



MINAMATA
CONVENTION
ON MERCURY

Distr.: General

1 July 2023

English only

**Conference of the Parties to the
Minamata Convention on Mercury
Fifth meeting**

Geneva, 30 October–3 November 2023

Item 4 (g) (ii) of the provisional agenda*

**Matters for consideration or action by the Conference
of the Parties: financial resources and mechanism:**

**Specific International Programme to Support
Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance**

**Midterm evaluation of the Specific International Programme to
Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance**

Note by the secretariat

The report on the midterm evaluation of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance is set out in the annex to the present note. The annex is reproduced as received from the external consultant, without formal editing. The executive summary of the midterm evaluation report is set out in annex II to document UNEP/MC/COP.5/11/Add.1.

* UNEP/MC/COP.5/1.

Annex*

Report on the midterm evaluation of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance

* The annex has not been formally edited.

Mid Term Evaluation of the Specific International Programme of the Minamata Convention

Placeholder: About this document

May 2023

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Executive summary

A. Introduction

1. The establishment of the Specific International Programme (SIP) was mandated under Article 13 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, to deliver direct capacity building and technical assistance to developing country Parties, and Parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. The SIP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), constitute the two components of the financial mechanism of the Convention.
2. The First Conference of Parties (COP-1), under Decision MC-1/6, approved the Terms of Reference for the SIP, established the SIP Governing Board, determined the hosting and administration arrangements for the Programme and established the duration for the programme to be 10 years in the first instance.
3. The Specific Trust Fund was established on 1 January 2018, marking the start date of the SIP. By November 2022, just before reaching its mid-term mark (5 years), the SIP had implemented 3 Calls for Proposals and approved 24 projects for the amount of approximately USD 5.2M.
4. At its Fifth Meeting, held in November 2020, the Governing Board of the SIP determined that a Mid Term Evaluation (MTE) should be undertaken to assess whether the Programme was on track to meet its objectives, to identify what problems and/or challenges it was encountering, and what corrective actions may be considered to address such problems and/or challenges.
5. Specifically, the objectives of the MTE were to:
 - (a) Provide evidence of performance and results to meet accountability requirements, and
 - (b) Promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among the main stakeholders active in the SIP including UNEP, donor and recipient governments.
6. The evaluation was also intended to identify the lessons of operational relevance to the work of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, and the functioning of the Governing Board, as well as providing recommendations for improvements to the programme within its mandate.
7. A mixed method approach was employed involving both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. In addition, a Theory of Change (ToC) approach was applied to understand the change process that has occurred and what factors had influenced the changes.
8. The full evaluation was informed by the inception period which consisted of a desk review and interviews with Secretariat staff managing (or supporting) the SIP, Parties who had submitted project applications to the SIP and members of current and past Governing Boards. All activities under the evaluation were conducted remotely using one or more of the following tools: Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp.
9. As no ToC or Results Framework had previously been prepared for the SIP, these were drafted within the context of the evaluation, in collaboration with the Secretariat staff. The draft ToC was shared with the Governing Board at the 7th Governing Board meeting.
10. Efforts were made to have the most representative viewpoints possible from both mainstream and stakeholders, in management, in project implementation, and on the Governing Board.

B. Findings

1. Strategic Relevance – Highly Satisfactory

11. The SIP is very well aligned to addressing the needs of the Parties under the Minamata Convention by providing technical support and capacity needed for them to meet their obligations under the Convention. The Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures established for its implementation are responsive to its mandate.

12. The SIP is one of several facilities that exist to address mercury pollution globally. The Cross Secretariat Task team comprising representatives of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Special Programme and the Global Mercury Partnership (GMP) reviews SIP proposals to ensure that duplication is avoided and where appropriate, there is complementarity between the projects they support.

13. The Programme is relevant to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in respect of SDGs 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

2. Quality of Programme Design – Not Rated

14. Having been established within the text of the Minamata Convention, and while it is congruent with UNEP's commitment to address mercury pollution globally, the SIP does not fall under any UNEP programme, and its design process did not involve the usual elements that are considered in the Quality of design rating schedule for UNEP evaluations.

15. The main strengths of the SIP design are: i) it is configured to provide direct support to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to meet their obligations under the Convention; ii) it was established within the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention, with the support of existing staff with relevant experience and expertise that afforded a quick startup; iii) it quickly established the means to access funds from donor parties; iv) the representation of the regions on the Governing Board means that beneficiaries of the SIP are able to influence the design and implementation of the SIP; v) appropriate mechanisms have been established to avoid duplication and enhance complementarity and synergies with other similar mechanisms targeting mercury pollution.

16. The main weaknesses is that no intervention logic, nor results framework with appropriate indicators was established at the outset to provide the means to objectively assess progress of the overall Programme towards achieving its Outcome.

3. Nature of the External Context – Unfavorable

17. The COVID-19 pandemic had an adverse effect on the implementation rates of projects in the countries that received funding in the First and Second Rounds due to: i) the closure of government offices and other implementing partner institutions in many countries; ii) the shortage, and subsequently inflated prices of goods required for implementation; and iii) the inability to convene face to face events such as training and community awareness activities.

18. While some work was facilitated remotely by the Internet, in many cases poor or absent connectivity disproportionately affected the participation of many target groups in underdeveloped areas of some countries.

19. Although the business of the SIP Governing Board continued via remote means, the absence of the usual face to face interactions is felt to have affected somewhat the establishment of deeper personal relationships, and alliances that are important in fostering leadership and strong advocacy on issues of mutual benefit to the represented regions.

4. Effectiveness – Satisfactory

20. Outputs and relevant indicators were identified for the purpose of establishing a framework within which the progress of the SIP could be objectively measured. The Outputs are:

1.National/regional strategies, plans for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds; 2.National legislation/regulations for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds established; 3. Human and institutional capacity in national agencies improved; 4.Technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors improved; 5.Systems for monitoring and assessment to meet policy needs established or strengthened; 6. SIP is effectively managed and Governing Board is supported; 7. Adequate funds for supporting SIP operations and funding of approved applications.

21. Of the 24 projects approved to date, 5 have been completed; 17 are in active implementation and 4 projects from the Third Round have not received disbursements as of March 2023, of which 2 are yet to sign the legal agreements. Among those completed and in active implementation, there is good delivery of outputs at both country and programme level, and potential or actual contribution to the overall programme Outcome.

22. It is clear that the support provided by the SIP is strengthening the capacity of Parties to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention. Among the 5 completed projects, 4 (Argentina, Armenia, Lesotho and Iran) show good evidence that the overall impact of the SIP is likely to be achieved over time.

5. Financial management – Highly Satisfactory

23. Overall arrangements are appropriate and funds management undertaken by the Secretariat are aligned with UNEP financial rules and procedures. The fiduciary responsibilities of the country partners is assured through tracking the semi annual financial reports and end of project audits.

24. From its inception in January 2018 and up to 31 December 2022, contributions from Parties have amounted to USD 6.866 Million (M). Funding approved for 24 projects over 3 Rounds amounts to USD 5.166 M. The costs incurred for the 3 rounds are:

- (a) Round 1 - USD 961,663 plus 13% programme costs, total USD 1,086,679
- (b) Round 2 - USD 1,977,564 plus 13% programme costs, total USD 2,234,647
- (c) Round 3 - USD 2,193,842 plus 13% programme costs, total USD 2,479,041

6. Efficiency – Satisfactory

25. The full operationalisation of the SIP was rapid, following closely on the establishment of the Specific Trust Fund in January 2018, and with the first call for proposals being launched by March 2018, and 5 projects approved in November 2018. This allowed for the First Round projects to be largely completed by the time of this MTE, at the 5 year mark of the implementation period.

26. The small Secretariat staff has functioned with a high level of efficiency and professionalism as reported by the members of the Governing Board and the country parties, however increasingly this has come at a considerable level of personal sacrifice as the demands have increased significantly over time with each succeeding round of funding. It is unlikely that this current complement will be adequate to service future rounds adequately.

27. Cost effectiveness for the SIP is significant, as all staffing and management costs are provided from the General Trust Fund established by the Executive Director of UNEP and managed by the Executive Secretary to the Minamata Convention.

7. Monitoring and reporting – Moderately Satisfactory

28. Reporting by the country parties is not adequately results based to accurately reflect the results achieved by their activities. This is largely because the log frames developed as a requirement of the application process, are not employed as monitoring and reporting tools. This practice, in addition to the absence of an overall results framework into which the country results can feed, makes it challenging to ascertain and report on the sum total of the programme's achievements.

29. Notwithstanding, the Secretariat has conscientiously carried out monitoring of country activities and expenditure based on the semi annual narrative and financial reports, and has kept the Governing Board adequately informed of the status of individual projects, as well as that of the Trust Fund in the Governing Board meetings. The reports are well organised, accurate and highly relevant to the deliberations of the Board.

8. Sustainability – Likely

30. Prospects for sustainability among completed and ongoing project appear to be high largely due to the project designs which, prompted by the SIP Application guidelines are obligated to address several dimensions of sustainability such as social, political, institutional, environmental and economic considerations. Commonly undertaken actions such as development of national strategies, plans, and legislation; as well as capacity building of staff and institutions are contributing significantly to the likelihood of benefits being sustained beyond programme end.

9. Factors Affecting Performance – Satisfactory

31. The Programme Management and supervision arrangements for the operation of the SIP as established by the COP 1 are clear cut and appropriate to the needs of the programme and the

country parties it serves. The Governing Board and the Secretariat both operate with a high level of professionalism and demonstrate strong commitment to supporting the parties seeking grant funding.

32. Good contact and cooperation is maintained with stakeholders through meetings of the CoP, with the wider body of the Parties; the Governing Board representing the 5 regions, providing inputs to the strategic direction of the programme and approving proposals for funding; and the Secretariat supporting parties in their preparation for application and implementation of their projects.

33. SIP application guidelines strongly encourage gender considerations and provides guidance for its inclusion, however in many projects, no specific action is undertaken, and for those that do take action, the related results of the action is not reflected, and sex disaggregated data is frequently not reported.

34. Addressing human rights as an issue is implied in the Application as respecting and safeguarding human rights is among the principles championed by UNEP, however the guidance is sparse and there is no significant focus on it. This issue is increasing in importance along with increased attention on environmental, social, and governance standards.

35. Countries implementing projects are expected to comply with UNEP's environmental and social safeguards, and although this is not currently addressed in a comprehensive way, it is reflected in the objectives of the SIP, i.e., to reduce the adverse impact of mercury pollution on human health and the environment, achieving positive environmental results. More guidance on this and particularly the aspects relating to social and human rights is needed in the Application guidelines.

36. SIP application guidelines require that country applicants partner with other national and local authorities within government academia and civil society to implement the project. Mechanisms such as project steering committees and other coordinating bodies among these partners provide broad national ownership of the project implementation and enhances opportunities for institutionalisation.

37. Broad communication outreach and raising of public awareness to promote understanding of SIP projects being undertaken is strongly encouraged by the programme. To strengthen this among country Parties, comprehensive communication and visibility guidelines and high quality materials are made available to countries so as to facilitate visibility of all country projects, as well as the overall programme.

Table 1

Summary of performance rating

Criterion	Rating
Strategic Relevance	Highly Satisfactory
Quality of Project Design	Not rated
Nature of External Context	Unfavorable
Effectiveness	Satisfactory
Financial Management	Highly Satisfactory
Efficiency	Satisfactory
Monitoring and Reporting	Moderately Satisfactory
Sustainability	Likely
Factors affecting Performance	Satisfactory
Overall Programme Rating	Satisfactory

10. Recommendations for the SIP Governing Board and the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

38. Revisit the Resource Mobilisation strategy previously developed (2018, 2019) and update it for approval and implementation, particularly regarding the additional human resource needs for administrative support in the Secretariat. Targets for additional funding support for both the Trust Fund and the administrative personnel should include private sector companies and Foundations, non-traditional donor countries, including high income countries who are also Parties to the Convention as well as countries who are not Party to the Convention. Short term contracted support,

and in kind contribution of personnel, such as that provided currently by the government of Italy are also good options to fill the need for administrative personnel.

11. Recommendations for the SIP Governing Board

39. Approve the contracting of appropriate Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) expertise to: i) establish a Monitoring and Reporting Plan to ensure there is a consistent process by which to capture and validate country results data and input to the overall results framework of the SIP; ii) ensure that the country project log frames are of sufficient quality to facilitate accurate results reporting, and the six monthly reports are reflective of results being generated, together with the relevant evidence.

12. Recommendations for the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury

40. Validate the Results Framework for the SIP, developed under this MTE, and with the support of appropriate M&E expertise: i) establish a Monitoring and Reporting Plan to ensure there is a consistent process by which to capture and validate country results data and input to the overall results framework of the SIP. This will facilitate objective assessment by the COP of the extent to which the SIP Outcome is being achieved, due to the SIP Trust Fund- supported actions of the individual parties; ii) ensure that the country project log frames are of sufficient quality to facilitate accurate results reporting; iii) ensure that the six monthly reports are reflective of results being generated, together with the relevant evidence (e.g. lists of training participants, training reports, technical reports, equipment inventories etc.; iv) revisit completed projects to retrieve details of results not readily accessible in their final reports, but which may have been elucidated in the ongoing terminal evaluation of 3 of these projects.

41. Provide special assistance to SIDs and LDCs who are interested to develop fundable proposals. Project amounts may need to be matched to their capacity to implement and possibly using country MIAs (where these exist) to develop strategic actions that can be undertaken, with technical guidance by the GMP. Consider provision of project management support if a gap exists.

42. Solicit the commitment of Parties to map out the steps for the necessary national approvals/legal documents during the proposal preparation process to reduce the time it takes for legal documents to be signed following approval. Establish a firm cut off point beyond which funds will be forfeited if agreements are not signed. During the proposal selection process, identify proposals that could be selected in the event that approvals were not received by the cut-off date. Where government applicants have a difficulty receiving the awarded funds directly, Parties should be encouraged to identify third party entities able to receive funds on their behalf, in order to reduce the government bureaucracy involved in receiving funds that cause the delays indicated.

43. Revisit Application guidelines to include more specific requirements for gender inclusion in projects in line with the recently developed roadmap on gender presented at COP-4, reflection of the updated environmental and social safeguards, the inclusion of gender specific/sex disaggregated indicators and data in reporting; and ensure that terminal reviews are undertaken by qualified persons external to the project to ensure the necessary quality and objectivity.

44. Establish or make use of an existing platform or searchable database of projects that includes summaries, themes addressed and detailed information on activities undertaken. Document innovative approaches and methods that have worked well in particular contexts need to be captured and shared on the website/a database specifically earmarked for this.

13. Recommendations for the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Global Mercury Partnership

45. Ensure that country Parties are aware of the technical expertise available in the GMP. This information could be highlighted in the guidelines and flagged in the Technical Reviews as necessary. In addition, the SIP website should include a directory of specific types of expertise including the experts available in the Global Mercury Partnership and countries that have had success with aspects of mercury management. This could be achieved initially by cross referencing SIP web pages link and cross-reference relevant web pages of Global Mercury Partnership and the Secretariat's work on capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer.

14. Recommendations for the Country Parties

46. Parties should commit to completing the signing of the legal document within a specified time frame or risk forfeiting the award, until the next round. If there are difficulties in receiving funds by applicant agencies, consider the possibility of identifying and establishing agreements with in country third party entities able to receive funds on behalf of the implementing government agencies to reduce the bureaucracy involved in receiving funds.

47. Applications' Country log frames should explicitly include sex disaggregated indicators for training activities, governance structures e.g., Project Steering committee, management team composition, and country progress reports should include the log frame with cumulative data values filled in to demonstrate progress against the targets, for each reporting period.

15. Recommendations for Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/Director of UNEP

48. Fundraising efforts should be led from the highest possible levels of leadership i.e., the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention and the Director of UNEP in the short term, and should be ongoing rather than targeted to fund one round at a time. An estimate of the funds necessary to implement the Programme over the remaining period of the initial ten-year term, i.e., 5 years, should be assessed (e.g. funds to support 2 or 3 more rounds, plus the cost of additional administrative support). This amount should be used as a target for fundraising over the next few years.

