., the loss of P-3 level posts), staff are expected to do "double-tasking." In this high-pressure environment, core intergovernmental mandates take precedence, often sidelining the development of specialized publications on disability-inclusive transport.
- **Protocol vs. Accessibility:** While the shift to hybrid meetings (the "COVID-19 legacy") improved regional inclusivity by allowing remote participation, the additional lead time required for virtual interpretation and protocol compliance often left little room for dedicated sessions on universal design or marginalized group advocacy.

Extrabudgetary (XB) Projects: The Gender Marker Framework

In XB-funded projects, cross-cutting issues are formally tracked through the GEM system, which reveals an uneven application across technical areas:

- **Targeted Success (GEM 2a):** The project "Sustainable maritime and port connectivity (Phase 1)" (XB 2021) was designated as GEM 2a, meaning gender equality was a significant objective. This resulted in tangible tracking, such as the 2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Dialogue, which recorded 26 female participants out of 106.
- **Technical Bias (GEM 1):** Conversely, "hardware-heavy" projects like "Smart mobility technologies in Pacific SIDS" (2023-TD-008) and "Green transport infrastructure along the Asian Highway" (2022-TD-003) were categorized as GEM 1. In these cases, inclusion was limited to participation metrics rather than influencing the technical design of the transport systems themselves.
- **The "Hardware" Problem:** Stakeholders observed that the technical nature of projects—such as Autonomous Shipping (2024)—often overshadows social inclusion. Engineers and maritime

[25] Gender Markers are a self-assessment tool used to track how much a project or program intends to contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment.
[26] GEM 1: Limited Contribution to Gender Equality. A project is assigned a GEM 1 rating when it contributes to gender equality in only a small or "limited" way. Usually, these projects are highly technical and don't have gender equality as a main goal, but they still try to be inclusive.
[27] GEM 2a: Gender Equality is a Significant Objective. A project is assigned a GEM 2a rating when gender equality is a central and deliberate part of the project's design. It is not just a side thought; the project is expected to make a noticeable contribution to women's empowerment

experts frequently perceive gender and disability as less "operationally relevant" than sensors, legal liability, or fuel efficiency.

Finally, within the implementation of the RAP (2022-2026), disability inclusion currently represents the least visible cross-cutting priority across both RB and XB funding streams. This lack of visibility is primarily driven by a gap between high-level policy aspirations and the technical standards that govern regional infrastructure. For instance, while "inclusive mobility" is cited as an overarching goal, it has not yet been fully operationalized within the Secretariat's core technical outputs. Key instruments, such as the technical manuals for the AH and TAR networks, often lack specific "Universal Design" standards. Without these standardized accessibility requirements, regional infrastructure risks being developed in a way that continues to exclude persons with disabilities from sustainable transport benefits.

Furthermore, the issue is compounded by a significant scarcity of data. Unlike gender mainstreaming, where participant metrics are systematically tracked and reported, there is a documented lack of data concerning the engagement of persons with disabilities in RAP workshops, training sessions, or leadership committees. This data void makes it difficult to measure progress or identify specific barriers to participation, leaving disability inclusion as a largely conceptual rather than an evidenced-based component of the current RAP cycle.

Recommendations for the Next Phase to Advance the Integration of Cross-cutting Issues

To improve the integration of cross-cutting issues, specifically gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, in the next RAP, the stakeholders shared the following strategic roadmap for improvement.

Moving Beyond "Counting" to Qualitative Impact. The next RAP should prioritize the collection of sex-disaggregated and disability-disaggregated data regarding transport usage and safety. By understanding *how* women and persons with disabilities navigate regional networks differently, the Secretariat can propose technical standards—such as gender-sensitive lighting in ports or universal design in railway stations—that address specific structural barriers.

Standardizing "Universal Design" in Technical Manuals. One of the most significant gaps identified was the absence of inclusive standards in "hard" infrastructure manuals. Therefore, some stakeholders suggested that in the next phase, the Secretariat should integrate Universal Design protocols directly into the technical manuals for the AH and TAR networks. By making accessibility a mandatory technical specification rather than an optional "add-on," the RAP can ensure that new infrastructure is inclusive by design from the outset.

Implementing "Last-Mile" Outreach to Specialized Stakeholders.: The Secretariat should adopt a "Last-Mile" Outreach strategy that engages beyond National Focal Points to include disability rights organizations, women's business collectives, and specialized technical ministries. Including these groups in the *design* phase of technical materials—not just the validation phase—ensures that the RAP reflects the daily operational realities of marginalized groups.

Bridging the Technical Bias with "Inclusion Roadmaps." To counter "technical bias," the next RAP should produce Modular Policy Integration Roadmaps. These modules should demonstrate the "business case" for inclusivity, showing how universal design and gender safety protocols actually improve economic efficiency, reduce accidents, and increase the commercial viability of transport networks.

Enhancing Communication through Interactive Content. Stakeholders suggested that the Secretariat should modernize its communication by utilizing interactive and graphic-rich content. By visualizing the impact of inclusive policies through digital maps, infographics, and success-story videos, the RAP can more effectively communicate the value of cross-cutting issues to a broader range of government officials and private sector partners.

5. Conclusions

Based on the gathered data the evaluation resulted in a number of conclusions across each evaluation criterion.

IMPACT. The RAP (2022–2026) has successfully matured from a high-level policy framework into a functional "regional rulebook" for sustainable and resilient transport. By transitioning to a treaty-based operational architecture, the RAP has moved beyond physical connectivity to address integrated regional development. It has effectively reduced technical and regulatory friction across borders while creating a harmonized system that balances efficient trade with the dual imperatives of decarbonization and social inclusion.

The primary impact of this cycle lies in the RAP's role as a neutral platform for policy harmonization. At the regional level, it has transitioned the Asia-Pacific from a collection of isolated infrastructure projects toward an integrated, multimodal system by standardizing technical specifications for the Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway, and Dry Port networks.

A defining success of this period is the "nesting" of national policies within these regional standards. This was achieved by utilizing the RPTC and XB projects as the RAP's "operational arm." This bridge allowed high-level roadmaps to be translated into tangible national results, such as the *National Strategy on Rail Digital Transformation* and the operationalization of logistics centers in LLDCs. These outcomes demonstrate that the RAP provided the technical blueprints necessary for countries to implement sustainable, digitally enabled freight transport. While the current cycle has built a robust technical foundation, the evaluation concludes that the next Regional Action Programme must evolve from a "dissemination model" toward an "Operational Partnership Model" to ensure long-term sustainability (***Linked to FINDINGs #1 and #2*****).**

RELEVANCE. The evaluation concludes that the RAP (2022–2026) has established itself as a highly relevant, multidimensional framework that successfully bridges global mandates with national operational realities. More specifically, the RAP serves as the primary technical and normative engine for the 2030 Agenda within the transport sector. By aligning its seven thematic areas with specific global targets, the programme has successfully translated high-level SDG mandates into concrete national infrastructure standards and legislative frameworks. It has moved beyond purely economic connectivity to integrate the "triple bottom line"—balancing economic, social, and environmental dimensions—thereby making the SDGs operationally relevant for transport ministries **(*Linked to FINDINGS #3 and #4*****).**

The evaluation also concludes that the RAP's high degree of relevance is fundamentally rooted in its strategic flexibility, which allows it to transcend a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Rather than imposing a rigid set of regional mandates, the programme functions as a responsive framework that member States leverage to address their specific geographic and developmental imperatives. This situational utility ensured that the RAP remained a high-priority instrument across diverse national contexts (***Linked to FINDING #5*****).**

Furthermore, the evaluation concludes that the long-term relevance of the RAP framework is contingent upon a fundamental strategic evolution from policy dissemination to operational mainstreaming. As the regional transport landscape matures, the current framework's utility is increasingly defined by its ability to bridge specific technical and financial gaps that persist between regional planning and national execution (***Linked to FINDING #6).***

EFFECIVENESS. The evaluation concludes that the RAP (2022–2026) has demonstrated a high level of effectiveness, characterized by the consistent delivery of mandated outputs and the successful attainment of core performance indicators. The Secretariat has effectively functioned as a technical

anchor, providing the standardized "language" and frameworks necessary for regional transport integration. The programme's success is most visible in the transition from regional consensus-building to a binding, treaty-based architecture, notably through the entry into force of critical amendments to the Intergovernmental Agreements for the AH, TAR, and Dry Ports.

Dual-Track Delivery and Implementation Friction. The Secretariat successfully executed a dual-track strategy to drive the RAP, balancing Intergovernmental and Normative Outputs (maintaining political alignment) with Technical Knowledge Products (driving modernization in areas like rail digitalization and cybersecurity). However, the evaluation concludes that while "output-level" targets are largely met, the transition to "outcome-level" impact is frequently tempered by "implementation friction." This gap between regional agreement and national regulatory adoption remains the primary barrier to effectiveness.

The Shift to Targeted Support Finally, the evaluation concludes that the Secretariat's impact is maximized when it provides standardized policy "anchors" (frameworks) rather than a high volume of generic recommendations. To ensure long-term effectiveness, the current cycle has revealed a critical need for more targeted, localized support to help member States navigate the specific domestic funding gaps and legislative barriers that currently prevent regional guidelines from being fully codified into national law ***(Linked to FINDINGS #7, #8, and #9).***

EFFICIENCY. The evaluation concludes that the implementation of the RAP (2022–2026) was driven by a tripartite operational model—leveraging ESCAP's convening power, technical research networks (e.g., KMI), and the investment pipelines of the ADB and World Bank. This model effectively maximized limited resources, allowing the Secretariat to function as a high-impact "policy engine." However, efficiency was consistently challenged by a "dual-track" operational reality that separated administrative consistency from field-level implementation.

