

Final report

External Evaluation of the Transboundary Waters Governance for Sustainable Development and Blue Peace programme

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACN	Andean part of the Community of Nations
AfDB	African Development Bank
ALT	Binational Authority of Lake Titicaca
AMCOW	The African Ministers' Council on Water
ANBO	Africa Network of Basin Organization
ARA	Regional Water Agency (Mozambique)
BRIDGE	Building River Dialogue and Governance
BuPuSa	Buzi, Pungwe, Save Rivers
CA	Central Asia
Carec	the Secretariat of Blue Peace programme
CUVECOM	Cuvelai River Basin Commission
DNGRH	National Directorate for Water Resource Management
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Commission
ENGRH	The National Strategy for Water Resource Management
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGRETA	Groundwater Resources Governance in Transboundary Aquifers
GPW	Global Programme Water
IGRAC	International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre
ITTAS	Iullemeden-Taoudeni/Tanezrouft Aquifer System
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LIMCOM	the Limpopo Watercourse Commission
MCCM	Stampriet Multi Country Cooperation Mechanism
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (sometimes named MoFA – align with MFA)
MOUs	Memorandum of Understanding
MoWR	Ministry of Water Resources
OAS	Organization of American States
OMVG	Organisation for the Development of the Gambia River
ORASECOM	The Orange-Senqu River Commission
PM	Project management
RBO	River Basin Organisation
RECs	Regional Economic Commission
SADC	The Southern African Development Community
SADC-GMI	Groundwater Management Institute
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SIC-ICWC	Scientific Information Centre - Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia
STAS	Stampriet Transboundary Aquifer System
TBWG	Transboundary Waters Governance Programme

TBWG	SDC Transboundary Waters Governance Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNOPS	The United Nations Office for Project Services
WWDR	World Water Development Report
ZAMCOM	the Zambezi Watercourse Commission
Zinwa	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZIRP	Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project

1.0 Executive Summary

The Transboundary Waters Governance was established in 2012. It was launched through a coordinated portfolio of interventions with results and lessons used to support global learning and water governance reforms. The fourth phase of the programme covers the period 2019-2022 and expected to contribute to the following described outcomes:

1. Transboundary surface and ground-water cooperation is strengthened through joint frameworks, institutions, and agreements in a financially sustainable manner.
2. Transboundary surface and ground-waters are managed, monitored and assessed with data shared, in key transboundary basins respecting integrated water resources management principles in a changing climate, backing evidence-based dialogue and decision making.
3. Awareness and support for transboundary surface and ground-water cooperation is evidence that the Water Convention does make a difference.

The program has three partial actions, each implemented by a different organization. This evaluation looks at selected projects within the partial actions:

Partial action 1: Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) implemented by IUCN focuses on developing the capacities of countries that share a river or lake basin to institutionalize effective water governance arrangements. The evaluation looks at two projects (as a sample of the projects covering twelve transboundary basins):

- **The Andes region:** specifically on the support provided to Peru regarding the use of shared waters between Peru and Ecuador, as well as to those between Peru and Bolivia through the Authority of Lake Titicaca.
- **The Southern Africa region:** specifically on the work performed on the Pungwe, Buzi and Save (BuPuSa) river basins between Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

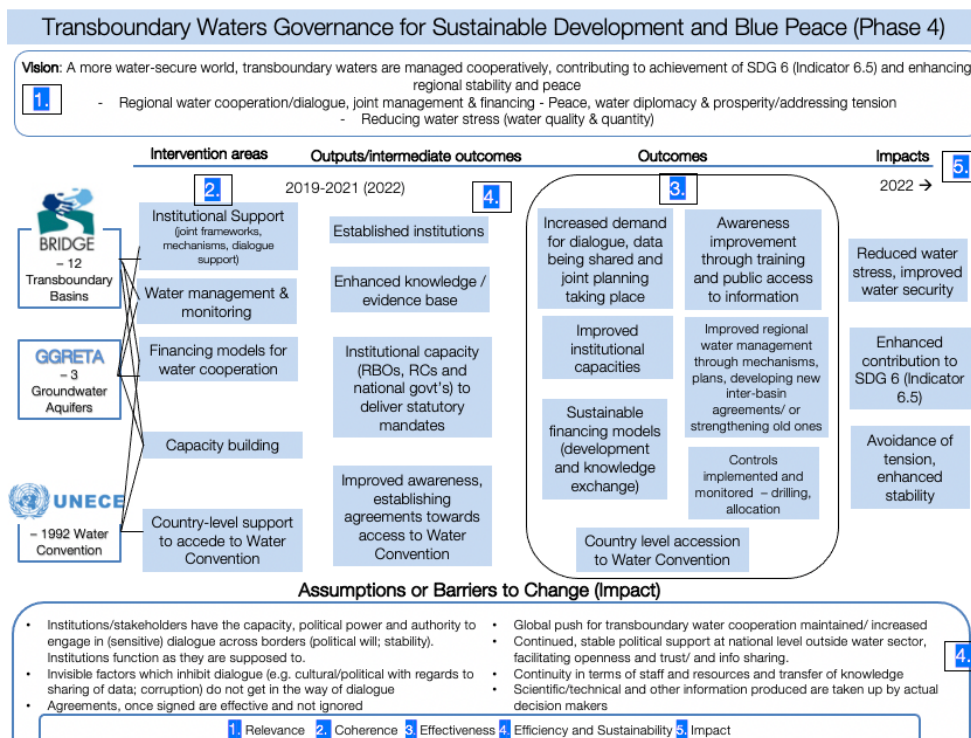
Partial action 2: Groundwater Resources Governance in Transboundary Aquifers (GGRETA) implemented by UNESCO has the overall goal to contribute to governance capacities that support the long-term and sustainable management of selected groundwater aquifers. The evaluation covers GGRETA's three projects:

- **The Trifinio Aquifer - Ocatepeque, Citalá:** El Salvador, Honduras
- **The Pretashkent Aquifer:** Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan
- **The Stampriet Aquifer:** South Africa, Namibia, Botswana

Partial Action 3: 1992 UNECE Water Convention carried out by the Convention Secretariat focuses on the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (UNECE Water Convention, 1992). This partial action is of a different type of nature than the other partial actions as it supports the implementation of a multilateral treaty. The evaluation looks at the capacity building activities supporting countries to accede to the Convention and programme area 5 (new programme area): facilitating financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development (SDC lead).

The main **purpose** of this evaluation is to provide evidence-based inputs on results and achievements of the three partial actions that can serve as evidence for the new FDFA Guidelines on Water 2022-25, and therefore support the thematic orientation of SDC's engagement in water activities".

Of the sampled projects, the evaluation undertook a **data collection** process guided by the **evaluation questions** finalized during the inception period under the areas of: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact (see Annex B). After a document review (encompassing both normative and project level documents), a series of key informant interviews firstly conducted online, and then in person through the field missions to visit the 3 projects of BRIDGE BuPuSa, BRIDGE Andes and GGRETA Pretashkent. Online interviews took place to collect data for the **desk study projects** (i.e., the project where field missions did not take place). The desk study projects included: GGRETA Stampriet, GGRETA Ocatepeque, and UNECE (capacity building for accession and programme area 5). To specifically support the findings for impact, a **Theory of Change** was reconstructed so that causal pathways to impact could be set out to guide the process (see figure below). As the programmes were mature (3rd or 4th Phase), a baseline was reconstructed and special effort made to collect data on the current Phase only (see Annex A).



Findings were made against each evaluation question. The findings were developed at overall transboundary water governance (TBWG) programme level, where it was possible to draw broad statements, and were subsequently supported by individual programme findings. Some findings were developed specifically at BRIDGE, GGRETA or UNECE level. Overall, 38 grouped findings were developed.

The findings were then synthesised into overall conclusion statements as well as 7 specific conclusions and lessons. Overall, the evaluation found that the BRIDGE, GGRETA and UNECE partial actions, under the framework of SDC's TBWG programmes are **highly relevant, effective and coherent** in terms of creating a favourable environment for countries to negotiate transboundary water management agreements. The programmes demonstrate a relevant set of actions that comprise transboundary water programmes, what cooperation looks like in practice, and addressing the inevitable challenges that arise when bringing together diverse stakeholders around sharing water resources under increasing pressures. The TBWG programme as a whole, is well thought out (i.e. encompassing surface water, ground water, and a range policy and legal frameworks that promote wise management), and is an analytical and consistent programme, with strong conceptual synergies across the actions.

Considering the evaluation covers Phase 4 actions, some aspects of the projects do not characterize mature programmes. Despite this, one of the key achievements of the TBWG programmes have been to be **adaptive to change**, supporting hydro diplomacy by taking non-linear approaches, while considering and responding to the complex environments and themes (e.g. water scarcity, fragility), and the changing political, economic and social conditions. There has been a focus on achieving results, especially at the outcome level. In locations where action has not been possible (e.g. due to lack of political will), projects have shifted to focussing on smaller more strategic actions, and then mobilising when larger progress is possible.

Although the programmes are not yet demonstrating impact on the ground, the outcomes achieved (in terms of progressively building trust and capacity, often leading to joint plans and agreements) are significant. Another successful aspect of the connections made through the three programmes, are the **leveraged synergies leading to achievement outside the programme**, which includes other funded programmes and the growth of new initiatives. The generalized, summarised specific conclusions include:¹

1. Coherence at programming/theme/strategy level is high, but there is scope for improvement to foster better learning across the programmes and draw synergies between different actors.
2. Different approaches to level (**regional, national, local**) are represented. Few programmes address all three. National can be overlooked for regional; and most overlook local. In some cases, the national level (domestic dimension) has

¹ The longer conclusions in the document contain specific examples and discussions around the partial actions.

been under-supported in the earlier Phases in terms of supporting governments to understand their own policy and legal frameworks and capacities to engage in transboundary water cooperation. This has led to the need to resolve such issues in later stages.

3. **The support of existing regional organisations** was a benefit to the projects. The projects which had an existing RBO were able to advance progress quicker.
4. **Soft skills have been at times underappreciated** across the programmes, including the **facilitation and sensitization aspects** across levels (Ministry, RBOs, local actors etc) to influence thinking to cooperate. Much of the awareness raising throughout the project were shouldered by the project coordinators (consultants) and project managers/officers (IUCN, UNESCO, UNECE) mostly at the regional level (but also sometimes at headquarters), in their day-to-day work.
5. COVID-19 restrictions have had an impact on the programmes, and the ability to consolidate. The general lessons of continuing work that were learnt during the pandemic (i.e. home working, online meetings) were not necessarily applicable transboundary water negotiation, where **trust is built in person**.
6. **Broad systemic analyses** are critical to undertake at the start, and at times, throughout the projects (considering the changeable nature, and duration of programmes) and inform a wide range of stakeholders to engage with.
7. The governance lens, **including the involvement of non-state actors (informal or formal) including the private sector actors** who can have a huge adverse impact on water resources, which can at times, lead to conflict, was at times lacking.
8. The individual programmes touch the surface of **regional peace-building** although the positive contributions are clear. However, the difference between the more modest programme contributions to water cooperation in a specific basin to peace-building overall remains unaddressed. The most influential project participants appear to be the MoFA focal points, but there remain many questions on how the focal points, or information being passed to MoFA staff are actually able to influence their diplomatic (bilateral and multilateral) outlook and affairs.
9. At times, some of the projects can be highly focused on **technical and scientific actions**. While technical assessments form a valuable evidence base and foundation to inform decision making, there needs to be a balance on striking a focus outwards on **risk management and water crises**, tension over resources in the local and national context. A focus alone on technical/ functional issues can limit projects in the long term. The risk based approach needs to extend to political and governance issues (including at the local level).
10. The TBWG programmes have **invested heavily in capacity**. However the outcomes and impact of such activities have not been measured sometimes assumed (i.e. through the take up of a new policy). As such the evaluation has struggled to verify the claims made on improvements without any systematic monitoring of outcomes.
11. In terms of **sustainability**, achievement of the agreement is the largest contribution towards a long-term legal framework that will continue beyond the project. Many agreements fall through, or are ignored, so the sustainability is not guaranteed however the ability of the programmes to influence such possibilities are beyond the scope of the TBWG programme actors.

An analysis of conclusions yielded 9 recommendations and 3 programme specific recommendations, again presented in a generalized form:

1. **Synergies should be strengthened across the programmes** from stronger sharing of lessons, political knowledge and insights at all levels (international, and regional) and the ability to reflect on experiences, between IUCN, UNESCO, UNECE and SDC GPW. In the case of Central Asia, this could be extended to Blue Peace. At the international level, the annual sharing of experiences should go more into strategy and lessons (rather than reporting activities), and potentially be held more frequently. Having a small group of experts to advise and act as an independent “check” would also support ongoing planning. At the regional level, project officers could share stakeholder mappings, assessments and strategies. At the basin level, UNECE and IUCN/BRIDGE and UNESCO/GGRET would benefit from sharing information on target countries to appreciate how the Waters Convention can support basin agreements (and vice versa), and how by adopting the principles of the Water Convention and supporting developing basin agreements (as well as unlocking further funding).
2. **A Theory of Change connecting programmes actions to peace is necessary** (followed by a more comprehensive mapping/assessment activities that explore the assumptions and barriers to change) to uphold statements made about strengthening stability and peace. This would include the connection between making progress on bilateral basin level agreements and ways of working together on management, and how such actions might contribute to regional stability.
3. A more systematic approach to **engaging at the local level with local actors**, is needed which would encompass policies, practices, incentives, and the informal actors involved, if outcomes/impact are desired at this level across programmes.
4. A **more formal connection to Blue Peace** and TBWG programmes should be made. Many of the weakness across the programmes are areas that are seen to be Blue Peace strengths. Lessons, agreements and achievements could be reported to Blue Peace, so high level actors can hold actors accountable on the technicalities. Blue Peace could also support TBWG programmes to on the media and awareness element, and working at the grassroots level, a weakness across the

programmes. Stakeholders across the programmes are also very interested in supporting their young professionals more systematically, another strength of Blue Peace.

5. Working adaptively has been a highlight across programmes, however **the more systematic use of innovative tools for programme design** (which can be taken up at various stages throughout programming to update approaches) could strengthen systemic thinking and make progress on complex challenges. Since the programmes were initiated, programme tools for complex programming have been strengthened, including systems thinking, power analysis and scenario planning. Training at project officer level (including consultants), of these tools, even online, would benefit the projects to consider different approaches at making progress. A training that looks at improving **facilitation skills** could also support staff to navigate different interests and push dialogue ahead. Systemic analyses could better support bringing in **other sectors** that influence water use (e.g. energy, mining, food) into programmes, seen to be a weakness across projects.
6. Outwards, a culture of **knowledge sharing** at water sector level could be improved. Global water forums do not always reach a wide range of actors. Programme level websites should be actively updated with new lessons, and concise guidebooks or policy briefs developed to suit a practitioner audience.

Partial Action 1: BRIDGE

7. In the design of phase 5, it is recommended to ensure that local level organizations, civil society and communities are involved in the implementation of the activities to advance integrated IWRM. The IUCN in-country capacity on ecosystems, conservation and governance at all levels could be put to achieve the expected results. In many cases, the approval of transboundary water management agreements is seen as an endpoint rather than a starting point. This could also be the case with the BuPuSa tri-basin agreement, although the presence of the roadmap will address this risk as many issues to be addressed in the basins are captured there. Nevertheless, through increased presence nationally, IUCN can assist the governments technically with solving these issues which are often related to unsustainable use of natural resources leading to pollution of water, reduction in fish stock and generally in biodiversity in the rivers, increased soil erosion etc. exacerbating poverty, food insecurity and depleting natural resources in and around protected areas. In the case of BuPuSa a phase 5 where the agreement is approved should focus on assisting the RBO in addressing these issues to find concrete solutions with impact on the ground. Through this approach IUCN can also increase its visibility among the stakeholders, beneficiaries and potential donors. In Andes, after the constitution of the binational commission there is a need to work with the local level, not only constituting local committees per basins but implementing its activities by closely working with communities and RBOs reinforcing their capabilities to exercise an effective role in IWRM.

Partial Action 2: GGRETA

8. GGRETA Pretashkent is now on a good trajectory with the validation of the numerical model, and Stampriet is actively being replicated. In the future, GGRETA's strength at advancing scientific and technical cooperation (and thus, using the numerical model as a basis for future programmes), could be complemented by a broadening of scope to influence groundwater governance at the local level, and strengthen concepts which address the major users of groundwater (and uses that threaten its quality), with a plan on how to engage directly or indirectly. An assessment on local policies and practices that govern groundwater use in practice (including the themes how licences are granted and monitored and the incentives that authorities have to regulate, what groups hold power over groundwater decisions, any actors that drill without licenses, any corrupt practices etc) would help to situate and guide programme activities at the local level in the future. Many such actors, because they are private or informal can be overlooked by projects that focus on formal institutions. A stronger risk-based approach in the future (the concepts are already there in varying capacities), also looking at the scarcity of water resources the key activities driving this, would better orient action in the future. In the future, embedding actions in the Commissions (Pretashkent) and potentially, an RBO should take place, with project staff aware and planning for the possibilities ahead.

Partial Action 3: UNECE, 1992 Water Convention

9. UNECE has been successful at using various opportunities to encourage new countries to join the Convention, and on bringing actors on transboundary water financing together, and creating an effective platform to define and frame approaches. UNECE has been harnessing various opportunities to support countries to join the Convention, supported by regional actors to enable strengthened joint management. The various initiatives are well designed to address the most important issues being faced on a high-level. A continuous needs/status assessment of countries having acceded to the Convention, to ensure the Convention is playing some role in supporting peace, sustainable development and security in the long term would help with accountability on how the Convention actively supports long term goals, and ensure countries don't fall by the wayside. An approach on how to manage the new power dynamics between old and new members; and members who are participating (i.e. joining the Meeting of the Parties) versus those who are joining could be considered, so that a constructive and ongoing process of exchange of experiences and definition of how the principles of the Convention can be implemented in the face of new pressures and challenges, takes place. Older members, and members who are unlikely to join the Convention could be engaged more actively to transfer experiences.

2.0 Introduction and Scope of the Evaluation

The Transboundary Waters Governance was established in 2012. It was launched through a coordinated portfolio of interventions with results and lessons used to support global learning and water governance reforms. Presently in its fourth phase, the program has seen its configuration change a few times since its inception but the overall goal of promoting sustainable development, regional stability and peace through transboundary water cooperation remains the same. The Transboundary Waters Governance Program is part of the third strategic component of SDC's Global Program Water Division, which aims at promoting water as an instrument for peace and cooperation (Blue Peace) through water diplomacy.

The fourth phase covers the period 2019-2022 and is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

4. Transboundary surface and ground-water cooperation is strengthened through joint frameworks, institutions, and agreements in a financially sustainable manner.
5. Transboundary surface and ground-waters are managed, monitored and assessed with data shared, in key transboundary basins respecting integrated water resources management principles in a changing climate, backing evidence-based dialogue and decision making.
6. Awareness and support for transboundary surface and ground-water cooperation is evidence that the Water Convention does make a difference.

The Waters Governance program has three partial actions, each implemented by a different organization:

Partial action 1: Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) implemented by IUCN focuses on developing the capacities of countries that share a river or lake basin to institutionalize effective water governance arrangements. The project covers more than a dozen transboundary basins in Central America, South America, Southeast Asia and Africa.

Partial action 2: Groundwater Resources Governance in Transboundary Aquifers (GGRETA) implemented by UNESCO. With the overall goal to contribute to governance capacities and arrangements that support the long-term and sustainable management of selected groundwater aquifers, GGRETA focuses on generating data and information on the physical and socioeconomic characteristics of groundwater resources and on facilitating the establishment of joint governance mechanisms between countries.

Partial Action 3: 1992 Water Convention carried out by the Convention Secretariat focuses on the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention, 1992). The project's objectives are to promote the adoption of this convention outside the UNECE region. This partial action is of a different type of nature than the other partial actions as it supports the implementation of a multilateral treaty.

2.1 Scope of the evaluation

For the in-depth analysis five projects under BRIDGE and GGRETA and two focus areas under UNECE were selected in the ToR:

BRIDGE	The Andes region: specifically on the support provided to Peru regarding the use of shared waters between Peru and Ecuador, as well as to those between Peru and Bolivia through the Authority of Lake Titicaca.
	The Southern Africa region: specifically on the work performed on the Pungwe, Buzi and Save (BuPu Sa) river basins between Mozambique and Zimbabwe.
GGRETA	The Trifinio Aquifer: Ocotepeque, Citalá: El Salvador, Honduras
	The Pretashkent Aquifer: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan

	The Stampriet Aquifer: South Africa, Namibia, Botswana
UNECE	Capacity building on the Water Convention in non-OECD countries which are not yet Parties to the Convention, support national accession processes, increase understanding and awareness on the Convention and lay the basis for the creation of a “common home” for transboundary water cooperation issues, also promoting the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention)
	Programme area 5 (new programme area): facilitating financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development (SDC lead).

3.0 Methodology, Approach and Timeline

An outline of the methodology through the four phases includes:

1. **Inception Phase** (8 – 22 March 2022): Development of broad evaluation plans, refining evaluation questions, document review.
2. **Data Collection** (23 March – 1 May): Primary and secondary data review; key informant interviews online (programme level and desk review projects) and field trips.
3. **Draft Reporting** (2 – 6 May): Team consolidation of findings across the programmes and portfolio, development of the draft evaluation report
4. **Finalizing the Evaluation** (9 - 13 May): Restitution meeting and finalizing of evaluation based on comments.