I. Introduction

1. The Mid Term Evaluation of the Specific International Programme (SIP) was undertaken in keeping with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Evaluation Policy (2022), and taking note of the deliberations of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme (hereafter, “Governing Board”) at its fifth meeting, which determined that the evaluation would be undertaken approximately halfway through the approved implementation period.
2. The Specific Trust Fund was established on 1 January 2018, marking the start date of the SIP. The evaluation should be undertaken by 2023. The purpose is to assess whether the Programme is on track to meeting its objectives, to identify what problems and/or challenges it is encountering, and what corrective actions may be considered to address such problems and/or challenges.
3. Specifically, the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) has the objectives to:
 - (a) provide evidence of performance and results to meet accountability requirements, and
 - (b) promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among the main stakeholders active in the SIP including UNEP, donor and recipient governments.
4. In addition, the evaluation is intended to identify lessons of operational relevance to the work of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (hereafter, “Secretariat”), and of the functioning of the Governing Board, and may provide recommendations, if any, for improvements to the Programme within its mandate, for consideration by the Governing Board and/or the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.
5. The evaluation applies internationally accepted criteria to undertake the assessment: Relevance; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Impact; Sustainability; and Factors Influencing Performance including COVID 19; and will also take note of the Executive Director’s report on Strengthening the Specific International Programme to support capacity building and technical assistance of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (UNEP/MC/COP.4/13). The full Terms of Reference for the MTE is in Annex 1.
6. The Evaluation was supervised by the Programme Management Officer for Capacity-building and Technical Assistance in the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention, and will be delivered to the Governing Board of the SIP in its final form.

II. Evaluation Methods

7. A mixed method approach was employed which involved both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. This involved desk review of documents related to the SIP, country applications, progress and expenditure reports; various COP and Governing Board meeting reports and financial documents. Meetings were held with key stakeholders including beneficiary parties; and the administration of an online survey using Survey Monkey, solicited the opinions of parties who had submitted project applications to the SIP regarding their satisfaction with the application process, and the support provided by the Secretariat to assist them in the application as well as implementation actions.
8. All meetings were held remotely, facilitated by Zoom and/or MS Teams. Individuals interviewed included: i) staff of the Secretariat tasked with supporting the SIP; ii) members of the current and past Governing Boards; iii) donors; iv) representatives of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Special Programme and the Global Mercury Partnership; vi) designated contact persons in a sample of Parties which had completed implementation/were in active implementation, or about to commence implementation of SIP projects; and Parties which have never received SIP funding. Interview questions were open ended for the most part, in order to solicit responses from informants in their own words, as far as possible; and data derived from interviews were triangulated with information from other sources, such as internal and external project documentation and other informants. The list of persons met and documents reviewed are in Annexes 2 and 3 respectively.
9. Survey instruments were sent to representatives from 58 countries which had submitted applications in at least one of the three rounds, and after multiple reminders, and a special appeal by the Secretariat, responses were received from 19 countries. The Survey Instrument is attached as Annex 4.

10. An Evaluation Framework (Annex 5) was developed to guide the process and included sub questions under the respective Evaluation Criteria as well as the sources from which the necessary data would be collected. The questions were guided by the main focus of the evaluation which are: i) to provide evidence of performance and results to meet accountability requirements; and ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among the main stakeholders active in the SIP including UNEP, donor and recipient governments.
11. In the absence of a Theory of Change (ToC) for the SIP, a draft ToC was developed in the inception phase, in collaboration with the Secretariat staff managing (or supporting) the SIP, and shared with the Governing Board at their 7th meeting, held on 22-23 November 2022. The ToC was further refined in the course of the full evaluation (See Figure 2). As the SIP also had no results framework nor established indicators, a results framework was established with some basic indicators developed to facilitate measuring progress toward achievement of the Programme outcome – “Capacity of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention is improved”.
12. Documentation related to all aspects of the Programme was very readily available, from the very comprehensive and informative Minamata Convention website, as well as the documents specially curated by the Secretariat, including application forms for all three rounds projects, country applications, legal documents, Governing Board meeting reports and country reports. The major challenge regarding data collection involved accessing country contact persons for interviews, and having designated country contacts follow through on commitments to complete the survey.
13. In all activities undertaken in this evaluation process, and in the preparation of the Final Report, efforts have been made to faithfully represent the viewpoints of all categories of stakeholders, taking care to safeguard the anonymity of all. Assurances were provided to interviewees and participants in the survey, that their identity and opinions would remain anonymous, and any quotes would only be attributed with prior permission. All data and information were collected in accordance with the UN Standards of Conduct.

III. The Specific International Programme

A. Context and Background

14. Mercury is a highly toxic element that occurs naturally in the earth's crust, and is released into the environment from volcanic activity, weathering of rocks and as a result of human activity. It is among the top 10 chemicals of major public health concern according to the World Health Organization. Exposure to it, even in small amounts, may cause severe health problems, especially for pregnant women and the developing fetus. Reducing the uses, releases and emissions of mercury not only protects human health, but also advances efforts to combat the global loss of biodiversity and climate change.
15. Human activity is the main cause of mercury releases, particularly coal-fired power plants, residential coal burning for heating and cooking, various industrial processes, waste incinerators and non-ferrous metal production, including artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Mercury can be transformed by bacteria into methylmercury which can accumulate in fish and shellfish to much higher concentrations than those present in the surroundings. People become exposed to mercury by eating contaminated fish, inhaling the vapours of elemental mercury from various industrial and artisanal processes, and handling products which contain added mercury, for example fluorescent light bulbs, mercury-added medical devices and mercury-added cosmetics.
16. The first epidemic of mercury poisoning occurred in the 1950's after industrial wastewater from a chemical factory was discharged into Minamata Bay, Japan. The wastewater contained methylmercury, which bioaccumulated in fish and shellfish in the bay. Local people who consumed seafood from Minamata Bay became very sick, and many died or were left severely disabled. International Action addressing the problem of mercury poisoning extended over many years, since the 1950's, with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) being a leader among global advocates for the identification and control of mercury pollution.
17. In 2013, after several years of negotiations, the Minamata Convention on Mercury was adopted, and entered into force on 16 August 2017, making it the newest global multilateral

environmental agreement. In the course of the negotiation of the Convention, it was recognized that developing countries would need capacity-building and technical assistance to enable them to meet their obligations under the instrument. An effective financial mechanism was therefore considered essential to the success of the instrument and the achievement of its objective.

18. Article 13 of the Minamata Convention mandated the establishment of the Specific International Programme (SIP) to deliver direct capacity-building and technical assistance to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. The SIP, together with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) constitute the two components of the financial mechanism of the Convention. Upon its establishment in 2017, the duration of the SIP, and the arrangements for its operation were determined by the First Conference of the Parties (COP-1) under Decision MC-1/6. The Decision also approved the Terms of Reference for the SIP, established the SIP Governing Board, and determined that the hosting institution would be provided by the UNEP, and that the SIP would be administered through the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention.

19. The duration of the SIP was established as 10 years in the first instance, from the establishment of the Specific Trust Fund (1st January 2018), during which period it will be open to receiving contributions as well as applications for funding support. The period may be extended by the COP, however any extension will not be beyond 7 additional years.

20. Up to November 2022, the SIP has implemented 3 rounds of applications (i.e., Calls for Proposals) and has approved 24 projects for the amount of approximately USD 5.2M. The Governing Board noted that for the Third Round of applications, there were more projects that merited funding than the funding that was available in the Third Round envelope to support them. The unsuccessful projects may be resubmitted for consideration under a Fourth Round, for which fundraising is currently being undertaken.

B. Project outputs and outcomes

21. Because it was mandated by Convention text, the SIP was not developed with the usual format and related project documentation common to UNEP Programmes. As such, neither a Theory of Change nor a logical framework with an appropriate results hierarchy were elaborated. Instead, an Impact and Outcome can be derived from the documentation. For example, the Programme Impact is derived from the objective of the Minamata Convention on Mercury i.e., to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds. The Outcome of the SIP can be articulated as “improved capacity of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Minamata Convention”. It is derived from Section D - Expected Outcomes, in UNEP/MC/COP.1/Dec.6 which states, “The support for capacity-building and technical assistance provided by the Specific International Programme is expected to improve the capacity of developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention”. No Outputs were established for the Programme at the outset, however, in the Inception period, a number of Outputs were identified by the Secretariat as reflective of those that have been delivered since the Programme commenced, as reported in Parties’ project reporting and COP meeting reports.

22. A provisional Results Framework has been drafted to provide context for the results achieved to date. The Framework includes the single Outcome and seven Outputs along with a number of proposed indicators at both Outcome and Output levels:

- (a) Outcome: Improved capacity of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition to meet their legally-binding obligations under the Minamata Convention (including those on mercury supply, trade, stocks, use, emissions, releases, storage, waste and contaminated sites) as a result of SIP support
- (b) Number of countries with improved capacity to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention (disaggregated by SIDS/ LDC/DC/CEIS)
- (c) Output 1: National/regional strategies, plans for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds
- (d) 1.1 Number of countries with new or updated national plans or strategies (disaggregated by relevant Convention articles)

- (f) Output 2: National legislation/regulations for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds established
- (g) 2.1 Number of countries with laws developed or strengthened (disaggregated by relevant Convention articles)
- (h) Output 3: Human and institutional capacity in national agencies improved
- (i) 3.1 Number of countries where relevant staff in national agencies have been trained
- (j) 3.2 Number of relevant staff of national/regional agencies who have been trained (M/F)
- (k) Output 4: Technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors improved
- (l) 4.1 Number of countries with targeted training and awareness raising programmes (disaggregated by sector)
- (m) 4.2 Number of persons targeted with training and/or awareness raising campaigns (disaggregated by sex)
- (n) 4.3 Number of stakeholder group targeted with training and/or awareness raising campaigns (disaggregated by type of group)
- (o) Output 5: Systems for monitoring and assessment to meet policy needs established or strengthened
- (p) 5.1 Number of countries with improved systems to monitor and assess mercury and mercury compounds in various media
- (q) Output 6: SIP is effectively managed and Governing Board is supported
- (r) 6.1 Number of Governing Board meetings held
- (s) 6.2 Number of applications rounds completed
- (t) 6.3 Number of projects screened, reviewed and appraised by the Secretariat
- (u) 6.4 Number of projects approved by the Governing Board
- (v) Output 7: Adequate funds for supporting SIP operations and country projects
- (x) 7.1 Funds contributed to the Specific Trust Fund
- (y) 7.2 Funds approved for disbursement to parties
- (z) 7.3 Funds required for funding qualified projects

C. Stakeholders and Target groups

23. The mapping and analysis of stakeholders was completed in the inception period and detailed in that Report. Stakeholders were classified according to 4 categories: Group A: Key stakeholders, comprising the Governing Board, the Conference of Parties (CoP), national agencies responsible for the Minamata Convention, National agencies that are implementing projects and the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention. This Group has both high interest in, and high influence on the SIP, being involved in: the day to day running of the Programme (Secretariat); the governance and decision making that affects the functioning and operations of the Programme (Governing Board and CoP); and being highly impacted by the SIP (Beneficiary parties), the primary target group, who are seeking support for their national/regional level activities from the Specific Trust Fund. All are integral to the realization of the objectives of the SIP, and are therefore the most highly invested.

24. The second group, Group B comprises Donor parties, Global Mercury Partnership partners and leads, Research Institutions, UNEP, UNON, potential donors, including private sector and non-governmental organisations. These entities have a High influence on the SIP, as providers of material and technical support to the SIP. The Donor Parties comprise a number of countries that are, to date the only source of direct financial support Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, and in kind support (Italy). UNEP provides, through the

Secretariat of the Convention, the hosting and human resource personnel support for the SIP, while other UN agencies provide technical support as required.

25. Group C organisations include the Global Environment Facility Secretariat, the Special Programme Secretariat and the Global Mercury Partnership secretariat which have a high interest in the SIP, having similar mandates, and being also involved in activities that have the same objective as the SIP i.e., reducing the harmful impact of mercury on health and the environment. They are, of necessity, key collaborators with a common interest to ensure that their activities are complementary and/or synergistic rather than overlapping with those of the SIP. The organisations participate on the SIP Cross-Secretariat Task Team to review project applications and contribute to their appraisal.

26. Group D comprises the general public, which has relatively low influence and interest under ordinary circumstances. However, they are an important target group for SIP action at both country and global levels. The interests of the general public are considered from the perspective that the Programme is supporting action that will reduce the potential for exposure to mercury and the risk of the adverse effects the element has on human health and the environment. The operation is mainly by way of public awareness at the country level primarily but also at the global level.

D. Implementation Structure and Partners

27. Under Article 13, para. 9 of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties, in decision MC-1/6, decided on the arrangements for the operation of the SIP which included:

- (a) Deciding that the hosting institution of the SIP would be provided by the United Nations Environment Programme;
- (b) Deciding that the Executive Director of UNEP would allocate human and other resources, through the secretariat of the Convention to support the administration of the SIP;
- (c) Establishing the 10 person Governing Board (comprising 2 representatives from each of UNEP's 5 region), to oversee and implement the guidance of the Conference of the Parties, including decision-making on projects;
- (d) Approving the guidance on the scope, eligibility, operations and resources of the SIP (annex I, section B. Guidance on the Specific International Programme);
- (e) Approving the duration of the Specific International Programme, which was to be open to receive contributions and applications for support for a period of 10 years from the establishment of the Specific Trust Fund;
- (f) Approving the terms of reference setting out the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board, the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention and UNEP (Annex II).

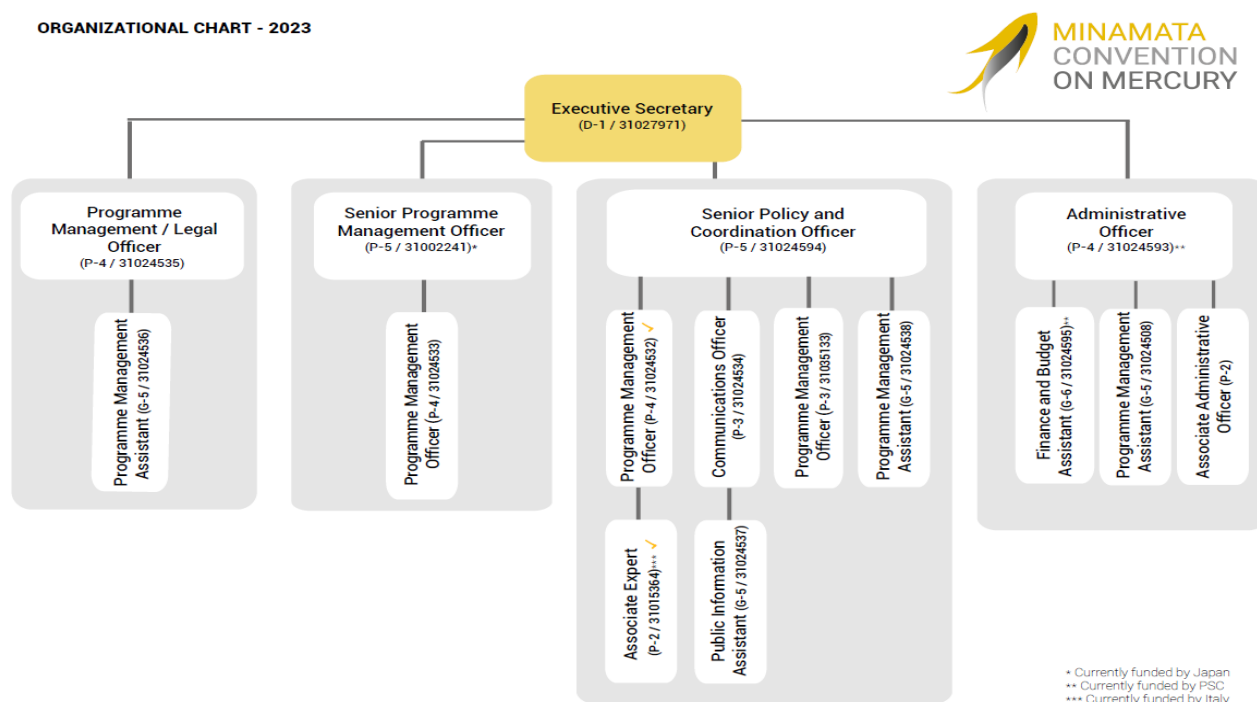
In keeping with these provisions, the Governing Board, at its first meeting, adopted its rules of procedure to support its functioning and that of the SIP. The criteria according to which SIP applications were to be appraised and approved were also developed.