Strategic Partnerships and Resource Leveraging Cooperation with a diverse array of partners, including UN entities and regional organizations like the SPC, significantly amplified ESCAP's reach. By aligning the normative standards of the RAP with multi-billion-dollar investment pipelines, the Secretariat ensured that its programmatic budget was bolstered by external technical expertise, effectively extending its human and financial capacity ***(Linked to FINDINGS #10 and #13)***.

The Dual-Track Pattern of Timeliness The evaluation concludes that the pace of delivery was often dictated more by funding architecture than by programmatic intent, creating a persistent tension between institutional stability and operational agility:

- *Regular Budget (RB) Implementation:* Demonstrated high consistency in meeting mandated targets but was frequently undermined by **"**reviewer bottlenecks" and institutional bureaucracy. These administrative layers risked a disconnect between the completion of work and its situational relevance to member states.
- *Extrabudgetary (XB) Implementation:* Offered greater field-level flexibility but remained structurally vulnerable to external shocks, donor dependency, and the "COVID-19 legacy." These factors necessitated frequent timeline revisions, reflecting a model that is agile yet highly susceptible to fluctuations ***(Linked to FINDINGS #11 and #12)***.

The Resource-Demand Threshold. Finally, the evaluation concludes that the RAP is at a critical threshold due to a widening "resource-demand gap." While member state expectations increased, internal capacity was constrained by the UN liquidity crisis and post abolitions. Future success is contingent upon addressing these staffing constraints to ensure the "operational arm" of the programme can effectively overcome national-level legislative and logistical hurdles ***(Linked to FINDING #12)***.

While the RAP (2022–2026) demonstrated high efficiency in resource leveraging, it remained vulnerable to internal administrative friction and external shocks. Transitioning to an "Operational Partnership Model" is essential for the next cycle to bridge the gap between regional policy and national infrastructure investment ***(Linked to FINDING #13)***.

SUSTAINABILIY. The evaluation concludes that the RAP (2022–2026) has achieved a high degree of institutional resilience and its results demonstrate a high likelihood of long-term sustainability, underpinned by strong institutional confidence and the successful codification of regional standards into national frameworks. The Secretariat has been instrumental in this process, transitioning from a provider of a "regional vision" to a catalyst for "national action."

- *Institutional Codification and National Ownership:* The long-term viability of the RAP is confirmed by its successful "nesting" within national legal architectures. The fact that 25% of Member States have already codified RAP recommendations into their National Development Plans indicates that regional goals have transitioned into permanent domestic priorities. For other states, sustainability is maintained through mid-cycle technical alignment, ensuring that ongoing infrastructure remains compatible with regional standards over time **(*Linked to FINDING #14).***
- *The Secretariat's Catalytic Impact:* The Secretariat has moved beyond high-level advocacy to act as a vital technical catalyst. Its support is most impactful when providing the practical "how-to" blueprints that allow national ministries to bridge the gap between abstract regional mandates and concrete domestic execution. This technical anchoring ensures that the results of the RAP are operationally feasible for member States to maintain (***Linked to FINDING #15).***
- *Strategic Continuity through Formal Agreements:* To safeguard against future resource or political fluctuations, the Secretariat has successfully formalized long-term continuity through strategic inter-institutional agreements. (***Linked to FINDING #15).***

CROSS-CUTTING. The evaluation concludes that the integration of cross-cutting issues, specifically gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, within the RAP (2022–2026) is characterized by a high-level normative commitment that faces significant "visibility gaps" during operational execution. While the Secretariat has established clear frameworks for inclusion, the impact remains primarily symbolic rather than transformative ***(Linked to FINDING #16).***

To ensure future relevance, the next RAP must transition from qualitative "participation metrics" toward data-driven accountability and technical integration. By embedding accessibility directly into infrastructure manuals and treating inclusivity as a technical specification rather than a social elective, the next RAP can achieve a more profound and lasting impact on regional connectivity ***(Linked to FINDING #17).***

The table below **(Table 13**) provides the evaluation rating across each evaluation criterion. The ratings reflect a synthesis of documentary evidence and stakeholder feedback, capturing the RAP's transition from a normative policy framework to a functional technical anchor for regional connectivity. While the programme demonstrates exceptional performance in regional harmonization and strategic impact, the ratings also highlight critical areas for improvement, particularly regarding the move from symbolic inclusion to the operational mainstreaming of cross-cutting priorities.

Table 13: Evaluation Rating Table[28]

[28] The evaluation applied a four-point rating system: **1. Highly Successful / Highly Satisfactory (**Used if the RAP technical standards were adopted by almost all member states and resulted in immediate large-scale infrastructure investment and harmonized regional laws); **2. Successful / Satisfactory (**It suggests that while there were "administrative bottlenecks" (as seen in the RB-funded projects), the core intergovernmental mandates were still met on time). **3. Partially Successful / Partially Satisfactory (**This rating is applied to specific areas like "Disability Inclusion" or "Gender Mainstreaming" if the

Evaluation Criterion	Rating	Conclusion Summary
Impact	Highly Satisfactory	The programme matured into a functional "regional rulebook," effectively eliminating technical friction at borders. It successfully "nested" regional standards into national policies through the RPTC and XB "operational arms." (Findings #1, #2)
Relevance	Highly Satisfactory	The RAP successfully aligned the 2030 Agenda with national priorities. Its "situational utility" allowed diverse Member States to address specific geographic and developmental needs, making it a primary engine for sustainable transport. (Findings #3, #4, #5)
Effectiveness	Satisfactory	Core intergovernmental mandates and technical outputs (e.g., Rail Digitalization Strategy) were met on schedule. However, "implementation friction" remains a barrier to turning these regional outputs into domestic law. (Findings #7, #8, #9)
Efficiency	Satisfactory	The "tripartite model" effectively leveraged external investment and research networks. However, RB activities faced internal bureaucracy, and a "resource-demand gap" created staffing pressures during the UN liquidity crisis. (Findings #10, #11, #12)
Sustainability	Satisfactory	Two-thirds of stakeholders (66.7%) anticipate lasting impacts, with 25% already codifying RAP into National Development Plans. Continued success requires formalizing more long-term institutional agreements. (Findings #14, #15)
Cross-cutting	Partially Satisfactory	While normative commitment is high, these issues remain "peripheral" or "invisible" during operational execution. Integration is currently limited to quantitative metrics rather than qualitative technical shifts. (Findings #16, #17)

Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

evaluation finds that these issues remained "invisible" or "peripheral" despite being written into the plan); **4. Unsuccessful / Unsatisfactory (**This would be used if regional connectivity actually decreased or if member states stopped engaging with the Secretariat's technical working groups entirely).

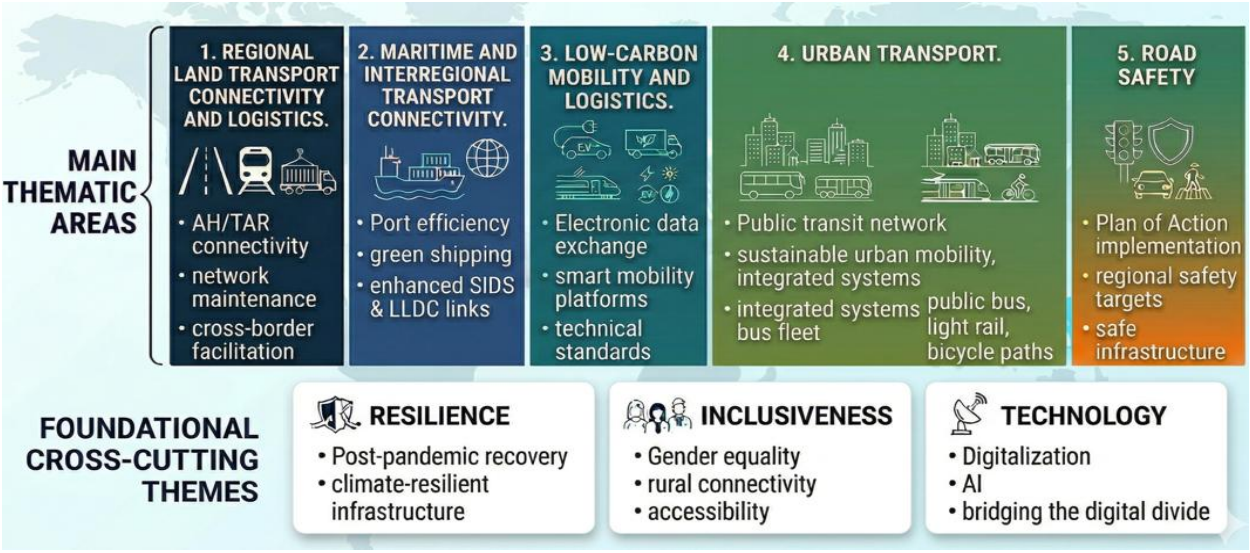
6. Recommendations

The evaluation proposes six (6) strategic and action-oriented recommendations addressed to ESCAP management and its member States. The recommendations are built around the fundamental shift the RAP's delivery model to support the Asia-Pacific transport sector transition from "planning" to "permanent implementation. It allows the next RAP must function as a Delivery Catalyst through a strengthened "Operational Partnership Model." This involves transitioning from regional roadmaps to the development of "bankable" project pipelines that align with the investment criteria of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs). By providing "plug-and-play" legal templates and utilizing RPTC and XB projects as a unified operational arm, the Secretariat can help member States "nest" regional goals directly into their national budget cycles.