Given the scope represented above and recognising that the evaluation is of a later phase of implementation, the team has evaluated the Phase 4 activities (Phase 3 for GGRETA), recognising the earlier actions that have contributed to the outcomes of the current Phase, and understanding the continuity of actions. The evaluation has looked at how the programmes have built on earlier phases and not focussed on fundamental design actions (i.e., not looking at the relevance of partnerships and locations as that was covered under earlier phases). To address this, in the inception phase the team constructed a **baseline for the evaluation** (see Annex A), which developed a picture of status of the programmes at the end of the previous Phase.

Another evaluation tool developed for the evaluation was the reconstruction of the **Theory of Change** for the three programmes, and how they contribute to the overarching goals of the Transboundary Waters Governance Programme (referred to as the “TBWG programme” in this evaluation). The Theory of Change was reviewed and amended in the draft reporting phase, to reflect information gathered throughout the data collection process, the various perspectives of the project stakeholders. The Theory of Change was visited in the Impact section of the evaluation, to identify which outcomes (represented under the “Effectiveness” sections) are evident and the strongest causal links that contribute to the longer-term Impact. The process also identified the assumptions/barriers to change that might inhibit the contribution to impact in the longer-term. The Theory of Change is represented under the Impact section (Figure 5)

As three programmes were being evaluated, team members were allocated to specific programmes based on skill (e.g. language ability) of the team member, with the team lead having an oversight of all three programmes. However, throughout the evaluation, **synergies were sought out** across the TBWG programme, for instance, taking the opportunity to ask GGRETA partners about UNECE² etc.

The **data collection** was guided by the **evaluation questions** finalized during the inception period (see Annex B). The primary data collection took place through a series of key informant interviews firstly conducted online, and then in person through the field missions. The team was guided by SDC, UNESCO, IUCN and UNECE to suggest interviewees, and then interviewees themselves led to other suggestions for interviews. The interviews were between 30

² Throughout the evaluation “UNECE” is used, however this more specifically encompasses the Secretariat support to the 1992 Water Convention which is hosted by UNECE.

minutes – 1.5 hours, and then transcripts were synthesized into main points and input into a data capture Excel tool for team members to access on a Dropbox file.

Through online interviews data was collected for the **desk study projects** (i.e., the project where field missions would not take place). The desk study projects included: GGRETA Stampriet, GGRETA Ocotepeque, and UNECE (capacity building for accession and programme area 5). The desk study consisted of 3-5 online interviews for each project, targeting project staff, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

As the online interviews mostly took place before the **field missions**, the team developed a set of assumptions (as part of the capture tool) to be tested during the missions and ensured that initial findings were noted by team members to explore during the missions. Some observations from the missions discussed in online interviews with IUCN managers after the mission. The missions took place as follows:

- Mission to BuPuSa, BRIDGE programme (Mozambique and South Africa including interviews with Zimbabwe stakeholders) by Malene Wiinblad: 20 to 29 April
- Mission to Pretashkent, GGRETA programme (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) by Leslie Morris-Iveson: 24 to 29 April
- Mission to Andes, BRIDGE programme (Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador) by Laura Cardona: 24 April to 1 May

During the missions, the evaluation team took a similar approach to the online interviews, but explored the questions in greater detail, allowing for more time for interviews and follow up interviews as necessary (see Annex D for a full list of interviewees). The Andes mission included two meetings with beneficiaries of the BRIDGE Programme at the local level, mainly women who are community leaders around the Lake Titicaca in Copacabana, Bolivia. The Pretashkent mission required a Russian translator to accompany the evaluator. In some cases, online interviews were preferred, with one partner requesting an online questionnaire.

Finally, during the **data consolidation and draft report phase**, the team developed an evaluation format to strategically look at the programmes and their contribution to the overall goal, while highlighting the individual programme level findings. The team found it important to represent the programme as a whole, rather than write up the evaluations of the three programmes separately, to enhance the strategic nature of the programme. As a result, the indications **[BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]** are demonstrated through the report so that individual programme level findings can be identified. The team has also attempted to indicate where stronger (or weaker) evidence exists through the wording in the report.

The **final report** will take into account the comments from SDC and partners.

3.1 Limitations

A number of limitations were experienced. The team sought to raise the limitations with SDC for discussion on how best to approach the evaluation and mitigate against the limitations, while keeping to the timeframe.

The main limitation resulted from the demanding time period, which was busy for SDC GPW staff, and many of the programme partners and stakeholders. At the top level, the Dakar World Water Forum (and other specific events and commitments for each partner) taking place shortly after the evaluation was initiated, led to a delay in connecting with partners, and thus, delaying having a clear sense of the approach amongst the evaluation team.

There were some limitations due to sensitivities around the nature of sharing information on transboundary waters, and openly discussing views on the topic. Some interviews were highly sensitive, with some information not being openly discussed. The trip to Pretashkent required additional time and effort to agree on meeting with officials involved in the programme (e.g. official letters to request information) and UNESCO supported the evaluator in this regard. The team endeavoured to use the best methods to bring out information, while respecting the wishes of the interviewees.

While the programmes aim to reach the local level, due to limited activities conducted locally (discussed under the Effectiveness sections), this led to a lack of field-based data collection.

COVID-19 does not appear to have been a major and direct limitation of the evaluation, although the stakeholders reached through interviews appear to be much less in number than in normal evaluations (the agreement rate of interviewees, compared against the interview requests), of which COVID-19 could be an indirect factor. A few interviewees in the mission countries preferred online interviews, and in one case, an online questionnaire was requested.

4.0 Findings

4.1 Programme level Relevance

1. Is the program design still relevant in the current water crisis and pandemic context?
2. Is the program approach (design, method, location, and duration) and organization appropriate to meet the objectives?
3. Are the established partnerships relevant to attain the objectives?
4. Are all intended beneficiaries at the 3 different levels (regional, national and local) being targeted?

Summary of findings

1.0 Transboundary water governance (TBWG) programmes are highly relevant responses to the water crisis at the global, national and regional levels. Motivations to participate in TBWG programmes (at national and regional level) are consistent with the most pressing aspects of the global water crisis, specifically water scarcity and possibilities of tension due to scarce resources.

1.1 In terms of the pandemic context, while implementation was hampered, programmes continued with the same approaches. Approaches are still seen to be relevant in the frame of this new global risk [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

1.2 Relevance of programming is reinforced by demonstrated gaps in “on the ground” examples of cooperation; and the continued demand for programmes [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

2.0 The programme approach (design, method, location and duration) has been adaptive, showing continuity from previous phases. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA]

In the case of UNECE programme design is completely demand driven. [UNECE]

3.0 Strong partnerships have been formed with formal actors, including RBOs and national institutions. Less well established are partnerships with non-state actors (e.g. private sector), other sectors that impact on water use (e.g. energy, agriculture). Although reaching local actors is part of the programme logic, this level has tended to be neglected. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

1.0 Transboundary water governance (TBWG) programmes are highly relevant responses to the water crisis at the global, national and regional levels. Motivations to participate in TBWG programmes (at national and regional level) are consistent with the most pressing aspects of the global water crisis, specifically water scarcity and possibilities of tension due to scarce resources. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

The baseline global context in 2019 is not dissimilar from the current context in terms of the status of water resources, pressures and accepted responses. In general, pressures and threats are rising, which give more reason for transboundary water cooperation and programming. The onset of climate change and increased frequency of natural disasters i.e. cyclones, floods and droughts give the strongest incentive to advance transboundary cooperation. Water sharing is a sensitive and complex issue, and the situation is being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. For instance, as one of the newer BRIDGE projects, for BuPuSA stakeholders stated that their strongest motivation to join was cyclone Idai/floods in March 2019, due to the heavy impacts experienced in the Buzi and Pungwe basins. This event influenced the governments in Mozambique and Zimbabwe as well as in SADC to accelerate the cooperation between the countries on transboundary waters with a focus on how to be prepared for similar events in the future, reducing the risk of conflict and addressing issues of water quality and quantity.

It is possible that new clashes between the upstream and downstream countries in some regions could emerge particularly if droughts and natural disasters become more persistent and destructive. Cooperation is seen to be key to achieve positive solutions.

1.1 In terms of the pandemic context, while implementation was hampered, programmes continued with the same approaches. Approaches are still seen to be relevant in the frame of this new global risk [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

Since 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all TBWG programme delivery. New methods of work have been developed, such as the move from in-person meetings to online conferencing. This aspect is described in more detail in

the Effectiveness section. However, at overall design level, activities have not changed significantly. The pandemic has put a focus on end use of water, and the connections between adequate water supply at the household level and the benefits for health and protection from infectious disease. There has been some messaging around water and health and that institutions with improved skills and tools to manage their water resources are better prepared to work towards access to water for all, especially needed in the pandemic context (reference: UNECE website). Broadly, approaches are still seen to be relevant in the frame of the pandemic, with the assumption that pandemic related risks will continue into the future.

1.2 Relevance of programming is reinforced by demonstrated gaps in “on the ground” examples of cooperation; and the continued demand for programmes [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

Despite there being attention given to the theme, in terms of research, global/regional events, and policy debate; international and regional TBWG experts interviewed believe that there are few tangible, longer-term, on the ground programme examples that aim to strengthen cooperation and peace, and the UNECE, GGRETA and BRIDGE programmes are modelling such programming.

For [GGRETA], groundwater is being increasingly recognised as a resource that requires more programme-based knowledge and evidence, to enable its use and sharing. This is underpinned by the very low level of knowledge about transboundary sharing of groundwater aquifers in many parts of the world. A number of global level groundwater events are being planned in 2022 (the UN Water year of groundwater), with the World Water Development report dedicated to groundwater, and the Focus of the World Water Forum in Dakar (held in March 2022). A high-level summit on groundwater is planned in December 2022, at UNESCO. The increased attention shows the major relevance of the GGRETA programme globally. The demand for programming support amongst GGRETA stakeholders is very high.

For [BRIDGE] demand for support comes from different stakeholders and partners at different levels of governance such as regional platforms for cooperation, national governments, river basin organizations, academia and NGOs. To respond to this increasing demand, BRIDGE had developed a meaningful portfolio to address emerging transboundary water issues, expand its services to contribute to the global discourse on transboundary water governance i.e., a representative from the BRIDGE BuPuSa project did a presentation of the project and results at the World Water Week. For BuPuSa, IUCN's structure and experience lends competence on facilitating diverse stakeholders, required in transboundary water management. It's an institution that “understands the game well” and works at the pace of governments.

For [UNECE], interviews have demonstrated a wide range of demand for increased roll out of the Water Convention. As a normative, multi-lateral instrument, countries approaching UNECE have stated a range of motivations including, water scarcity and increased demand for scarce resources which leads to increasing competition (including concerns over future insecurity); and the need to improve capacities to implement IWRM. Demand is further shown with regional/country patterns of accession, where countries observe neighbouring countries joining the Convention and then seek support for accession themselves. Countries approaching UNECE express a need to understand how the Convention can be used in practice. They also see the Convention as a means to negotiate.

UNECE's most recent report on implementation of the programme of work (2019-2021) states that increased awareness of and political support for the Convention (with more than 20 countries highlighting the importance of transboundary water cooperation and 5 countries mentioning the role of the Water Convention in the statements at the recent High-level meeting on Water). Reflecting demand, increased financial support from donors and increased support for implementation is being granted to UNECE.

The Gambia (in the process of accession) described their motivations in detail. As a downstream floodplain country, covered by a regional transboundary organization (Organisation for the Development of the Gambia River or OMVG) shared by 4 countries, with a positive history of integration, recent pressures including climate change and population growth has led to new ideas on coordinating water management. Minor tensions are being noted at the local level with transboundary waters. In the future, it was felt that a comprehensive analysis of the regional basin level can help to avoid problems which OMVG hasn't addressed (needs for improvement and capacity building were mentioned).

2.0 The programme approach (design, method, location and duration) has been adaptive, showing continuity from previous phases. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA]

In terms of programme design, GGRETA and BRIDGE show continuity from previous phases. It is therefore accepted that certain aspects of the programme framework (e.g. location) would have been established in earlier phases. Therefore, in terms of programme approach, we look at design and methods and the programme adaptations made in the 4th phase, and lightly touch on location and duration as these were decisions of earlier phases.

[BRIDGE] The programme overall is highly decentralized. Decisions on approaches are taken at the regional level of IUCN, supported by HQ where necessary. Leadership is shown through IUCN's regional offices, who assess opportunities and adjust approaches as conditions change. BRIDGE tools are continuously being developed and adapted to suit the demand i.e. the benefit sharing tool. The large number of projects (12 transboundary basins) do not represent static projects, but represent relationships and initiatives developed, and are developed to take advantage of opportunities to progress the agenda when they arise. Some initiatives stay dormant when there is no scope to advance progress. The programme places value on regional/national experts.

Resources (including staff time) are reallocated to support initiatives where there are needs for advancement. For instance, it was not possible to go ahead with a project because of disagreement between Tanzania and Malawi on Lake Malawi. Even with BRIDGE promoting cooperation, it was felt that addressing this conflict was beyond the scope and resources of BRIDGE (only 5% of the funds set aside for this project in the Southern African Component were used and of the remaining 14% were allocated to regional activities). A decision was therefore taken to pause the project. The stakeholders are aware that the BRIDGE programme is there to support if the situation changes, and BRIDGE is not pushing to advance the agenda where there is no motivation. Because of its structure IUCN understands well the diplomatic work necessary in transboundary management and the needs for adaptation.

BRIDGE Andes was well designed and leveraged the know-how of the implementing partners to engage in topics such as building consensus and trust. It also made an important approach to the basins to identify conditions such as political will and coherence within the legal framework to set the main foundations for the work ahead. IUCN has a similar approach to transboundary waters as the SDC and this has led to an interesting relationship. Stakeholders at the national and regional level were able to engage in dialogue, even if it was a new task. The methodology to generate trust and promote agreements has worked and capacity has been transferred to the main stakeholders responsible for the sustainability of the processes.

In BuPuSa, support has created a favourable environment for reinforcing the already good cooperation between Zimbabwe and Mozambique on transboundary water management particularly around the tri-basin agreement. There are other RBOs in the region who have not been involved (Orasecom, LIMCOM and ZAMCOM). As the themes and challenges are similar and the Ministries of Water Resources in the respective countries are part of the RBOs, BRIDGE has made use of the experience with the implementation of these transboundary water agreements.

In BuPuSa and Andes, the reliance on consultants to deliver programmes has reduced the visibility of IUCN as an organization that promotes the sustainable use of natural resources, conservation and biodiversity. In the case of BuPuSa especially, there are few resources at the regional level for IUCN staff to take on a role of technical advisory support and technical resources available at the IUCN country office level are not included in the project. The beneficiaries interviewed did not distinguish between IUCN BRIDGE and the IUCN BuPuSa GEF project but saw it as one package delivered by different consultants.

In terms of **duration**, in the case of BuPuSa the funding has been short term. The funds for phase 4 were only disbursed halfway into 2019 which meant that the project had only 2½ years of implementation. The possibility of having a phase 5 has only emerged very recently. This means that even though SDC has supported BuPuSa since Phase 3 and that with Phase 5 it will be 9-10 years, possibilities for long term planning have not been explored i.e., procuring co-financing and for activities that take longer time to have a consolidated impact.

Overall, discussions with local partners in Andes have revealed that as a result of the contract procedures and lack of communication of the “bigger picture” of BRIDGE as a 4th Phase programme has sometimes led to the perception that the programme is short term (i.e. less than 3 years) among the local partners. This can have the effect of inhibiting a

long term vision of the programme actions amongst the partners, which could influence their motivation (although the evaluators saw no evidence of this happening).

For **[GGRETA]**, in the current Phase, **approaches** have been more regionally led, and less centralized, than in the previous phases, which is a positive development. The **methods** followed since 2013 (where a knowledge base is built, then needs for governance improvement are identified, and finally cooperation is strengthened) is functional to the objective of strengthening groundwater governance in the regions. The innovative method of GGRETA giving focus to surface and groundwater conjunctive management opened the dialogue with river basins organizations that lack capacity on groundwater. The Pretashkent project has built on the assessments of the previous phases and has focused on two areas: 1) furthering development of the Pretashkent numerical model; and 2) capacity-building activities targeted at younger professionals. Stakeholders suggest both of these areas, while incremental in the wider vision of TBWG, are appropriate in the context where cooperation over sub-soil resources can be characterized by sensitivity and suspicion. Working with younger professionals is seen to be very promising for future action, with current water governance models being led by older professionals.

GGRETA has increased its ambition over the phases. Changes in **approach** in Phase 3 have taken place, however in some cases it is not clear whether lessons from previous phases have been resolved or tabled due to the difficulty in addressing them. For instance, some of the Phase 2 actions in Central Asia (e.g. fostering institutional transformation in order to promote groundwater governance at the national and transboundary levels, creating capacity in conflict resolution and setting the base for the establishment of inter-ministerial and multilateral consultations mechanisms) appear to be unresolved.

On a **design** level, there are important aspects that could be developed taking into account pressures that existed pre-2019 but are even more stark now: climate change and population growth, and groundwater as a valuable and resilient water source that needs protection against competing priorities. The emphasis is on sharing water, with a less thought-out approach to protection and control, could have been integrated on a higher level.

In terms of **location**, the project design includes three pilot aquifers, which were selected to serve as regional examples for replication. There are early indications of how this aspect has been successful under Effectiveness. The three locations are showing different outcomes, which leads to the question of how different regions who are able to progress quicker could have benefitted from more resources and attention and allow project not making progress to be dormant until the situation changes. In this case, the rigidity of the location selection may be seen as a barrier the sense of achieving progress towards overall goal and objectives, but positive towards creating models for replication, and learning from lessons.

In terms of **duration**, GGRETA has benefitted from multi-phased commitment, which has been a prerequisite for building the programme models, working with stakeholders and building trust. However the complex challenges experienced for two of the projects (Pretashkent and Ocotepeque) – described in greater detail in the Effectiveness section – mean that the duration has not been enough to achieve many of the outcomes.

2.1 In the case of UNECE programme design is demand-driven, as a normative instrument supporting multi-lateral processes. [UNECE]

UNECE's programme of work is responsive to the needs of member parties and other countries/partners, with a new programme being developed every three years that is based on the analysis of a questionnaire sent to members (i.e. beneficiaries). The results of the survey are discussed at the inter-governmental meetings. Plans are adjustable and look at the real issues being faced by countries that need more support. UNECE also uses the opportunity to understand if there is an interest to continue with existing programmes. UNECE tries to balance the global dimension, and the interest from different regions (e.g. European interests might differ from African priorities), and over the last few years have tried to leave out certain areas where there has been opposition. Some new changes include information gathering and monitoring (which has been taken on and off the areas of focus), to support new accession countries (in Africa) who lack monitoring capacity. Climate change has been integrated in 2006 when it wasn't high on the agenda, and the topic has shifted to transboundary adaptation.

The two types of activities, i.e. the tailored technical support given to countries in the accession process/ newly acceded countries; and the capacity building and sensitization activities are seen to be well-balanced, with specific

specialized/expert staff at UNECE building on the different programmes of work. The staff are responsive to shifts being made in their areas and work in an adaptive way.

Despite this, there is some feeling that given the broad scope of the exercise, it can be difficult to capture the detail in the responses given by individual countries, and where countries have acceded many years previously are still in need of political engagement and in-depth support.

3.0 At varying levels, strong partnerships have been formed with formal actors, including RBOs and national/sub-national institutions. At project level, less well established are partnerships with non-state actors (e.g. private sector), other sectors that impact on water use (e.g. energy, agriculture). Although reaching local actors is part of the programme logic, this level has tended to be neglected, with BRIDGE Andes and GGRETA Ocotepaque showing more positive examples on local engagement. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

The TBWG programmes have strong established links with varying national, regional actors at the technical/sector level, and in some cases with international transboundary water actors. The schematic below outlines the range of partners that have been observed.