28. A representation of the human resources that undertake day to day management of the SIP is shown in Figure 1. They include: i) the Programme Management Officer for Capacity-building and Technical Assistance, (50% time), and ii) the Junior Professional Officer (Associate Expert, 100% time) who is supported by the Government of Italy for the period 2021-2023, with the possibility for a one year extension. Other support for the SIP, (denoted by a blue dot) is provided on an as required basis by: iii) Senior Policy and Coordination Officer, iv) Programme Management/Legal Officer, v) Administrative Officer, vi) Finance and Budget Assistant, vii) Programme Management Assistant – Legal, and viii) Programme Management Assistant - Finance.

Figure 1

Organisational Chart of the Minamata Convention Secretariat

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART - 2023



29. In support of the SIP, the Secretariat undertakes:

- (a) Support for the meetings and work of the Governing Board of the SIP, including preparation of appraisals and/or other documents as appropriate;
- (b) Support to the application rounds of the SIP including launching the round, producing and updating the guidelines and application process, undertaking outreach and explanations to applicants during the submission process, screening applications received and undertaking technical reviews by the mandatory deadline and preparing appraisals of eligible applications for the Governing Board's decision;
- (c) Administration of the Specific Trust Fund, including full Umoja support for grant creation, disbursement and administration;
- (d) Implementation support for approved projects, involving support to finalize project documentation in preparation for the signature of the legal agreements; funds disbursement in tranches to project teams; monitoring of project implementation; closure of completed projects and overseeing the review or evaluation of completed projects;
- (e) Resource mobilization for the Specific Trust Fund;
- (f) Recognition of and reporting on donors' support;
- (g) Communications and outreach for the Specific International Programme.

30. The Governing Board of the SIP comprises 10 members – 2 members from each of the 5 UNEP regions (Africa, Asia Pacific, Eastern European States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western European and Others Group). It has representation of Parties that are recipient countries, as well as Donor parties, i.e. representatives from Western European states and others. Of the current 10 members, 3 represent developed countries (Croatia, Germany and USA); 1 represents a country with economy in transition (North Macedonia); 1 represents an LDC (Uganda) and the other 6 represent Developing Countries (Brazil, India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Suriname).

31. The Governing Board oversees and guides the implementation of the SIP, including making decisions on projects to be funded based on applications that have been screened and appraised by the Secretariat. It reviews progress under the Programme on the basis of reports from the Secretariat, as well as other relevant information provided to them on implementation of the Programme. The Board meets at least once per year. Based on the guidance provided by the

Conference of the Parties, the Board endorses, as appropriate, criteria and procedures for application, assessment, reporting and evaluation.

32. Partners that play an important role in aspects of the implementation of the SIP are the GEF Secretariat, the SP Secretariat and the Global Mercury Partnership. These are involved in the Cross-Secretariat Task Team to review project applications and contribute to their appraisal, including assessing projects to ensure that there is no overlap with GEF and SP projects and that opportunities for complementarity are identified.

E. Changes in Design during Implementation

33. Since the start of the implementation of the SIP, there has been no significant change in design of the overall program. What changes have been made are related mainly to modifications in the Applications' guidance and process over successive rounds. As such, following receipt and processing of the First Round applications, a number of observations were made, and based on these, several changes to the application forms were instituted. For example, the meeting of the Governing Board in September 2019 noted that there was need for simplification of project application forms, and that more guidance should be provided in the documentation. In addition, the Secretariat needed to provide more intense support of applicants in the project preparation process.

34. Similarly, following review of the Second Round process, various changes were made in preparing for the Third Round. This included the initiation of a technical review process that would follow the initial project screening. The Secretariat staff along with the Cross-Secretariat Task Team, comprising representatives of the Special Programme Secretariat, the GEF Secretariat and the Global Mercury Partnership, would undertake a detailed review of the applications (as in the previous Round), however commencing with the Third Round, a written assessment would be prepared for the attention of country applicants, indicating areas where the proposals could be improved. The applicants would then have an opportunity to revise their proposal in keeping with the suggestions made and resubmit it for final review and the possible selection by the Governing Board. It was noted that this resulted in higher quality of proposals, to the extent that there were several projects that met the criteria for approval, that could not be approved as the funding available was inadequate to meet the demand. These applicants were encouraged to reapply to the next Round.

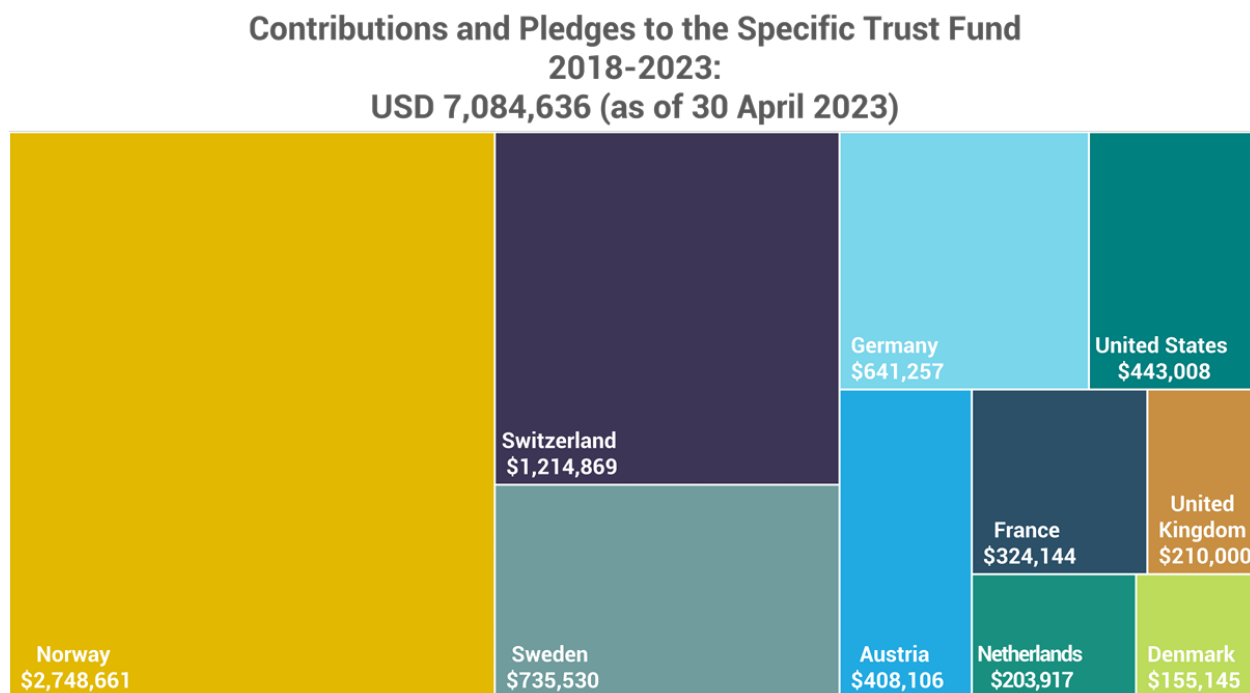
35. The COVID-19 pandemic presented a number of challenges for the implementation of the Programme. Having approved projects in 2018 (First Round) and 2019 (Second Round) there were expectations for a Third Round call for proposals in 2020, however due to the pandemic, the Third Round was held in 2021 instead. There were also interruptions in communication between recipient countries and the Secretariat, and delays with acquisition of equipment supplies, hosting of public events/trainings, and completion of legal documents by countries who experienced various levels of country wide shutdowns. No-cost extensions were necessary for a number of First and Second Round projects whose activities were adversely affected by the shutdowns of government offices and other agencies during the peak of the pandemic.

F. Programme Financing

36. Funding for the SIP is provided through voluntary contributions to the Specific Trust Fund. Annex 1 to Decision MC-1/6, encourages contributions to the Trust Fund from a wide range of sources including all parties to the Convention with the capacity to contribute, as well as other stakeholders such as Governments, the private sector, foundations, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, academia and other types of civil society actors. To date, however, contributions have only been received from governments who are parties to the Convention – Figure 2 below).

Figure 2

Contributions and Pledges to the Specific Trust Fund



37. Between its inception in January 2018 and 31 December 2022, contributions from parties have amounted to USD 6.866 M. Funding approved for 24 projects over 3 Rounds amounts to USD 5.166 M. The cost incurred for the 3 rounds are:

- (a) Round 1 - USD 961,663 plus 13% programme costs, total USD 1,086,679
- (b) Round 2 - USD 1,977,564 plus 13% programme costs, total USD 2,234,647
- (c) Round 3 - USD 2,193,842 plus 13% programme costs, total USD 2,479,041

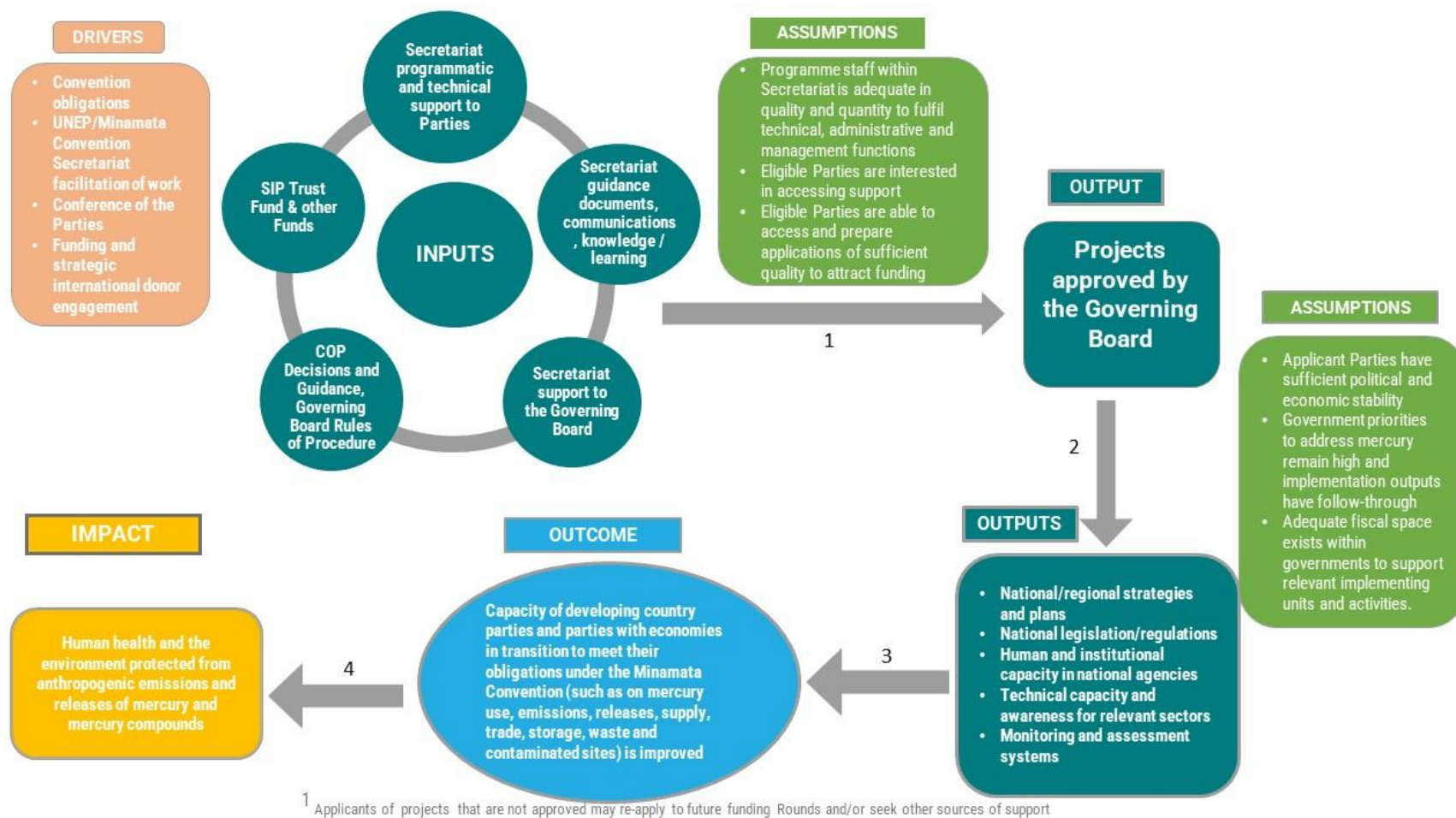
38. Nearly all the funds in the Specific Trust Fund are allocated to the projects approved, with a 13% Programme Support Cost fee applied to the total sum allocated per Round. Some Specific Trust Fund funding supports travel for in-person Governing Board meetings (of which there have been only 3 from 2018 through 2022) and limited “surge capacity” consultant support. All other staffing and management costs related to the Programme are covered under the General Trust Fund established by the Executive Director of UNEP and managed by the Executive Secretary to the Convention.

IV. Theory of Change

39. No Theory of Change was prepared for the SIP in the programme design process. As such, in preparation for this evaluation, a Theory of Change was drafted for the first time. This was carried out in collaboration with the Secretariat staff, and shared in draft form at the 7th Governing Board meeting in November 2022. It has since been modified somewhat to show the change pathways more clearly. See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

Theory of Change: Specific International Programme



40. The main pathway (Pathway 1) shows that if the inputs, namely COP Decisions and Guidance, Governing Board Rules of Procedure, Secretariat support to the Governing Board and SIP Trust Fund & other Funds are in place; and if the Programme staff within Secretariat is adequate in quality and quantity to fulfil technical, administrative and management functions, and the eligible Parties are interested in accessing support and are able to prepare applications of sufficient quality, then projects will be approved by the SIP Governing Board. This is the first level of Outputs.

41. On Pathway 2, if these approved country projects have the supporting environment of: sufficient political and economic stability; their governments maintain addressing mercury as high priority; and fiscal space exists within governments to support relevant implementing units and activities, then further Outputs will be achieved, such as national/regional strategies and plans; national legislation/regulations; improved human and institutional capacity in national agencies; improved technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors; and monitoring and assessment systems for mercury established.

42. The other main pathways show the various Outputs contributing to the Outcome (Pathway 3) and ultimately to the Impact (Pathway 4). The Assumptions related to political stability, relevant and supportive government priorities, and the existence of fiscal space to allow for government support to the project are also important for these Pathways.

43. The relevant drivers (well defined forces that positively affect the changes) that facilitate the change for the inputs to the delivery of the first level of outputs – approved projects - include i.e. UNEP and its facilitation of the SIP through provision of the necessary human resources and hosting of the Secretariat; and the strategic engagement with donors that will lead to contributions to the Specific Trust Fund, will enable the funding of the projects.

V. Evaluation Findings

A. Strategic Relevance

The rating for Strategic Relevance is **Highly Satisfactory**

44. The Specific International Programme (SIP) is well aligned to addressing the needs of Parties under the Minamata Convention in meeting their obligations under the Convention. The Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedures established for its implementation are responsive to its mandate. The Parties who constitute the beneficiaries of the SIP have ratified the Minamata Convention and therefore have identified addressing issues related to mercury pollution among the priorities of the respective countries. The specific areas for attention are, in many cases, identified through the Minamata Initial Assessments (MIAs) which have been undertaken by most of the applicants to the SIP and are a useful, though not required, basis on which to develop applications for funding support under the Programme.