Through this evolution, the RAP will move beyond being a provider of vision to becoming a facilitator of permanent, inclusive, and resilient infrastructure, ensuring that the Asia-Pacific transport network remains the primary engine for achieving the 2030 Agenda.

RECOMMENDATION 1 (Thematic Areas of the Next RAP). In developing the next RAP, the Secretariat should facilitate intergovernmental discussions on the thematic structure, drawing on the findings of this evaluation and inputs from member States. This involves transitioning toward a systemically integrated approach that synchronizes five proposed core thematic areas with three cross-cutting imperatives—Resilience, Inclusiveness, and Technology—ensuring that regional connectivity serves as a holistic catalyst for sustainable and inclusive economic growth (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7: Proposed Thematic Areas of the Next RAP



Source: The Evaluation Dataset, ESCAP (2026).

The backbone of the region relies on **Regional Land Transport Connectivity and Logistics**. It is recommended that the RAP prioritizes the operationalization of the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway through "smart" corridors. This involves not only physical completion but the coordinated removal of non-physical barriers through standardized cross-border facilitation and paperless trade environments.

Complementing land routes, **Maritime and Interregional Connectivity** should focus on port efficiency and the unique requirements of SIDS and LLDCs. By fostering "Green Shipping" and multimodal links,

the region can ensure seamless integration into global value chains while minimizing environmental impact.

The transition to **Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics** should be the cornerstone of the new program. By leveraging electronic data exchange and smart mobility platforms, the region can optimize load factors and significantly reduce the carbon intensity of the logistics sector.

On the local scale, **Urban Transport** strategies should pivot toward human-centric design. The recommendation is to support member States in developing integrated public transit systems that prioritize mass transit and active mobility (walking and cycling). This reduces urban congestion and improves the quality of life in the region's rapidly growing metropolitan hubs.

Finally, the program should treat **Road Safety** as a critical public health priority. By adhering to a regional Plan of Action and implementing "Safe System" infrastructure, we can ensure that increased mobility does not lead to increased mortality, targeting a substantial reduction in road-related fatalities across the network.

To ensure the success of these five pillars, the RAP should move toward technical mainstreaming, weaving three cross-cutting imperatives into the technical architecture of projects where feasible:

- *Resilience:* Moving from "alignment" to technical durability. Infrastructure should be designed for longevity through comprehensive climate-risk modelling of assets and building flexible supply chains capable of recovering rapidly from global shocks.
- *Inclusiveness:* Moving from "advocacy" to enhanced accessibility. The RAP should mainstream gender-responsive planning and universal accessibility audits, ensuring that rural populations, women, and persons with disabilities have equitable access to the opportunities created by regional connectivity.
- *Technology and Innovation:* Moving from "adoption" to predictive management. The digital divide must be bridged through the integration of AI, big data, and encrypted paperless protocols, moving the region toward a predictive, rather than reactive, transport management model.

RECOMMENDATION 2 (Transition to "Plug-and-Play" Operational Mainstreaming for Inclusive and Green Connectivity). To address regional implementation friction and support member States in moving cross-cutting issues from the periphery to the technical core, the Secretariat should continue to develop and make available practical reference documents, model frameworks, and voluntary, "off-the-shelf" guidance materials. This technical assistance should be provided upon request and in a manner that respects the internal governance structures of each member State, enabling interested countries to align their domestic standards and policies with regional best practices through two key supportive mechanisms:

- *Institutional Anchoring & Budgetary Alignment:* The Secretariat should incorporate Model Terms of Reference (ToR) to help national authorities establish National RAP Task Forces. These voluntary inter-ministerial bodies (bringing together Transport, Finance, and Environment) will can help align regional connectivity goals directly into national budget cycles, ensuring domestic financial backing while respecting sovereign governance structures.
- *Technical Mainstreaming of Sustainability Standards*: Rather than relying on passive social workshops, these frameworks should provide guidance on integrating practical "Inclusion by Design" and low-emission protocols directly into physical engineering standards. This includes embedding universal design and gender-safety standards (such as safety lighting and tactile paving) into core infrastructure planning, alongside accelerating electric mobility and developing dedicated "Green Shipping or Transport Corridors."

RECOMMENDATION 3 (Tiered Technical Support for Digital and Resilient Infrastructure). Recognizing that the capacity and needs of member States vary significantly across the Asia-Pacific region, the next RAP should continue to tailor its capacity-building programmes and technical assistance accordingly, with particular attention to the needs of LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS.

To bridge the widening technological divide, the Secretariat should explore frameworks for more systematic needs assessments, upon member State request, to better calibrate its support in emerging areas such as transport digitalization and data-driven transport management. This voluntary approach ensures that vulnerable economies receive the foundational support needed to implement initiatives like the Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation, while advanced economies can share practices on high-end innovation. Simultaneously, the programme should prioritize supporting supply chain resilience by sharing best practices on developing redundant corridors and shared regional resources to safeguard against systemic shocks.

Overall, the core of this tailored approach is the recognition that technical capacities vary significantly across the region. To better calibrate its activities, the Secretariat can explore frameworks to assess needs across distinct areas of focus, for example:

- *Level 1: Foundational Readiness (Focus on LDCs/LLDCs/SIDS):* For nations with nascent digital infrastructure, support focuses on the legal and regulatory prerequisites. This includes drafting national laws for data privacy, basic cybersecurity frameworks, and the initial digitization of customs and port documentation.
- *Level 2: Systems Integration (Emerging Economies):* For countries with existing digital systems, the RAP provides the interoperability "anchors." This involves implementing the *Strategy 2030 on Accelerating Rail Digital Transformation* by aligning national rail software with regional standards to ensure trains can cross borders without "digital friction."
- *Level 3: Advanced Innovation (Technology Leaders):* For digitally advanced nations, the RAP serves as a knowledge-sharing hub for high-end technologies like AI-driven logistics, autonomous shipping, and blockchain for supply chain transparency.

RECOMMENDATION 4 (Evolve the Secretariat into a Strategic Facilitator and Enhance Accountability through Performance Tracking). The Secretariat should strengthen its role as a strategic facilitator by improving the monitoring and reporting of RAP implementation progress and by enhancing knowledge exchange among member States. This approach should focus on consulting with member States on streamlined, standardized approaches to tracking progress and leveraging technical advocacy across three strategic pillars:

- *Institutional Anchoring & Progress Tracking:* Facilitate National Inter-Ministerial EGMs to elevate RAP goals into whole-of-government priorities nested within National Development Plans. Progress tracking can be explored through a voluntary via a Regional Implementation Dashboard that visualizes commitments into progress indicators, validates progress through standardized metrics, and triggers proactive support from peers and the Secretariat to address gaps in collaboratively.
- *Technical Knowledge Brokerage***:** Activate Sub-Regional Peer-to-Peer (P2P) EGMs to foster a "community of practice" where technical experts exchange practices and identify solutions to regulatory hurdles, ensuring regional standards are locally feasible.
- *Investment Readiness***:** Coordinate Infrastructure Funding EGMs to close the resource-demand gap. This peer-advisory mechanism can provide practical reference materials, such as "MDB-readiness" checklists and project-vetting workshops, ensuring national infrastructure proposals meet the strict "bankability" criteria of international financiers (e.g., ADB, WB, AIIB).

In addition, the evaluation offers two recommendations for member States:

Recommendation A (Strengthen national institutional mechanisms and regulatory alignment to accelerate sustainable, inclusive, and resilient transport systems). Member States that have not yet done so are encouraged to strengthen the implementation of the next RAP by securing political commitment and aligning national policies, regulations, financing frameworks, and technical standards with regional sustainable transport objectives. To achieve this, member States are encouraged to consider the following actions:

- *Institutionalize Inter-Ministerial Coordination***:** Establish formal National Inter-Ministerial Expert Groups (incorporating Finance, Transport, and Environment ministries) to effectively integrate regional transport goals into national development planning.
- *Adopt Inclusive Standards:* Integrate "Inclusion by Design", green connectivity, and digitalization frameworks into national transport planning, promoting their adoption through national engineering codes, legislation, and public procurement.
- *Enhance Investment Readiness:* Utilize strategic technical advisory facilities to evaluate and align high-priority national infrastructure projects against Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) investment criteria, ensuring proposals are technically aligned for international green financing.