Figure 1: SDC Transboundary Waters Governance for Sustainable Development and Blue Peace: Observed/Discussed Partnerships

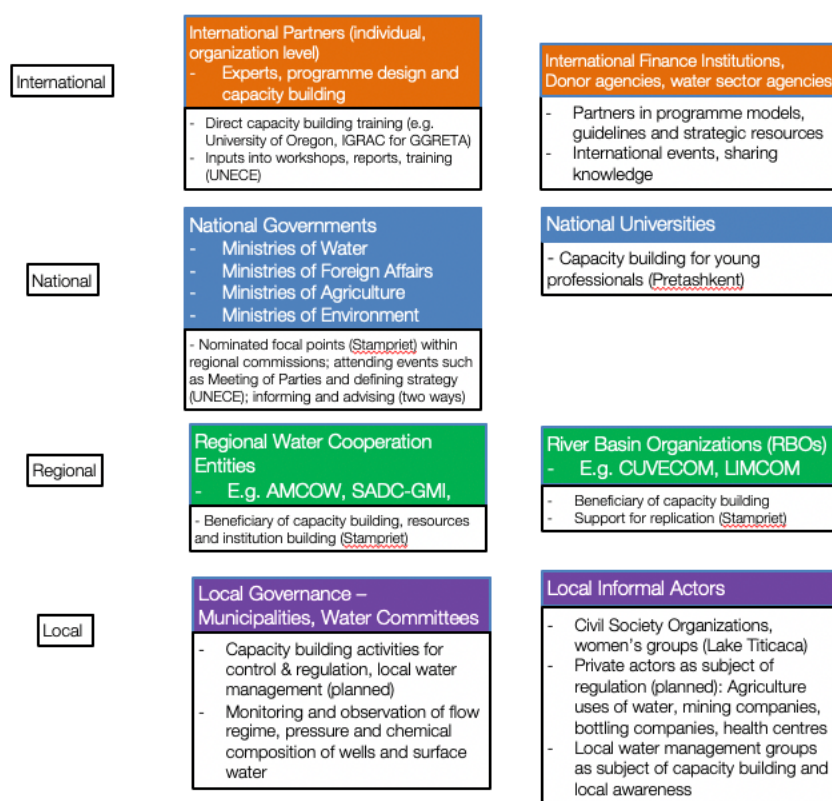


Figure 1: Observed/discussed partnerships, summary of stakeholders

[GGRETA] has had varying levels of success in working with RBOs³, and recognises that it is crucial that RBO basins include groundwater actively in their implementation of their management plans. In practice, it is found that this is not an easy task with historically, groundwater data being kept secret and the lack of RBO mandate on groundwater. Despite the challenges, the Stampriet project has shown that RBOs can be a strong partner in groundwater management.

In reaching the local level, COVID-19 restrictions are a partial factor for a lack of engagement. The projects have had an intention to reach communities and other actors at the local level (i.e. municipalities, private users of water) to understand their priorities. A lack of a broader stakeholder involvement could also partially be explained due to the

³ RBOs and RCs are typical units of governance in the African continent, and other forms may be observed in other regions.

sensitivities involved. In Pretashkent, it was recently decided to include health care centres and drinking water bottling companies as stakeholders who are extracting large volumes of water from the aquifer in both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The mining project identified in the Stampriet also has no direct involvement in project activities, although the potential impact was identified in the Stampriet Transboundary Aquifer System (STAS) Wide Strategic Action Plan. The Ocotepeque project consults with a wider group of stakeholders representing governance and civil society, however.

[BRIDGE] has focused Phase 4 on strengthening knowledge in regional commissions, and working with youth, at the request of SDC. IUCN now has a long history of understanding the capacities and other challenges with working with regional commissions. There is a perception amongst partners that the focus on regional strengthening can also come at the expense of supporting national levels.

Non-state actors do not play a strong role in the project. There is a sense that earlier Phase assessments have mapped out all influencing uses and actors, although there was no noticeable re-assessment in the later Phases. The earlier plan was mapped out to focus on regional actors and national actors. Local level actors do not play a strong role, nor do the larger “competing” uses of water (e.g. irrigation in the BuPuSa basin). Local actors including municipalities are not strongly involved, with exception of the Lake Titicaca project (described under the “Efficiency of BRIDGE” section); and the Andes project who works through a local NGO, and are currently working through a Local Committee structure.

[UNECE] recognises the need to strengthen inter-sectoral collaboration and has defined its programme of work focusing on the water-energy-good nexus. Despite this it is felt that activities are still dominated by the water sector, with weak involvement from other sectors (e.g. energy). Although UNECE’s strength is on engaging national and regional actors (often high-level), there is evidence that local, tangible concerns are brought into discussions in The Gambia example.

Some of the longer-term partners to the Convention feel there could still be a need to work closely with national and regional partners who can more sustainably carry on with initiatives, and engaging more with national and regional experts over international experts, and not always partnering with northern based Universities, instead of supporting regional or national institutions.

4.2 Programme level Coherence

1. Are the Water Governance programme’s interventions aligned with national priorities and policies of partner countries and partner institutions?
2. Are the Water Governance programme’s interventions coordinated with other project/programmes (both inside and outside the programme – including within the 3 programmes and other donor funded programmes) in the concerned sector and are they complementary?
3. Are the programmes synergized with the Blue Peace programme in terms of the vision and goals?

Summary of findings

1.0 Although regional water cooperation is not always a main goal at national level, alignment is found with national policies and strategies under similar or related themes (e.g. water scarcity etc.) Partner institutions are aligned with the goal and activities of programmes. **[BRIDGE]** **[GGRETA]** **[UNECE]**

2.0 **[BRIDGE]** and **[GGRETA]** programmes coordinate to some extent with other donor funded programmes, in part due to the partners input to other transboundary water programmes/proposals and participation in workshops.

2.1 Coherence between the three programmes are high at the conceptual level in the area of supporting multi-lateral basin agreements/acceding to the Water Convention; and in monitoring of SDG 6.5.2. At implementation level, improvements could be made to optimize synergies through sharing information and working together in a functional way. Supporting end results (i.e. working together towards agreements/accession to the Convention) across the programmes is not happening systematically, nor are compatibilities described to partners. **[BRIDGE]** **[GGRETA]** **[UNECE]**

3.0 Although the programmes and actions are directly harmonized with Blue Peace at goal level, direct connection between BP and the TBWG programmes are limited.

3.1 In Central Asia the GGRETA programme is cooperating minimally with Blue Peace. There is some coordination around water quality (Kazakh focussed) and water education in youth. There is a clear scope and interest from all parties to improve synergies moving forward.

1.0 Although regional water cooperation is not always a main goal at national level, alignment is found with national policies and strategies under similar or related themes (e.g. water scarcity etc.) Partner institutions are aligned with the goal and activities of programmes. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

Regional water cooperation is not always enshrined in national priorities, policies and strategies. In discussion with partner institutions/stakeholders, the activities of the TBWG programmes respond more broadly with national frameworks which integrate water scarcity and access to/development of water resources. Countries are increasingly open a range of solutions to address dwindling resources, with transboundary water cooperation as part of this.

[GGRETA] All programme activities are either directly linked to Ministries (i.e. MoFA, MoWR), or are embedded in institutions that report to Ministries (e.g. in Ocotepeque every action is coordinated through the MoFA and Ministry of Environment). In Pretashkent, in Kazakhstan, the MoFA endorses the project but is not directly involved, and technical activities take place through Committees under Ministry of Water structures. The Stampriet example where focal points from Ministries are appointed to committees are a good example of ensuring coherence, through a wide representation of sectors (gender, water resources, monitoring etc.). However, in general programme staff are actively ensuring programme plans and actions can be implemented and are aligned with national priorities and policies before the activities take place. For instance, in Pretashkent there are future ideas to influence private companies who extract from the aquifer through the Water Code and by working with municipal actors in Kazakhstan. Partners are considering development agreements to sign between Oblast or region and private companies. Similar ideas were discussed in Uzbekistan, and the idea that GGRETA could be the basis to pursue this jointly with Kazakhstan, in terms of the monitoring.

[BRIDGE] Promoting dialogue is very much in line with the Mozambican priorities and aspirations of Zimbabwe. The National Strategy for Water Resource Management is from 2007 and the Water Act from 1991. Zimbabwe has a Water Policy (2012) and the Water (1998), currently being critically reviewed with the considerations of Mozambique's use of water, to avoid conflict in the future. Another aspect of the legal revision is that the parastatal ZINWA (Zimbabwe's National Water Authority) has changed quite a lot in recent years because of its mandate as a profit seeking institution. In the revised Act there will be a restructuring so that an institution under the Water Department in Zimbabwe will be responsible for monitoring and data collection.

BRIDGE Andes are fully aligned with national policies around water resource management and water laws in the countries. There is understanding and political will to work on these issues, even though they are new, as they are a shared responsibility that affects water quality and quantity, and local development. Peru is a country at the forefront in the region in terms of policy development, while Ecuador is restructuring its water policy and Bolivia has been presented as a draft law.

[UNECE] The Convention engages entirely at the national level, supporting their aspirations to further transboundary water cooperation. In the process of signing up for the Convention and the access to advisory support and funds to join the Convention, in some way, has supported national water sector reforms as in the case with The Gambia. The Gambia discussed that reform plans include a National Water Resources Management Strategy and national authority (plans not yet implemented).

2.0 [BRIDGE] and [GGRETA] programmes coordinate to some extent with other donor funded programmes, in part due to the partners input to other transboundary water programmes/proposals and participation in workshops.

Both GGRETA and BRIDGE programmes coordinate with other donor funded programmes, particularly those that IUCN and UNESCO are directly implementing aside from the TBWG programmes. A number of donors and implementing organizations have been identified as implementing similar programmes. The World Bank is seen to be one of the more consistent players for large, transboundary water programmes, although infrastructure based. Other partners include Global Water Partnership (GWP), whose action is more policy based. Exchanges have been noted between GWP and BRIDGE, UNECE and UNESCO. USAID is also a major actor, present in Southern Africa with the Resilient Waters Programme, in Central Asia with the SMART Water Programme and at the global level with the Shared Waters Cooperation Facility. IUCN has entered into a partnership with the facility in 2021 for financial support to develop the Benefit Sharing Methodology.

[GGRETA] Individual projects have a high level of coherence with other programmes that UNESCO and partners (e.g. IGRAC) have been able to leverage GGRETA experiences into newly, developed, larger programmes. For instance, the lessons learned through GGRETA allowed for a better implementation of the GEF/UNDP-funded project

Improving IWRM, Knowledge-based Management and Governance of the Niger Basin and the Iullemeden-Taoudeni/Tanezrouft Aquifer System (ITTAS), with the design of cooperation mechanisms for the management of TBAs with a basin approach. The World Bank has offered to support the implementation of the “Methodology of analysis and assessment of national groundwater legislation” in several African countries, and the GGRETA methodology is also a direct contribution to the AMCOW groundwater programme.

[BRIDGE] In BuPuSA, there has been some coordination with other projects and programmes. In Zimbabwe coordination has happened with several projects that have been put in place after the Idai cyclone and floods i.e., UNESCO which is intervening in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts of Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe as part of the World Bank funded Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (ZIRP) and also with the Austrian Development Agency which is funding the project "Towards a community focused flood Early Warning System for the Buzi-Pungwe and Save (BuPuSa) Transboundary River Basins" that was launched in 2022. UNDP is working in the same districts with funding from GCF to revitalize irrigation schemes, enhancing water and soil moisture management and water use efficiency and promoting climate-resilient agriculture. UNOPS is also working in communities that were affected by cyclones. These organizations have been invited to the hybrid meetings which have taken place to prepare the tri-basin documents.

In the Andes programme, the broad network has made it possible to bring more players to the table and get more basins and projects funded by other donors (i.e., the GEF project, implemented by the UNDP) using BRIDGE methodologies and approaches. For example, under the BRIDGE project, there are ten basins involved both in Peru and Bolivia and Ecuador and Peru borders now through the GEF, three more basins were added to the project with and intention to expand its processes in transboundary water diplomacy to Colombia.

[UNECE] UNECE coordinates and exchanges with a very wide range of actors. At the country level, evidence of GWP supporting the UNECE Water Convention is also seen in the example of Cameroon, where GWP has been designated by the Ministry of Water Resources and Energy as a member of the technical committee in charge of facilitating the country's access to the Convention, supporting capacity of experts to engage in negotiations and to raise awareness. Gambia was similarly engaged through GWP in the region, among other activities (i.e. the invitation to the Meeting of the Parties in Geneva).

2.1 Coherence between the three programmes are high at the conceptual level in the area of supporting multi-lateral basin agreements/acceding to the Water Convention; and in monitoring of SDG 6.5.2. At implementation level, improvements could be made to optimize synergies through sharing information and working together in a functional way. Supporting end results (i.e. working together towards agreements/accession to the Convention) across the programmes is not happening systematically, nor are compatibilities described to partners. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA] [UNECE]

The BRIDGE proposal describes how strengthening water governance capacities across levels and physical and institutional boundaries require steady improvements that are carried out in coordination, which can only be achieved by consolidating institutions and their capacities, fostering stakeholder dialogues at different levels, mobilising investments, and multiplying and scaling up by influencing other basins. The concept of working in collaboration with relevant stakeholders is ingrained in all programmes, and programmes synergize with important similar programmes according to their context.

Some conceptual issues need resolving at outcome level, which currently inhibit coherence across the TBWG programme. Although conceptually, the Water Convention provides a global framework for BRIDGE and GGRETA,⁴ giving an opportunity to operationalize frameworks for supporting basin agreements and making them more effective on the ground, in practice, end results may not be the same – for instance, the intricate set of activities that BRIDGE/GGRETA programmes engage in may result in an inter-basin agreement, but not the signing of the Water Convention. Similarly, countries signing on to the Water Convention, may already have an inter-basin agreement with their neighbouring countries, but are looking to improve shared transboundary water arrangements on the ground, and seek out the Convention.

⁴ Alongside other global frameworks, such as SDGs and the UNWC

BRIDGE and GGRETA take a more neutral stand in terms of the Convention (in the case of BRIDGE they don't see it as their role to promote the Convention), as some countries are not ready to discuss the agreement. This could in part be explained by a lack of a coherent and detailed statement in the TBWG programme Theory of Change on how the Water Convention and inter-basin agreements reinforce one another, beyond the notion of "good principles", and the broad compatibility between outcomes. GGRETA's Phase 3 proposal has ingrained the notion that it should build awareness about UNECE's Water Convention, however little evidence was seen of this in practice (GGRETA and UNECE are planning to conduct training together on how to make use of the Convention).⁵

These aspects were broadly demonstrated broadly in interviews. In the case of The Gambia, although a regional transboundary organization (OMVG) exists, with an agreement shared by four countries, and harmonious water sharing arrangements persist, The Gambia finds there is a need to bring water sharing up the agenda due to the current water crisis and the risks and pressures being faced. A regional stakeholder in Central Asia discussed that although several countries are party to the Convention, there are still obvious needs to cooperate. Several of the GGRETA project counterparts met with in Central Asia were unaware of the Water Convention, despite the country being a party to the Convention.

3.0 Although the programmes and actions are directly harmonized with Blue Peace at goal level, direct connection between BP and the TBWG programmes are limited.

At the goal level and in terms of programme vision, TBWG programmes are highly coherent with Blue Peace. The table below outlines how the vision, key activities and approach of the TBWG programmes are aligned with Blue Peace. In reviewing at the strategic level, the three programmes are synergised with Blue Peace in terms of the goal and mission.

	Blue Peace	BRIDGE	GGRETA	UNECE
	Improved transboundary water cooperation, watershed protection, cross-sectoral dialogue, hydro-diplomacy			
Vision and overall goal	Water cooperation across borders, sectors and generations to foster peace, stability and sustainable socio-economic development (contributing to increased water, food and energy security, ecosystem services for a changing climate)	Secure and safe access to water is improved for all and water-related conflicts are reduced in target transboundary basins through sustainable management and governance of water resources	Strengthen regional stability, cooperation and peace through the establishment of cooperative frameworks for transboundary groundwater governance in RBOs and RCs (and other relevant institutions)	Transboundary waters worldwide are managed in cooperation between riparian countries in accordance with the Water Convention, promoting sustainable development, peace and security.
Activities/ key features	A growing global movement, branding. Promotes solutions; uses a variety of diplomatic, political, financial, economic tools to advocate for innovative and creating thinking on how to better manage water resources. Toolbox for systemic transboundary water cooperation at multiple scales.	A global programming platform offering capacity building, tools, dialogue facilitating and technical advisory to basin stakeholders.	A programme that aims to build water governance capacity through learning, demonstration, leadership and consensus-building.	A legally binding instrument promoting joint management and conservation of water resources. Support (including capacity building) to countries in accession process.

⁵ Phase 1 and 2 coherence is noted in several instances on conceptual development of the programme. For instance, BRIDGE has worked with UNECE on the establishment of dialogues in the Horn of Africa and Europe.

Approach	A vision and diplomatic initiative – based on a set of projects/programmes to promote water cooperation across borders, sectors and generations Tools offered in areas of capacity/ awareness/ education, engagement and financing. Support to target regions (Middle East, West Africa, Central Asia), including through Geneva Water Hub.	Facilitating cooperation at multiple levels, strengthening inter-governmental capacities for water negotiations, creating spaces for dialogues and agreements with stakeholders in 6 regions and 20 basins.	In 3 aquifer systems, capacity support; regional cooperation through investments on aquifer commissions, partnerships and networks; evidence-base and decision-making capacity; shared groundwater resources diplomacy	Foster principles of the Water Convention: Increasing awareness/ political support to support Increasing accession to the Convention. Contributing to trust building and transboundary dialogues.
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TBWG programmes (at management levels) coordinate with Blue Peace, attending events and sharing lessons and experiences. A stronger example is the exchange between the UNECE Financing theme and Blue Peace on various activities, including the ‘Funding and Financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development’ (2021) report, which presented the Blue Peace Financing initiative alongside other innovative initiatives (an event was held at Dakar World Water Forum 2022). However, there can be a perception that Blue Peace is broad, focussing on innovation and diplomacy rather than on concrete actions. A range of stakeholders felt that Blue Peace is imprecise and struggled to understand how tangible programmes can interact on a functional level with Blue Peace, perceived as a diplomacy initiative. The TBWG programmes have also developed tools in the earlier phases (now focussed on consolidation) so are not actively seeking tools and conceptual guidance, that are provided by Blue Peace. In the past BRIDGE had assisted in the development of the Blue Peace Index, despite there being some sensitivities in a practical sense around showing countries being benchmarked against each other in the context of developing inter-basin agreements.

Despite this, TBWG programmes are open to do more and to formally connect and await SDC GPW to define their priority on how to engage. Several strengths of Blue Peace were mentioned as being useful to further the aims of the TBWG programmes. This includes the innovation and neutrality of the Blue Peace Platform, which could help the programmes to further the awareness of good water sharing principles. The ability to bring partners to a neutral space, out of their regional institutions is when they can talk more openly and consider unorthodox ways forward, could be instrumental in the more complex TBWG projects.

Engaging youth and improving awareness at the grassroots level is seen to be an asset of Blue Peace, and a gap of the TBWG programmes (explored in more detail in the individual programme Effectiveness sections). Stakeholders and interviewees across the board (e.g. with river basin organizations, implementing counterparts) discussed their ideas for future programming to strengthen youth involvement.

3.1 In Central Asia the GGRETA programme is cooperating minimally with Blue Peace. There is some coordination around water quality (Kazakh focussed) and water education in youth. There is a clear scope and interest from all parties to improve synergies moving forward.

Central Asia is one of the first regional initiatives under Blue Peace, launched with a report in 2017 on “Rethinking Water in Central Asia”, and a study tour of a Central Asia delegation taking place in 2018. GGRETA programme stakeholders are generally aware of the Blue Peace programme, and collaborate with the initiative through the water quality working group (on the Kazakhstan side only, Uzbekistan stakeholders are interested to be involved but have no information on how to engage), and through attending events (e.g. the Dushanbe meeting in June will be attended by all parties). Despite the active engagement on water quality, stakeholders appear to be “fuzzy” on the operational arrangements of Blue Peace, and how exactly GGRETA can synergize their activities. A main reason for this is that Blue Peace is seen to work on surface water, and is perceived to function at the “diplomat” level.

The water quality working group is actively involved in discussing a new system on water classification in Kazakhstan, and GGRETA project has provided technical information by presenting their assessment of groundwater. Carec (the Secretariat of Blue Peace) has shared information with UNESCO on an ad hoc basis. Other synergies noted as

UNESCO/Carec collaborate on larger programmes (e.g. USAID's Smart Water programme on water cooperation in Central Asia of which Carec is the main partner - a new US \$24.5 million programme new phase is starting). Carec and UNESCO are both partners in education for sustainable development in the region.

The young professionals/youth aspects of Blue Peace and GGRETA in Central Asia are conducted through shared partners (i.e. the German-Kazakh University), however activities are mainly implemented separately, with the exception of the annual meetings of young civil servants (linked to Blue Peace) where UNESCO has presented the GGRETA programme. A series of modules developed through Blue Peace have been separate from the modules developed through GGRETA. Blue Peace has also conducted a study on water education at the tertiary level for Central Asia region, and under GGRETA project it was complemented by a similar assessment focusing on groundwater, conducted by Almaty office. Methodologies under the Blue Peace assessment have been shared and replicated by UNESCO, for greater complementarity, and the assessments will be presented at the WWDR 2022 presentation for Central Asia water stakeholders in May 2022 (organized by UNESCO Almaty).

The education partner suggested that a Training of Trainers activity could not only consolidate the various modules but also reach a wider audience, a greater scope of action could more comprehensively bring practical application of water diplomacy and embed into teaching and consolidate the investments made across GGRETA and Blue Peace. Additional activities could include study tours, sponsoring research students, enhancing the international water law/hydro diplomacy element (e.g. practical training on negotiations), and bringing groundwater into Blue Peace youth engagement activities.

4.3 The Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability of the GGRETA programme

Summary of findings

1.0 The 3rd phase of GREETA has achieved variable progress across the projects on outcomes relating to strengthened institutional and technical capacity on groundwater governance, cooperation and improved evidence base (outcomes 1, 2 and 3). The three projects are actively consolidating activities from earlier phases and some significant achievements have been established.

1.1 All outcomes have been hampered in-part by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to a restriction on face-to-face activities. Specifically, activities which relate to communication, public awareness and to local engagement (outcome 4) have been delayed. Flaws in programme design in earlier phases which necessitated resolving in Phase 3 have also hampered effectiveness.