45. Several facilities exist to support the efforts to address mercury pollution globally. These includes the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the other part of the financial mechanism under the Minamata Convention, and the Special Programme (SP). A Cross Secretariat Task Team, comprising representatives of the SP, GEF, the Global Mercury Partnership and the SIP ensures that duplication is avoided and that there is complementarity between the respective projects that they support. The Task Team is an integral part of the SIP project appraisal process, providing detailed technical reviews of project proposals and recommendations (since the Third Round) for improvement. The insights from the GEF and the SP have been particularly useful in terms of considerations of funding made available under these bodies, and based on the reviews, some applicants to the SIP have been referred to, for example the GEF for funding support due to better alignment with the requirements and/or capacity of that funding mechanism to address the proposal.

46. The SIP is relevant to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2015. The SDGs relevant to the SIP include: Goal 2. Zero hunger, Goal 3. Good health and well-being, Goal 5. Gender equality, Goal 6. Clean water and sanitation, Goal 8. Decent work and economic growth, Goal 11. Sustainable cities and communities, Goal 12. Responsible consumption and production, Goal 14. Life below water, Goal 15. Life on land, Goal 16. Peace, justice and strong institution, Goal 17. Partnership for the goals.

B. Quality of Programme Design

The Quality of Design is **Not rated**

47. The SIP was established in the text of the Minamata Convention (Article 13) as one of two parts of its financial mechanism. The Programme has the objective to provide technical assistance and capacity building to developing country parties, and parties with economies in transition to meet their obligations under the Convention. While the SIP is congruent with UNEP's commitment to address the issue of mercury pollution globally, it does not fall under any UNEP Programme of Work, and its design process did not follow that of regular UNEP programmes which have well developed project documents with a Theory of Change, a results framework and text that address the elements such as those considered in the Quality of Design rating schedule for UNEP evaluations.

48. The identified Project outcome of the SIP is "Capacity of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Minamata Convention is improved". Although no specific Outputs are described, and no logic model was developed at the inception of the SIP, the remit to support countries in meeting their obligations under the various articles of the Convention, means that the SIP is found to be supporting delivery of at least the following: National/Regional Strategies, Plans; National legislation and regulations; Human and institutional capacity built in national agencies; Technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors; and Monitoring and assessment systems to meet policy needs. Based on this, the Outcome, Outputs and respective indicators have been proposed to facilitate measuring the progress of the SIP to date (See Table 1).

Strengths and Weaknesses in Programme design

49. Among the design strengths of the SIP are:

(a) It was established based on the expectation that a mechanism that could provide Parties with direct support for technical assistance and capacity building would be needed to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition in meeting their obligations under the Minamata Convention;

(b) It was established within the existing Secretariat of the Minamata Convention with support of staff already in place, to facilitate early start and draw on existing expertise;

(c) It established the means to mobilise financial resources from donor parties with the commitment to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention;

(d) The country parties through their regional representation on the Governing Board are able to influence the design of the intervention, determining the Rules of Procedure and other aspects of implementation;

(e) Appropriate mechanisms have been established to ensure that there is good complementarity between the SIP and the GEF and the Special Programme, and to avoid the possibility of duplication.

50. The primary weaknesses of the SIP design are:

(a) No intervention logic or theory of change was developed at the outset, nor any performance indicators, and relevant targets established against which the progress of the SIP can be systematically tracked. This makes it challenging to objectively verify the achievements of the Programme as a whole, although performance indicators instituted for project applicants are able to provide some evidence of country level achievements.

(b) No assumptions, nor risk analysis has been undertaken that would inform possible mitigative actions by the programme under adverse conditions.

C. Nature of the External Context

The rating for this criterion is **Unfavorable**

51. The COVID-19 pandemic had a dampening effect on implementation rates in the countries that received awards in the First and Second Rounds. Public awareness activities, particularly at the grass roots level, and technical training activities suffered most as social distancing did not allow for

gatherings. While remotely held meetings / events became the norm, and in some cases facilitated wider participation than the traditional face to face modes, areas with poor or inadequate internet access were severely disadvantaged.

52. The Governing Board continued its meetings remotely commencing in 2020 and up to the present time, the usual support of the Secretariat, fulfilling its obligations to review and approve projects submitted with to the SIP, and to discuss and make decisions regarding enhancing the operations of the SIP. While the business aspects were addressed generally, some members feel that the remote mode has not served to foster the establishment of deeper interpersonal relationships generally, and cohesion among members which usually catalyses strong leadership, the establishment of alliances and commitment to strong advocacy for the SIP. These characteristics are very important at this stage of the SIP development as scarce funds, competing demands on funds that exist, and diverse ideas among some donors regarding where the SIP should reside (i.e., remaining independent or rolled into some other facility such as the Special Programme) are likely to continue making fundraising for the remaining years of the SIP quite challenging.

53. At the country level, a number of Parties implementing projects also experienced delays due to elections, changes in government and political upheavals. Despite the SIP and the Country Parties weathering the COVID pandemic as well as can be expected under the circumstances, and individual Parties navigating a number of national level crises, it has been a difficult 3 years since the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

D. Effectiveness

This is rated as **Satisfactory**

1. Availability of Outputs

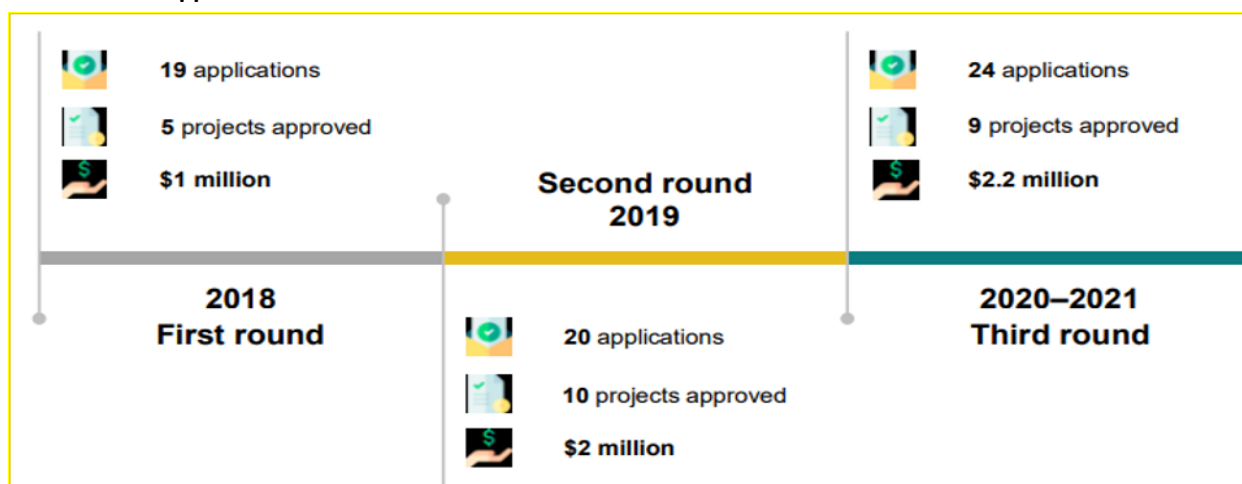
54. The Outputs identified in discussions between the Consultant and the Secretariat in the evaluation inception period are:

- (a) Output 1: National/regional strategies, plans for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds
- (b) Output 2: National legislation/regulations for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds established
- (c) Output 3: Human and institutional capacity in national agencies improved
- (d) Output 4: Technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors improved
- (e) Output 5: Systems for monitoring and assessment to meet policy needs established
- (f) Output 6: SIP is effectively managed and Governing Board is supported
- (g) Output 7: Adequate funds for supporting SIP operations and funding of approved applications
- (h) Appropriate indicators have been proposed to facilitate performance assessment toward achievement of the outputs and outcome.¹

55. Over the three rounds of calls for proposals launched by the SIP, some 65 applications were received, of which 24 have been approved to support projects in 22 countries (Iran was awarded in all three rounds). Figure 4 shows the status of applications to all three rounds. Up to January 2023, all five First Round projects have ended; three of which (Argentina, Armenia, Lesotho) are now undergoing terminal evaluations, while one, (Iran) is closed, and has had an internal terminal review undertaken by project staff. The performance of Benin is yet unconfirmed as only 26% of total funds had been disbursed by the project end date, November 2022. The October 2022 progress report reflects all results as “pending”, and an interview of the designated contact by the MTE consultant in January gave assurances that all the results were achieved in the remaining months. The final report remains outstanding and so these assertions cannot be confirmed.

¹ It is anticipated that the Secretariat and the Governing Board will review and validate and/or amend these Outputs and their indicators, and confirmed results from other projects will be reflected in the results framework.

Figure 4

Applications to the three SIP Rounds

56. Some of the confirmed outputs from the completed country projects as well as those related to administration of the SIP are reported in the results framework. It is anticipated that the Secretariat and the Governing Board will review and validate and/or amend these outputs and their indicators.

57. Confirmed results from ongoing and new projects can be reported in the Results Framework once they have completed their activities, thereby creating a consolidated view of the achievements of the SIP.

Table 2

Provisional Results Framework for the SIP

<i>Results</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Baseline (2018)</i>	<i>Target (2028)</i>	<i>Current value (2023)¹</i>
Outcome: Improved capacity of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition to meet their legally-binding obligations under the Minamata Convention (including those on mercury supply, trade, stocks, use, emissions, releases, storage, waste and contaminated sites) as a result of SIP funding	Number of countries with improved capacity to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention (disaggregated by SIDS/LDC/DC/ CEIS)	0	TBD	4 (2DC, 1 LDC, 1 CEIS)
Output 1: National/regional strategies, plans for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds	1.1 Number of countries with new or updated national plans or strategies (disaggregated by relevant Convention articles)	0	TBD	4 (Argentina, Armenia, Iran, Lesotho)
Output 2: National Legislation/regulations for environmentally-sound management of mercury and mercury compounds established	2.1 Number of countries with laws developed or strengthened (disaggregated by relevant Convention articles)	0	TBD	3 (Argentina, Armenia, Iran)

<i>Results</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Baseline (2018)</i>	<i>Target (2028)</i>	<i>Current value (2023)¹</i>
Output 3: Human and institutional capacity in national agencies improved	3.1 Number of countries where staff in national agencies have been trained	0	TBD	4 (Argentina, Armenia, Iran, Lesotho)
	3.2 Number of relevant staff of national/regional agencies who have been trained (M/F)	0	TBD	Not reported
Output 4: Technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors improved	4.1 Number of countries with targeted training and awareness raising programmes (disaggregated by sector)	0	TBD	4
		0	TBD	(Argentina Armenia Lesotho, Iran)
	4.2 Number of persons targeted with training and/or awareness raising campaigns (disaggregated by sex)			
	4.3 Number of stakeholder group targeted with training and/or awareness raising campaigns (disaggregated by type of group)			
Output 5: Systems for monitoring and assessment to meet policy needs established or strengthened	5.1 Number of countries with improved systems to monitor and assess mercury and mercury compounds in various media	0	TBD	2 Argentina, Iran
Output 6: SIP is effectively managed and Governing Board is supported	6.1 Number of Governing Board meetings held	0	TBD	7
		0	TBD	3
	6.2 Number of applications rounds completed	0	TBD	63
	6.3 Number of projects screened, reviewed and appraised by the Secretariat	0	TBD	24
Output 7: Adequate funds for supporting SIP operations and country projects	6.4 Number of projects approved by the Governing Board			
	7.1 Funds contributed to the Specific Trust Fund	0	TBD	USD 6.855M
		0	TBD	USD 5.133M
	7.2 Funds approved for disbursement to parties	0	TBD	TBD
	7.3 Funds required for funding qualified projects			

TBD (To be determined): Targets will need to be determined by the Secretariat and Governing Board;

¹ Current values are approximate and will require deeper probing of individual project reports for finalization; additional indicators may also be added

58. Seventeen projects are in active implementation under the Second and Third Rounds, and four projects from the Third Round have not yet received disbursements as of January 2023. Two of these have not yet signed the legal agreements, and there have been some delays related to the transmission of instalments of funds using the bank accounts provided by two projects. An indication of the extent of achievement and contribution to some of the Outputs are summarized below for countries who have completed their activities.²

Output 1: National/regional Strategies, Plans for mercury management

- (a) Four countries to date have confirmed the establishment of national plans and/or strategies for mercury management; these are:
- (b) Argentina: National strategy for the implementation of the Minamata Convention; National Training Plan on the Minamata Convention
- (c) Armenia: Strategy for Sound Collection, Storage, Transportation, and Processing of Mercury-Containing Waste Lamps developed
- (d) Iran: Guideline on Decommissioning of the Mercury Chlor-Alkali Plant in the Petrochemical Industry
- (e) Lesotho: Strategy to phase out/down mercury-added products in manufacturing processes to switch to alternatives.

Output 2: National Legislation / regulations for mercury established

- (a) Armenia: Reviewed and updated mercury relevant legislation
- (b) Argentina: Established a legal framework that includes regulations, incentives and enforcement systems for the implementation of Article 4 of the Minamata Convention
- (c) Iran: The project contributed to the development of the environmental legal framework

Output 3: Human and institutional capacity in national agencies improved

- (a) Argentina: Capacity was built in the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, local government agencies, laboratories, academies and research centers strengthened through training and equipment
- (b) Iran: Agencies with improved capacity to undertake health risk assessment (Job hazard assessment); decommissioning of chlor-alkali plant

Output 4: Technical capacity and awareness for relevant sectors improved (health, industry etc.)

- (a) Argentina: Improved technical capacity in sectors for mercury research and mercury surveillance through equipping/up laboratories and training personnel; extensive awareness campaigns for the general public on the Minamata Convention, Mercury management, Minamata disease and Mercury Added Products.

Output 5: Systems for Monitoring and assessment of mercury established

- (a) Argentina: Pilot monitoring plan for mercury established
- (b) Iran: Mercury sampling and analysis methods in different media developed

Output 6: SIP is effectively managed and Governing Board is supported

- (a) Number of GB meetings held - 7
- (b) Number of Rounds of project approvals completed - 3
- (c) Number of projects screened, reviewed and appraised by the Secretariat - 65

² The list is indicative rather than exhaustive as country reports tend to focus on activities rather than outputs, and detailed assessment of all country results is outside the remit of this evaluation.

(d) Number of projects approved by the Governing Board - 24

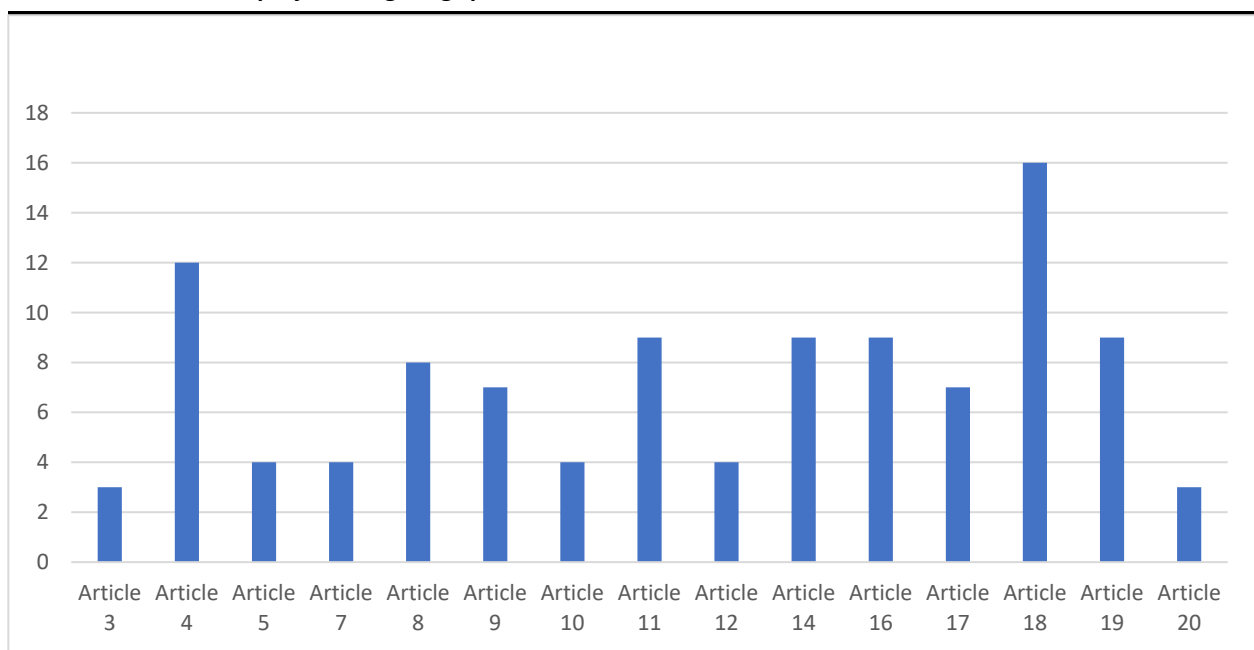
2. Achievement of Programme Outcome

59. It is clear that at the mid term of the SIP, some positive outputs are being generated by the country parties as well as the at the overall programme level. It is evident that these are evidence of contributions to the Outcome, i.e. improved capacity of developing country parties and parties with economies in transition to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention as a result of the support provided by the SIP. However, due to fairly common deficiencies in reporting by the countries, an important metric of achievement central to capacity building projects is missing. This relates to the number of persons trained and number of institutions with increased capacity to address the issues of mercury management. While almost all the projects include some element of training, institutional capacity building and/or public awareness, only a few (e.g., Argentina, Armenia) report consistently on the number of persons trained; and even fewer report sex disaggregated data on persons trained.