Recommendation B (Enhance data-driven implementation, peer learning, and tiered capacity development for sustainable transport transformation). Member States that have not yet done so are encouraged to strengthen evidence-based implementation and regional cooperation by actively participating in transparent monitoring, self-assessment, and knowledge-sharing platforms. Specifically, member States are encouraged to consider the following actions:

- *Conduct Objective Self-Evaluations:* Undertake voluntary national capacity assessments to determine their implementation path and guide technical modules corresponding to their respective capacity level.
- *Commit to Data-Driven Tracking:* Participate in regional monitoring mechanisms by collecting and providing relevant national data and evidence to support regional progress tracking frameworks.
- *Engage in Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Exchange:* Empower technical staff to actively participate in peer-learning networks and technical platforms to share local feasibility data, operational "lessons learned," and strategic insights.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation TORs

Evaluation of the Implementation of the
Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development
in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026)

Terms of reference

Job Opening number:	**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Job Title:	**Consultant**
General Expertise:	**Management and Programme Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation**
Category:	**Project Management, Monitoring, Evaluation**
Department/ Office:	**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**
Organizational Unit:	**ESCAP**

Duties and Responsibilities

The fourth session of the Ministerial Conference on Transport, held in Bangkok from 14 to 17 December 2021, culminated in the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific and the Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022–2026). Subsequently, the adoption of the Declaration and the Regional Action Programme (RAP) was endorsed by the Commission in its resolution 78/3 of 27 May 2022 on the Implementation of the Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific.

In that declaration, the Executive Secretary was requested to support the convening of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Transport in 2026 to assess the progress made on the implementation of the RAP for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, and to consider a future programme of work. The Ministerial Conference is, tentatively, scheduled to be held from 17 to 20 November 2026. To inform the deliberations at the Ministerial Conference, the Commission, in the same resolution 78/3, also requested the Executive Secretary to carry out an evaluation of the implementation of the RAP and submit a report with recommendations to the Ministerial Conference.

This document outlines the purpose, scope, approach, and timeline of the evaluation of the RAP to be conducted by an external evaluation consultant. The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the ESCAP Monitoring and Evaluation Policy and Guidelines and the United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standard for evaluation. In addition, the evaluation results will contribute to the development of a new RAP for 2027 – 2031.

In this context, ESCAP will engage a consultant to conduct an objective and independent evaluation of the RAP with the following objectives:

- To assess the implementation of the RAP in terms of the achievement of the objectives set out under each of the seven thematic areas under the three overarching objectives.
- To assess the performance of the activities and services provided by the secretariat to the member States in support of the implementation of the RAP using the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and gender mainstreaming.
- To recommend areas for improvement in the next regional action programme and priority activities in light of the needs and requirements of the member States in the context of UN 2.0, UN80, the UN Decade for Sustainable Transport, emerging programmes for SIDS and LLDCs, member States' transport priorities, as well as preparations for the post-SDGs agenda.

A detailed terms of reference of the evaluation is provided as an annex.

Ultimate result of service

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, ensuring the quality of interviews and data collection, preparing the draft report, presenting the draft report and producing the final report after comments have been received in line with standard templates provided by ESCAP.

Title & ID number of programme/project

Is any other department or office of the Secretariat or any other organization of the United Nations involved in similar work to the best of your knowledge?

No

Travel Details (Including Cost)

The consultancy is primarily home-based (remotely). The consultant is required to attend in person the *Regional Meeting and Workshop on Unlocking Finance for Scaling Up E-Mobility in Asia and the Pacific*, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand on 1 – 4 December 2025. Travel expenses are included in the consultancy fee.

Outputs/Work Assignment

The following outputs will be delivered to ESCAP's management and the Evaluation reference group through the Strategy and Programme Management Division:

1. Inception meetings and consultations with ESCAP to discuss the purpose, scope and requirements of the evaluation **(Output 1)**
2. Inception report, including an evaluation work plan and framework detailing the evaluation approach **(Output 2)**
3. Mission to Bangkok for in-person interviews and other data collection **(Output 3)**
4. Data collection (survey, interviews and consultations, etc.) **(Output 4)**
5. Presentation of evaluation results to the evaluation reference group and draft and final evaluation reports, including an evaluation brief **(Output 5)**

The draft evaluation report, including preliminary findings and recommendations, will be shared with the evaluation reference group prior to finalization for their review and suggestions. The final report will be submitted to the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Transport in 2026 and posted on ESCAP's public website.

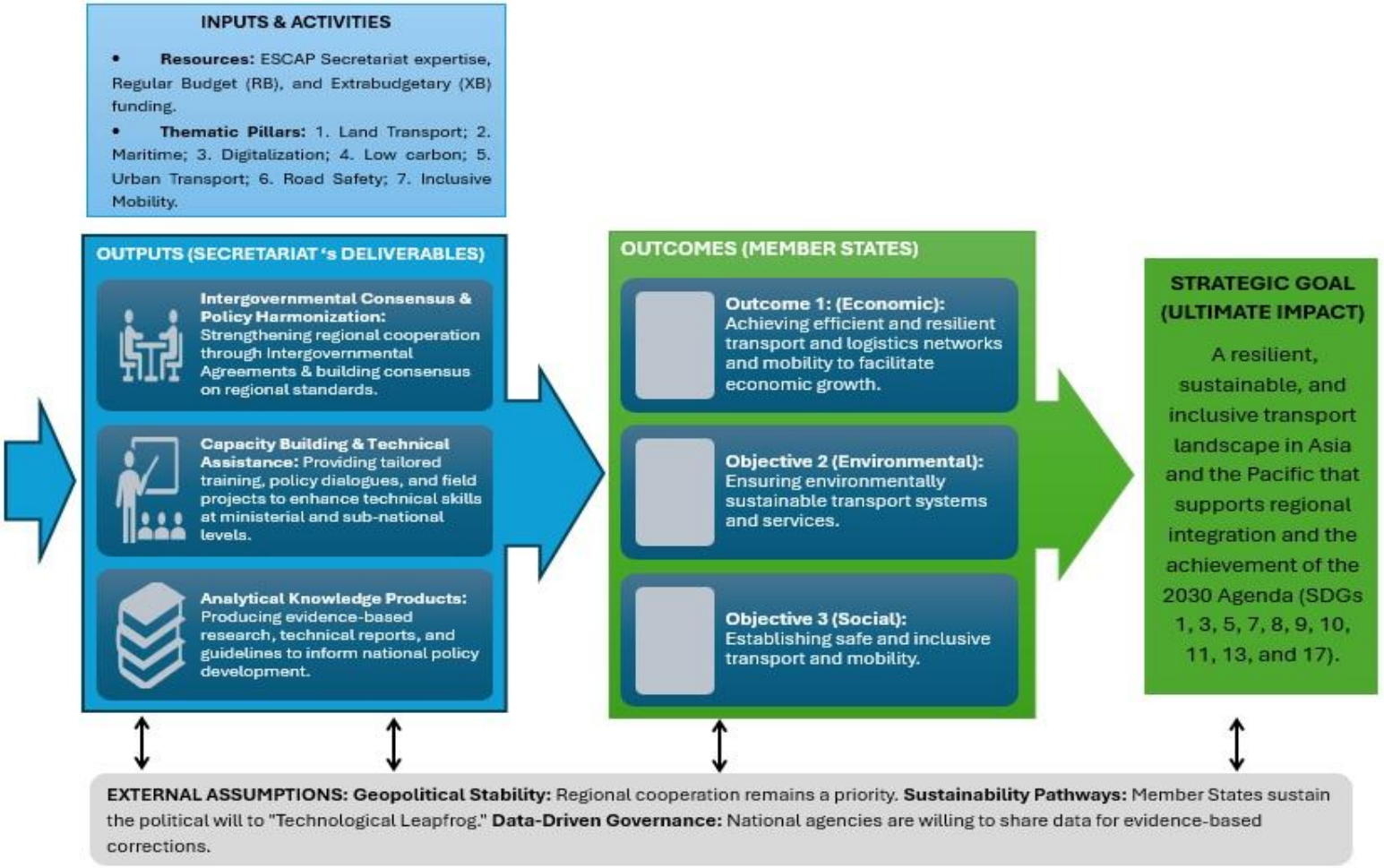
Expected Duration

The evaluation will be conducted on a part-time basis from 22 November to 31 March 2025.

Evaluation Criteria

- **Academic Qualifications:** Postgraduate degree in an area related to sustainable development, programme management, monitoring and evaluation, etc.
- **Experience:** The consultant (or evaluator) should have a good professional and technical foundation on evaluation, including familiarity with the UNEG norms and standards for evaluation, solid knowledge of evaluation design, approaches and methods and analytical skills to interpret findings and formulate conclusions and recommendations demonstrated through several years of experience in conducting evaluations for UN entities and other international organizations and preparation of evaluation reports that meet the UNEG quality standards for evaluation reports. The evaluator must also have knowledge of the United Nations System and its principles, values, goals and approaches. ESCAP also seeks to find evaluators who have 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.
- **Language:** It is essential that the evaluators have an excellent command of the English language and should have demonstrated their ability to communicate results effectively.