2.0 GGRETA has supported policy and legal frameworks through the development of a Wide Strategic Action Plan in Stampriet. There is no apparent influence in Pretashkent and Ocotepeque, however, plans to influence based on GGRETA experiences are evident and the partners have many ideas for opportunities.

3.0 Consumption of funds has been delayed, and many activities are planned for 2022. Broadly, the budget appears to be top-heavy for a 3rd phase programme, as the regions are taking on more responsibility in this phase; although project management is strong.

4.0 The partner selection is good and has led to the project being embedded, with a greater likelihood of sustainability, although in Pretashkent this aspect is immature. The nesting mechanism in the Stampriet project, where the project is ingrained in national and regional structures, has provided excellent conditions for sustainability and for replication – a strength of GGRETA's Phase 3 programme.

5.0 Satisfaction among the stakeholders interviewed (i.e., directly involved and benefiting from the projects) is perceived to be high, and continued demand for support is also high. There is weak evidence that activities offered are not always taken up by partners.

6.0 Replication has been a key target of GGRETA for Phase 3. The programme has shown replication on two levels: at programme design level for similar groundwater programmes; and in the regional sense, where the Stampriet model is being actively replicated. Replication is not evident in Pretashkent, there are mixed views on the potential for replication in the region.

This section reviews the Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability of the GGRETA programme, in its 3rd phase. The section draws its main findings specifically on field trip to the **Pretashkent aquifer project** to meet partners on both sides of the aquifer in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The section provides additional findings from the smaller desk reviews of the Ocotepeque-Citala and Stampriet GGRETA projects, where documents were reviewed, and data collection took place through a more limited set of online interviews with UNESCO staff and implementing partners. The review takes note of the fact that the project is still in full execution and main results are expected by the end of November 2022 so a final comprehension of the achievements with partners and beneficiaries has been limited.

Effectiveness of GGRETA

There are 4 predicted outcomes in GGRETA:

Outcome 1: Strengthened institutional and technical capacity

Outcome 2: Reinforcing regional cooperation

Outcome 3: Improved evidence base (groundwater quality, protection and monitoring)

Outcome 4: Communication, public awareness, capacity and skills on transboundary, diplomacy

1.0 The 3rd phase of GREETA has achieved variable progress across the projects on outcomes relating to strengthened institutional and technical capacity on groundwater governance, cooperation and improved evidence base (outcomes 1, 2 and 3). The three projects are actively consolidating activities from earlier phases and some significant achievements have been established.

The most notable effectiveness achievements of the projects represent a gradual building of mutual trust and, in some cases, agreements across conceptual and geographical lines rather than a comprehensive framework governing the transboundary aquifers. In Central America, developing knowledge around groundwater and the aquifers per se has been relevant to comprehend its main affectations as well as its geographical composition to set better governance structures. Significant achievements towards changing governance structures are seen in the Stampriet and Ocotepeque projects where agreements have been signed in Phase 2/early Phase 3. The actions are considered to be effective, and expected, given the programmes of work designed and the specific contexts represented. In the 3rd phase, the most effective achievements include:

- Pretashkent: Modest achievements have been made across outcomes (1-3), which in the political context of Central Asia are seen to be significant. The participation of the Uzbek authorities towards the end of Phase 2, and throughout Phase 3 are found to be highly positive and unique in the regional context.⁶ Data is being exchanged through the mutually agreed numerical model (preparations have been made throughout the current Phase) which has led to mutual, informal agreement on risks to the aquifer. The project is currently technically and scientifically focussed and will require focussed efforts to move to the next level of outcomes which more directly contribute to strengthening regional stability and peace (explored in more detail under Impact). Although the trajectory has not been logical (i.e., assessments and sensitization are still being carried out in Phase 3 with more involvement from Uzbekistan stakeholders – more suited to Phase 1 or 2) the project has been responsive to the changing context to contribute to outcomes when they were possible.
- Stampriet: Significant achievement of Outcome 2 has been made through the achievement of the Stampriet Wide Strategic Action Plan (STAS SAP).⁷ It is currently under official endorsement with the ORASECOM, Namibia, Botswana and South Africa. The achievement has been supported beyond the water sector i.e., at MoFA level. This example has been presented at numerous international water events which demonstrates the significance of the actions related to the Stampriet Multi Country Cooperation Mechanism, broadly seen to be “one of the best” groundwater mechanisms (according to an international transboundary expert), and a first in the region.
- Ocotepeque-Citala: The “Letter of Intent” signed at the end of Phase 2/start of Phase 3 (Feb 2019) has been built on earlier activities and is a non-binding document setting “good intentions” to build bilateral cooperation. There is great anticipation of further outcomes to come based on this. Involvement has taken place on all levels, including the local level which is seen to be important in the context. However, activities at the local level (local activities are significant in the Latin America water management context), such as capacity building and workshops, were delayed as for the COVID-19, focusing only at the national level, developing documents and generating technical and legal information through consultants to identify future steps in the constitution and implementation of the binational agreement.

Broadly, the GGRETA programme has provided opportunities for **cooperation around the IWRM conceptual framework** (GGRETA sees IWRM as an approach with potential for the conjunctive management of groundwater and

⁶ The finding of an earlier review that the project that the underestimated risk of Uzbek authorities being unwilling to engage, and a false assumption (stakeholder engagement in the design phase was not deep enough) is noted (External Review conducted by adelphi, 2015)

⁷ This outcome builds on the Phase 2 outcome, which was the formal decision made by the highest decision making body of the Orange-Senqu river council to host permanent cooperation for the Stampriet in its own internal structure.

surface water). IWRM is seen to be relatively novel in Central Asia and Latin America, involving actors beyond the water sector (such as the case with Stampriet). An international water expert described that this is significant in terms of water savings, enabling people to talk through IWRM mechanisms at various levels (i.e. national, basin level and local levels). Regional stakeholders in Southern Africa and Latin America have reinforced that GGRETA has supported the regions conceptually on how transboundary aquifers work from a structural, technical and governance perspective, recognising the novelty of the aquifers, their definition, composition, the main problems and its relevance in the international, binational and national context.

The **data generation and assessments/ studies (hydrogeological and other)** (Phases 1 and 2, and 3 in the case of Pretashkent, and phase 2 and 3 in the case of Central America), has led to agreements around the **numerical models** as a tool for joint management in Phase 3. The ongoing generation of data to be shared has been critical across the three projects in supporting the cooperative frameworks being developed. In Phase 3, inroads into sustainability are being made under the achievements. ORASECOM Groundwater Committee is planning to host the ongoing monitoring of data produced under the numerical model and currently awaiting endorsement (i.e. a harmonized method, with agreement from both countries who were separately using different methods and standards previously), a highly effective outcome. Pretashkent is following a similar process, although behind in terms of agreements.

In terms of **capacity support** (outcome 1) COVID-19 has reoriented approaches, with varying results. The international support from experts vis-à-vis trainings have not yet occurred in Phase 3 as it did in Phases 1 and 2, although during the pandemic online trainings have taken place. It is understood that plans are underway for some capacity building, including developing a Hydro-diplomacy workbook in the following months. In Stampriet, groundwater governance courses were conducted online, reaching a larger number of participants (over 1000 people). GGRETA in Stampriet engages broadly with expert organizations, including IGRAC, WaterNet and African groundwater experts to build the courses, and have reached out beyond the South African region. The approach is seen to be effective although results beyond numbers reached are not available. For Ocotepeque, a training on water and gender was very well received. Although there is great demand for such online courses, interviewees suggest that they raise awareness and do not replace the ingrained capacity building and support to understanding that should be targeted at direct project stakeholders and need to take place in person.

In Ocotepeque and Pretashkent, capacities are still low, despite the activities. In Ocotepeque previous Phase capacity building activities themselves led to an exposure of low expertise (in both Honduras and El Salvador). Although early indications show capacities are being improved, one international expert felt that there is little evidence that exposure is leading to an improvement in cooperative arrangements, particularly in the case of El Salvador. Despite this, exposure has led government officials to further their own agenda, through looking at potential changes to their existing Water Act, last year. National and international interviewees mentioned that because expertise is perceived to be low, also in terms of project consultants (specifically in the case of Ocotepeque), this might have also affected the quality and engagement of nationals in the revision of the outputs delivered.

1.1 All outcomes have been hampered in-part by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to a restriction on face-to-face activities. Specifically, activities which relate to communication, public awareness and to local engagement (outcome 4) have been delayed. Flaws in programme design in earlier phases which necessitated resolving in Phase 3 have also hampered effectiveness.

Lessons learned in the earlier phases, such as the importance of building national capacities and understanding national frameworks to further cooperation has been important lesson in the GGRETA project, and the (false) assumption that countries would be willing to initiate discussion early in the programme has led to initiation activities to take place early in Phase 3. For example, in Ocotepeque, El Salvador was less receptive and resistant to a legally binding agreement. Therefore, in Phase 3, activities have included having two national consultants to look into domestic legal institutions on groundwater governance and to strengthen the national basis. The situation in Uzbekistan (brought to the programme more formally in Phase 3) has meant that assessments and exchange of data needed to take place.

Plans for engaging and raising awareness at the local level in Phase 3 have not yet materialized – workshops have been conducted but continuous engagement is low. This is in part due to COVID-19 restrictions and plans to further this are underway for 2022. Therefore, engagement on education around groundwater management, data collection, gender engagement; all thought to be village level activities have yet to take place. Importantly, a stakeholder mapping from the 1st phase was updated, and reflected a wider range of stakeholders including health centers and bottling plants that are

the major abstractors of Pretashkent groundwater in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Initial contacts have been established, with such actors and convincing ideas on how to engage better in the future are being set out. In Ocotepeque, the mapping has been updated and has included academics and institutions that have the capacity to gather and host water information and data (i.e., data to be reported under SDG 6.5).

The plans on the IMS in the GGRETA project proposal have not been achieved, and data is not publicly available. This is perhaps an oversight of the programme design, where the idea of owning and publicly sharing the data (which is sensitive) needs agreement. Groundwater data is very sensitive in comparison to surface water and is seen to be highly strategic. In Central Asia, groundwater is seen as a strategic resource.

2.0 GGRETA has supported policy and legal frameworks through the development of the STAS Wide SAP. There is no apparent influence in Pretashkent and Ocotepeque, however, plans to influence policy based on GGRETA experiences are evident and the partners have many ideas for opportunities.

The development of the Stampriet Transboundary Aquifer System Wide Strategic Action Plan (STAS SAP) under the project, currently under official endorsement by ORASECOM and the countries (Botswana, Namibia and South Africa) is aligned with the wider strategy for transboundary river basin management and sets long-term objectives and actions which are key for guiding policy at regional and national levels.

In Central Asia, policy influence is hampered by there being no agreement on a harmonized monitoring system (no national system exists on the Kazak side, which also has not enshrined the concept of conjunctive water management, nor does a specific policy on groundwater exist in policy frameworks which also hampers activities). Project coordinators have ideas, for instance to influence the Water Code (Kazakhstan – new code being developed), to get communities to report actors (i.e., private businesses) on quality and quantity. Incrementally, the Pretashkent project has uncovered the gaps in national policy frameworks that inhibit equitable sharing and wise management, and project staff are aware of the range of policies that need to be addressed, and how to engage at different levels with the use of the data and evidence developed through the project. Another example not yet implemented is how to best support the Akemat (municipality) and Oblast (province) to improve groundwater governance and issue permits based on data. Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan stakeholders are interested to develop a system of granting licenses now that borehole data is established and that usage of groundwater is available, i.e., where water levels are depressed, they should not issue a permit when groundwater is not being recharged. This represents a major step forward, that may potentially manage and stem drilling from major users (i.e., health centres and bottlers, identified on both sides of the border). Both sides are interested in a bi-lateral basin agreement, and although they have come a long way in understanding and agreeing on the major users of the aquifer (i.e., private use from health centres), are not at the stage yet to initiate such plans.

In Central America, the workplan in 2022 aims at the development of a roadmap towards institutionalized binational cooperation with a basin approach, to inform future efforts of policy reforms in Honduras and El Salvador. The roadmap will consider especially the legal frameworks and participative platforms of both countries, to guide improvements and actions beyond 2023.

Efficiency and sustainability of GGRETA

3.0 Consumption of funds has been delayed due to COVID-19, and many activities are planned for 2022. Broadly, the budget appears to be top-heavy for a 3rd phase programme, as the regions are taking on more responsibility in this phase; although project management is strong.

A comprehensive cost-benefit analysis was not conducted for the project, the one-page budget in the proposal was made available to the evaluation team. The finding is therefore based on a broad understanding of the budget.⁸

⁸ It was not possible for UNESCO to share more detailed budget information with the evaluation team, stating it is not customary to share budgetary information as UNESCO provides all required information to SDC in financial statements.

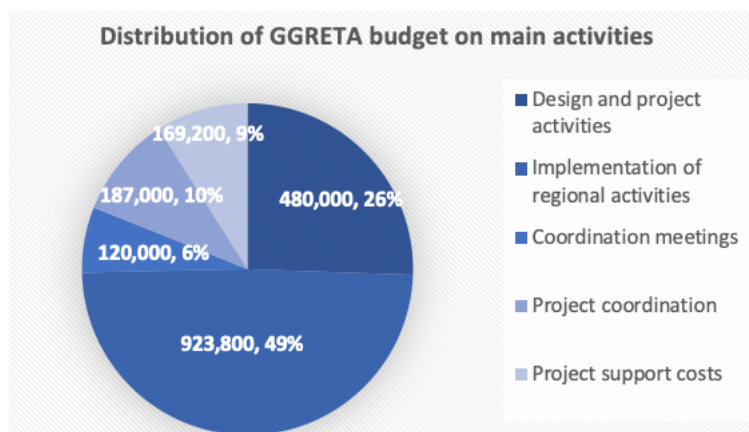


Figure 2: GGRETA budget distribution

The project funds for the overall GGRETA project constitute 50% of the overall GGRETA programme (see Figure 2). Project funds for the regions appear to be relatively small (i.e. 203,800 CHF for 3 years for the Central Asia component) as a proportion of the overall programme, which has a reliance on the three regions to support the programme level outcomes. The project funds support the activities as well as the 2 UNESCO (regional) staff and 2 national consultants. There are currently 4 layers of project management for each project, which include 2 staff at UNESCO Headquarters, and 2 staff at the regional level (this includes the full-time project coordinator position). This has led to higher management costs, and potentially, less efficiency at project level.

Although internal project management is strong (and provides very competent oversight), it is perceived to be top-heavy. Some decentralization in the running of the project has occurred in Phase 3. Staff and implementing partners feel that COVID-19 has been the factor for any delay rather than project management. In Ocotepque capacities and having strong embeddedness in national institutions, have come at the cost of efficiency. Ministries have only one person in charge of the project that are at a high level. Decentralization is an idea for the future, which would include having a stronger presence in the territories, including a small office or one staff member permanently overseeing project activities and level of implementation. COVID-19 had delayed the plan.

4.0 The partner selection is good and has led to the project being embedded, with a greater likelihood of sustainability, although in Pretashkent this aspect is immature. The nesting mechanism in the Stampriet project, where the project is ingrained in national and regional structures, has provided excellent conditions for sustainability and for replication – a strength of GGRETA’s Phase 3 programme.

All projects have voiced concerns about sustainability and partners being supported do not believe they could work unsupported, due to the benefits that UNESCO has brought to the functioning of the projects. Stampriet is a positive example of the project closely supporting a multi country cooperative mechanism (ORASECOM) that is enabling member countries to cooperate, chiefly through the Groundwater hydrology committee. The committee has appointed different focal points from national level Ministries under different areas and meets each year, there is a dialogue with the Stampriet aquifer being a specific agenda item. The fact that activities related to the STAS are now built in ORASECOM’s 10-year IWRM Plan (2015-2024) can be regarded as an indicator of the sustainability of the institutional arrangement made.

In Pretashkent, there is a risk to sustainability if the project stops. The bi-lateral connections have only started late in Phase 2, and the stakeholders feel that if GGRETA stops, those connections will cease to continue. Sustainability is partially at risk in Kazakhstan, where project coordinators do not work actively within, but inform and advise the Committees (i.e., decision making body). There is a general acknowledgement that GGRETA needs to ingrain capacity more directly in the future, particularly with actors Kazakhstan which include Committees (responsible for water management) and local actors. In Uzbekistan, capacity is seen to be good and GGRETA is directly supporting Hydroengeo (structured under a wider State establishment on Geology – GOSCOM) responsible for the licensing, regulation and drilling institutions. A national task group has been established under the GGRETA project within GOSCOM (with its own project room as a location for data collection, and staff – which include a team of young professionals). The numerical model is seen as a sustainable tool for decision makers. The Central Asia activities do not

support a regional basin level organization. In the future it is acknowledged that this needs to happen, with different ideas suggested in the Syr Darya Basin Organization i.e. an Association of sub-soil users.

In Ocotepeque, sustainability is perceived as both high and low. The approach of generating knowledge around the aquifers is new to the region and the generation of hydrological and legal studies might be important for evidence-based information to take action around the site. This information is thought as a baseline for decision making, which is highly valuable. However, there are challenges to the sustainability of the results. One is the level of interest and engagement of both countries, specifically in El Salvador and the need for it to have a stronger institutional and legal framework that allows the constitution of instruments for the transboundary management of the aquifer such as national and local basin councils. All of these are issues at the national level and out of the responsibility of the cooperation. On the other hand, the information that is generated by the project is relevant and will be hosted in an observatory, which will be reporting information at the basin level and country level to the SDG 6.5.

5.0 Satisfaction among the stakeholders interviewed (i.e., directly involved and benefiting from the projects) is perceived to be high, and continued demand for support is also high. There is weak evidence that activities offered are not always taken up.

Generally, interviews with stakeholders and direct project stakeholders at the national/regional level, the demand for services. There is a high interest to continue the activities. In Pretashkent, partners in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are extremely encouraged by the positive progress in the current Phase, with a regional meeting in early May expect to yield important results on the way forward. There have been some unconfirmed indications (limited evidence) throughout the project of some stakeholders being unwilling to receive the activities. For instance, a regional organization, did not wish to take part in one of the trainings in Stampriet, with reports of UNESCO having difficult conversations with the partner. In Ocotepeque, there is a high interest to continue activities, which lead to a binding instrument as well as more local support. For now, they had the opportunity to enhance their technical capacities, but they want to manage the natural water resources with more engagement of the local level institutions as well as other institutions such as the IUCN to bring the hydro-diplomacy to another level in a significant topic as groundwater which is believed to be new in the region.

6.0 Replication has been a key target of GGRETA for Phase 3. The programme has shown replication on two levels: at programme design level for similar groundwater programmes; and in the regional sense, where the Stampriet model is being actively replicated. Replication is not evident in Pretashkent, there are mixed views on the potential for replication in the region.

Transboundary aquifer management is generally perceived to have limited experience in terms of on-the-ground programming (the relevance explores this point). The GGRETA programme model has important considerations for replication for other countries and agencies are looking to replicate the project conjunctive management of surface and groundwater resources approach. For the three pilot regions, the project has developed knowledge on target aquifers which considers not only the hydrogeological dimension but also the assessment of elements which are key for a basin approach: stakeholders characterization, legal frameworks, access to water, potential pollution sources. However, a number of lessons learned highlighted by partners, including UNESCO staff have been described and it would be critical to integrate those lessons, for the model to be promoted worldwide.

Stampriet is being widely replicated in the South Africa region. The operationalization of the Stampriet mechanism to support the Africa Network of Basin Organization (ANBO), and in other aquifers in the SADC region has been established by UNESCO; specifically, the possible replication of the Stampriet experience to support the consideration of groundwater governance principles in the Cuvelai River Basin Commission (CUVECOM), the Limpopo Watercourse Commission (LIMCOM) and the Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM) in partnership with SADC-GMI. From a governance and institutional point of view, in Africa a basin approach becomes intuitive through the work with River Basin Organizations (ORASECOM for Stampriet, and LIMCOM and CUVECOM for upscaling). Currently, an aquifer vulnerability assessment is underway in LIMCOM- Tuli-Karoo transboundary aquifer; and a co-developed plan in Angola basin Cuvelai Watercourse Commission. SADC-GMI are very mobilized for upscaling, however they are dependent on outside support. Replication in the region has been deliberate, with the Stampriet project staff initiating contact towards the end of Phase 2. The objective to have groundwater and transboundary aquifers in the debates and in the Dakar declaration was achieved and UNESCO is looking for other events including the preparation process for the UN Conference on Water in March 2023.

The replication approach requires building and maintaining established partnership – SADC GMI, are an interlocutor with national, regional groundwater initiatives, and have MOUs with the entities. However, there needs to be an investment at national level on human resources and technology to take care of day-to-day tasks and monitoring and planning needs support. SADC-GMI themselves have indicated their need for funding support.

In Central America, where such a favourable institutional setting does not exist, countries have expressed an interest in adopting a basin approach, and UNESCO is currently working with Honduras and El Salvador to develop a roadmap on binational cooperation, to inform knowledge development, water resources management and policy reforms for the Ocotepeque-Citala, considering interactions with the Lempa river and surface activities. Another possible replication is possible with the Trifinio Aquifer. Guatemala is showing interest in the impact of management of transboundary groundwaters. Possibilities are being explored, which might include institutions at the trinational level as the Tri-national Border Commonwealth of the Lempa river and other actions such as the Plan Trifinio. There is some possible knowledge exchange with Costa Rica and Panama.