60. As part of their proposals the countries are required to identify the specific articles under the Convention that their project will be targeting. All projects to date have identified more than one target article. Figure 5 shows the articles identified by the recipient countries.

Figure 5

Number of SIP projects targeting specific Articles of the Minamata Convention



Source: Country Project applications

See the Table below for the description of the identified Articles.

Table 3

Articles to the Minamata Convention on Mercury addressed in SIP projects to date

Article 3	Mercury supply sources and trade
Article 4	Mercury-added products
Article 5	Manufacturing processes in which mercury or mercury compounds are used
Article 7	Artisanal and small scale gold mining
Article 8	Emissions
Article 9	Releases
Article 10	Environmentally sound interim storage of mercury, other than waste mercury
Article 11	Mercury wastes
Article 12	Contaminated sites

Article 14	Capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer
Article 16	Health aspects
Article 17	Information exchange
Article 18	Public information, awareness and education
Article 19	Research, development and monitoring
Article 20	Implementation plans

61. It is noteworthy that country Parties have specific obligations to report progress on implementing Articles 3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,16,17,18,19, in their National Reports, due every 4 years. The chart shows that several parties are being enabled to meet these obligations due to the SIP. Support for implementation of Article 4 (mercury-added products) is common to many (12) countries, and there is also strong commitment to promoting and facilitating public information, awareness and education pursuant to Article 18 (16 countries) as part of many of the projects.

3. Likelihood of Impact

62. The areas being addressed by the country recipients are in alignment with the objective of the SIP, i.e. to improve the capacity of countries to meet their obligations under the Minamata Convention. The 4 projects completed to date reflect that capacity has been built in various areas related to Articles 3-12 under which the specific obligations fall. Specifically, these countries addressed the Articles indicated here:

(a) Argentina addressed Article 4 - mercury-added products, in addition to Article 12 - contaminated sites; Article 18 - public information, awareness and education and Article 19 - research, development and monitoring.

(b) Armenia addressed Article 4 - mercury-added products and Article 11 - mercury wastes, in addition to Article 18 - public information, awareness and education.

(c) Iran addressed Article 5 - manufacturing processes in which mercury or mercury compounds are used, in addition to Article 16 - health aspects.

(d) Lesotho addressed Article 4 - mercury-added products as well as Article 19 - research, development and monitoring and Article 20 - implementation plans.

(e) Benin (reporting overdue and full status uncertain) is addressing Article 4 – mercury-added products and Article 11 - mercury wastes, as well as Article 19 - research, development and monitoring.

63. The other 19 projects in implementation are similarly addressing various Articles and strengthening national capacity to meet parties' obligations under the Convention, which will ultimately contribute to the achievement of the stated impact of the Convention, i.e. "Human health and the environment protected from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds".

E. Financial Management

This criterion is rated **Highly Satisfactory**

64. Reflection on the financial situation of the Specific Trust Fund at this point leads to the conclusion that funding is currently inadequate to meet the demand for support for qualified projects. This was apparent in the Third Round where several qualified projects could not be funded. The Report of the Executive Director (MC/COP.4/13*) to the COP-4 meeting, in November 2021 and resumed in March 2022, noted this and called for steps to be taken to ensure that additional effort be provided to improve the funding levels to the Programme as early as possible, in the life of the Programme, given that its period of implementation is just 10 years, with the possibility of extension by the COP for an additional seven years. This would allow any adjustments needed to make the Programme as beneficial as possible for parties' compliance with their obligations and for the effective implementation of the Convention, within the remainder of the short time it is in place.

65. Fundraising for the Fourth Round is ongoing, and it is anticipated that adequate funds will be on hand to facilitate a call for proposals by 2024. There is no doubt that additional staff support will

be required within the Secretariat to carry on the tasks associated with the call as well as the ongoing support and oversight of the projects currently in implementation. This will also come at a cost.

66. Cost effectiveness is practiced in the management of the Trust Fund and is also required of the country recipients. The process for assuring this is detailed in the Project Cooperation Agreements which are signed by the country project authority and the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention. Under the requirements, country recipients are obliged to provide a financial report with each half yearly progress report to account for expenditure and justify further disbursements. At the end of each project, an audit is undertaken as part of the project closure process.

67. At the Programme level, the accounting and financial management of the SIP is undertaken by the Secretariat and subject to the internal and external audit process of the United Nations. Account statements for the SIP are prepared within three months of closure of the financial period and are presented to the SIP Governing Board. They are also considered by the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention. Up to date, there has been full compliance with these procedures.

F. Efficiency

This criterion is rated **Satisfactory**

68. To the credit of the Secretariat, the startup of the SIP was rapid, following closely on the acceptance of the Rules of Procedure for the Governing Board at the COP-1, in September 2017. The Specific Trust Fund was established in January 2018, and the first call for proposals launched by March 2018. This was beneficial as it has enabled the First Round projects to be largely completed by the mid term of the SIP implementation period, despite the delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has facilitated the undertaking of a MTE that can demonstrate some results, identify lessons learned and make recommendations to support the further implementation of the Programme.

69. Delays in implementation were caused mainly by the COVID 19 pandemic. On the side of the country parties implementing projects, COVID-19 related delays affected operations in government offices, many of which were closed for months. Even after reopening, face to face meetings were restricted and public awareness activities, particularly at the grass roots level, and technical training activities suffered most, as social distancing did not allow for large gatherings. While remotely held meetings/events became the norm, and in some cases facilitated wider participation than the traditional face to face modes, areas with poor or inadequate internet access were severely disadvantaged.

70. To date, the human resources in the Secretariat have been really stretched to deliver, at a high standard, the required support to parties as they prepare their applications; to undertake project screenings and appraisals; and prepare for and support the Governing Board meetings to facilitate the selection of projects for approval. Nonetheless, the preparation of relevant guidelines (with significant changes for the Third Round), overall communications and other support to countries are assessed to be very good and this is also reflected in feedback from parties in both interviews and the survey questionnaire.

71. Support to the Governing Board is also assessed to be outstanding, particularly regarding preparation for project selection activities, but also support to regular (non-project selection) meetings and preparation for CoP meetings. The high standard of service by the Secretariat has been achieved, however, only through significant personal sacrifice of the dedicated staff. It is noted that a request to the COP for an additional position was rejected, although this expert feels that this request was well justified, even at that time. Certainly, additional rounds of applications will require that this decision be revisited.

72. One of the many tasks undertaken by the Secretariat appears to be particularly onerous. This is the process to have the legal documents signed by the country recipient, so as to facilitate disbursement of approved funds. The task is very time consuming as the parties do the rounds of their various agencies in their country to get the requisite signatures, and the Secretariat expends a great deal of effort and time to communicate with the Parties, seeking clarifications and following up to ensure that the necessary revisions are undertaken and completed satisfactorily. The lack of flexibility within many government agencies to receive funds directly is the root cause of these

delays, and some options such as the use of third party entities e.g., non governmental organisations as intermediary partners through which to pass funds, may need to be considered.

73. Cost effectiveness of the operations of the SIP has been significant, with the vast majority of funds in the Specific Trust Fund being utilised for funding projects. None of the Secretariat staff assigned to support the SIP is paid from the Fund (other than the planned co-funding the third and final year of the Junior Professional Officer). Just about 13% has been allocated to Programme support.

74. Evidence of how efficient the Secretariat has been at its tasks to date is captured in the findings of the survey undertaken in the course of the MTE to provide feedback on several elements of the Secretariat's work to date.

75. Of 58 parties contacted, 19 responded to the survey, representing just over 31% response rate. Despite concerted efforts to contact some of the non-awarded countries, via follow up calls, there has been little success in reaching the designated contact persons. Significantly, most of the responses have come from countries who have been awarded funds. This may introduce some element of bias.

(a) The majority of parties found out about the SIP through: 1) International meetings (44%); 2) Direct contact from the Secretariat (39%);

(b) Of the parties responding, 61% were applicants in the Second Round; 33% in the Third Round; 5.5% in the First Round;

(c) 100% of parties found the Application guidelines to be very helpful (89%) or helpful (11%);

(d) 95% of applicants were either very satisfied (78%) or satisfied (17%) with the assistance provided by the Secretariat during the application process;

(e) 94% of respondents were either very satisfied (44%) or satisfied (50%) with the timeline from application to the SIP to receiving a decision;

(f) 71% of applicants either strongly agreed (17%) or agreed (44%) that the range of funding offered by the SIP (i.e. USD 50,000 to USD 250,000 per project) is adequate for the type of projects that the SIP supports; 22% disagreed that this range was adequate and 17% neither agreed nor disagreed;

(g) 82% of respondents felt that funds were disbursed in a timely manner; 12% felt that this was not the case;

(h) 67% of respondents who received funding reported that they were easily able to comply with the reporting requirements defined in their legal agreement, 33% did not find it easy to comply with the requirements.

76. Eleven (11) responses were received to the request "Please provide any additional comments or suggestions relating to any aspect of the SIP and/or the operations of the Secretariat including lessons learned, areas of strength/weakness, and/or opportunities for improvement". These are below:

(a) SIP is expected to continue to be developed to help parties so that their innovations can be developed and become lessons for others. The results of SIP activities should be informed systematically so that other parties can benefit from existing innovation;

(b) Ecuador appreciates the support provided by the Secretariat in completing the forms that were submitted for project approval. It is recommended to be more agile in approving budget modifications since they are made based on the country's needs to meet the project's objectives;

(c) Continuous communication among national stakeholders is key to the success of the SIP project;

(d) The guidance document is comprehensive and clear. However, it helps to have a one to one guidance with the applicant;

(e) Secretariat was very helpful, in all aspects in implementing the programme;

(f) I appreciate the proactive work and operation of the Secretariat. Very much responsive, reliable and helping. Excellent visibility of the Secretariat's work on the web of their work, developed document, presentations and user friendly graphics and animations;

(g) The Secretariat should surround itself with firms and service providers that can help countries develop and/or write their applications;

(h) This is to commend the Secretariat for the support offered to countries through webinars and especially the SIP coffee sessions for implementing countries, which is a platform where we share experiences and ideas amongst countries and with the Secretariat.

(i) We found that application and clarification process was good and improved between two consecutive rounds. Within CEE region there are capacities to apply to different funds under UNEP;

(j) The project financed by the International Specific Program in Burundi started on September 01, 2022. It is therefore ongoing. There are no lessons learned, strengths or weaknesses and/or possibilities of improvement to share yet;

(k) We are waiting for the second batch of payment (the remaining 50%) to be able to complete the work.

G. Monitoring and Reporting

This criterion is rated **Moderately Satisfactory**

77. This aspect of the Programme is the most problematic, which is unfortunate because there is much to report regarding the good results that are being achieved. However, due to the fact that there was no overarching intervention logic and results framework for the Programme, the country projects are managed separately rather than as components of a larger Programme which is mandated to achieve a well identified Outcome. In the absence of a framework of results into which the country projects can feed, it would be difficult to ascertain apart from individual country success, what has been the sum total of the Programme's achievements.

78. Monitoring activity by the Secretariat involves monitoring country level actions, and expenditure which is accomplished by receiving and reviewing the half yearly narrative and financial reports that country recipients are obligated to submit. This is conscientiously carried out, by the Secretariat with great effort, but are nonetheless challenged by late and sometimes inadequate reporting by the parties necessitating time consuming follow ups for clarifications. The progress of the projects is routinely reported in summary at the Governing Board meetings.

79. This is very important for the Governing Board as it keeps the members focused on how work is progressing in the various countries and regions, and provides insights on approaches that work and others that do not – valuable information to have, given the Board's responsibility as the approving authority for projects proposals from parties.

80. The guidance accompanying the Application forms, provides detailed instructions on the preparation of Theories of Change and logical frameworks (log frames), and it is clear that the Secretariat has exerted significant effort to develop these, as applicants were reportedly having difficulties with preparing log frames. In particular there is a marked improvement in the Third round applications reflecting the positive influence of the technical review by the Secretariat and revisions by the applicants. There continue to nonetheless be log frames that are somewhat inadequate for the purpose of reporting against. For example, there is frequently no differentiation between inputs and activities, and these are commonly grouped together. In other cases, the outputs are repeated as activities and even outcomes. In several cases, the indicators are not well aligned with the outputs, and targets are sometimes not relevant. This is not an uncommon failing with project proposals at all levels, however increasing expectations of evidence-based results reporting demands that better quality log frames are prepared, and that the exercise is not just a formality.

81. The main issue, however, is that once the implementation begins, the country project management teams tend to pay scant attention to the log frame as an instrument against which to report. Country project reports are replete with the very many activities that are implemented, but do not reflect the results achieved adequately. For example, most countries undertake as a matter of

course, training of various groups of persons in various skills. However, in many cases the number of persons trained in the courses are not consistently reported.

H. Sustainability

This criterion is rated **Likely**

82. The prospects for sustainability among the First Round countries that have completed implementation appear positive. The dimensions of sustainability include sociopolitical, institutional, environmental, and economic considerations. In respect of the projects supported by the SIP, these dimensions are all considered in the project design. In practical terms they are also evident as, for example the application for support by country parties is reflective that there is political will to address mercury management/ pollution. Commonly undertaken actions such as national strategy/plan development, and/or the development or updating of legislation and regulations to address the control or removal of mercury containing products and waste, are establishing strong foundations for institutional sustainability and contributing to environmental sustainability.

83. For some countries, the path to sustainability in all respects is not so clear, as in terms of economics there may be a fine balance between the elimination of industrial processes utilizing mercury on the one hand, and the financial welfare of the industries and employees that benefit from the operations, on the other hand. A number of countries are involved in seeking alternate additives to these polluting activities, and assessing cost benefits involved in this action (Lesotho).

84. Overall, regardless of which aspect of mercury contamination, management and/or control is undertaken by beneficiary countries addressing the various Articles under the Convention, the action will reduce adverse environmental effects, and even have the potential to enhance environmental justice and social equity, for example, by ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable communities are not disproportionately affected.

I. Factors affecting Performance

This is rated as **Satisfactory**

1. Quality of Programme management and Supervision

85. The management and supervision arrangements for the operation of the SIP were established by the COP-1 under Decision MC-1/6 which approved the Terms of Reference for the SIP, established the SIP Governing Board, and determined that the operations of the SIP would be administered through the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention. They are clear cut and appropriate to the needs of the SIP and the country parties it serves. The Governing Board is responsible for overseeing and guiding the implementation of the SIP, including making decisions on projects to be funded based on applications that have been screened by the Secretariat. It reviews progress under the Programme on the basis of reports from the Secretariat, as well as other relevant information provided to them on implementation of the Programme. The Board and the Secretariat both operate with a high level of professionalism, enjoy a convivial working relationship and are strongly committed to supporting the parties seeking grant funding, and the overall success of the SIP. As such, the success of the Programme owes much to this productive collaboration, and mutually supportive relationship.