Annex 2: Theory of change



Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation Criterion	Evaluation Questions	Indicators	Data Gathering Method
Relevance	To what extent was the RAP perceived by member States as relevant to their respective sustainable transport development priorities, and which thematic areas were considered most relevant to their needs and requirements of the governments?	% of surveyed member States who rate the RAP as "Highly Relevant" or "Relevant" to their current 5-year transport cycle. Type of validated relevant priorities & policies identified during survey and desk research. Ranked order of RAP thematic areas based on the frequency of their inclusion in member States' national sustainable development reports.	Desk research Online survey (member States) Key informant interviews (state officials)
	What thematic gaps, emerging issues, or new priorities should be addressed in the next phase of the Regional Action Programme?	Number of thematic gaps, emerging issues, or new priorities identified by key stakeholders (the member States and ESCAP). Number and nature of national transport priorities identified in Member State "Voluntary National Reviews" (VNRs) that are not currently covered by RAP thematic pillars. Number & type of thematic priorities identified by the development partners.	Desk research Online survey (member States) Key informant interviews (state officials, ESCAP, development partners)
Effectiveness	To what extent were the objectives and indicators of achievement, defined under each thematic area, achieved and to what extent were the	% of “Indicators of Achievement” within each thematic area that met their end-of-project targets. % of thematic objectives that met their end-of-project targets.	Desk research Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff, member States)

	outputs, defined under each thematic area, delivered?	Number of outputs produced/delivered vs. number of outputs planned per thematic area. Evidence that the delivered outputs (e.g., reports, tools, training) are being used by the intended stakeholders.	
	What were the key activities and outputs delivered by ESCAP in support of the implementation of the RAP by member States?	Total number of policy briefs, toolkits, and "SDG Roadmaps" developed by ESCAP that explicitly reference the RAP pillars. Number of Member States receiving direct advisory services or technical missions related to RAP implementation. % of workshop participants reporting "increased knowledge" or "intent to apply" RAP-related strategies in their national context. Number of regional standards, frameworks, or "Model Agreements" (e.g., on paperless trade or transport) finalized and promoted. Amount of extrabudgetary funding or partnership resources (e.g., Women Enterprise Recovery Fund) leveraged for RAP activities.	Desk research (ESCAP Publications Repository, RAP Reports, MoU/agreement signed, Extrabudgetary projects) Online survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP, member states)
Efficiency	To what extent did ESCAP coordinate and cooperate with other development partners, including other UN entities, global/regional/subregional organizations in conducting activities in support of the implementation of the RAP?	Number of RAP-related activities or projects co-funded, co-designed, or co-delivered with other UN entities or regional organizations. Number of active MoUs, Letters of Intent, or "Joint Work Plans" established specifically to support RAP implementation. % of partners (UN, ADB, etc.) who agree that ESCAP provided "added value" or "effective leadership" in regional RAP coordination. Number of instances where ESCAP technical expertise was integrated into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) at the national level.	Desk research (Joint Project Documents, Financial Agreements, UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) reports, MoU /partnership database, Key informant interviews (ESCAP and development partners, resident coordinators) Online survey (member States)

		% of development partners confirmed that ESCAP shared data, avoided duplication, or competed for the same projects under RAP framework	
	Was RAP implemented in a timely manner? If there were delays or bottlenecks, what were the main contributing factors?	% of planned activities completed within the original 2022–2026 (or specific period) schedule. Number of reported delays categorized by "Internal" (e.g., procurement, staffing) vs. "External" (e.g., political instability, member state capacity).	Desk research (progress reports) Key informant interviews ESCAP staff and member states)
	What challenges or constraints were encountered during the RAP implementation (e.g., resource limitations, staffing, UN80 impact, or external factors)?	Frequency and severity of external factors (e.g., geopolitical shifts, climate disasters) cited in progress reports and reported by the key stakeholders. Number of reported "implementation challenges" categorized by type (e.g., procurement, budget cut, travel restrictions, IT infrastructure) Reported percentage of activities delayed or canceled due to UN-wide liquidity constraints (UN80 impact) or structural shifts.	Desk research (progress reports, financial reports) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states) Survey (member States)
	How can the coordination and cooperation among countries and other stakeholders be further enhanced, particularly to address such challenges in	Categorized list of preferred coordination mechanisms[29] ranked by member States.	Desk research (progress reports, financial reports)

[29] i.e: **(1) Information-Sharing Mechanisms (Low Effort):** Virtual Coordination Hub: A simple cloud-based repository (like SharePoint or a dedicated portal) where all RAP documents, calendars, and toolkits are stored in one place. Monthly E-Newsletters/Bulletins: Short, automated updates on RAP progress to keep focal points informed without requiring a meeting. Digital RAP Dashboard: A visual tracking tool where countries can see progress in real-time rather than reading long PDF reports. **(2) Technical & Practical Mechanisms (Medium Effort):** Thematic Working Groups: Small, expert-level groups focused on specific pillars that meet only when technical decisions are needed; "One-Stop-Shop" UN Focal Point: A single designated person at ESCAP who handles all communication for the RAP, so Member States don't have to contact multiple departments. Joint Help Desks: A shared technical assistance hotline or email where Member States can request support from any involved UN agency through a single request. **(3) High-Level & Strategic Mechanisms (High Effort):** Annual Ministerial Forums: High-level in-person meetings held on the sidelines of existing events (like the Commission session) to ensure political buy-in; Regional Peer-to-Peer Learning: "South-South" exchanges where one Member State shares its success directly with another,

	the next RAP?	Number of specific thematic areas where stakeholders report "overlap" or "service gaps" in current cooperation. Number of non-UN organizations (like ASEAN, ADB, or NGOs) interested in formal co-designing of the next RAP. % of development partners agreed to pool resources or co-host events to avoid 'workshop fatigue' for Member States.	Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states, external development partners) Survey (member States)
Impact	What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the Regional Action Programme at the regional and national levels, including those funded through RPTC?	Qualitative ranking of the top 3 RAP achievements as identified by Member State focal points. Qualitative ranking of the top 3 RAP achievements as identified by ESCAP staff. Qualitative ranking of the top 3 RAP impact (intended and unintended) as identified by Member State focal points. Qualitative ranking of the top 3 RAP impact (intended and unintended) as identified by ESCAP staff. Qualitative ranking of the top 3 RAP impact (intended and unintended) as identified by international partners	Desk research Survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff, member states and international partners)
	What changes in the design and implementation of the RAP are required, and how could the secretariat and member States further enhance the impact of the next Regional Action Programme?	Number and type of structural, thematic, or operational changes to the RAP design recommended by Member States and the Secretariat.	Desk research Survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states)

facilitated by ESCAP; Joint Steering Committee: A formal group of Member State representatives and UN heads who co-manage the "Pooled Fund" or Joint Program.

	To what extent did the activities undertaken by ESCAP to support the implementation of the RAP contribute to the achievement of the SDGs?	Number of RAP outputs that are explicitly linked to specific SDG targets and indicators in the project design. % of member states that integrated RAP recommendations into their National Development Plans or VNRs (Voluntary National Reviews). Number of legislative or policy changes at the national level cited as influenced by ESCAP technical assistance. % of stakeholders who agree that RAP activities accelerated their country's progress toward specific SDGs (e.g., SDG 7, 9, or 13).	Desk research Survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states)
Sustainability	Are the results of the implementation of the RAP likely to prove sustainable?	Number & type of national laws, decrees, or official strategies that have formally adopted RAP standards or frameworks (linked to legal performance and commitment). Number of Member States that have created a specific budget line or allocated domestic funds to continue RAP-related activities (linked to financial commitment). % of development partners confirmed that ESCAP policies helped draft strong enough for their bank/agency to follow up and invest in later.	Desk research Survey (member states) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states, development partners)
	How well has the Secretariate supported the development and implementation of programmes and policies to ensure sustainable results for the RAP?	Member State satisfaction score regarding the relevance and long-term utility of technical support provided by the Secretariat. Number of South-South cooperation exchanges (where one country helps another) that were initiated or brokered by the Secretariat. Number of RAP interventions/projects/programs with a completed and agreed-upon handover plan**.**	Desk research Survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states)

		Number of Secretariat-produced research products (policy briefs, manuals) that were formally adopted or cited in national policy documents.	
Cross cutting issues	To what extent were cross-cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and implementation of the RAP?	Number/% of women represented in RAP workshops, trainings, and leadership committees. % of respondents who believed that cross cutting issues were reflected in design of RAP. Number of RAP-supported policies or laws that specifically address the needs of marginalized groups. Level of agreement among stakeholders that cross-cutting issues were meaningfully discussed during implementation of RAP..	Desk research Survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states) Online survey
	What can be done to improve these cross-cutting issues in the next regional action programme?	Number and type of recommendation proposed by the member States, ESCAP and Development Partners.	Survey (member States) Key informant interviews (ESCAP staff and member states)

Annex 4: Data collection instruments

Questionnaire

Consent and Confidentiality Statement
The ESCAP cordially invites you to participate in the independent evaluation of the **Regional Action Programme for Sustainable Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific (2022-2026).**
With this in mind, we are sending you a questionnaire to fill in.
The information received through this questionnaire will be treated confidentially with no reference made at any stage to the names of the respondents.
Completing the questionnaire will only take 15-20 minutes of your time. This survey will be available through February XXX, 2026.
The ESCAP would like to thank you in advance for your support and cooperation!

General Section

	Interview Protocol	
1.	Name[30]	
2.	Country	
3.	Organization	
4.	Position/Job title	
.		
5.	Gender	☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Prefer not to say
6.	Type of Organization	☐ State agency ☐ Ministry ☐ Non-Governmental Organization ☐ Independent Expert ☐ Academia ☐ Private sector ☐ other (please specify)

Relevance

1. Please specify to what extent the RAP (Phase II) was relevant to the sustainable transport development priorities of your country?

- Extremely relevant
- More or less relevant
- Not relevant
- I do not know/I have no answer

[30] The name of the respondent will remain confidential and will not be reported

2. Please rank (1-hiest ranking, 7-lowest ranking) the RAP thematic areas according to their relevance to the needs and requirements of your government.