In the case of Central Asia, the 2022 workplan includes policy-focused dialogues and recommendations based on the Pretashkent numerical model and expert advice. In these dialogues, it is expected that the future use of the aquifer by both countries will address several aspects of surface processes including for example the projected demands of surface water and groundwater by human activities in the basin. There are 19 transboundary aquifers in the region, and UNESCO believes there is great potential for replication. However, the political situation is a pre-determining factor: stakeholders in Uzbekistan have stated that the project model is only suitable for Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan and did not think it suitable for scaling up with regards to their transboundary aquifers that are shared with Kyrgyzstan.

4.4 The Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability of BRIDGE

This section draws upon the findings of the missions to the Andes project (5.C: Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador) and BuPuSa (2A: Mozambique and Zimbabwe) project only. However, as the Lake Titicaca project (5.B: Peru and Bolivia) relates strongly to the Andean regional activities, some of the actions for this project were reviewed as well, and visited on the mission.

Summary of findings

1.0 At outcome level, BRIDGE has strongly contributed towards enhanced water governance capacity for transboundary cooperation, and the development of new transboundary agreements on water management. BRIDGE has been critical in providing a platform for technical discussion on transboundary water governance, and the space to build trust between stakeholders (known in the project as “enabling conditions”). The projects are filling in a niche where few programmes operate showing how tangible actions can lead to improved cooperation on setting up and implementing transboundary water management agreements.

1.1 The outputs of the BRIDGE BuPuSa project were redefined and reprioritized during the implementation phase, advancing the finalization of the joint agreements. The adaptive approach was seen to have been a factor for projects to achieve greater effectiveness.

1.2 In terms of stakeholder engagement, the projects have been strong at the regional level, and good at supporting national levels. The local levels are not strongly involved, with exception of the Lake Titicaca project - the only example showing a considered approach and outcomes in local engagement throughout all of the projects evaluated.

1.3 Capacity building activities are seen to be effective in the area of hydro diplomacy, and in making progress on shared water cooperation. Projects are seemingly doing well at transferring knowledge.

2.0 The BuPuSa project has been very successful at leveraging policy change in a short period, working in synergy with other similar opportunities/projects. The training on environmental flows has been one of the leveraging factors.

3.0 BRIDGE has with a relatively limited financial input contributed to important results in some of its projects delivered within a short time frame, particularly BuPuSa. The programme has been financially efficient. Longer-term support could have enhanced results.

4.0 BRIDGE has shown acceptable project management, and the ability to flexibly adjust to changing conditions has been key in this.

5.0 The projects are thought to have a high potential for embeddedness, due to the high political priority that is now assigned, despite not currently being embedded in national institutions. However, discussions with local partners have revealed a perception that projects are short – which could inhibit embeddedness and take-up of results.

6.0 There is an interest to scale up BRIDGE in both projects. Replication to date in terms of knowledge sharing across stakeholders is limited, although sustainability and replication are being promoted by integrating BRIDGE lessons into

other projects. BRIDGE stakeholders find that BRIDGE has only to a limited extent facilitated cross-regional experiences and learning between RBOs and RECs. Despite this, ownership is strong.

Effectiveness of BRIDGE

There is one outcome for the BRIDGE project in each basin:

- BuPuSa: Enhanced water governance capacity for transboundary cooperation in the BuPuSa translates to action planning around concrete transboundary water management issues
- Andes: By 2021, a Transboundary Basin Cooperation is adopted at the regional level as a recognised development approach that supports coordination in shared resources management and local development, which can also catalyze broader cooperation in migration, health and security.
 - Lake Titicaca: By 2021, the TDPS system has an effective cooperation mechanism in place, improved coordination and investments to attack the main environmental and social problems in the basin and hydro-diplomacy supports constructive dialogue between Peru and Bolivia.

1.0 At outcome level, BRIDGE has strongly contributed towards enhanced water governance capacity for transboundary cooperation, and the development of new transboundary agreements on water management. BRIDGE has been critical in providing a platform for technical discussion on transboundary water governance, and the space to build trust between stakeholders (known in the project as “enabling conditions”). The projects are filling in a niche where few programmes operate showing how tangible actions can lead to improved cooperation on setting up and implementing transboundary water management agreements.

The outcomes have responded to the needs of the states, and regions. IUCN has been successful at understanding the intricacies of hydro diplomacy and how to work at the pace of government. The crucial role of building capacity of regional institutions and contributing to water resource management frameworks has been recognised, although more attention of the national frameworks as a base for transnational cooperation could have been strengthened. IUCN has played a successful role at playing a neutral role and generating conditions conducive for agreeing on specific instruments to advance in effective transboundary waters management.

For BuPuSa, outputs have contributed towards achieving a framework for transboundary water governance. The focus has been more on the outputs related to the legal and policy framework than the technical outputs related to environment flows and benefit sharing. The BRIDGE actions, implemented in synergy with other donor programmes, have been highly effective, resulting in three different agreements and one protocol:

- The Tri-Basin Establishment Agreement and The Hosting Agreement have been technically approved by both countries, only waiting political approval.
- The Save Water Sharing Agreement has been agreed on and awaits ratification.
- The data exchange protocol has developed into its 3rd draft.

The operationalization of the agreements has not yet begun – therefore their effectiveness cannot be judged. The elaboration of these documents has been supported by several stakeholder dialogue and high-level negotiation meetings and two workshops on hydro diplomacy and negotiation skills facilitated and partially financed by BRIDGE. The basis for this work was the approval of the BuPuSa roadmap which was approved at the beginning of Phase 4.

At the **regional** level, the project has contributed to the first part of expected component outcome: Support the application of effective transboundary water governance frameworks in the Pungwe/Buzi/Save (PuBuSa), Lake Malawi/ Nyassa/ Niasa (LMNN)⁹ and SADC and strengthening policy, legal and institutional frameworks for transboundary water cooperation in Southern Africa. The stakeholders interviewed on PuBuSa are unanimous in their satisfaction with the accelerated progress on finalizing several key transboundary agreements which are now ready for political approval. The LMNN component has been stalled for political reasons while this aspect has been difficult, good progress has occurred on the regional cooperation with SADC. This last part has been difficult to triangulate due to difficulties in getting an interview with SADC focal points.

⁹ The LMNN project was stalled due to disagreement between Malawi and Tanzania on the boundary setting in Lake Malawi/ Nyasa which has been reignited due to recent findings of oil in the lake. IUCN is planning to revitalize this project.

For Andes, BRIDGE contributed in terms of the agreement for the establishment of the Bi-National Commission between Peru and Ecuador, after five years of building trust and coming to agreements in terms of the legal framework and differences between both levels of institutional development (the groundwork was laid in Phase 3 and partially in Phase 4 where it was ratified by both countries). The Bi-National Commission is conceived at three levels, i) The Executive level, in charge of the integrated management of water resources at the ministry level between Ecuador and Peru; ii) The Technical Secretariat with three representatives per country; and iii) Local Committees to be established in each of the shared basins (9 basins), which is yet not achieved.

Currently, the Secretariat (which will have direct link to MoE and MoFA) and the executive levels are developing the commission's rules of procedure and different kinds of protocols for data collection, among others. The next steps are related to the local committees, as well as ensuring the binational procedures and protocols. It is envisaged that specific plans to be developed and funding could be sought at the basin level to fund projects for a greater impact on the shared basins, through specific actions at the local level. Currently, a document with international treaty status will be generated for the nine basins the project works with (more than 95% of the border area). It is expected that these rules of procedure can be used as a starting point for the cooperation process initiated by Ecuador.

Concerning Bolivia and Peru, the re-engineering of the Binational Authority of Lake Titicaca (ALT) is a process with limitations. BRIDGE has supported the ALT in previous phases, but in Phase 4, there is dissatisfaction at the national and local levels with the approaches of the institution to manage and assess local needs. Therefore, the issue of re-engineering is proposed. Work is currently underway to develop a common vision of what governments want from this authority. This process has been affected by the pandemic, as online conversations lacked the effectiveness of face-to-face engagement. This process takes place within the framework of the Swiss cooperation, as well as within the GEF Titicaca. IUCN consulted its Environmental Law Centre to develop the initial diagnosis of the authority, now it is necessary to see the path to be taken after this diagnosis. This process of revising the statutes of the ALT is an issue felt to be important by stakeholders, both at the local and national levels, where they do not feel represented on issues of the needs of the basin and the territory levels. The ALT, in the last phase, has not been involved in the activities, as its revision has not been finalised.

However, at the local level, the process has shifted to engaging with local communities as the women leaders of Lake Titicaca. The women have been empowered through capacity building in gender equality, water management and water monitoring. It can be said that through the strengthening of the capacities and empowerment of women leaders of Lake Titicaca, they contributed to the Bolivian Water Bill. Also, they have achieved some participation and leadership in teaching and engaging with schools, municipalities and locals who have been sensitized to water pollution and environmental co-responsibility.

1.1 The outputs of the BRIDGE BuPuSa project were redefined and reprioritized during the implementation phase, advancing the finalization of the joint agreements. The adaptive approach was seen to have been a factor for projects to achieve greater effectiveness.

BRIDGE projects have benefitted from the flexibility from Swiss cooperation, where they have been able to change outputs according to different developments, changing emphasis while enabling conditions are developed. This was useful during the COVID-19 pandemic, when restrictions led to management adjustments for consultations and negotiations. Hybrid meetings were set up, where the teams in Zimbabwe and Mozambique were able to make contact.

The planned outputs in the project proposal are only achieved to some extent. However, project managers have explained that this is the result of changing priorities. For instance, the planned activities on benefit sharing were not carried out but IUCN BRIDGE at the global level did enter into a strategic partnership with USAID's Shared Waters Cooperation Facility that will finance part of the work which is not finalised. On environmental flows (BuPuSa), considered to be very important in furthering cooperation and a major output for Phase 4, there was only 1 one training in 2019. The output was downsized due to the very short time for implementation e.g., 2½ years and the financial resources which were not efficient to establish the environmental flows. However, IUCN was able to re-orient the activity within another of their projects: the GEF BuPuSa project which is presently being implemented. This prioritisation has been inclusive with strong buy in of the government stakeholder, as they expect the technical parts to be implemented under the BuPuSA GEF project.

In the Andes the outputs were considered effective, mainly building trust and enabling conditions to set agreements among parties. However, there were some arrangements to the initial plan as the COVID-19 outbreak took place. The most effective outputs are the online meetings with main stakeholders and courses and the advanced course with the Andean University Simon Bolivar that allowed stakeholders to come to terms with the technical terminology of transboundary water management. Other outputs seem to be relevant to the community such as the publication of a book of legends and tales of Lake Titicaca which brought interesting worldviews and identities around the lake for conservation.

1.2 In terms of stakeholder engagement, the projects have been strong at the regional level, and good at supporting national levels. The local levels are not strongly involved, with exception of the Lake Titicaca project - the only example showing a considered approach and outcomes in local engagement throughout all of the projects evaluated.

In the BuPuSa project, BRIDGE has worked well with regional organizations and national institutions, despite the wider challenges agencies face. RBOs and national governments have a weakness in capacity and staff availability. When additional capacity is made available, it is likely that a big role will be played in implementation but until then, effectiveness can be limited. In BRIDGE, the national counterparts are involved, although it is possible that more could have been done to support the legal framework and technical capacities.

Andes has proven successful in reaching the regional, national, and local levels. For the Andes component, the Community Women Leaders (Lake Titicaca) received capacity building which has empowered them to actively engage in the public spaces and have a role in the water management. In previous phases, IUCN had an opportunity to develop an initiative named “Champions” which was well received but did not continue following the expected results. In phase 4, they have changed the approach and noticed more participation and engagement of these women. At the same level, there is an interest in Lake Titicaca to create local councils to oversee every basin. The engagement has been limited and have not reached wide enough group of leaders to have a widespread impact, but in the future, it is hoped to engage with them not as beneficiaries but as implementers on the field. They are claiming those positions as they are replicating what they have been taught in their families, schools, and communities and have engaged with municipalities. Additionally, Women Leaders (Lake Titicaca) have leveraged funding from other cooperation to continue developing their activities (i.e., Canada).

1.3 Capacity building activities are seen to be effective in the area of hydro diplomacy, and in making progress on shared water cooperation. Projects are seemingly doing well at transferring knowledge.

Interviewees have praised BRIDGE's support for capacity building, particularly the quality of training. BRIDGE has in this process facilitated the transfer of very specific and customized know-how which has contributed strongly not only at the output level but also to the overall outcome of Phase 4 in enhancing the stakeholder consultation and probably also accelerating the agreement between the countries on the tri-basin institutional and host arrangements.

In BuPuSa, capacity building has consisted of one training on hydro diplomacy carried out by SADC WaterNet. The knowledge and expertise of the presenters coming from different universities, research institutions and practitioners from different parts of the world were particularly appreciated. GWP carried out a course on international law and negotiation skills. Capacity building has inspired the stakeholder meetings and the negotiation process, so the timing was good and it has paid off.

Early in the implementation (early 2019) a field training on environmental flows and social assessments was carried out by SADC WaterNet in a tributary to Buzi River. This training was mentioned several times by key informants as an eye-opener on this aspect of IWRM. Although IWRM has been in implementation for many years in the region, there are still many challenges and new will present themselves with the planned infrastructure projects such as dams in the basins. The training was effective at building awareness on the concept of environmental flows, and how upstream factors can affect downstream conditions.

In the Andes component, IUCN has had a strong role in providing technical knowledge support and leveraging its well-established relationships with governments and local institutions that have facilitated the implementation of the project in the region. Water diplomacy is a new approach to building trust among different transboundary stakeholders. While the IUCN's role is to create enabling conditions and play a role behind the scenes, stakeholders at the regional, national

and local levels recognise its input to the process. Even though there are no specific actions in the territory (funding, equipment acquisition), IUCN has proven to have a facilitating role building governance capabilities.

2.0 The BuPuSa project has been very successful at leveraging policy change in a short period, working in synergy with other similar opportunities/projects. The training on environmental flows has been one of the leveraging factors.

In BuPuSa, BRIDGE is thought to have played a very significant role in the development of the three influential policies mentioned in point 1.0 (the Tri-Basin Establishment Agreement and The Hosting Agreement; The Save Water Sharing Agreement, and the data exchange protocol has developed into its 3rd draft). BRIDGE was not the only actor and worked in synergy with other programmes: the USAID Resilient Waters programme, valued at 60,000 USD, financed the coordinator of the agreements in the first year, and GIZ contributed 100,000 USD. Since the end of 2021, GWP is contracted by IUCN to execute the BuPuSa GEF project. The significant role played by BRIDGE was provided through the platform and facilitation of different actors and building capacities.

At the national level, the transboundary cooperation between Mozambique and Zimbabwe has also partially informed the revision of the Water Act in Zimbabwe (1998). The country is reviewing this act and other acts that have a bearing on water policy. From a transboundary perspective, BRIDGE has influenced this revision i.e., in relation to the BRIDGE supported training on environmental flows. The training led Zimbabwe and Mozambique to an increased understanding of the dynamics of water resources development and the environmental implications. Zimbabwe has many projects on constructing large dams lined up, although the projects wouldn't have a bearing on the water resource flows.

The Andes project contributed in terms of the Agreement for the creation of the Bi-National Commission between Peru and Ecuador already ratified by both countries. In relation to Bolivia, it can be said that through the strengthening of the capacities and empowerment of women leaders of Lake Titicaca, the women contributed their views (representing the community) to the Bolivian Water Bill (under revision). This was the first-time community inputs were received to the Water Bill.

In Ecuador, regional river basin organisations (RBOs) are being influenced in the reform of the Water Law (under revision). This gives them legitimacy and eventually leads to their inclusion in the budgets, through support for the reform of the water law so that these binational organisations are part of the budget and have a budget line. They are looking to include them in the Water Bill, which will allow them to gain access to public budget funds.

Efficiency and Sustainability of BRIDGE

3.0 BRIDGE has with a relatively limited financial input contributed to important results in some of its projects delivered within a short time frame, particularly BuPuSa. The programme has been financially efficient. Longer-term support could have enhanced results.

IUCN is budgeting per output in its Project Document but SDC is requiring financial reporting per expense code. This makes an assessment of efficiency very time-consuming as data are not readily available. Time has not been available for such analysis in this evaluation.

IUCN has asked SDC to change the financial reporting to show execution per output, but it remains the same. In terms of management of the projects, it would improve transparency and management of the financial resources if expenses were systematically allocated to outputs. In terms of evaluation, the possibility to assess the efficiency becomes limited.

BRIDGE has a total budget of CHF 6.655.470 of which CHF 5.370.799 is financed by the SDC Water Governance Program and CHF 1.284.671 is co-financing. 35% of the funds are for the support facility which is placed in HQ in Switzerland. Considering this global character of the programme, it is not deemed exaggerated although there are some indications that budgeting for the components has been too optimistic leading to reprioritization shortly after the start of implementation as was the case in the BuPuSa project where important technical elements had to be taken out. The general flexibility and ability to adapt of BRIDGE has also reflected on the budget execution in BuPuSa where funds have been allocated from outputs with lesser priority to outputs with higher priority such as implementation of the BuPuSa roadmap and capacity building on transboundary cooperation and hydro diplomacy.

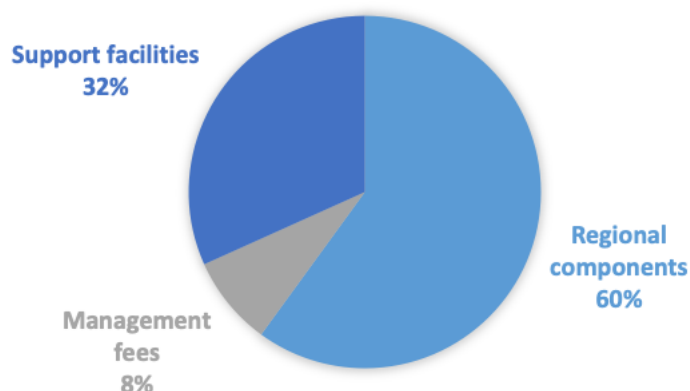


Figure 3: Distribution of SDC Support to BRIDGE (5,370,799 CHF)

The budget for the Southern African Component of phase 4 is USD 403,583 of which USD 152,065 is for BuPuSa. The cumulative expenditure from Jan 2019 to Dec 2020 was 53% giving a balance of 211,353 USD of a budget of 403,583 USD for the Southern Africa Component e.g., BuPuSa, Lake Malawi project and regional activities. IUCN Southern Africa has indicated that all funds have been executed in 2021.

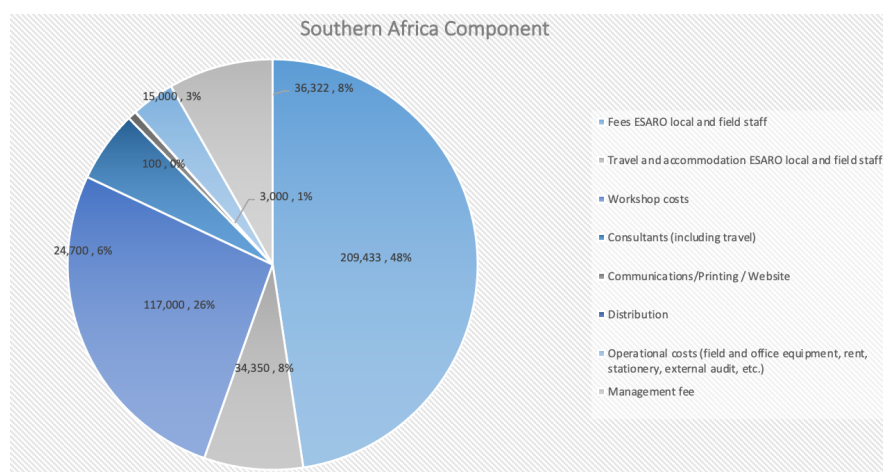


Figure 4: Southern Africa component of the BRIDGE programme

There is a high turnover of staff, mainly at the technical level in the ministries, as well as some changes of government which have meant that processes already underway need to be taken up again and ways sought for better knowledge transfer when this occurs. Trusting relationships do not develop overnight.

At the start of 2021, there was a delay in implementation and steps were taken to identify what activities could be done in place of planned travel and capacity building processes. In 2021, implementation was accelerated with new initiatives such as the course with the Andean University, and the production of content such as the book of stories and legends of Lake Titicaca, as well as online training. It is indicated that from the end of 2021 to date 85% of the funds have been executed and by the end of the project (end of May), it is expected to reach 95% of execution for the Andes project.

4.0 BRIDGE has shown acceptable project management, and the ability to flexibly adjust to changing conditions has been key in this.

The close working relationship in BuPuSa means partners can discuss informally and agree on approaches and messages before meetings etc so that the project management works smoothly and that meetings are better prepared in terms of harmonising approaches and policies. The communication in the region between SDC (Lima), IUCN and other partners

is very good (SDC and IUCN are seen to be “hand-on” and practically involved). There are some misconceptions among local partners on the scale of the programme (this was discussed under Relevance – on project duration). IUCN in the Andes region has shown great results in their understanding of the region and technical knowledge. Parties and stakeholder recognise their role and their know-how on processes related to hydro diplomacy are well known. IUCN has managed to include some other partners such as Agua Sustentable that add to sustainability matters. IUCN Andes Office being located in Ecuador ensures a better understanding of the context and better and close relations with the SDC representatives.