2. Stakeholder Participation and Cooperation

86. Communication between the various stakeholders supporting, or being supported by the SIP is assessed to be effective. The COP meetings provide opportunities for the parties to the Convention to receive reports and updates on the progress of the Programme and make decisions regarding its strategic focus and implementation. Governing Board meetings provide a forum for the Board to undertake project selection, and receive reports on the progress of the Programme, the status of the Trust Fund and operational or strategic issues to be addressed. The documentation of both the COP meetings and the Governing Board meetings constitute an important record of the interactions between these bodies, including discussion held and decisions made. At the country level, the Secretariat maintains close contact with the parties interested in receiving grant funding, as well as those already implementing projects. Support is provided through the various guidelines and

documentation developed by the Secretariat, as well as individual meetings convened to provide advice on proposal development or project implementation.

3. Responsiveness to Human rights and Gender Equity

87. Gender considerations are strongly encouraged in country applications, and there is guidance on how to integrate gender into projects. As such, most projects mention their commitment to gender and some demonstrate this to varying degrees. Projects such as those undertaken by Argentina, Armenia, Iran (First Round), Zambia (Second Round), and Rwanda (Third Round) have implemented activities that target or involve women directly. In most projects however, no specific action is undertaken and even when women are involved in some activity, this involvement is not explicitly recorded and reported. Although the Application Guidelines for the Third Round of applications require that applicants “explain how the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects includes a gender lens”, many applicants restate excerpts of the text included in the “mainstreaming of gender in chemicals and waste” in the application guidelines. It states that “projects aimed at evaluating impacts of and exposures to mercury should include plans to evaluate the gender-differentiated nature of impacts and exposures” and that principles of equal participation and non-discrimination should be integrated in the staffing of projects and in opportunities for public participation.

88. The further elaboration in Section 3.4, (Chapter 3, Gender) is very useful, even explaining the value of sex differentiated indicators, however use of these indicators is not required nor enforced, and to date only the log frame of Rwanda includes this type of indicator. In only one report (Argentina final report) is the number (%) of women’s participation in an activity expressed. One country (Armenia) shared the number of women on the Project Steering Committee.

89. This is despite most projects undertaking multiple training and/or public awareness activities, and even reporting on number of attendees, but failing to mention the proportion of women participating. The means of verification for these training sessions should include the Training Report, complete with attendance sheets i.e. to verify participants. These are not routinely available in country reports, although the reports of Senegal and Armenia do share this information.

90. Addressing human rights as an issue is implied in the application, and expected as one of the principles of the UN environmental and social safeguards, however there is no significant focus on it. It represents a gap as marginalized communities such as those in proximity to industrial complexes such as that next to the chlor alkali plant in Iran (First Round) and others in proximity to mercury contaminated waste dumps are at risk of violation of their right to healthy environment. This should be noted in the Application guidelines (see Recommendations), and when actions to close the plant and/or contaminated waste sites, these groups are direct beneficiaries and should be accounted for as such.

4. Environmental Safeguards

91. Country recipients are required to ensure that there is compliance with UNEP Environmental and Social Safeguards in the implementation of their projects. Currently this is not fully addressed although it is clear that there is significant congruence between safeguarding the environment, and the objectives of SIP supported projects, which are expected to ultimately reduce the adverse impact of mercury pollution on human health and the environment. Based on the updated Environmental and Social Safeguards, more could be included in the Application guidelines to assist in explicitly covering this subject, particularly the aspects relating to social and human rights.

5. Country Ownership and Driven-ness

92. The application guidelines require that country applicants partner with other national and local authorities within the government, academia and civil society to implement the project. The establishment of a project steering committee or other coordinating body among these partners and other relevant agencies, promotes broad national ownership of the project implementation and its results, and enhances the potential for institutionalization and long term sustainability.

6. Communication, Public awareness and Information exchange

93. Country parties are encouraged to undertake broad communication outreach and public awareness activities to promote understanding of the projects being undertaken to safeguard human

health and the environment from mercury pollution. In addition, the role of the SIP in supporting capacity building and technical assistance to enable countries meet obligations under the Convention should be highlighted. Toward this end, comprehensive Communication and Visibility Guidelines have been made available to countries with information on visibility and outreach opportunities; information in the authorized use of the name and logo of the Minamata Convention to acknowledge the funding received from the SIP and sample materials for use by project managers.

94. Applicants are also encouraged to consider South-South exchanges to share experiences and lessons learned. In order to strengthen national capacities and promote the exchange of experiences at the regional level the Argentina country project undertook South-South cooperation between itself and Uruguay. Exchanges were supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Basel Regional Centre for South America (CRBAS), and were planned via videoconference, to share experiences, visions and coordinate actions of both countries on different issues of mercury management.

95. Other South-South collaborations are seen in the regional projects led by: i) Antigua and Barbuda “capacity-building with technical assistance and technology transfer for managing mercury in the Caribbean” (Second Round) involving St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, Grenada, Guyana, Dominica, Barbados; ii) Gabon in the Central Africa region, “Facilitating capacity-building with technology assistance and technology transfer for monitoring and managing mercury in Central Africa” (Third Round). The project involves Sao Tome and Principe and Cameroon, and is in the early stages of implementation.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

96. Conclusion 1: The SIP was established within the context of the Convention and did not undergo the usual project development and design process that includes accepted elements such as a logic model and results framework against which progress toward achieving the stated Outcome can be objectively measured. The Country parties, are however, well instructed to develop log frames, although in most cases there are deficiencies in their configuration, resulting in inadequacies in reporting that tends to focus on activities rather than results.

97. Recommendation 1: Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury: Validate the Results Framework for the SIP, developed under this MTE, and with the support of appropriate M&E expertise: i) establish a Monitoring and Reporting Plan to ensure there is a consistent process by which to capture and validate country results data and input to the overall results framework of the SIP. This will facilitate objective assessment by the COP of the extent to which the SIP Outcome is being achieved, due to the SIP Trust Fund- supported actions of the individual parties; ii) ensure that the country project log frames are of sufficient quality to facilitate accurate results reporting; iii) ensure that the six monthly reports are reflective of results being generated, together with the relevant evidence (e.g. lists of training participants, training reports, technical reports, equipment inventories etc.; iv) revisit completed projects to retrieve details of results not readily accessible in their final reports, but which may have been elucidated in the ongoing terminal evaluation of 3 of these projects.

98. Conclusion 2: The SIP currently faces an existential threat due to inadequate funds to support all of the qualified proposal requests (seen in the Third Round) and fund the personnel resources needed to meet the increasing administrative demands of the SIP operation. The work load of the Secretariat has increased significantly over the past 2 years and is expected to increase far beyond the current capacity to manage another round of application reviews and approval. Temporary contracted support has been useful at times of peak workload e.g., to prepare projects for approval, however the post approval work and follow up on project reports has exceeded the natural ability of the Secretariat to meet the demand. It is anticipated that fundraising will continue to be challenging due to competing demands for donor funds due to current global economic and security pressures.

99. Recommendation 2.1: **Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/Executive Director of UNEP:** Fundraising efforts should be led from the highest possible levels of leadership i.e., the Executive Secretary of the Minamata Convention and the Executive Director of UNEP in the short term, and, should be ongoing rather than targeted to fund one round at a time. An estimate of the funds necessary to implement the Programme over the remaining period of the initial ten-year term, i.e., 5 years, should be assessed (e.g., funds to support 2 or 3 more

rounds, plus the cost of additional administrative support). This amount should be used as a target for fundraising over the next few years.

100. Recommendation 2.2: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/SIP Governing Board:** It is important to revisit the Resource Mobilisation strategy previously developed (2018, 2019) and update it for approval and implementation, particularly regarding the additional human resource needs for administrative support in the Secretariat Targets for additional funding support for both the Trust Fund and the administrative personnel should include private sector companies and Foundations; nontraditional donor countries including high income countries who are also Parties to the Convention as well as countries who are not Party to the Convention. Short term contracted support, and in kind contribution of personnel, such as that provided currently by the government of Italy are also good options to fill the need for administrative personnel.

101. Conclusion 3: A relatively low number of applications have been submitted by SIDS, and LDCs; and for those who have applied, only 50% have been successful at receiving funding awards.

102. Recommendation 3: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/Global Mercury Partnership:** It may be necessary to provide special assistance to SIDs and LDCs who are interested, to develop winning proposals. Project amounts may need to be matched to their capacity to implement. The country MIAs and national reporting could provide insights as to which modest, but strategic actions would be feasible. Technical Guidance could be provided by the GMP. Project management support should also be considered as other countries have benefitted from this as a budget item.

103. Conclusion 4: There have been significant delays among country applicants to have the necessary legal agreements signed to facilitate disbursement. Two countries whose proposals were approved in the Third Round (Sixth Governing Board meeting, August 2021), have not yet had the requisite documents signed.

104. Recommendation 4.1: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury:** Parties should be encouraged to map out the steps for the necessary national approvals/legal documents during the proposal preparation process to reduce the time it takes for legal documents to be signed following approval. Where government applicants have a difficulty receiving the awarded funds directly, Parties should be encouraged to identify third party entities able to receive funds on their behalf, in order to reduce the government bureaucracy involved in receiving funds that cause the delays indicated. During the proposal selection process, proposals could be identified that could be selected in the event that approvals were not received by the cut off date.

105. Recommendation 4.2: **Country Parties:** Parties should commit to completing the signing of the legal document within a specified time frame or risk forfeiting the award, until the next round. Where government applicants have a difficulty receiving the awarded funds directly, Parties should permit identification and establishment of an agreement with a third party entity able to receive funds on their behalf, in order to reduce the government bureaucracy involved in receiving funds that cause the delays indicated.

106. Conclusion 5: The preparation of fundable proposals appears to be a challenge for some countries.

107. Recommendation 5: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury:** It may be beneficial to showcase a few samples of successful proposals, so countries can take ideas from them. This must be cleared with the respective countries to avoid intellectual property conflicts. In addition, a searchable data base of projects should be established that includes summaries, themes addressed and detailed information on activities undertaken.

108. Conclusion 6: The single terminal review that has been completed up to February 2023, does not meet the required standard of a basic terminal review, even though it was generally conducted in accordance with the Secretariat's guidelines. First the review was undertaken by the Project Manager and therefore not provide adequate objectivity, even for a modestly costed project; ii) the prompts in various sections of the template provided by the SIP Secretariat were either ignored or misinterpreted. As a result, the review reads like a progress report and does not adequately highlight the achievements of the project, and opportunities for this pilot action, involving plant decommissioning and waste cleanup, to be replicated.

109. Recommendation 6.1: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury:** Ensure that the country party nominates someone external to the management of the project to undertake the review. The Application guidelines suggests some other government agency, or NGO who will undertake the activity for a small fee; ii) Provide professional M&E guidance/orientation of the review team, and undertake more stringent review of the internal terminal review produced, to ensure that the guidelines are followed and questions answered appropriately, so that the critical results information is highlighted that can be inputted into the overall results framework. The review reports must focus on assessment of the results achieved, how these will be sustained/institutionalized over time, and what specific changes in behavior/systems/processes (Outcomes) are likely to arise from the immediate project outputs.

110. Recommendation 6.2: **Country Parties:** Avoid proposing the project manager to undertake the review of the project that he/she was in charge of. This is an inherent conflict of interest even for a modestly priced project. Closely follow the Guidelines for Terminal Reviews that have been provided by the SIP.

111. Conclusion 7: While some countries have targeted gender by ensuring the involvement of women in various aspects, others have only given this lip service, often reiterating what the guidance documents say about the importance of integrating gender without any tangible activities to do so. The inclusion of appropriate indicators of involvement of women has not been taken on board, and so the results are not reflective of any effort that is made.

112. Recommendation 7: **Country Parties/Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury:** The Application Guidelines should more strongly require gender inclusion and responsiveness through specific actions that respond to differentiated needs of, and benefits to men and women; inclusion of women's organisations on project steering committees etc. Country log frames should explicitly include sex disaggregated indicators for training activities; governance structures e.g. Project Steering committee, management team composition.

113. Conclusion 8: Several innovative approaches and interesting findings are being generated by some projects. The Coffee Sessions appear to have been helpful to share these in the past, however the information shared in those sessions is not readily available.

114. Recommendation 8: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury:** Documentation of innovative approaches and methods that have worked well in particular contexts need to be captured and shared on a new or existing website/database specifically earmarked for this (see above).

115. Conclusion 9: Some countries appear to be unaware of where specific technical expertise can be found to support/advise on their activities.

116. Recommendation 9.1: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury/Global Mercury Partnership:** Country parties should be made aware of the technical expertise available in the Global Mercury Partnership (e.g., highlighted in the guidelines and flagged in the Technical Review as necessary).

117. Recommendation 9.2: **Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury:** The SIP website should include a directory of specific types of expertise including the experts available in the Global Mercury Partnership and countries that have had success with aspects of mercury management. This could be achieved initially by cross referencing SIP web pages link and cross-reference relevant web pages of Global Mercury Partnership and the Secretariat's work on capacity-building, technical assistance and technology transfer.

VII. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

118. In the spirit of transparency and cooperation Governing Board members who have an interest in an application that comes before the Board for approval must declare their interest in the project and excuse themselves from decision making on the project. While the member may be present in the room to hear and observe the deliberations on the project, the member may not speak to the application and does not participate in deliberations affecting the application. However, the Board Member may request the other Board Member representing the region (or a Board Member from a different region) to speak, if necessary, to the application during the deliberations.

119. Coffee Sessions and side events at the COP meetings appear to have been very good opportunities for countries to directly exchange information on projects they have undertaken or applications being developed and can give rise to more formalized collaborations or at least continued collegial information and knowledge exchanges. The impact of these exchanges would be greater if some of the key information shared was made available on the Convention website.

Lessons learned

120. The work of the Cross-Secretariat Task Team (which includes staff from the secretariats of the Minamata Convention, the Global Environment Facility, the Special Programme, and the Global Mercury Partnership) to undertake a technical review of the screened proposals and provide feedback, which projects can integrate into a revised submission as in the Third Round, was very useful. It ensured, as before that there was no overlap between the various funding facilities; allowed for better, and stronger applications coming forward, and also allowed for applicants to be informed of the suitability of their applications for support from the other facilities i.e. the Global Environment Facility, and the Special Programme. It can also serve to identify ways in which the expertise of the GMP as well as the experience of previous projects can benefit newly approved projects.

121. The inclusion of women's, environmental, and human rights groups on the project steering committees may be an efficient way to ensure that various human rights and gender interests and objectives are addressed in the course of implementation of country projects.

122. The contracting of short-term administrative support during the peak activities period of the SIP funding cycle, e.g., in project screening and preparing for project review and approval by the Board is highly beneficial. However, it did not altogether alleviate the significant workload of the Secretariat in finalizing the ever more demands on time for the finalization of legal agreements and the ongoing follow up with and support to parties to provide adequate results based semi-annual progress reports.

123. The absence of M&E expertise available to the Secretariat renders the unit unable to adequately address issues such as sub-standard country log frames; semi-annual and terminal reports that are not sufficiently evidence based; and terminal reviews that do not fulfill the requirements of such a review, despite the fairly decent guidelines provided. This affects the ability of the Secretariat to report adequately at the Programme level on objectively verifiable achievements of the SIP and progress toward achieving the stated Programme Outcomes and Impact.