Thematic area	Ranking
Regional land transport connectivity and logistics	
Maritime and interregional transport connectivity,	
Digitalization of transport	
Low carbon mobility and logistics	
Urban transport	
Road safety	
Inclusive transport and mobility	

3. What emerging transport issues or thematic gaps should be prioritized in the next phase of the RAP?

4. Please identify any national transport priorities in your country's national determined contribution (NDC) that are not currently covered by RAP thematic pillars.

Effectiveness

5. What were the key activities and outputs delivered by ESCAP in support of the implementation of the RAP by your country?

6. Did your country receive direct advisory services or technical missions related to RAP implementation.

- Yes
- No

Please specify

Section 1.2 - Results of the Thematic Area "Regional Transport Operational Connectivity"

7. In your view, what has been the most significant achievement or impact of RAP (Phase II) at your national level?

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: As a result of my participation in workshops conducted under RAP (Phase II), my understanding of RAP-related strategies has increased.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

9. How likely are you to apply the RAP-related strategies discussed during workshops conducted under RAP (phase II), within your national policy context?

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely
- Extremely Likely

Please specify

10. To what extent have the activities and outputs delivered by ESCAP (e.g., workshops, technical studies) supported your country in implementing the RAP (Phase II)?

    - *Scale: 1 (Minimal Support) to 5 (High Support)*

11. Can you provide an example of a policy, strategy, or practice in your country that was influenced by RAP implementation?

12. To what extent did the activities undertaken by ESCAP to support the implementation of the RAP contribute to the achievement of the SDGs?

- **To a Great Extent:** ESCAP activities were a primary driver or essential support for our SDG progress.
- **To a Moderate Extent:** ESCAP activities provided helpful support alongside other national or international initiatives.
- **To a Small Extent:** ESCAP activities had a minor impact on our SDG-related transport goals.
- **Not at All:** ESCAP activities did not noticeably influence our progress.
- **I Don't Know / Not Applicable.**

13. Has your country integrated any RAP recommendations or technical expertise provided by ESCAP into high-level national planning documents?

- Yes, in the National Development Plan (NDP)
- Yes, in other national planning documents
- No, but it is currently under consideration
- No
- I don't know

If “Yes” Please specify the thematic area (e.g., Road Safety, E-mobility) and, if possible, the name/year of the document: _____"

14. Do you agree that RAP (Phase II) was "country-driven" rather than "UN-driven

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

15. Since 2022, has your government formally adopted or integrated any RAP standards, frameworks, or guidelines into national legal or policy instruments?

- Yes
- No
- In Progress / Under Development
- I don't know

16. If "Yes" or "In Progress," please identify the type of instrument used (Select all that apply):

- National Law/Act: (e.g., A primary legislative act passed by Parliament)
- Executive Decree/Order: (e.g., An order from the President, Prime Minister, or Cabinet)
- Official National Strategy: (e.g., Inclusion in the National Development Plan or a Sectoral Strategy like a National Road Safety Plan)
- Technical Standards/Regulation: (e.g., Mandatory technical specifications for transport infrastructure)

17. Has your country allocated specific domestic financial resources to implement or sustain activities initiated under the RAP 2022–2026?

- Yes, a dedicated budget line has been created in the national/sectoral budget.
- Yes, funds have been allocated from existing departmental budgets.
- No, activities currently rely solely on external/donor funding.
- No, no specific funds are currently allocated.

18. For which thematic area(s) have domestic funds been primarily allocated? (Select all that apply):

- Regional land transport connectivity & logistics
- Maritime & interregional transport
- Digitalization of transport
- Low-carbon mobility & logistics
- Urban transport
- Road safety
- Inclusive mobility

Efficiency and Implementation

19. Has RAP (Phase II) been implemented in a timely manner within your country? If not, what were the main bottlenecks (e.g., resource limitations, staffing, external factors)?

20. How would you rate the level of coordination between ESCAP and other development partners (e.g., other UN entities or regional organizations) in your country?

a. *Scale: 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent)*

21. Looking at the current RAP thematic areas, please indicate if you have observed any **overlaps** (duplication of work by other organizations) or **service gaps** (unmet needs) in the cooperation provided by ESCAP:

Thematic Area	No Issues	Overlap (Duplication)	Service Gap (Unmet Need)
1. Regional land transport connectivity & logistics	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2. Maritime & interregional transport	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. Digitalization of transport	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. Low-carbon mobility & logistics	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Urban transport	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. Road safety	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. Inclusive mobility	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

22. How can the coordination and cooperation among countries and other stakeholders be further enhanced, particularly to address implementation challenges in the next RAP and or above mentioned duplications/gaps?

23. Were there any MoUs, Letters of Intent, or "Joint Work Plans" established specifically to support RAP implementation.

Yes/no

If yes, please specify _____

24. re you aware of ESCAP technical expertise being integrated into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) at the national level.

Yes/no

If yes, please specify _____

Sustainability and Cross-Cutting Issues

25. How likely are the results of the RAP (Phase II) implementation in your country to be sustained after 2026?

a. *Scale: 1 (Unlikely) to 5 (Very Likely)*

26. Could you please identify challenges that impede the sustainability of the results of RAP (Phase II) after 2026.

27. On a scale of 1–5, how effectively did the RAP activities (workshops, technical assistance, or guidelines) address the specific transport needs of:

Women (e.g., safety, travel patterns, economic access)? [Scale 1-5]

Persons with Disabilities (e.g., universal design, accessibility standards)? [Scale 1-5]

28. Can you provide a specific example of how a RAP activity has influenced your country's approach to **gender-responsive** or **disability-inclusive** transport policy? *(Prompt: Did it lead to new national standards, inclusive urban planning, or data collection changes?)*

29. What specific measures could be taken to improve these cross-cutting issues (gender and disability inclusion) in the next RAP?

30. What changes in the design or implementation of the RAP would you recommend to enhance its impact in the next cycle/next phase of PAR?

31. How can coordination among member States and the Secretariat be further enhanced to address implementation challenges?

Thank you for Participation!

Interview Protocol for the ESCAP

	Interview Protocol for the ESCAP	
1.	Name of Interviewee(s)	
2.	Organization	
3.	Position	
4.	Location	
5.	Date of Interview	
6.	Gender	
Introduction question: What was your role in the RAP (phase II)		
Relevance: Evaluation Questions		
Q1.2	What thematic gaps, emerging issues, or new priorities should be addressed in the next phase of the Regional Action Programme?	
A1.2		
Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions		
Q 2.1	To what extent were the objectives and indicators of achievement, defined under each thematic area, achieved and to what extent were the outputs, defined under each thematic area, delivered?	
A 2.1		
Q 2.2	What were the key activities and outputs delivered by ESCAP in support of the implementation of the RAP by member States?	
A 2.2		
Q 2.3	To what extent have strategic partnerships facilitated the achievement of RAP outcomes that ESCAP could not have achieved alone?"	
A 2.3		
Efficiency: Evaluation Questions		
Q 3.1	To what extent did ESCAP coordinate and cooperate with other development partners, including other UN entities, global/regional/subregional organizations in conducting activities in support of the implementation of the RAP?	
A 3.1		
Q 3.2	Could you please name RAP-related activities or projects co-funded, co-designed, or co-delivered with other UN entities or regional organizations.	

A 3.2	
Q 3.3	Could you please advise on the number of instances where ESCAP technical expertise was integrated into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs) at the national level.
A 3.3	
Q 3.4	Was RAP implemented in a timely manner? If there were delays or bottlenecks, what were the main contributing factors?
A 3.4	
Q 3.5	What challenges or constraints were encountered during the RAP implementation (e.g., resource limitations, staffing, UN80 impact, or external factors)?
A 3.5	
Q 3.6	What is an estimate % of activities delayed or canceled due to UN-wide liquidity constraints (UN80 impact) or structural shifts?
A 3.6	
Q 3.7	How can the coordination and cooperation among countries and other stakeholders be further enhanced, particularly to address such challenges in the next RAP?
A 3.7	
Q 3.8	Please identify specific thematic areas where stakeholders report "overlap" or "service gaps" in current cooperation.
A 3.8	
Impact: Evaluation Questions	
Q 4.1	What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the Regional Action Programme at the regional and national levels, including those funded through RPTC?
A 4.1	
Q 4.2	Please provide quantitative ranking of the top 3 RAP achievements.
A 4.2	
Q 4.3	Please provide quantitative ranking of the top 3 RAP impacts.
A 4.3	
Q 4.4	What changes in the design and implementation of the RAP are required, and how could the secretariat and member States further enhance the impact of the next Regional Action Programme?