In BRIDGE Andes, the pandemic has impacted the implementation, linked to the nature of the BRIDGE project's actions, which aimed at creating spaces for consultation and meetings. As the possibility of face-to-face meetings was cancelled and replaced by virtual coordination sessions, there has been an effect on the efficient use of resources, as well as a relative delay in the implementation of activities. The implementing partner has sought to compensate for it and look for other activities to be implemented in the context of the pandemic. There has been constant coordination with SDC, readjusting the budget to achieve the goals and expected results in other ways than initially planned. The cooperation is noted for being flexible. However, there were some problems in working on issues of trust between governments, which are naturally better-dealt face-to-face.

5.0 The projects are thought to have a high potential for embeddedness, due to the high political priority that is now assigned, despite not currently being embedded in national institutions. However, discussions with local partners have revealed a perception that projects are short – which could inhibit embeddedness and take-up of results.

The transboundary cooperation in the three basins of Buzi, Pungwe and Save has high political priority in Mozambique and Zimbabwe based on the long-term good relationship between the two countries. In that sense, the BuPuSa project is embedded in the national water management framework. The activities in BuPuSa BRIDGE are demand-driven so there is strong ownership of the project. The cooperation between Zimbabwe and Mozambique on these matters goes back a long time and the relationship is very good so in that sense, BuPuSa is embedded in the government institutions.

Despite this, there are few or no activities directly embedded in the national institutions to support the consolidation of the activities. The implementing organisations are based at the regional level. The strategy to maintain and enhance achievements in BuPuSa has partly relied on the existence of the GEF project which includes both activities to maintain the dialogue and concrete activities to address the impact of natural disasters like floods and droughts in the river basins. In the framework of the GEF project, it is also envisaged to elaborate a financing strategy. The political will for transboundary cooperation is assessed to be strong in Zimbabwe and Mozambique although the capability to put in financial resources is very limited.

The point that was discussed under “relevance”, that local partners are not sufficiently brought into any long term planning around BRIDGE, and thus can perceive the programme as being short-term, could potentially inhibit their motivation and take up of results although there is no direct evidence of this.

6.0 There is an interest to scale up BRIDGE in both projects. Replication to date in terms of knowledge sharing across stakeholders is limited, although sustainability and replication are being promoted by integrating BRIDGE lessons into other projects. BRIDGE stakeholders find that BRIDGE has only to a limited extent facilitated cross-regional experiences and learning between RBOs and RECs. Despite this, ownership is strong.

In BuPuSa and Andes, discussions with IUCN and partners have shown there is a real motivation to replicate achievements in other specific territories. The replication would encompass diplomacy, as well as the other capacity building actions. This is a real endorsement of the project from those on the ground who are working closely with the concept of the project.

The strategy of IUCN to sustain and enhance the achievements in BuPuSa seems to rely partly on the existence of the GEF project which IUCN is also implementing with GWP as executing agency. This project includes several concrete activities which were identified in the stakeholder process such as addressing the impact of natural disasters like floods and droughts in the river basins and establishing the environmental flows. In the framework of the GEF project, it is also envisaged to elaborate a financing strategy. Funds for putting in the tri-basin secretariat and other institutional

arrangements are not mentioned specifically in the project framework so additional funding for the roll out of the agreements, once they have the political approval has, not been secured yet. The political will for transboundary cooperation is assessed to be strong in Zimbabwe and Mozambique although the capability to put in financial resources is very limited.

For replication, SADC is seen to be a key actor in potential replication, but the cooperation with SADC has been challenging.¹⁰ According to IUCN BRIDGE, SADC is less interested in the BRIDGE project if it doesn't bring funds for SADC activities/strategies.

In a possible next phase of BRIDGE, according to several key informants support will be needed to put the BuPuSa permanent river basin organization in place including the secretariat. Support transboundary cooperation in the Incomati- Maputo River Basin shared by Mozambique and South Africa could also be considered. The positive environment has also assisted in motivating Mozambique in moving forward with cooperation on other transboundary water i.e., the Rovuma River Basin that is shared with Tanzania and to revitalize the BRIDGE project on the cooperation between Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique on Lake Malawi.

For Andes, BRIDGE Andes has shown its potential for replication in the region, mainly as for the Agreement for the establishment of the Bi-National Commission between Ecuador and Peru, which includes not only the basins from the project but the whole border. This has become a great example of management of transboundary waters and countries such as Colombia are interested in replicating the model. Also, in Latin America there is a need to engage more in the hydro-diplomacy sector, learning from experiences and capitalizing knowledge on how to engage local communities in this process.

The evidence is not sufficient to indicate that there has been much capacity building and knowledge and experience exchanges at the RBO level. KIIs informed their participation in different RECs such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Commission - ECLAC- for the preparation of the UN-Water Conference 2023, where there was an intention to come up with a regional vision on transboundary waters management and water-diplomacy. Interviewees also mentioned exchanges within the Organization of American States (OAS) as spaces for the dissemination of results and cross-knowledge exchanges. Finally, the creation of an advanced course on transboundary water management and water-diplomacy at the Simon Bolivar University Andean part of the Community of Nations (ACN), with the participation of interested persons from governments and individuals in general.

On funding RBOs, BRIDGE produced a study on RBO funding. It was developed through a global consultancy but was not specific to the region. Among the actions relevant developed in Africa, it developed an accompaniment process through capacity building and developing technical and legal language, which allows them to speak in the same terminology to be able to apply for different sources of funding such as GEFs (Ecuador – Peru; and Colombia – Ecuador). GEFs always have a governance component, from which the link with BRIDGE is made, and BRIDGE was sought as an expert partner for capacity building in the matter.

The added value of BRIDGE is not so explicitly visible, it is to generate and help build capacities that lead to new sources of funding through the development of more sophisticated proposals. BRIDGE in many cases puts the countries and actors involved, through the alignment of approaches and concepts, which are in daily use in funding sources and which are aligned with the new directives that are coming out in certain cooperation agencies, with new paradigms and approaches to water resources. This is admittedly difficult to quantify and complex to establish the causal logic. And it is difficult to directly determine the amount of resources leveraged.

4.5 The Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability of the UNECE programme

Summary of findings

1.0 UNECE has made progress on all of its 5 outcomes. Progress is most notable on its direct support to countries who are in the accession process following the Global Opening to the Convention (Outcome 1). UNECE is seen to be a responsive organization and engages widely with countries and provides direct tailored support to find opportunities within

¹⁰ SADC was contacted several times, but it did not reply to solicitation for an interview so their input on the achieved of the latter part of the outcome has not been received.

the Convention, according to the country needs and regional context. Once countries have acceded, support is less evident, although opportunities to engage continue (Outcome 1).

2.0 Interviews suggest the Convention itself, and accession process has led to some examples of positive changes in policy/frameworks. The range of the activities through UNECE's support is supporting Gambia's own plans for an ambitious set of water sector reforms (all in development, not yet implemented).

3.0 UNECE's thematic framework and cycle of work, alongside its partnerships with key sector actors support countries to achieve a wide range of outputs, and further the promotion of positive models and the principles themselves which will likely enhance sustainability. (Outcome 3)

4.0 The Accession process itself represents sustainability, in itself on some level, provided that certain assumptions hold true. While the responsive and tailored support tails off once countries have acceded, it is believed that benefits continue and that the Convention continues to encourage more countries to engage in dialogue. Although further steps are left to the Parties own initiative, it is believed that the Convention once signed will lead to further action.

5.0 In terms of efficiency, a budget analysis was not undertaken due to the funds being disbursed into UNECE's general fund, although SDC's leadership in providing slightly earmarked funding has been believed to allow the Secretariat better operational efficiency, making process on the entire programme of work.

6.0 Scale up of countries in Accession is in evidence through regional patterns of Accession processes being instigated; in large part enabled through relationships formed.

This section outlines the results of the online key informant interviews with staff of UNECE (overall staff, and project staff for the financing and supporting to country accession outcomes); and partners/beneficiaries of the UNECE Convention, which has included a representative from the Gambia (Department for Water Resources), who are finalizing Accession. Contact was established with Cameroon (also currently in Accession), with initial information exchange, but not a full interview conducted. An interview with a regional water cooperation organization in Central Asia (SIC-ICWC) supported the findings; and where possible, interviews undertaken with experts to discuss GGRETA/BRIDGE programmes, was used as an opportunity to discuss UNECE where the interviewee had knowledge on the Convention.

There are 5 outcomes of the UNECE programme:

1. Countries understand and gain accession to Convention
2. Transboundary waters are monitored and assessed, information shared
3. IWRM implemented at all levels in a changing climate
4. Transboundary water cooperation is sustainably financed
5. Cooperation is monitored and partners mobilised.

Effectiveness of UNECE

1.0 UNECE has made progress on all of its 5 outcomes. Notable progress is made on its direct support to countries who are in the accession process following the Global Opening to the Convention (Outcome 1). UNECE is a responsive organization and engages widely with countries. It provides direct tailored support to find opportunities within the Convention, according to the country needs and regional context. Once countries have acceded, support is less evident, although opportunities to engage continue (Outcome 1).

Following the accession of Senegal and Chad in Phase 3, UNECE's support has followed a similar trajectory with accession by Ghana in 2020, Guinea- Bissau and Togo in 2021. Currently, there is significant progress on accession in Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq and The Gambia; and 21 countries are currently seeking advice and range of workshops taking place at different levels (regional, national).

UNECE works on different levels (national, regional, programme level capacity building and workshops, guideline development). Countries and staff of UNECE discussed that direct support (one to one) given to countries is highly effective, often resulting in a considered Accession process. In this situation, UNECE staff develop an understanding of the specific needs and opportunities in potential Accession countries (e.g. the regional context, neighbouring countries situation), and give targeted support based on the identified priorities. UNECE staff interviewed discussed that countries are not at the same level, and efforts are made to assess how works for opportunities for them (regional context, needs), either through remote or in person workshops, which might function to raise awareness on international law, Convention, etc.

The Gambia, currently in the advanced stages of the Accession process, has discussed a range of support to sensitize and facilitate being provided by UNECE. Gambia has been supported by UNECE to conduct a national workshop with counterparts from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Justice in December 2021, with staff supporting in-person at the event from UNECE Headquarters. The Gambia Ministry staff have taken part in the 9th session of the meeting of the parties in Geneva, sensitizing stakeholders to the Convention, and the impacts in other countries that have acceded. At the meeting, connections were made with the EU Delegation, where Gambia hopes to gain support for their transboundary governance activities. The Gambia has also benefited from initial funding support from UNECE to start the process of Accession through the Trust Fund. Effectiveness has been enhanced by the existence and responsiveness of the Secretariat where staff are there to share experiences and give feedback.

2.0 Interviews suggest the Convention itself, and accession process has led to some examples of positive changes in policy/frameworks. The range of the activities through UNECE's support is supporting Gambia's own plans for an ambitious set of water sector reforms (all in development, not yet implemented).

Currently, three bills are being prepared. A new institution (the National Water Resources Management Authority) has been formed to oversee transboundary water management, with a National Water Resources Strategy also being prepared. A Cabinet Memorandum to endorse a Bill for the legal arrangements for the protection and use of transboundary waters through accession to the 1997 Watercourses Convention and the 1992 Water Convention has been prepared, showing how accession signals to other countries that Gambia has a willingness to cooperate, and to benefit from the learning and knowledge sharing from the 1992 Water Convention. Further, a Ministerial Declaration on the Senegalo-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin has been signed by Ministries from Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania and Senegal - countries that share the basin - in 2021, to commit to advancing water sector reforms, laws and regulations to strengthen joint water management. A Regional Working Group has been facilitated and supported by UNECE (along with Geneva Water Hub and IGRAC), and currently the dialogue being supported by UNECE, and an action plan outlines future action to support sharing of water resources.

In the Central Asia region, it is believed that accession countries (Central Asia are Parties to the Water Convention from its adoption in 1992) has been useful in understanding the principles of, and aspects of IWRM, integrated water management, and different water uses. An example in Uzbekistan was related, where, in the process of preparing a new water code, the principles of the Convention are being incorporated in its formulation nationally. This aspect of influence has taken place without the support of UNECE staff.

3.0 UNECE's thematic framework and cycle of work, alongside its partnerships with key sector actors support countries to achieve a wide range of outputs, and further the promotion of positive models and the principles themselves which will likely enhance sustainability (Outcome 3). The topic on financing, reflects a unique approach to a critical issue. (Outcome 4)

A wide range of tools and packages of support are demonstrated and UNECE is thought to be doing well in putting new themes under the Convention, identifying questions that come systematically in all countries such as climate change adaptation at basin level, and the water-food-energy nexus. Issues are identified through conducting FAQs to the Convention, and focuses on bringing new concepts and trying to operationalize how it relates to the country obligation and treaties. The Convention has seen trends and are flexible on adjusting the concept of, and dropping and re-introducing based on needs e.g. climate change, water allocation (recently brought back on country request).

The use of practical examples from members on-the-ground has been a key driver for continuous progress on transboundary water cooperation, and UNECE leverages experiences from members and sector partners to demonstrate how the Convention looks in practice. This process however has at times led to a high demand on partners' resources (time, effort) to take part and share their experiences and advisory support, which needs to be recognised. UNECE themselves see this cooperation with partners on the ground as important, so they can demonstrate on how they support good principles and make them more clear. UNECE is seen to be effective at global workshops, promotion of models, best practices and bringing people together. The usefulness of products are seen to be an interplay between capacity building, sharing experiences and working on the ground, tools and guidance (e.g. Handbook on Water Allocation which was developed in collaboration with over 50 collaborators) leading to a widely accepted product.

The work area on facilitating financing of transboundary cooperation water and basin development has been identified as a bottleneck in the sustainability of existing agreements and in supporting new cooperation processes and activities

at country and basin level Activities have taken place to frame a cross-sectional approach to financing, using inputs from a wide range of key sector actors, as well as a wide range of funding/financing actors. Various methods, such as workshops¹¹ and a joint publication¹², has taken place to define the funding needs at basin level and how the financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development can take place in practice, looking at the current challenges and opportunities related with the mobilization of financial resources. This process has brought together key actors including a number of International Financial Institutions for the first time, by a neutral actor (i.e. the multi-lateral intergovernmental platform), which a key informant discussed had never happened before.

Efficiency and Sustainability of UNECE

4.0 The Accession process itself represents sustainability, in itself on some level, provided that certain assumptions hold true. While the responsive and tailored support tails off once countries have acceded, it is believed that benefits continue, and that the Convention continues to encourage more countries to engage in dialogue. Although further steps are left to the Parties own initiative, it is believed that the Convention once signed will lead to further action.

The example of the Central Asian countries, who are early parties to the Convention¹³ has shown that although the responsive support tails off once countries have acceded, the principles of the Convention continue, and are furthered through engagement continues mainly through the Meeting of the Parties. All parties can take part in the subsidiary bodies, working groups and task forces to learn from best practice and lessons so that new countries can exchange between old countries, although less than in the past. Major assumptions captured in the Theory of Change (see Figure 5, under Impact) such as continued political support, stability and resources for cooperation, are very difficult to plan for and mitigate. Many potential barriers are beyond the scope of the Water Convention and the Convention captures the intent of the parties at the time of Accession.

There can be a feeling that the current focus is on West Africa, however a stakeholder has suggested that this has both positive and negative implications, as countries don't feel that UNECE is constantly taking care of them, they have to think for themselves and develop their own contextual solutions necessary to have a strong idea on how they will manage a changing situation. It was suggested that once the practical instruments of cooperation and a general meaning is established, that parties need to be on their own to demonstrate what the principles mean in practice.

5.0 In terms of efficiency, a budget analysis was not undertaken due to the funds being disbursed into UNECE's general fund, although SDC's leadership in providing slightly earmarked funding has been believed to allow the Secretariat better operational efficiency, making process on the entire programme of work.

It is difficult to make a comment on value for money due to the institutional quasi core-funding, softly earmarked to support specific themes arrangement. This has meant that a budget analysis of SDC's funding cannot be separated from other sources of funding. A full analysis of the budget has not been made. Despite the lack of clarity it is felt that the earmarked funding mechanism is a very important aspect to ensure greater efficiency of the Secretariat's programme of work allocating money where it is needed the most, and lowers transactional and administrative costs while enabling the flexibility and responsiveness needed to support countries as opportunities come up. The action has motivated other donors to follow suit.

6.0 Scale up of countries in Accession is in evidence through regional patterns of Accession processes being instigated; in large part enabled through relationships formed.

Effectiveness and scale up is maximized when a regional view is promoted. Ghana is an example, a party to the Convention since 2020. The UNECE team has considered and discussed national legal frameworks, the upstream situation with Cote d'Ivoire, industry and threats to watersheds (e.g. pollution from upstream mining industry); alongside

¹¹ Among the different events organized, UNECE organized a global workshop on financing transboundary water cooperation and basin development, more information is available here: <https://unece.org/environmental-policy/water/events/virtual-workshop-financing-transboundary-water-cooperation-and-basin#:~:text=The%20Virtual%20Workshop%20on%20financing,water%20cooperation%20and%20basin%20development>.

¹² Funding and financing of transboundary water cooperation and basin development, available at: <https://unece.org/info/publications/pub/359843>

¹³ 2001 (Kazakhstan) and 2007 (Uzbekistan)

downstream issues with issues. Ghana has identified that they want to strengthen legal framework dealing with pollution (mining) – as downstream to see how to have discussion with Togo through a platform. By promoting the relevance of the Convention in the regional context, neighbouring countries have made contact with UNECE, and currently UNECE is in contact with Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.

4.6 Programme level Impact

1. To what extent do the actual impacts caused by the programme interventions match the targeted impacts?
2. Has there been impact delivered at basin level against SDG 6 (specifically Target 6.5)?
3. How did the results of the partial actions translate into actual policy adaptation / reform, or led to governmental action in terms of allocation of funds and concrete action?
4. Which unexpected and unintended positive and negative effects have occurred?
5. Did a specific part of the programme have a greater impact than another?

Summary of findings

1.0 Impact is not yet discernible in terms of supporting decision making which furthers peace and stability. Frameworks are being established and the gradual building of mutual trust and accountability, opening spaces for dialogue, will contribute on some level towards stability, cooperation and peace in the basins targeted, alongside other factors. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA]

1.1 In [GGRETA] impact would be enhanced by a strengthened focus on political economy, the informal and local actors and connecting the threats (e.g. major water users, uses which degrade water) and a focus on control alongside cooperation.

1.2 In [BRIDGE] impact can not be measured yet. Impact is more discernible through the Andes project through the empowering of women leaders, although impact is not shown.

1.3 The future impact of the Water Convention is most discernible where it is supporting countries to cooperate and implement IWRM regionally. It is too early to discern impact from the financing activities [UNECE]

2.0 Impact against SDG 6.5 has been delivered, by improving transboundary cooperation.

3.0 The most positive unintended consequences relate to the BRIDGE projects activities, or linkages made under the programmes having led to larger, funded programmes. The projects themselves have not led to concrete action at the national level in terms of fund allocation. No major unintended negative consequences have been discovered as a result of the projects themselves.

The impact section looks at impact to be achieved in terms of the framework provided by the programme. A framework for impact is described in the Theory of Change (see Figure 5 below), which was developed to guide understanding which specific parts of the programme will lead to a greater impact than others.¹⁴ The outcomes across the programmes are described under the “Effectiveness” evaluation questions (sections 5.3-5.5), for instance, the impact on capacities and awareness of individuals and stakeholders is discussed under these sections. The main impacts of the programme are described in the Credit Proposal (7F-07810.04), and individual programme proposals (BRIDGE, GGRETA and UNECE) and were updated following the conclusion of the data collection phase. The impacts in the right column demonstrate how the overarching impacts could occur in the future (i.e. in the longer term), and how they are derived from the outcomes.