Annex I

Terms of Reference

1. PURPOSE: Article 13 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury defines a mechanism for the provision of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources to support developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. The mechanism is comprised of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) trust fund and the Specific International Programme (SIP) to support capacity-building and technical assistance.
2. The SIP is administered by UNEP through the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury under the oversight of the SIP Governing Board which implements its guidance, including decision-making on projects and project management. In decision MC-1/6, the Conference of the Parties established guidance on the operations of and duration of the SIP and establishment of its Terms of Reference and Governing Board. Its Rules of Procedure were adopted by the Governing Board at its first meeting in 2018 and completed at its third meeting. The Specific Trust Fund was established in January 2018 and is open to receive contributions from governments, the private sector, foundations, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, academia, and civil society organizations. Applications for support can be accepted for a period of 10 years, until 2028, which the Conference of the Parties could decide to extend for a period not exceeding an additional seven years.
3. The SIP is mandated to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication with other existing arrangements to provide capacity-building and technical support, in particular GEF and the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level for implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as well as other existing assistance frameworks, and be consistent with the integrated approach to financing the sound management of chemicals and waste.
4. OBJECTIVES, OUTPUT EXPECTATIONS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS: Mid-term Review Objectives: In line with the UN Environment Evaluation Policy and taking note of the deliberations of the SIP Governing Board at its fifth meeting, a Mid-term Review of the SIP will be undertaken approximately halfway through the approved implementation period to analyze whether it is on track to meeting its objectives, to identify what problems and/or challenges it is encountering, and what corrective actions may be considered to address such problems and/or challenges. Because the Specific Trust Fund was established in 2018, the Mid-term Review of the programme should be completed in 2023.
5. The review has two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of performance and results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among the main stakeholders active in the SIP including UNEP, donor and recipient governments. The review will identify lessons of operational relevance to the work of the Secretariat and of the functioning of the Governing Board, and may provide recommendations, if any, for improvements to the Programme within its mandate, for consideration by the Governing Board and/or the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.
6. The review will be delivered in final form to the SIP Governing Board and will be one of the inputs into the report to be prepared pursuant to Decision MC/3-7 on the Second Review of the Financial Mechanism, to be considered by the parties at COP-5 in October-November 2023.
7. The review will assess the design, performance and implementation of the SIP, its governance arrangements, its administration, its financial situation, and the extent to which the projects it is funding are increasing the capacity of eligible parties to implement their obligations under the Convention. The review will apply internationally accepted criteria to undertake the assessment: Relevance; Effectiveness; Efficiency; Impact; Sustainability; and Factors Influencing Performance. The consultant may propose other review criteria as deemed appropriate and discuss these with the Programme Management Officer for possible inclusion in the review.
8. The review will consider the quality of design; coherence with SIP Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure; alignment with Minamata Convention obligations; alignment with donor and recipient priorities; complementarity with and avoidance of duplication with work supported by the GEF, the Special Programme, or other relevant actors at the national level; national ownership;

stakeholder engagement, and responsiveness to gender equity. It will also provide a preliminary assessment of transparency and timeliness of the project approval process; simplicity, flexibility and expeditiousness of the procedures for accessing funds and for implementing and reporting on projects; adequacy and sustainability of the resources. To the extent available, it will note quantitative and/or qualitative information on resources mobilized through co-financing and/or indirect actions of the private sector and other stakeholders.

9. The review will explore factors affecting the performance of the SIP, including relevant external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The review will take particular note of UNEP/MC/COP.4/13 - Executive Director's report on strengthening the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (<https://www.mercuryconvention.org/en/documents/executive-directors-report-strengthening-specific-international-programme-support>).
10. The review will consider the application process; monitoring and reporting arrangements; and how the SIP might further its outreach and success, while ensuring involvement and participation from governments, civil society and industry.
11. Mid-term Review Arrangements, Approach and Methods: The consultant will consult key stakeholders who will be kept informed throughout the evaluation process. Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods will be used, as appropriate, to determine achievements against the expected outputs, outcomes and impacts. The consultant will maintain close communication with the Minamata Convention Secretariat and promote information exchange with key stakeholders throughout the review to increase their (and other stakeholder) ownership of the findings.
12. The findings of the review will be based on the following:
 - (a) A desk review of: Relevant background documentation, including reporting documents, legal agreements, the Rules of Procedure (including SIP Terms of Reference), and application guidelines and forms, amongst others; Governing Board meeting reports and associated documentation; Reports by the Secretariat to the Governing Board, including on matters related to the Specific Trust Fund; Reports to the Conferences of the Parties on the SIP and associated documents; including UNEP/MC/COP.4/13 - Executive Director's report on strengthening the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (<https://www.mercuryconvention.org/en/documents/executive-directors-report-strengthening-specific-international-programme-support>); Programme of Work and Budget documents and decisions relevant to the SIP; Status of contributions to the Specific Trust Fund.
 - (b) Interviews (individual or in groups, generally undertaken virtually) with: (individual or in groups, generally undertaken virtually) with: Governing Board Members; Secretariat staff; Cross-Secretariat task team members – Special Programme, Global Mercury Partnership, and GEF Secretariats; A subset of SIP Project partners, including focal points for the First, Second and Third Round projects; Relevant resource persons.
 - (c) Survey of eligible recipient party governments covering both successful and unsuccessful SIP applicants to the First, Second and Third Rounds of Applications; survey of donor party governments; and survey of Governing Board members. The consultant will submit draft survey instruments to the Secretariat for review, comment, and, if needed, revision.
13. SPECIFIC TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES: The consultant will prepare:
 - (a) Inception Report: this will be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and supporting documentation, to be presented to the SIP Governing Board. It will contain the review framework, procedures, and tentative review schedule.
 - (b) Draft and final survey instruments: three instruments as described above, unless mutually agreed otherwise by the Secretariat and the consultant.
 - (c) Preliminary Findings Note: typically, in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. This will be presented to the Secretariat, in draft form, and to the SIP Governing Board in final form. It provides an opportunity for early comments and feedback with respect to preliminary findings before preparation of a formal draft report.
 - (d) Draft and Final Review Report: containing an executive summary that can act as a stand-alone document; synthesized analysis of the review findings organised by review criteria and

supported with evidence; lessons learned and recommendations. The report will be no longer than 30 pages, excluding the executive summary and annexes, and will be to the point and written in plain English. It will explain the purpose of the review, the methodology used, and evidence-based and balanced findings covering the review criteria set forth in "Objectives and Scope" above, consequent conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations. The report will be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible.

14. The consultant will submit an initial draft report to the Secretariat and revise the draft in response to Secretariat comments with respect to factual errors and other suggestions, as appropriate. The consultant will then provide a revised draft which the Secretariat will provide to the SIP Governing Board for review and comment within a constrained timeframe to allow for the timely submission of the final report. The Secretariat may also, at its discretion, provide the draft to additional stakeholders, such as specific project partners, for comment. The consultant will provide the final report. The consultant will be available for brief interaction with the Secretariat as the latter develops relevant documentation for the SIP Governing Board and the Conference of the Parties for a period of six weeks following submission of the final report.

15. The consultant will liaise with the Programme Management Officer on comments received, will finalize the report, ensuring that comments are taken into account, and will prepare Response to Comments document for the Secretariat, listing those comments not accepted by the consultant and indicating the reason for the rejection.

16. The proposed structure of the Mid-term Review Report is as follows:

Executive Summary

Background (to include purpose of review and methodology)

Findings

(a) Relevance (including coherence with SIP Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure and alignment with Minamata Convention obligations)

(b) Effectiveness

(c) Efficiency

(d) Impact

(e) Sustainability (including country ownership)

(f) Factors Influencing Performance (which may include design, organization and management, human and financial resources management, and monitoring, reporting and evaluation, as appropriate.)

(g) Cross-cutting issues (including stakeholder engagement, responsiveness to gender equity, complementarity with and avoidance of duplication with work supported by the GEF, the Special Programme, or other relevant actors at the national level)

Conclusions

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Annexes (if any)

17. REPORTING LINES: The consultant will work under the overall responsibility of the Programme Management Officer for Capacity Building and Technical Assistance of the Minamata Convention Secretariat, Ms. Marianne Bailey.

Annex II

Persons interviewed

<i>Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury</i>	
Monica Stankiewicz	Executive Secretary, Minamata Convention
Claudia ten Have	Senior Policy and Coordination Officer, Minamata Convention
Marianne Bailey	Program Management Officer for Capacity Building and Technical Assistance
Maria Irene Rizzo	Junior Professional Officer
Lara Ognibene	Legal/Programme Officer
Alexandru Sofroni	Programme Management Assistant
Reena Agarwal	Finance and Budget Assistant
Moses Okello	Programme Management Assistant
My Linh Doan	Programme Management Assistant
Sandra Ruecker	Administrative Assistant
<i>Governing Board of the Specific International Programme</i>	
Olubunmi Olusanya (Nigeria)	Representative, Africa
Anne Nakafeero (Uganda)	Representative, Africa
Satyendra Kumar (India)	Representative, Asia Pacific
Wasantha Dissanayake (Sri Lanka)	Representative, Asia Pacific
Mario Vujić (Croatia)	Representative, Central and Eastern Europe
Suzana Andonova (North Macedonia)	Representative, Central and Eastern Europe
Helges Samuel Bandeira (Brazil)	Representative, Latin America and the Caribbean
Gina Griffith (Suriname)	Representative, Latin America and the Caribbean
Rafael Zubrzycki (Germany)	Representative, Western Europe and Others
Andrew Clark (USA)	Representative, Western Europe and Others
Reginald Hernaus	(Former Governing Board member) Lead Negotiator, Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management, Netherlands
Gillian Guthrie	Former Governing Board member (co chair, First Governing Board)
Greg Fylyk	Former Governing Board member (co chair, First Governing Board)
Katherine Theotocatos	Programme Management Officer, Special Programme Secretariat
Felix Herzog	Programme Officer/ M&E Specialist, Special Programme Secretariat
Yuki Shiga	Environmental Specialist, Global Environment Facility
Sandra Averous-Monnery	Global Mercury Partnership
Marie Clare Henry	Government of France
Moleboheng Juliet Petlane	Project contact - Lesotho
Anahit Aleksandryan	Project contact - Armenia
Leila Devia	Project contact - Argentina
Marisol Diaz Rivera	Project contact - Argentina
Sandra Gonou	Project contact - Benin

Annex III

Documents reviewed

Minamata Convention on Mercury (Text and Annexes)

Decision MC-1/6 on the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, as finalized by the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting (November 2018)* adopted by the first Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, October 2017

Rules of Procedures of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme of the Minamata Convention, UNEP/MC/COP.2/9 Annex II

Executive Director's report on strengthening the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (UNEP/MC/COP.4/13)

Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Fourth Meeting (COP-4), 1-5 November, 2021 Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the Parties: Effectiveness Evaluation

Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Third Meeting (COP-3,) 25-29 November, 2019 : Overall report on the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance

Report of the Seventh Meeting of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, November 2022

Report of the Sixth Meeting of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, 9-13 August 2021

Report of the Fifth Meeting of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance, 24-25 November 2021

Report of the First Meeting of the Governing Board of the Specific International Programme to Support Capacity-Building and Technical Assistance 15-16 May 2018

Application Guidelines, Specific International Programme, First Round of Applications

Application Guidelines, Specific International Programme, Second Round of Applications

Application Guidelines, Specific International Programme, Third Round of Applications

Approval of the MOU between the COP of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Council of the GEF (GEF/C.56/10/Rev.01)

Reporting format for the Minamata Convention on Mercury

Status of contributions to the Specific Trust Fund of the Minamata Convention (32MCP), as of 30 September 2022

UNEP Environmental and Social Sustainability Framework, 2020

UNEP Evaluation Manual June 2022

Final Narrative Reports - Argentina, Lesotho, Armenia, Iran

Interim Progress reports, selected Round 1, Round 2 and Round 3 projects

Country Application Forms - Argentina Armenia, Benin, Lesotho, Argentina, Antigua & Barbuda, Sri Lanka, N Macedonia, Rwanda

Terminal Evaluation- Iran

Annex IV

Survey Instrument

Survey administered to applicants of the SIP, Rounds 1-3

1. Article 13 of the Minamata Convention defines a mechanism for the provision of adequate, predictable and timely financial resources to support developing-country parties and parties with economies in transition in implementing their obligations under the Convention. The mechanism comprises the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund and the Specific International Programme (SIP) to support capacity building and technical assistance. The SIP is administered by UNEP through the Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (referred to as the Secretariat) under the oversight of the SIP Governing Board which implements its guidance, including decision-making on projects and project management.
2. The SIP is presently undergoing a Mid-Term Evaluation with the following objectives:
 - (a) to provide evidence of performance and results to meet accountability requirements, and
 - (b) to promote operational improvement, learning and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among the main stakeholders active in the SIP including UNEP, donor and recipient governments.
3. This brief survey seeks your feedback on various aspects of the Programme.

All the responses you provide are completely anonymous and confidential

Please mark the response which best describes your opinion

1. How did you find out about the Specific International Programme's (SIP) available funding to support capacity-building and technical assistance for implementing Parties' obligations under the Minamata Convention?
 - ☐ International meeting
 - ☐ Direct contact from the Secretariat
 - ☐ Social media/Internet
 - ☐ Another agency who had received funding
 - ☐ Special Programme

Other, please state

2. To which Round did you submit an application (select as many as appropriate):
 - ☐ First Round (2018)
 - ☐ Second Round (2019)
 - ☐ Third Round (2021)
3. Was your application successful?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
4. In which round(s) of applications to the SIP was your application approved? (select as many as appropriate)
 - ☐ First Round (2018)
 - ☐ Second Round (2019)
 - ☐ Third Round (2021)
 - ☐ None

5. How helpful was the information on the application process (call for applications; the application forms; the application guidelines including webinars) provided by the Secretariat?

Please rate on a Scale of 1-5; 5 = Very helpful; 1= Not Helpful at all.

- ☐ 5
☐ 4
☐ 3
☐ 2
☐ 1

6. How satisfied were you with the assistance provided by the Secretariat during the application process?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied
☐ NA

Please elaborate, especially if you applied in the Third Round and benefitted from the Technical Review and Application Revision process

7. How satisfied were you with the timeline from application to approval?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

8. Do you think that the range of funding that the SIP provides (from USD 50,000 to USD 250,000 per project) is adequate for the type of projects that the SIP funds?

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree

9. Were funds disbursed in a timely manner ?

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ NA, did not receive funding
☐ Have you been easily able to comply with the reporting requirements defined in the legal agreement for your SIP project? Yes
☐ No
☐ NA- did not receive funding

Please provide information on your experience with this, including your thoughts on if/ how the Secretariat could make this process easier

10. Are you satisfied with the overall support provided by the SIP Secretariat e.g. in both the Application and Implementation process?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Somewhat satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Somewhat dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

Comment on what aspects you liked/did not like

11. Do you feel that SIP has improved /is improving your government's capacity to implement its obligations under the Minamata Convention?"

- ☐ Strongly agree
☐ Somewhat agree
☐ Neither agree nor disagree
☐ Somewhat disagree
☐ Strongly disagree
☐ Not applicable – have not received support

Comments, if any

NOTE: Qu 13 and 14 are for Parties who have not been awarded grants to date:

12. Were the reasons why your application was not successful communicated to you so that you had a clear understanding of any shortcomings?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Please elaborate

13. Based on the feedback provided by the Secretariat, are you planning to:

A) reapply to the fund?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

B) Seek funding support elsewhere?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

Please specify where:

- ☐ GEF
☐ Special Programme
☐ Other, please specify

For all applicants

14. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions relating to any aspect of the SIP and / or the Operations of the Secretariat including lessons learned, areas of strength/weakness; opportunities for improvement.