A 4.4	
Q 4.5	To what extent did the activities undertaken by ESCAP to support the implementation of the RAP contribute to the achievement of the SDGs?
A 4.5	
Q 4.6	Are you aware of cases of member states integrating RAP recommendations into their National Development Plans or VNRs (Voluntary National Reviews) and /or number of legislative or policy changes at the national level cited as influenced by ESCAP technical assistance.
A 4.6	
Sustainability: Evaluation Questions	
Q 5.1	Are the results of the implementation of the RAP likely to prove sustainable?
A 5.1	
Q 5.2	Could you please advise how well has the Secretariate supported the development and implementation of programmes and policies to ensure sustainable results for the RAP?
A 5.2	
Q 5.3	Could you please advise on the number of South-South cooperation exchanges (where one country helps another) that were initiated or brokered by the Secretariat.
A 5.3	
Q 5.4	Could you please advise on the number of RAP interventions/projects/programs with a completed and agreed-upon handover plan**.**
A 5.4	
Q 5.5	Could you please advise on the number r of Secretariat-produced research products (policy briefs, manuals) that were formally adopted or cited in national policy documents.
A 5.5	
Cross cutting: Evaluation Questions	
Q 6.1	To what extent were cross-cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and implementation of the RAP?
A 6.1	
Q 6.2	What was a strategy to engage women and persons with disabilities in RAP workshops, trainings, and leadership committees? Was there any data gathered in this regard?
A 6.2	
Q 6.3	Could you please advise on the RAP-supported policies or laws that specifically address the needs of marginalized groups.

A 6.3	
Q 6.4	Do you believe that cross-cutting issues were meaningfully discussed during implementation? If so, why?
A 6.4	
Q 6.5	What can be done to improve these cross-cutting issues in the next regional action programme?
A 6.5	
Q 7.1	Please share any recommendations with regard to the content of the next phase of RAP and what lessons could be learned for the Secretariat and member State to improve it implementation, impact and sustain the results?
A 7.1	
Q 8.1	How has the division worked to ensure the Social Dimension (inclusion and gender mainstreaming) is not overshadowed by infrastructure and economic connectivity goals?
A 8.1	

Interview Protocol for the Member States

	Interview Protocol for the Member States	
1.	Name of Interviewee(s)	
2.	Organization	
3.	Position	
4.	Location	
5.	Date of Interview	
6.	Gender	
Introduction question: What was your role in the RAP (phase II)		
Relevance: Evaluation Questions		
Q1.1	To what extent was the RAP was relevant to respective sustainable transport development priorities of your country, and which thematic areas were considered most relevant to your country's needs and requirements?	
A1.1		
Q1.2	What thematic gaps, emerging issues, or new priorities should be addressed in the next phase of the Regional Action Programme?	

A1.2	
Q1.3	To what extent does the RAP (2022–2026) align with your current national transport priorities and your **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**?
A1.3	
Effectiveness: Evaluation Questions	
Q 2.1	Have you (your country/ organization) ever used outputs (e.g., reports, tools, training) delivered under RAP? If so, what kind of? and if not why?
A 2.1	
Q 2.2	What were the key activities and outputs delivered by ESCAP in support of the implementation of the RAP by your country?
A 2.2	
A 2.5	
Q 2.6	To what extent have strategic partnerships facilitated the achievement of RAP outcomes that ESCAP could not have achieved alone?"
A 2.6	
Efficiency: Evaluation Questions	
Q 3.1	Is there any MoU or any agreement signed between your country and ESCAP with regard to implementation of RAP? Can I get a copy of it?
A 3.1	
Q 3.4	Was RAP implemented in a timely manner? If there were delays or bottlenecks, what were the main contributing factors?
A 3.4	
Q 3.5	What challenges or constraints were encountered during the RAP implementation?
A 3.5	
Q 3.7	How can the coordination and cooperation among countries and other stakeholders be further enhanced, particularly to address such challenges in the next RAP?
A 3.7	
Q 3.8	Are there any specific thematic areas that can be reported as "overlap" or "service gaps" in current cooperation? Please specify..
A 3.8	
Impact: Evaluation Questions	

Q 4.1	What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the Regional Action Programme at the regional and national levels?
A 4.1	
Q 4.2	Please provide quantitative ranking of the top 3 RAP achievements.
A 4.2	
Q 4.3	Please provide quantitative ranking of the top 3 RAP impacts.
A 4.3	
Q 4.4	What changes in the design and implementation of the RAP are required, and how could the secretariat and member States further enhance the impact of the next Regional Action Programme?
A 4.4	
Q 4.5	To what extent did the activities undertaken by ESCAP to support the implementation of the RAP contribute to the achievement of the SDGs?
A 4.5	
Q 4.6	Are you aware of cases of your country integrating RAP recommendations into their National Development Plans or VNRs (Voluntary National Reviews) and /or number of legislative or policy changes at the national level cited as influenced by ESCAP technical assistance.
A 4.6	
Q 4.7	**Economic Resilience:** Can you provide an example of how RAP activities (e.g., on land corridors or digitalization) have helped your country build more **shock-resistant** logistics or transport networks?
A 4.7	
Q 4.8	**Environmental Sustainability:** Regarding "Technological Leapfrogging," has ESCAP's support facilitated a faster transition to **green e-mobility** or low-carbon transport in your country/city?
A 4.8	
Q 4.9	**Social Inclusion (Gender & Disability):** How did the RAP activities address the needs of women and persons with disabilities?
A 4.9	
Q 4.01	To what extent have RAP initiatives in port digitalization and resilience directly supported your country's commitments under the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) and the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy?
A 4.01	

Q 4.02	Does the 'Inclusive Mobility' pillar of the RAP provide a sufficient framework to address the maritime and rural connectivity priorities identified in the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy?
A 4.02	
Q 4.03	How has the RAP's work on land transport connectivity and dry ports facilitated your national implementation of the Awaza Programme of Action for LLDCs (2024–2034)?
A 4.03	
Sustainability: Evaluation Questions	
Q 5.1	Are the results of the implementation of the RAP likely to prove sustainable? Are there any challenges in this regard?
A 5.1	
Q 5.1.1	Do you believe that the RAP was "country-driven" rather than "UN-driven (linked to country ownership) and why do you think so?
A 5.1.1	
Q 5.1.2	Number & type of national laws, decrees, or official strategies that have formally adopted RAP standards or frameworks (linked to legal performance and commitment).
A 5.1.2	
Q 5.1.3	Did your country/government created a specific budget line or allocated domestic funds to continue RAP-related activities (linked to financial commitment).
A 5.1.3	
Q 5.2	Could you please advise how well has the Secretariate supported the development and implementation of programmes and policies to ensure sustainable results for the RAP?
A 5.2	
Q 5.4	Could you please advise on the number of RAP interventions/projects/programs with a completed and agreed-upon handover plan**.**
A 5.4	
Q 5.5	Could you please advise on the number of Secretariat-produced research products (policy briefs, manuals) that were formally adopted or cited in national policy documents.
A 5.5	
Q 5.6	**Implementation Barriers:** What external factors (e.g., geopolitical shifts or financial constraints) have most significantly hindered the translation of RAP technical outputs into national policy?
A 5.6	
Cross cutting: Evaluation Questions	

Q 6.1	To what extent were cross-cutting issues, including gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion, integrated into the design and implementation of the RAP?
A 6.1	
Q 6.2	What was a strategy to engage women and persons with disabilities in RAP workshops, trainings, and leadership committees? Was there any data gathered in this regard?
A 6.2	
Q 6.3	Could you please advise on the RAP-supported policies or laws that specifically address the needs of marginalized groups?
A 6.3	
Q 6.4	Do you believe that cross-cutting issues were meaningfully discussed during implementation? If so, why?
A 6.4	
Q 6.5	What can be done to improve these cross-cutting issues in the next regional action programme?
A 6.5	
Conclusive	
Q 7.1	Please share any recommendation with regard to the content of the next phase of RAP and what could be lessons learned for the Secretariat and member State to improve it implementation, impact and sustain the results?
A 7.1	

Interview Protocol for the Development Partners

	Interview Protocol for the Development Partners	
1.	Name of Interviewee(s)	
2.	Organization	
3.	Position	
4.	Location	
5.	Date of Interview	
6.	Gender	
Introduction question: To what extent are you familiar with the RAP (phase II)		
Relevance: Evaluation Questions		
Q1.2	What thematic gaps, emerging issues, or new priorities should be addressed in the next phase of the Regional Action Programme?	
A1.2		
Effectiveness		
Q 2.1	To what extent have strategic partnerships facilitated the achievement of RAP outcomes that ESCAP could not have achieved alone?"	
A 2.1		
Efficiency: Evaluation Questions		
Q 3.1	To what extent did ESCAP coordinate and cooperate with other development partners, including other UN entities, global/regional/subregional organizations in conducting activities in support of the implementation of the RAP?	
A 3.1		
Q 3.1.1	Was there any MoU, Letters of Intent, or "Joint Work Plans" established between ESCAP and tour organisation to support RAP implementation? Please specify.	
A 3.1.1		
Q 3.5	Do you believe that ESCAP provided "added value" or "effective leadership" under the RAP and why do you think so?	
A 3.5		

Q 3.6	Could you confirm that that ESCAP shared data, avoided duplication, or competed for the same projects under RAP framework
A 3.6	
Q 3.7	How can the coordination and cooperation among countries and other stakeholders be further enhanced, particularly to address such challenges in the next RAP?
A 3.7	
Q 3.8	Are there any specific thematic areas that can be reported as "overlap" or "service gaps" in current cooperation? Please specify..
A 3.8	
Sustainability: Evaluation Questions	
Q 5.1	Are the results of the implementation of the RAP likely to prove sustainable? Are there any challenges in this regard?
A 5.1	
Q 5.2	Do you believe that ESCAP-supported policies (under RAP) helped draft strong enough for you agency to follow up and invest in later.
A 5.2	
Impact	
Q 6.1	What have been the most significant achievements or impacts of the Regional Action Programme at the regional and national levels?
A 6.1	
Conclusive	
Q 7.1	Please share any recommendation with regard to the content of the next phase of RAP and what could be lessons learned for the Secretariat and member State to improve it implementation, impact and sustain the results?
A 7.1	