¹⁴ Impact evaluation question 5

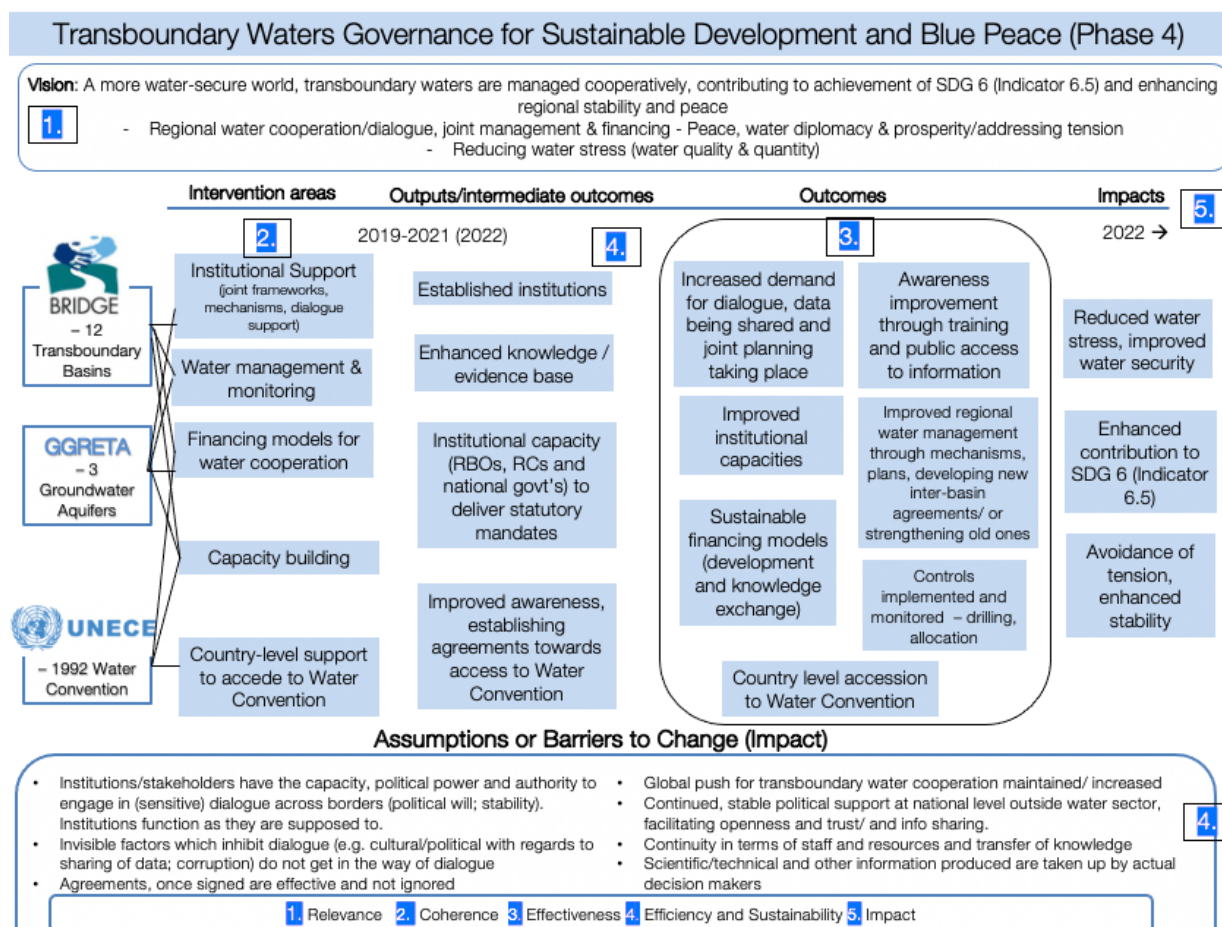
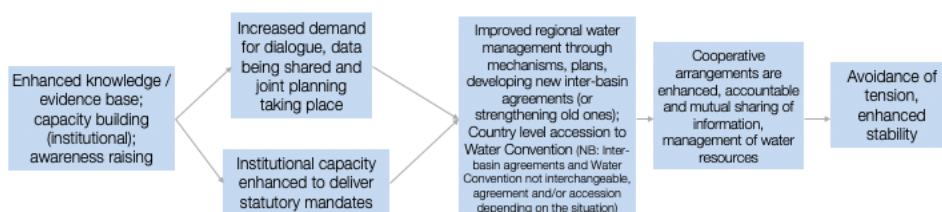


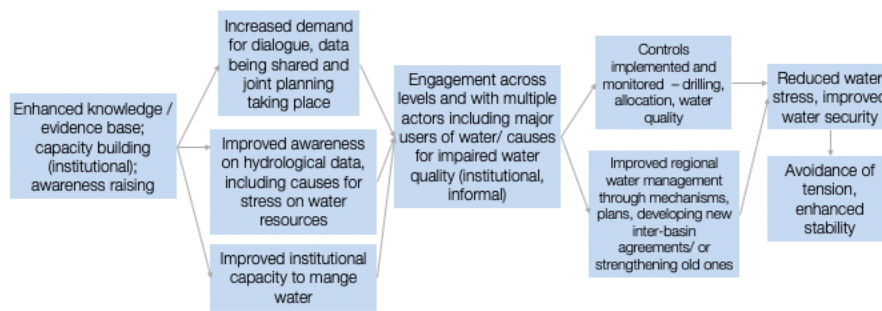
Figure 5: Theory of Change for the Transboundary Waters Governance for Sustainable Development and Blue Peace Programme (Phase 4)

The evaluation finds **two convincing causal pathways to impact**, with multiple outputs/outcomes when combined with other external influencing factors, may on some level contribute to impact. The causes (i.e outcomes) of the potential future impact are the most significant ones that may contribute to impact in the future. The two pathways are not comprehensive, but approximately outline the interventions that contribute to impact, the outcomes which will likely make the most difference.

The first causal pathway focuses on building trust and agreements that facilitate **cooperative sharing**, which in the future could be a factor in a more widespread cooperation and resolution. The building of such outcomes could potentially be a factor in **avoidance of tension**:



And a second causal pathway where the programme activities that contribute to agreements to manage water wisely **reduces water stress**. Where water stress is lessened and there is an improvement seen in **water security in the basin**, could be a factor in **lessened possibilities of tension**:



The findings below focus on the two pathways identified.

1.0 Impact is not yet discernible in terms of supporting decision making which furthers peace and stability. Frameworks are being established and the gradual building of mutual trust and accountability, opening spaces for dialogue, will contribute on some level towards stability, cooperation and peace in the basins targeted, alongside other factors. [BRIDGE] [GGRETA]

The TBWG programme has not yet matched the identified impacts, but some of the outcomes could contribute towards peace in the long-term. The greatest advances are at outcome (effectiveness) level, and represent a more modest and gradual building of mutual trust and agreements across conceptual and geographical lines, rather than a comprehensive collaborative framework governing the waters. The projects and policy changes are expected to or have already contributed to results in the short term, which will inform the long-term impacts.

The outcomes noted so far, which relate to signed inter-basin agreements, or access to the Water Convention (i.e. the first causal pathway), where links to decision making at higher political levels can be demonstrated will likely have the most impact in the interim periods, pending a more comprehensive regional approach to water management and peace.

Impact will also likely occur in ways that the programme does not track – through encouraging better governance and accountability in how decisions are made, based on evidence and sound analysis of data. The programmes have opened the way for a more accountable management of water, through sharing data openly, opening the way for dialogue. The individual projects are at different stages in achieving this. All programmes have been successful in fostering relationships, creating networks, spaces for dialogue which can result in impacts into the future, through joint programming.

[GGRETA] has highlighted the need for a conjunctive management approach of surface and groundwater resources, and improving sector level capacity to achieve this. The activities have so far raised awareness among project partners and beneficiaries on this topic, and count on long-lasting tools and developed capacities to do so. This aspect is significant, considering the baseline situation (where limited data and information existed prior to GGRETA, including their size and capacity). In Central Asia where water can be used as a coercive tool and where conflict over water is common at the local level but now they are jointly analyzing and discussing data, and Ocotepique GGRETA has delivered good progress, but it is too soon and too far down the causal pathway to have delivered indication of impact.

Impacts in terms of improving dialogue, although difficult to demonstrate, can assume that the platforms will result in improved accountability in the long-run, should the activities be sustainable. Stakeholders believe strongly that the situation has improved from before and after the programme, where people are now more open and have an evidence base to use as a starting point in dialogue (a stakeholder from a regional organization for Stampriet): “...the barriers to open discussion were flattened, people were secretive before. GGRETA opened opportunities to share data and tell each other what they are doing.” There is room for improvement, trying to have longer term projects that address more of the challenges that are being faced, and advocacy and resources are needed to help stakeholders to work together in the long term.

[BRIDGE] In terms of impact of the transboundary cooperation concerning the Buzi, Pungwe and Save basins it must be kept in mind that cooperation agreements on the Buzi and Pungwe basins were signed in 2019 and 2016 respectively so in these cases cooperation goes back some time. The agreement on Save and on the Tri-Basin together are new and will soon be approved. This means that at least for Buzi and Pungwe improvements in IWRM should already be in

place. To assess in the future the impact of BuPuSA BRIDGE Phase 4 will rely on a baseline study of the present situation. What can be noted at this stage is that activities that will be directly impacting communities and ecosystems in the basins are part of the GEF BuPuSa project which is being implemented by IUCN including strong focus on environment flows as well as natural disaster risk management.

In the Andes region, stakeholders recognise the importance of water management and hydro diplomacy in all levels to ensure a better future and reduction of local conflicts in the transboundary basins. For example, Lake Titicaca is the third biggest basin in Peru, it brings together a number of different people, communities and municipalities. Hence the importance of managing transboundary watersheds at all levels. As beneficiaries mentioned, “Water is life and if it is taken care of, we all are”.

1.1 In [GGRETA] impact is more directly attributed to a focus on the political economy of groundwater, the informal and local actors and connecting the threats to status (e.g. major water extractors, uses which degrade water) and a focus on control alongside cooperation. These aspects are not currently being explored to a great extent.

Given the focus on groundwater, furthering the principles of groundwater protection, adopting a risk-based approach and introducing the concept of controlling drilling of groundwater should be clearer. The GGRETA projects have gone a long way on working with institutions on both sides to define the real issues which threaten the aquifer. In Pretashkent, stakeholders on both sides have built a broad understating of the status of aquifer and the threats to it, and seem open to the possibility to jointly manage the aquifer which may include limit restrictions on abstraction on both sides. These ideas, now clear on both sides, have only been developed as a result of the recent numerical modelling which has identified that the volume of abstraction is higher than recharge, who the abstractors are and the value of the mineral water aquifer and need to protect it (the Uzbek side particularly highlighted the health benefits of mineral artesian water), and that recharge of the aquifer is either not happening or very low.¹⁵

A joint understanding if come a far way, but some position points need to be clarified, specifically on the aquifer drawdown now being monitored in some locations, but which side is responsible. However much decision and engagement needs to be done to decide how to engage with the major water users – talking to companies to the bottling companies is sensitive. The GGRETA project activities have been effective and moving the sharing and cooperation agenda, which is just starting to build a joint understanding of unsustainable water abstraction of Pretashkent. Project coordinators are aware and are thinking about these issues but have yet to develop a national or joint plan to address these fundamental, impact level ideas.

Quotes from GGRETA Pretashkent Stakeholders:

Stakeholders on the Kazak side: *“Now is the ideal time... we are running out of time to get permissions for groundwater use”; “The model helps us to know where we are to avoid catastrophic things... control is our biggest hope”*

Stakeholder on Uzbek side: *“The mineral water is valuable, we need to protect it together... we can use the model to decide on rational use of groundwater in the future”*

Current situation (stakeholder representing Committee for water management on Kazak side): *“When they try to get data from businesses they tell us they are not required by law to report to us”*

There is an insufficient connection between the gradual building of activities and move towards basin level agreements, and the indicators of peace and stability for the project to have established such thinking. The situation is complex and the project has identified, but is a long way from addressing the perverse set of policies that policies need resolution to have an impact on groundwater. For instance, in Kazakhstan at the local level, Akemats (municipalities) are paid a tax from users/abstractors of groundwater. Discussions with stakeholders revealed that this could lead to too many groundwater permits being issued (currently this is done without understanding aquifer vulnerability). The partners are aware that without a sustainable system which understands and optimizes water abstraction (who, when and how much should be abstracted), some of the GGRETA actions could be negligible. .

Across the projects, opportunities have been taken to discuss current and future threats to precious water resources in the countries should be harnessed. In Stampriet this includes mining operations is not a major present threat to the resource, but will impact on groundwater quality in the future. The “basin view” approach discussed by Stampriet undertaken earlier in the programme as part of the aquifer vulnerability assessment identifies that assess all possible

¹⁵ One interviewee suggested that it is not recharging, and another said they think it is recharging in one area on the Kazak side at a very low level.

sources of contamination of the aquifer and surrounding environment (i.e. the downstream/upstream and surface water/groundwater interactions) has gone some way in adopting a holistic view of the challenges to inform policy decisions and improve groundwater governance/management. In Stampriet, the long-term vision is for the STAS MCCM to move from data collection and exchange to joint strategizing and advising STAS countries on the management of the aquifer and its resources. Its ability to influence the threats raised, which includes mining operations, will inform the programmes' impact in the future.

1.3 In [BRIDGE], beyond the potential impact of providing the platform for dialogue (national and regional level), local impact from the Andes project is far down the impact chain.

Women have been trained in gender and technical issues in the Andes project and have demonstrated how to integrate community views into wider, government policy process. They were supported to submit comments to the Bolivian Water Bill (around 45 women were trained, so the scope is relatively small given the large geographical area). There is a real novelty to this activity, however some hindrances were noted. BRIDGE was an approximation to the territory and that the work at the local level requires several working spaces at the level of basin committees, beneficiaries, communities through projects and actions with more direct impact on the territory. The women are getting involved with participatory water monitoring, working with youth and engaging with municipalities. The bottom-up work requires a follow-up that has not been taken into account, as it's a new topic. Although there is a long way to go, the activities will help improve accountability on some level.

1.4 The future impact of the Water Convention is most discernible where it is supporting countries to cooperate and implement IWRM regionally. It is too early to discern impact from the financing activities [UNECE]

Joining the Convention is not a foregone conclusion that impact will be created, and UNECE has a broadened scope of cooperation beyond the signing of the Convention. The case of Central Asia is a case in point, where Kazakhstan (2001), Turkmenistan (2012) and Uzbekistan (2007) acceded to the UNECE Water Convention, and beyond that there are numerous existing water agreements a global, regional, basin and bilateral levels. The GGRETA original proposal highlights ongoing challenges – that in spite of the fact that all these regional and international legal instruments exist, the reality of the regional cooperation on transboundary waters is that it still needs to be improved, and in particular for transboundary aquifers.

It is hopeful that some current instances of regional cooperation being furthered through the UNECE support will contribute to impact in the future through national agreements, and in the context, build integrated management of regional waters. There is evidence that UNECE is supporting the country level to be able to join, and using the opportunity to encourage neighbouring states. This in turn has supported some countries to develop joint management projects that will go a long way towards reducing water stress and managing tension. An example includes the support UNECE is providing to water management in Senegal and Mauritania, covering from Guinea Bissau and The Gambia (all countries have established links to UNECE through having recently joined the Convention, or are in the process of joining; and share the Senegal-Mauritanian Aquifer Basin). A declaration signed at the 9th session of the Meeting of the Parties (2021), outlined a shared commitment to set up a permanent mechanism for the management of the aquifer basin. UNECE along with partners (IGRAC, the Geneva Water Hub, the EU are mentioned) have been supporting the development of technical and political cooperation on the basin, setting up dialogue through a Regional Working Group for Transboundary Cooperation, together with the regional basin organizations (OMVS and OMVG). The platform enabled a common vision, and a regional project ("Consolidated management of the Senegal Mauritania basin", a 9 million USD project). Speaking to the Gambia stakeholder, the actions have created a positive basis and idea of future impacts ("We are excited about the positive benefits and impacts").

The financing activities are currently focussing on drawing awareness and global attention to allow for a longer-term water cooperation. This includes facilitating knowledge sharing and strengthening links between key sector actors and funders (e.g. IFIs, development banks, World Bank) on the issue. There are some indications of gaining traction at the conceptual level – for instance, the Lake Chad Basin Commission have recommended a publication should be summarized for advocacy, and Guinea Bissau has connected the activities to the national water fund – however the activities are too early to demonstrate any impact.

2.0 Impact against SDG 6.5¹⁶ has been delivered, by improving transboundary cooperation.

The programmes have yet to demonstrate impacts on people's lives, at the community level, through improved access to water resources. However, BRIDGE, GGRETA and UNECE actively support SDG target 6.5, which requests all countries to implement IWRM through transboundary cooperation. SDG monitoring frameworks provide a normative framework for monitoring target 6.5. The programmes contribute most strongly to the transboundary cooperation elements while promoting IWRM principles within national and regional authorities (local levels are less of focus for the programmes).

For SDG indicator 6.5.2, which measures transboundary water cooperation, it is shown that 153 countries share transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers, while only 24 countries report having operational arrangements in place for all their transboundary waters. The replication elements of the programmes (captured in previous sections) will contribute towards this indicator. SDG 6.5.2 monitoring also shows a continued low level of cooperation, with only 56 countries reporting (115 of 147 sharing rivers have reported) at least 90% coverage of their transboundary river and lake basin area is covered by an operational arrangement. BRIDGE, GGRETA and UNECE are contributing towards operational arrangements in this regard. GGRETA delivered the online workshop "Data compilation and sharing on transboundary aquifers with relation to SDG indicator 6.5.2 reporting: focus on Southern Africa region", for targeted African River Basin Organizations. The workshop was delivered in cooperation with UNECE.

The most recent Progress Report on Transboundary Water Cooperation (2021) shows there are few agreements in place for groundwater aquifers: 12 countries report having a total of eight aquifer-specific arrangements in place. The Ocotepeque project (Statement of Intent on the Governance); is one of the 12 examples and the report noted the Bi-National Commission (Ecuador-Peru) as the major improvement for Latin America and the Caribbean (BRIDGE support). The report describes that due to the lack of knowledge on groundwater and Transboundary aquifers many countries will not achieve the SDG 6. Hence, investments are still needed to create capacity for the assessment of these systems as a prerequisite for cooperation.

3.0 The most positive unintended consequences relate to the [BRIDGE] projects activities, or linkages made under the programmes having led to larger, funded programmes. The projects themselves have not led to concrete action at the national level in terms of fund allocation. No major unintended negative consequences have been discovered as a result of the projects themselves.

As an unexpected positive result, BRIDGE has contributed to the elaboration of the project Management of competing water uses and associated ecosystems in Pungwe, Buzi and Save basins to which IUCN has USD 6 million in funding from GEF. IUCN has contracted GWP to execute the project (timeframe from 2019 – 2023). The project seeks to promote holistic approaches to the water-food-energy nexus, with specific interest on connected ecosystems. The preparation of the project began in 2016/2017. As implementation began in 2021, the GEF project has recognized the roadmap for the BuPuSa tri-basin agreement. This project has a strong focus on disaster risk management through installation of hydrometeorological equipment, capacity building of local disaster risk management committees and mapping of flood and drought risk in the catchment areas. It also contributes to establishment of the quantities needed for environmental flows in the basins which is a comprehensive exercise that requires specialist knowledge. The data collection and sharing protocol which was initiated under BRIDGE is being finalized under this project and it is expected that this project will contribute to data collection although this part will require additional financing.

Despite some of the project level having leveraged further funding, the evaluation team has not uncovered any situation where the projects have led to a concrete action at the national level in terms of fund allocation. For BuPuSa, the governments are not allocating their own funds to the project although there are in kind contributions. The ministries are coordinating and involving other relevant institutions in stakeholder consultations so there is knowledge about the project more widely.

However, in Bolivia in the framework of the GEF, this year is the right year for updating the Binational Master Plan. A strategic action plan will be developed in the work of transboundary basins with the GEF and BRIDGE methodology. Many of the positive experiences of BRIDGE will be discussed in local workshops. The experience of the women

¹⁶ "By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate"

leaders of Lake Titicaca is one that has the greatest potential to be replicated within the framework of this action plan, which, if approved, will have a budget allocation. Additionally, by having a water bill in the approval process, which includes border basin management issues, it can count on a budget for its implementation.

5.0 Lessons and Conclusions

In evaluating BRIDGE, GGRETA and UNECE partial actions, under the framework of SDC's TBWG programme the team concludes that the programmes are **highly relevant, effective and coherent** in terms of creating a favourable environment for countries to negotiate transboundary water management agreements. The programmes demonstrate a relevant set of actions that comprise transboundary water programmes, what cooperation looks like in practice, and addressing the inevitable challenges that arise when bringing together diverse stakeholders around sharing water resources under increasing pressures. The TBWG programme as a whole, is well thought out (i.e. encompassing surface water, ground water, and a range policy and legal frameworks that promote wise management), and is an analytical and consistent programme, with strong conceptual synergies across the actions. International water expert level interviewees suggest that SDC is a significant actor in the field, and the programmes are important globally in demonstrating how principles of IWRM are not only talked about, but practiced and demonstrated on the ground in transboundary contexts.

The evaluators did not see evidence of major changes in strategy between the previous and the current Phase actions of some programmes, based on previous evaluations or lessons learned exercises. Considering the evaluation covers Phase 4 actions, there are some undeveloped aspects, and some aspects of the projects do not characterize mature programmes. Despite this, one of the key achievements of the TBWG programmes has been the ability to be **adaptive to change** and the ability to support hydro diplomacy by taking non-linear approaches, considering and responding to the complex environments and themes (e.g. water scarcity, fragility), and the changing political, economic and social conditions. The programmes have, in varying capacities, been able to capitalize on where delivery is possible, shifting away from strict targets, and working in flexible ways to take advantage of opportunities as they arise, and even defining what success (at outcome level) looks like in a fluid way. There has been a focus on achieving results, especially at the outcome level. In locations where action has not been possible (lack of political will), projects have shifted to focussing on smaller more strategic actions, and then mobilising when larger progress is possible. Specifically, the gradual building of mutual trust and capacities to implement IWRM (especially of regional water organisations, where capacities are known to be low but also of national actors) has been a positive aspect of the programme.

Although many of the activities are not yet demonstrating impact on the ground, the outcomes achieved (in terms of progressively building trust and capacity, often leading to joint plans and agreements) are significant. Another successful aspect of the connections made through the three programmes, are the **leveraged synergies leading to achievement outside the programme**, which includes other funded programmes and the growth of new initiatives. The evaluators have knowledge of some of these programmes and initiatives but there might be many initiatives and linkages than have been revealed during the interviews and desk study.