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Annex V

Evaluation Framework

<i>EVALUATION QUESTIONS</i>	<i>Project team, SIP</i>	<i>SIP Governing Board</i>	<i>UNEP</i>	<i>GEF</i>	<i>SIP Donors</i>	<i>SIP Beneficiary Countries</i>	<i>Special Programme</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>
A. STRATEGIC RELEVANCE								
1. To what extent is the Programme aligned with the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure; and with Minamata Convention obligations?								Interviews, MC-1/6 Project document, SIP reporting
2. To what extent is the Programme aligned with donor and recipient country priorities?								Interviews, Funding agreements
3. How effective are the mechanisms that seek to ensure complementarity with and avoidance of duplication with work supported by the GEF, SP, other?								Interviews, MOUs
B. QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN								
5. To what extent were the main target groups/beneficiaries (Parties) involved in the SIP design?								COP meeting reports, Interviews
6. Did the Programme design benefit from lessons learned in other similar Programmes?								Interviews, Governing Board meeting document INF.5, and COP documents on the SIP and GEF (including the ED report))
7. Has it been necessary to modify any aspects of the SIP design based on new knowledge?								Interviews, SIP Reports, Application guidelines, Governing Board meetings reports
8. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the design? How could this have been improved?								Interviews
9. Have Human rights and Gender equality been considered in the Programme design?								Interviews, Application Guidelines

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Project team, SIP	SIP Governing Board	UNEP	GEF	SIP Donors	SIP Beneficiary Countries	Special Programme	Data Sources
C. NATURE OF EXTERNAL CONTEXT								
10. What was the impact of COVID on the operations of the SIP and the actions of the Parties - immediate impact, - lessons learned; mainstreaming of lessons	-							Interviews, Project Reports
D. EFFECTIVENESS: ATTAINMENT OF OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES								
11. How have Parties made use of the outputs of their projects?								Parties Reports, Legal agreements, Interviews
12. To what extent have the projects implemented by Parties catalyzed behavioral or attitudinal changes by the target groups and/or contributed to institutional, policy changes within the recipient organisation?								Parties Reports, Interviews
13. How are the results (outputs/outcomes) achieved by the Parties contributing to the realisation of the planned SIP Outcome?								Parties Reports, COP meetings reports, Interviews
14. What role does South South Cooperation have in contributing to results, if at all?								Parties Reports, Interviews
E. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT								
15. Are the financial resources (Trust Fund) and financial management arrangements in place adequate to support the achievement of the Programme objectives?								Interviews, Financial reports
16. Is cost effectiveness apparent in the procurement, HR allocation and financial management operations at the Programme and Project level?								Project reports, SIP reports, Interviews
17. Are the required fiduciary standards for financial management and accountability applied consistently to all Parties and at Programme level?								Interviews, SIP Financial Reports

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	Project team, SIP	SIP Governing Board	UNEP	GEF	SIP Donors	SIP Beneficiary Countries	Special Programme	Data Sources
F. EFFICIENCY								
18. Is there adequate institutional and human capacity within the Secretariat to implement the Programme?								Project applications, Interviews
19. How efficient are the operations of the Secretariat to support the Parties/the Governing Board? (Are the processes and implementing arrangements clear and flexible enough to support the Parties/ the Governing Board ?)								Interviews, SIP Reports, surveys Application Guidelines/other support material
20. Are the inputs and other resources contributed by the Parties adequate for supporting implementation?								Interviews, Surveys, Reports Interviews, Application guidelines
21. What is the efficiency in terms of the amount of resources going directly to projects vs programme overhead?								Interviews, financial reports
MONITORING AND REPORTING								
22. What is the quality of the log frames developed by the Parties, and to what extent are Parties reporting against indicators identified in their Log frames?								Interviews, Project reports, SIP reports
23. Is the monitoring and reporting system of the SIP able to facilitate the timely tracking of results towards Programme objectives? (Programme and Project level reporting)								SIP reports, country reports
F. SUSTAINABILITY								
24. Is the capacity built within the Parties adequate to continue delivering benefits regarding the Parties' obligations under the Minamata convention?								Interviews, Parties' reports, SIP reports
25. Are there sufficient government and other key stakeholders' awareness, interests, commitment and incentives to sustain action on meeting the obligations of the Minamata convention?								Interviews, Parties' reports, SIP reports

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	<i>Project team, SIP</i>	<i>SIP Governing Board</i>	<i>UNEP</i>	<i>GEF</i>	<i>SIP Donors</i>	<i>SIP Beneficiary Countries</i>	<i>Special Programme</i>	<i>Data Sources</i>
26. Are governance structures and processes, policies, etc in place to ensure the sustainability of benefits derived from SIP support?								Interviews, Parties' reports, SIP reports

Annex VI

List of approved projects

<i>Country</i>	<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Year of Approval</i>	<i>Total Project Budget (USD)</i>
Argentina	Capacity Building Programme for the implementation of the Minamata Convention	2018	250 000
Armenia	Strengthening capacity to promote phasing-out of mercury-added products (lamps) in Armenia	2018	162 000
Benin	Improvement of management framework for mercury-containing products and wastes	2018	249 113
Iran	Implementing of Minamata Convention on Mercury Management in Chlor-Alkali Plants in the Petrochemical Industry	2018	100 000
Lesotho	Strengthening institutional capacity in the development of a phase-out and phase down strategy for mercury added products in Lesotho	2018	200 550
Antigua and Barbuda	Facilitating capacity-building with technical assistance and technology transfer for managing mercury in the Caribbean	2019	210 000
Ecuador	Project to strengthen capacities in the implementation of the Minamata Convention in Ecuador	2019	250 000
Ghana	Strengthening Ghana's Health Sector for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury	2019	250 000
Indonesia	Improving Health Risk Control of Mercury Exposure in Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining (ASGM) and Surrounding Areas by Developing the "Participatory Approach" Model	2019	143 340
Iran	Capacity Building for Effective Implementation of Minamata Convention Focusing on Mercury Inventory	2019	149 800
Moldova	Support to post-ratification of the Minamata Convention to the Republic of Moldova by building phase down capacities and reducing risks associated with mercury	2019	219 765
Nigeria	Capacity strengthening for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Nigeria	2019	250 000
Peru	Strengthening capacities to control emissions and releases of mercury in Peru	2019	126 000
Sri Lanka	Strengthening National Capacity for Phasing Out Mercury Added Products and Environmentally Sound Mercury Containing Waste Management in Sri Lanka	2019	178 659
Zambia	To strengthen the Institutional Capacity for Zambia to implement the obligations of the Minamata Convention by reducing the presence of mercury in vulnerable populations as provided for under Articles 16 and 18	2019	200 000
Burundi	Capacity building support for the implementation of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in Burundi	2021	250 000
Cuba	Improvement of information on inventories of mercury use and the environmental cycle in Cuba to support the implementation of the Minamata Convention	2021	249 210
Gabon	Facilitating capacity-building with technology assistance and technology transfer for monitoring and managing mercury in Central Africa	2021	249 500
India	Development of Institutional and Regulatory Framework for Implementation of Minamata Convention in India	2021	240 000
Iran	Improving capacity building program for the replacement of mercury containing lamps in order to implement Minamata Convention in Islamic Republic of Iran	2021	238 000
Jordan	Environmentally Sound Management of Mercury-Containing Wastes and Reduce the Use of Mercury-Containing Products in Jordan	2021	250 000
North Macedonia	Strengthening national capacities for Minamata Convention implementation with focus on development of strategy for assessing the sites contaminated with mercury	2021	248 500
Rwanda	Strengthening the Institutional Capacities for Rwanda to implement Minamata Convention	2021	220 000

<i>Country</i>	<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Year of Approval</i>	<i>Total Project Budget (USD)</i>
Senegal	Strengthening the legal framework and institutional capacities of ECOWAS countries (Senegal, Togo and Burkina Faso) for the implementation of Articles 3 and 4 of the Minamata Convention	2021	248 632

Annex VII

CV of Expert Consultant

Valerie Gordon
1638 Pinto Trail, Jonesboro Ga, 30236

1. Education:

University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1976-1980, BSc, Chemistry
 University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 1986-1990, Masters (MPhil), Environmental Chemistry
 University of New Orleans, 1996, Certificate in Project Management
 University of the West Indies, Jamaica, 2006, Diploma in Project Cycle Management (PCM) for Sustainable Development

2. Language skills:

Proficient in English

3. Membership of professional bodies:

President, Caribbean Evaluators International (CEI); Member, American Evaluators Association (AEA); Atlanta Area Evaluators Association (AaEA), Member International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS)

4. Other skills:

Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM), End of Project Result Reporting, (EPRR), Outcome Mapping Methodology, Group training and process facilitation; Advocacy, Institutional development support (civil society)

5. Present position:

Independent Development Consultant, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist

6. Key qualifications:

- International Development professional with over 25 years experience in Development Cooperation
- Over 17 years experience in Monitoring and Evaluation of development projects including 15 years experience (2007-2022) monitoring EDF projects in: Caribbean, Africa, and the Pacific region
- Fifteen years experience supporting and/or undertaking Monitoring and Evaluation of projects with focus on Environment, Natural Resources Management, Climate Change, Civil Society, Rural development, Energy, Gender and Human rights
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, having prepared over 80 European Union Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) and/or Evaluation reports, and leading numerous briefing and debriefing exercises with International development partners in the Caribbean, Pacific, Africa, and Asia Regions.

7. Specific Country

Long Term: Caribbean, Jamaica

Short Term: Caribbean- Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Barbados, Bahamas, Belize, Cayman Is, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago
 Africa Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, The Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe
 Pacific Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Is, Micronesia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Is, Tuvalu, Vanuatu
 Asia Cambodia

8. Training-Certificate courses

Claremont Graduate University (2015)

- Rigorous Impact evaluations under Real World Conditions
- Survey Research Methods
- Equity Focused and Gender Responsive Evaluations
- Development Evaluation

9. Professional experience

Evaluation, Monitoring & Learning

Evaluation Consultant, UNEP Geneva, Secretariat for the Minamata Convention on Mercury, December 2022 Present
Mid Term Evaluation of the Specific International Programme for technical assistance and capacity building to support the Minamata convention on Mercury

Evaluation Consultant, UNEP/ Regional Office for Latin American and the Caribbean, June-Nov, 2020
Terminal Evaluation of the project "Knowledge and Capacity Development for Inclusive Green Development (Green State Development Strategy) in Guyana"

Team Leader, Summative Evaluation, ITAD, April to November 2020

Evaluation of the UK Caribbean Investment Fund infrastructure intervention in 9 Caribbean countries. To undertake a Baseline study of the UKCIF and an end-line Summative Evaluation of the Programme with focus on Resilience, Gender and Social Inclusion

M&E Consultant, UNEP, Geneva, Jan- June 2020,

Development of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Strategy for the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level to enhance the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, the Minamata Convention on Mercury and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (see Publications)

Evaluation Consultant, Caribbean Development Bank, May – July 2018

Mid Term Evaluation of the EU/DFID supported project "Sustainable Energy for the Eastern Caribbean", implemented in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and St Kitts & Nevis
December 2014- May 2015, UNDP, Barbados-OECS

Evaluation Consultant, UNDP (Barbados, OECS) (December 2014- May 2015)

Mid Term Evaluation of UNDP's Sub Regional Programme for Barbados and the OECS (2012-2016) to assess progress in achieving programme outcomes, identify lessons learned, and recommend how the programme can be aligned to meet the requirements of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan.

Co- evaluator, Bescobarbados / Government of Barbados, (April - June 2014)

Evaluation of the Agricultural Health and Food Control Programme, developing Evaluation frameworks standardised questionnaires, statistical analysis and Final report preparation

Development Consultant, UNESCO, Jamaica, November 2004 - February 2005

Participatory Evaluation of the Container Project, a rural community based ICT initiative targeting at risk youth; established and implemented participatory protocols for data collection, documentation, and assessment of outputs and outcomes from the project interventions

Results Oriented Monitoring (excerpted- Caribbean and SIDS)

Assessments of interventions with regard to the OECD /DAC standard parameters of: relevance/quality of design, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability

Eptisa International

Senior ROM Expert, 2011-15

- Support for the Implementation of the Small Island Developing States "Mauritius Strategy" in the ESA-IO Region (ISIDSMS) (Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles)
- Expert review of ROM reports of EDF projects in the Caribbean which were monitored since 1998; Developed conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for future EDF programming in the Caribbean region
- Support to Non state Actors in Vanuatu

- Rehabilitation of 2 main secondary schools (Vanuatu)
- Water and Sanitation in Outer Kiribati Is
- Improving drought period water security in Tuvalu
- Improved quality of life of low-income groups within the OECS Region through promoting improved governance and institutional frameworks to support energy efficiency (St Lucia)
- Preparation of a Geothermal-based Cross Border Electrical Interconnection in the Caribbean (Dominica)
- Poverty Reduction Programme II (Jamaica)
- Establishment of Digital Early Warning Station in the Cayman Is
- Improved Water, Sanitation and Hygiene conditions for Hinterland Communities (Guyana)
- Support to the Low Income Housing Sector (Guyana)
- Rehabilitation of the Eastern part of the Suriname East West Road connection: Meerzorg – Albina (Suriname)
- Environmentally Safe Aggregates for Tarawa (ESAT) (Kiribati)
- ACP EU Disaster Facility (Pacific Regional)
- Combating Invasive Alien Species in the Pacific for the benefit of biodiversity and people (Fiji & Regional)
- SFA 2008 - Education Enhancement through Information and Communications Technology Programme (St Lucia)
- Improving Education through the use of ICTs (St Vincent and the Grenadines)
- Intervention for Rural and Parochial Roads Rehabilitation and Maintenance (Jamaica)
- JM: Establishment of a Digital Early Warning Station on the Cayman Islands (Cayman Is)
- Supporting Gender Equality in the context of HIV/AIDS” (Jamaica); also prepared Horizontal Report of country components of 5 countries including Kenya and Rwanda
- Capacity Support for Sustainable Management of Energy Resources in the Caribbean Region (St Lucia)
- 9th EDF Sea Defences Programme (Guyana)
- Preparation of a Geothermal-based Cross Border Electrical Interconnection in the Caribbean (Dominica)
- BAR: OAS – Increasing Sustainability of Energy Sector in the Caribbean through improved Governance and Management (St Lucia)

ICCS- National Technical University of Athens (ICCS-NTUA) , Senior ROM Expert, 2016 – 2019

- Consolidated Analysis of ROM review results for the Latin America and the Caribbean and Asia Pacific over 2015-2019 in the thematic areas natural resources, environment, climate change
- World Bank/GFDRR implemented project: ACP-EU Disaster Risk Reduction Project including two country components (Dominica, Samoa) and Horizontal report
- 10th EDF Technical Cooperation Facility (Ex Post) (Trinidad)
- Rehabilitation of the Eastern part of the Suriname East West road connection: Meerzorg – Albina (Suriname)

Landell Mills, November 2015

- Support to the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) through capacity building, community engagement and applied research (Vanuatu)
- Improved Drinking Water Supply for Kiritimati Island in the Republic of Kiribati (Kiribati, Fiji)
- Water and Sanitation in Kiribati Outer Islands- Phase 1 (Kiribati, Fiji)

Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, Baastel/ EU, March-September 2017

Provided Technical support to assist the Caribbean Development Bank in the implementation of its Climate Resilience Strategy through undertaking Institutional Capacity Assessment of selected Caribbean countries' ability to carry out Climate Change Adaptation

Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, Baastel/ EU, June- December 2016

Provided Technical support to assist the CDB in the implementation of its Climate Resilience Strategy by building in-house knowledge and technical capacity, establish appropriate policies and processes for mainstreaming climate change adaptation and other related climate actions at CDB and among member countries

Consultant, EU Jamaica/ Ministry of Agriculture, June 2016

Undertook the study "Socio-Economic Infrastructure Needs Assessment for Sugar Dependent Areas in Jamaica" as part the Programming for the transformation of the Jamaican Sugar Cane industry

Long Term:**National Coordinator, UNDP/ Jamaica Sustainable Development Network Ltd., Feb 1998 - August 2006**

Established and provided support to ICT enabled community access centres and small rural community information networks; Promoted capacity building of community based organisations to use ICTs for improved citizen participation in community development issues and government decision making

Environmental Advisor/Green Fund Coordinator, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Support Unit, Feb 1991 - Jan 1998

Provided programmatic advice for environmental management in Jamaica and Belize; Developed, coordinated and managed a Small Grants environmental fund to benefit NGOs and CBOs; Supported the institutional development of CBOs/NGOs to build capacity in environmental governance, citizen participation in environmental stewardship and advocacy for government accountability.

Snr Research Officer, University of the West Indies, Centre for Nuclear Science, 1989-1991

Under the IDB supported "Environmental monitoring of Jamaica" project, undertook preparation and analysis of water, air and soil samples collected from locations across the island. Participated in data analysis and GIS mapping of data points; identifying areas of enrichment due to natural phenomena as well as sources of pollution, and made recommendations for further investigation and /or action.