Annex 5: List of individuals interviewed

No	Name	Position	Organization	Country
1.	Mr. Adnan Aliani	Director of the Strategy and Programme Management Division (SPMD	ESCAP	(UN) Kingdom of Thailand
2.	Mr. Agustinus Bruno Halle	Head of IT unit and Vice-Coordinator of Public Transport Working Group	National Directorate of Land Transport	Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
3.	Mr. Ang Chin Hup	Director (Maritime Research)	Belt Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific (BRICAP)	Malaysia
4.	Mr. Isomiddin Absattorov	Chief Specialist	Center for Research of Issues in Development of Transport and Logistics under the Ministry of Transport	Republic of Uzbekistan
5.	Mr. James Leather	Chief of the Transport Sector Group	Asian Development Bank (ADB)	Republic of the Philippines
6.	Mr. Hormoz Zakeri	Deputy General Director	Ministry of Roads and Urban Development (MURD)	Islamic Republic of Iran
7.	Ms. Katrin Luger	Section Chief of the Transport Research and Policy Section at Transport Division	ESCAP	(UN) Kingdom of Thailand
8.	Dr. Mohammad Mahfuz Kabir	Research Director	Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies	People's Republic of Bangladesh
9.	Mr. Nurmat Musabekov	Head of the Transport, Policy Department	Ministry of Transport and Communications	Kyrgyz Republic
10.	Mr. Nurullo Ruzi	Head of International Cooperation Department	Ministry of Transport	Republic of Tajikistan
11.	Dr. Odgerel Ulziikhutag (Mr.)	Senior Expert of the Policy Planning Department	Ministry of Road and Transport	Mongolia

12.	Mr. Ronald Cartagena	Chief	City Planning and Development Office	Republic of the Philippines
13.	Mr. Ronald JR Fugui	Asst Manager Operations (System)	Port of Honiara & Noro	Solomon Islands Ports Authority (SIPA)
14.	Mr. Sakong Min	Deputy Director, Port Investment Cooperation Division	Iloilo city, Philippines	Republic of Korea
15.	Ms. Salina Binti Mustaffa	Coordinator	Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (MIROS)	Malaysia
16.	Mr. Saroj Kumar Pradhan	Advisor	National Road Safety Council (NRSC)	Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal
17.	Mr. Syed Minhas Mahmood	Deputy Secretary (Roads)	Ministry of Communication	Islamic Republic of Pakistan
18.	Ms. Thanattaporn Rasamit	Chief of the Sustainable Transport Section	ESCAP	(UN) Kingdom of Thailand
19.	Prof. Xie Hui (Mr.)	Deputy Director General	Ministry of Transport	People's Republic of China
20.	Ms. Wei Shiuen Ng	Economic Affairs Officer (Transport Research and Policy Section)	ESCAP	(UN) Kingdom of Thailand
21.	Mr. Watchara Chiemanukulkit	Chief of International Affairs Division	Marine Department	Kingdom of Thailand
22.	Mr. Weimin Ren	Director of the Transport Division at	ESCAP	(UN) Kingdom of Thailand

Annex 6: List of documents reviewed

1. ESCAP Annual Report: 30 April 2021–27 May 2022 (E/2022/39 ESCAP/78/34)
2. ESCAP Annual Report: Annual Report 28 May 2022–19 May 2023 (E/2023/39 ESCAP/79/25)
3. ESCAP Annual Report: Annual Report 20 May 2023–26 April 2024 (E/2024/39 ESCAP/80/27)
4. ESCAP Annual Report: Annual Report 27 April 2024–25 April 2025 (E/2025/39 ESCAP/81/32)
5. ESCAP Annual Report: Annual Report 27 April 2024–25 April 2025
6. Corrigendum (E/2025/39/Corr.1-ESCAP/81/32/Corr.1)
7. ESCAP: Proposed programme plan for 2025 (ESCAP/80/21)
8. ESCAP: Proposed programme plan for 2024 (ESCAP/79/21/Rev.1)
9. ESCAP: Proposed programme plan for 2022 (ESCAP/77/21)
10. ESCAP: Proposed programme plan for 2023 (ESCAP/78/28)
11. ESCAP Annual Progress Report for Development Account Projects for 2024: Digital and transport connectivity for socio-economic resilience of rural communities post COVID-19 in Asia-Pacific countries (January 2025)
12. ESCAP Annual Progress Report for Development Account Projects for 2024: (2427AC) Moving Towards efficient, resilient, low carbon and accessible port cities in Asia-Pacific Small Island Developing States to achieve better transport connectivity and accessibility for all (December 2024)
13. ESCAP Project Document: Sustainable maritime and port connectivity for resilient and efficient supply chains in the aftermath of COVID-19 (Phase I) (January 2021)
14. ESCAP Project Annual Progress Report: Sustainable maritime and port connectivity for resilient and efficient supply chains in the aftermath of COVID-19 (Phase I) (April 2022)
15. ESCAP Project Document: Supporting a shift to greater sustainability in selected ports of Asia and the Pacific (June 2021)
16. ESCAP Terminal Report: Supporting a shift to greater sustainability in selected ports of Asia and the Pacific (February 2022)
17. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Accelerating the transition to electric mobility for public transport in Asia and the Pacific (December 2024)
18. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Sustainable maritime and port connectivity for resilient and efficient supply chains in the aftermath of COVID-19 (Phase I) (April 2023)
19. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Promoting the utilization of transport big data from smart transport systems in the Asia-Pacific region for the achievement of sustainable transport (April 2023)
20. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Supporting the policies on green and resilient transport infrastructure along the Asian Highway Network (April 2023)
21. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Building capacity for the integration and application of digital technologies in urban public transport systems in Asia-Pacific cities (April 2023)
22. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Enhancing energy efficiency of the freight
23. transport sector in Asia and the Pacific (April 2023)

24. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Enhancing social inclusion and innovations in
25. urban transport systems in Asia-Pacific cities (April 2023)
26. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Facilitating sustainable and resilient port development to support sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific (Phase 3) (June 2023)
27. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Improving the management of dangerous goods (DG) operations in the port areas in Asia and the Pacific to support sustainable maritime Connectivity (June 2023)
28. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Supporting the policies on green and resilient transport infrastructure along the Asian Highway Network (April 2024)
29. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Building capacity for the integration and application of digital technologies in urban public transport systems in Asia-Pacific cities (April 2024)
30. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Enhancing energy efficiency of the freight transport sector in Asia and the Pacific (April 2024)
31. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Enhancing social inclusion and innovations in urban transport systems in Asia-Pacific cities (April 2024)
32. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Improving the safety of navigation and the sustainability of shipping through the introduction of innovative autonomous shipping technologies in the Asia-Pacific region (April 2024)
33. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Advancing regional cooperation policies on sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific (2023) (June 2024)
34. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Sustainable maritime and port connectivity for resilient and efficient supply chains in the aftermath of COVID-19 (Phase I) (September 2023)
35. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Accelerating the transition to electric mobility for public transport in Asia and the Pacific (January 2024)
36. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Developing a regional road map to support regional cooperation for the wider deployment of sustainable smart transport systems (February 2024)
37. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Promoting the utilization of transport big data from smart transport systems in the Asia-Pacific region for the achievement of sustainable transport (April 2024)
38. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Support the digitalization of ports including smart port reforms (June 2024)
39. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Strengthening the capacity of Pacific SIDS to utilize smart mobility technologies for the fast transition to sustainable smart cities (April 2025)
40. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Bridging the digitalization and resilience gap in small ports in the Asia-Pacific region (April 2025)
41. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Leveraging the Trans-Asian Railway Network for a more efficient and resilient transport connectivity and logistics in ASEAN and beyond (April 2025)
42. ESCAP Project Progress Report: Accelerating the transition to electric-mobility for public transport in Asia and the Pacific – Phase II (April 2025)
43. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Enhancing energy efficiency of the freight transport sector in Asia and the Pacific (March 2025)

44. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Enhancing social inclusion and innovations in urban transport systems in Asia-Pacific cities (February 2025)
45. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Building capacity for the integration and application of digital technologies in urban public transport systems in Asia-Pacific cities (December 2024)
46. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Improving the safety of navigation and the sustainability of shipping through the introduction of innovative autonomous shipping technologies in the Asia-Pacific region (December 2024)
47. ESCAP Project Terminal Report: Advancing regional cooperation policies on sustainable maritime connectivity in Asia and the Pacific (2024-2025) (August 2025)
48. Assessment and evaluation of the implementation of the Regional Action Programme for Transport Development in Asia and the Pacific, Phase II (2012-2016), Mr. Stephen J Meyrick, ESCAP, 2016
49. Handbook on Gender Issues in Roads and Transport Sector, Uttar Pradesh Core Road Network Development Project (UPCRNDP), 2020
50. Gender and Rural Transport Connectivity, Dr. Annabel Bradbury ReCAP Deputy Team Leader, ESCAP Expert Group Meeting, 9-10 July 2019.
51. Gender, the Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, ESCAP, 2018.