The review of the three partial actions allows to draw some **lessons** from the transboundary water programming that could be input into future programme design. The lessons focus on BRIDGE and GGRETA, although some are applicable to UNECE:

- **Coherence at programming/theme/strategy level is high, but there is scope for improvement to foster better learning across the programmes and draw synergies between different actors.** Programme managers (particularly global level, amongst UNECE, BRIDGE and UNESCO) input to other TBWG programme partners', events, guidelines etc. However, there is scope for improved coherence through closer ways of working. The programmes work as individual parts and learning across the programmes could be enhanced. UNECE for instance, could be better supported by on the ground examples. The annual meetings between the three partners are useful to share information and plans but more could be done for the meetings to be places where strategies are discussed.
- Different approaches to level (**regional, national, local**) are represented. Few programmes address all three. National can be overlooked for regional, and most overlook local. The extent to which regional, national and local level organisations and institutions have been included or supported has to a large degree depended on the stage in which the transboundary cooperation is at. This means that projects focused on high-level negotiations have included the local level less than projects focused on implementation. In some cases, the national level (domestic dimension) has been under-supported in the earlier Phases in terms of supporting

governments to understand their own policy and legal frameworks and capacities to engage in transboundary water cooperation. This has led to the need to resolve such issues in later stages (e.g. in the case of Ocotepaque/GGRETA). Each transboundary water situation has its own idiosyncrasies, and support is required to partners to understand their own approach to transboundary water negotiation, and where this does not take place, can inhibit the ability to embed and immediate replication potential. A success factor for the Stampriet has been to nominate national focal points, who were able to articulate each country's needs (including local issues) and priorities which informed interventions. The focal points also champion the programme to their own Ministries to invest in info management etc.

- **The support of existing regional organisations** was a benefit to the projects. The projects which had an existing RBO were able to advance progress quicker (e.g. Stampriet/GGRETA). Similarly, the RBO was able to advance building partnerships, acting as an interlocutor with national, regional groundwater initiatives. This also helped to embed quicker and more effectively. However capacity can be lacking – in the case of SADC-GMI, human capacity is good, but human resources and financial resources are lacking.
- **Soft skills have been at times underappreciated** across the programmes, including the **sensitization aspects** across levels (Ministry, RBOs, local actors etc) to influence thinking to cooperate and the need to continuously **facilitate**. Much of the awareness raising throughout the project were shouldered by the project coordinators (consultants) and project officers (IUCN, UNESCO, UNECE) mostly at the regional level (but also sometimes at headquarters), in their day-to-day work. This was not the case in BRIDGE BuPuSa though where most capacity building was focused on hydro diplomacy, negotiation skills and international law. The facilitation skill in transboundary water programming, encouraging stakeholders to gain consensus and move forward together, has been a considerable element of the programmes. The ability of the staff to further this was a success factor of the projects.
- COVID-19 restrictions have had an impact on the programmes, and the ability to consolidate. The general lessons of continuing work that were learnt during the pandemic (i.e. home working, online meetings) were not necessarily applicable transboundary water negotiation, where **trust is built in person**. The projects where trust had already been built prior to the pandemic were more able to “get back on their feet” than others i.e., in the case of BRIDGE BuPuSa. To work at the local level and consultation between different stakeholder groups, were not possible. In general the “middle to highest” levels i.e. Ministry/government officials, RBO officials and organization staff were able to meet online, and workshops could be conducted online. Village level/ field stakeholders were not able to engage because they did not have the connectivity to take part in online meetings, or they were not accustomed to online conferencing platforms.
- **Broad systemic analyses** are critical to undertake at the start, and at times, throughout the projects (considering the changeable nature, and duration of programmes) and inform a wide range of stakeholders to engage with. For GGRETA Stampriet, this has included taking a basin approach, connecting the activities on the surface that impact the groundwater which led to the recognition of the need to bring mining actors into the project. BRIDGE has a long history in many of the basins worked in and are able to leverage their knowledge and relationships built up, and where the investment is worthwhile have deployed political economy analysis (PEA) to inform the set of partners to engage with.
- Related to the point above, sometimes the governance lens, **including the involvement of non-state actors (informal or formal) including the private sector actors** who can have a huge adverse impact on water resources, which can at times, lead to conflict, was lacking. The representation from sectors beyond the water sector e.g. mining, energy etc, was also lacking although in BuPuSa they were involved in earlier Phase stakeholder meetings.
- The individual programmes touch the surface of **regional peace-building** although the positive contributions are clear. However the difference between the more modest programme contributions to water cooperation in a specific basin to peace-building overall remains unaddressed. The most influential project participants appear to be the MoFA focal points, but there remain many questions on how the focal points, or information being passed to MoFA staff are actually able to influence their diplomatic (bilateral and multilateral) outlook and affairs. In other projects (e.g. BuPuSa), the MoFA doesn't seem to play any significant role.
- At times, some of the projects can be overly focussed on **technical and scientific actions**. Although in BRIDGE BuPuSa the overall focus was on develop the agreement documents for setting up the organisation and legal structures for the tri-basin organisation. Technical aspects were moved into an IUCN GEF project which began implementation in 2021. While such technical assessments form a valuable evidence base and foundation to inform decision making, there needs to be a balance on striking a focus outwards on **risk management and water crises**, tension over resources in the local and national context. A focus alone on

technical/ functional issues can limit the project in the long term. The risk-based approach needs to extend to political and governance issues (including at the local level). Although nuanced, a focus on cooperation alone can also hinder the other important factors of environmental sustainability.

- The TBWG programmes have **invested heavily in capacity**. However, the outcomes and impact of such activities have not been measured sometimes assumed (i.e. through the take up of a new policy). As such the evaluation has struggled to verify the claims made on improvements without any systematic monitoring of outcomes.¹⁷
- In terms of **sustainability**, achievement of the agreement is the largest contribution towards a long-term legal framework that will continue beyond the project. Many agreements fall through, or are ignored, so the sustainability is not guaranteed however the ability of the programmes to influence such possibilities are beyond the scope of the TBWG programme actors.
- Although **gender** was not a focus of the evaluation, for BuPuSa, water management is very dominated by men and all the key informants interviewed or contacted except one were men. As mentioned in other parts of this evaluation the partnership in BuPuSa is both informal and formal and goes back a long time, so it has been the most straight forward to continue that way since there seemingly has not been any intention or activity towards better gender balance.

6.0 Recommendations

Considering the conclusions and lessons, alongside the findings throughout the evaluation process and reflected in this report, the evaluators submit the following recommendations:

SDC Transboundary Water Governance Programming:

10. **Synergies should be strengthened across the programmes** from stronger sharing of lessons, political knowledge and insights at all levels (international, and regional) and the ability to reflect on experiences, between IUCN, UNESCO, UNECE and SDC GPW. In the case of Central Asia, this could be extended to Blue Peace (Carec Secretariat and their partners). At the international level, the annual sharing of experiences should go more into strategy and lessons (rather than reporting activities), and potentially be held more frequently. Having a small group of experts to advise and act as an independent “check” would also support ongoing planning, although we accept this would have budget implications. The international experts could include a governance expert (who supports a wide definition of governance, understanding power dynamics and sources of power and social change processes), a transboundary water expert and an expert that supports complex, systemic programming (i.e. facilitation, complex process design). Focussing on water sector experts alone could inhibit supporting strategies that look at the bigger picture, and how the programmes input to a wider process of facilitating peace-building. At the regional level, project officers could share stakeholder mappings, assessments and strategies (e.g. Carec in Central Asia is starting to work on engaging with mining companies, the lessons could benefit GGRETA in the future’s plans to engage large private water users). At the basin level, UNECE and IUCN/BRIDGE and UNESCO/GGRETA would benefit from sharing information on target countries to appreciate how the Water Convention can support basin agreements (and vice versa), and how by adopting the principles of the Water Convention and supporting developing basin agreements (as well as unlocking further funding).
11. **A Theory of Change connecting programme actions to peace is necessary** (followed by a more comprehensive mapping/assessment activities that explore the assumptions and barriers to change) to uphold statements made about strengthening stability and peace. This action should be coordinated with Blue Peace. This would include the connection between making progress on bilateral basin level agreements and ways of working together on management, and how such actions might contribute to regional stability. The Theory of Change should look at the separate issues for regional/national level tensions and security and local tensions/ clashes and the interactions between the levels. The process may uncover new stakeholders to work with, or new approaches to be taken. For instance, many of the programme actions support capacities at the national and regional level, and these activities might be strengthened while localised clashes take place over water in the same basins. The local dynamics can be ignored when looking alone at regional/national levels. One of the projects (Pretashkent) discussed how perverse local policies exist for granting drilling licensees (alongside issues

¹⁷ A traffic light system exists for BRIDGE, but the evaluators were not able to review the system.

- with corruption), which if not addressed, could negate actions at the national or regional level. A wider understanding of conflict could inform all scoping.
12. A more systematic approach to **engaging at the local level with local actors**, is needed which would encompass policies, practices, incentives, and the informal actors involved. There are small examples, some executed and some are ideas (e.g. working with women in Bolivia for BRIDGE Andes, ideas to work with bottling plant in Pretashkent through the Akemats and their monitoring function). Although the examples are few and far between, they could be brought together and programmes could strategize on how best to work at the local level with partners.
 13. A **more formal connection to Blue Peace** and TBWG programmes should be made. The partners are highly receptive and await SDC to suggest projects to be connected, and the focal points within Blue Peace – however partners should actively seek out contacts themselves where links haven’t been made. Many of the weakness across the programmes are areas that are seen to be Blue Peace strengths. For instance, Blue Peace could be able to foster a connection between programmes to Swiss Diplomatic representation in specific basins where extra support is needed. The Blue Peace Index 2020 states that “focusing only on scientific and technical matters could weaken the impact of findings... the most effective transboundary arrangements link directly to high-level political officials, have independent status and are capable of regulating specific decisions”. Lessons, agreements and achievements could be reported to Blue Peace, so high-level actors can hold actors accountable on the technicalities. Blue Peace could also support TBWG programmes to on the media and awareness element, and working at the grassroots level, a weakness across the programmes. Stakeholders across the programmes are also very interested in supporting their young professionals more systematically, another strength of Blue Peace.
 14. Working adaptively has been a highlight across programmes, however **the more systematic use of innovative tools for programme design** (which can be taken up at various stages throughout programming to update approaches) could strengthen systemic thinking and make progress on complex challenges. Since the programmes were initiated, programme tools for complex programming have been strengthened, including systems thinking, power analysis and scenario planning. Training at project officer level (including consultants), of these tools, even online, would benefit the projects to consider different approaches at making progress. A training that looks at improving **facilitation skills** could also support staff to navigate different interests and push dialogue ahead. Systemic analyses could better support bringing in **other sectors** that influence water use (e.g. energy, mining, food) into programmes, seen to be a weakness across projects.
 15. Outwards, a culture of **knowledge sharing** at water sector level could be improved. Global water forums do not always reach a wide range of actors. Programme level websites should be actively updated with new lessons, and concise guidebooks or policy briefs developed to suit a practitioner audience. Frameworks for **monitoring, reporting and communicating** (includes quantifying) outcomes of the programme should be improved to better capture the outputs and complex outcomes, that might occur through non-linear approaches. The information should cover **increases in capacity** as an integral part of TBWG programming, as well as reach of the programme, beyond the basin agreements signed.

Partial Action 1: BRIDGE

16. In the design of phase 5, it is recommended to ensure that local level organizations, civil society and communities are involved in the implementation of the activities to advance integrated IWRM. This would lead to improved livelihoods and more sustainable use of natural resources while engaging and guaranteeing mutual responsibility. The IUCN in-country capacity on ecosystems, conservation and governance at all levels could be put to achieve the expected results. In many cases, the approval of transboundary water management agreements is seen as an endpoint rather than a starting point. This could also be the case with the BuPuSa tri-basin agreement, although the presence of the roadmap will address this risk as many issues to be addressed in the basins are captured there. Nevertheless, through increased presence nationally, IUCN can assist the governments technically with solving these issues which are often related to unsustainable use of natural resources leading to pollution of water, reduction in fish stock and generally in biodiversity in the rivers, increased soil erosion etc. exacerbating poverty, food insecurity and depleting natural resources in and around protected areas. In the case of BuPuSa a phase 5 where the agreement is approved should focus on assisting the RBO in addressing these issues to find concrete solutions with impact on the ground. Through this approach IUCN can also increase its visibility among the stakeholders, beneficiaries and potential donors. In Andes, after the constitution of the binational commission there is a need to work with the local level, not only

constituting local committees per basins but implementing its activities by closely working with communities and RBOs reinforcing their capabilities to excessive an effective role in IWRM.

Partial Action 2: GGRETA

17. GGRETA Pretashkent is now on a good trajectory with the validation of the numerical model, and Stampriet is actively being replicated. In the future, GGRETA's strength at advancing scientific and technical cooperation (and thus, using the numerical model as a basis for future programmes), could be complemented by a **broadening of scope to influence groundwater governance at the local level**, and strengthen concepts which address the **major users of groundwater** (and uses that threaten its quality), with a plan on how to engage directly or indirectly. An assessment on local policies and practices that govern groundwater use in practice (including the themes how licences are granted and monitored and the incentives that authorities have to regulate, what groups hold power over groundwater decisions, any actors that drill without licenses, any corrupt practices etc) would help to situate and guide programme activities at the local level in the future. Many such actors, because they are private or informal can be overlooked by projects that focus on formal institutions. A stronger risk-based approach in the future (the concepts are already there in varying capacities), also looking at the scarcity of water resources the key activities driving this, would better orient action in the future. In the future, embedding actions in the Commissions (Pretashkent) and potentially, an RBO should take place, with project staff aware and planning for the possibilities ahead.

Partial Action 3: UNECE, 1992 Waters Convention

18. UNECE has been successful at using various opportunities to encourage new countries to join the Convention, and on bringing actors on transboundary water financing together, and creating an effective platform to define and frame approaches. UNECE has been harnessing various opportunities to support countries to join the Convention, supported by regional actors to enable strengthened joint management. The various initiatives are well designed to address the most important issues being faced on a high-level. A continuous needs/status assessment of countries having acceded to the Convention, to ensure the Convention is playing some role in supporting peace, sustainable development and security in the long term would help with accountability on how the Convention actively supports long term goals, and ensure countries don't fall by the wayside. An approach on how to manage the new power dynamics between old and new members; and members who are participating (i.e. joining the Meeting of the Parties) versus those who are joining could be considered, so that a constructive and ongoing process of exchange of experiences and definition of how the principles of the Convention can be implemented in the face of new pressures and challenges, takes place. Older members, and members who are unlikely to join the Convention could be engaged more actively to transfer experiences.

Annex A - Transboundary Waters Governance Programme Baseline (Phase 4 – at project initiation, early 2019)

BRIDGE (began 2011)	• Tools are consolidated, approaches and in place and there is a demand for them • Partnerships formed in 14 basins as a basis for deepening and making on the ground results and impacts and meaning scaling up (hypothesis: impacts should be demonstrated in the evaluation, and scaling up from previous). In all cases, tailored and adaptive activities at multiple levels have achieved incremental steps forward in cooperation for improved water management. • Institutional arrangements have been strengthened and capacity building processes (including bringing together new actors) has been effective to foster dialogue • Bridge now has a global branded platform for transboundary dialogue and support services • For BuPuSa activities are relatively new. Improvements have been made towards joint Integrated Water Resources Management between Mozambique and Zimbabwe. I • BRIDGE has facilitated binational cooperation on the determination and management of environmental flows, (i.e., Environmental Flows Assessment on the Zambezi river, Zambia 2018) which is critical for the implementation of IWRM measures, as the two countries derive critical ecological and socio-economic benefits from river flows. • Through partnership with South African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat and WaterNet, SADC's capacity-building arm, BRIDGE has facilitated field demonstration and will be strengthening the legal framework for transboundary cooperation through shaping the annex to the Bilateral Agreement between Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This work has inspired neighbouring countries to recognise the importance of environmental flows for the management of river basins in general and of transboundary rivers in particular: as an example, the Limpopo Watercourse states have decided to develop their capacity to plan and manage environmental flows. • For Andes region, transboundary water institutions have been established and strengthened through BRIDGE training, dialogues, facilitation and strategic advice during the third phase of the programme. BRIDGE supported the drafting of the Agreement establishing the Binational Commission for the Integrated Management of Transboundary Water Basins between Ecuador and Peru, signed in October 2017. This instrument will serve as the basis for the establishment of a water cooperation organisation for all of the shared basins between Ecuador and Peru, building on the original Binational Commission for the Zarumilla River. • In the TDPS basin (Peru/Bolivia), BRIDGE strengthened capacities of the Lake Titicaca Authority (ALT) staff, including through technical exchange with the International Commission for the Protection of the Rhine (ICPR). In both basins, the knowledge base has been strengthened at multiple levels, and a renewed connection with Champions has fostered more cooperation between stakeholders. Through successful agreements with Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other projects working in the region, BRIDGE has also expanded its impact on governmental institutions and on regional processes. BRIDGE helped review and design Binational Planning for integrated water resources management (IWRM) of three basins shared between Ecuador and Colombia, contributing an important building block for the cooperation on water resources between the two countries.
GGRETA	• Groundwater assessments in place in Phase 1 and 2nd phase focussed on improving cross-border dialogue based on shared management tools and foster improvements in governance, laying the foundations • A common methodology developed to create an enabling environment for transboundary water cooperation: capacity building, joint activities, shared data and provision of a management tool (to form a common science understanding, establish trust) • A joint management mechanism for the Stampret embedded into its River Basin Organization (ORASECOM) for fully transboundary IWRM, model to be promoted (RBO being implemented). A schedule of implementation was also approved, with implementation being reportedly in progress. • In Pretashkent, need expressed to revise national water legislation, to include provisions on groundwater legislation. A training manual developed "Hydrodiplomacy, Legal and Institutional Aspects of Water Resources Governance: From the international to the domestic perspective" was tailored to the Central Asian context and will provide guidance for initiating reforms at national level. Sensitivities are noted, which leads to capacity building activities

	• While Central Asian countries have acceded to the 1992 Water Convention, there are no basin agreements covering the Pretashkent aquifer • A Groundwater hydro-diplomacy and conflicts prevention Toolkit (including a webinar) that considers a methodology and simulation exercises on principles of conflict and cooperation based on serious gaming and review of historical benefits-and-opportunities for conception and causes of conflict. • UNESCO-UNECE cooperation on monitoring of SDG indicator 6.5.2 • Legal framework for cooperation has been developing since collapse of Soviet Union, slowly moving towards IWRM and RBOs system • Uzbekistan only party in the region to UN Watercourses Convention (2007) • In Trifinio, there is no joint governance mechanism, however parties are introduced and sensitised and consensus has been built and, on the opportunity, to nest the Ocotepaque-Citala joint cooperation mechanism in the structure of the Plan Trifinio
UNECE	• In many basin situation is inadequate to tackle the existing problems and upcoming challenges, for a variety of reasons, including weak legal and/or institutional frameworks insufficient implementation of joint policies and regulations, low human and institutional capacity, lack of resources made available, lack of integration of water-related policies at the national and international levels, etc. Low political will towards sustainability and transboundary cooperation, in some cases based on the (mis)perception that finding cooperative solutions hinders national interests rather than bringing benefits, is often an additional challenge to overcome • The Convention was adopted in 1992, entered into force in 1996 and counts to date 46 Parties, almost all countries sharing transboundary waters in the pan-European region, as well as Chad and Senegal, the first African countries which acceded to the Water Convention in 2018, Ghana in 2020, Guinea Bissau and Togo in 2021. Novel approach for twinning between Parties and non-Parties is promising, to accelerate accessions • The UN-Water report “Progress on Transboundary Water Cooperation 2018 - Global baseline for SDG indicator 6.5.2” carried out by the UNECE and UNESCO, the first ever global report on the status of transboundary water cooperation based on official data from countries, shows that for the 62 countries where the SDG indicator 6.5.2 can be calculated only 58% of their transboundary basin area is covered by operational arrangements. And only 17 of those countries have all their transboundary basins covered. This falls far short of having all transboundary basins covered by operational arrangements by 2030, in line with the ambition set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. • The pilot reporting under the Convention which was combined with the baseline reporting on SDG indicator 6.5.2 has had a response rate over 70% (107 replies from the 153 countries sharing transboundary waters). This is astounding for a newly introduced indicator and largely depends on the strong network of focal points responsible for transboundary water cooperation established under the Water Convention and on the high attention raised on the reporting. • Momentum has been built and higher political attention has been built: the launch of the International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028, water and peace as recurring topics in the UN Security Council, as well as the review of the dedicated water goal of the Sustainable Development Goals at the High-level Political Forum 2018, all represent ground-breaking developments for this topic. The Water Convention played an active role in this, by supporting the conceptualization and methodology of SDG indicator 6.5.2 and in the IAEG negotiations, during which the Convention’s Parties and secretariat were able to catalyse support for the indicator. • A regional workshop on transboundary water cooperation in Latin America was organized in October 2016 in Merida in cooperation with CODIA and CONAGUA. This has led to growing interest In Latin America, in particular in Peru, El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Colombia. With regards to benefits of cooperation, benefit assessment exercises were carried out in the Okavango-Cubango basin in cooperation with the World Bank and Okavango Commission, in the Sio-Malaba-Malakisi basin in cooperation with IUCN and IGAD and in the Drina basin. • over the past 20 years, the work under the Convention has evolved to respond to changing needs of Parties and often non-Parties in implementing the Convention, for instance addressing emerging issues such as ecosystem valuation, adaptation to climate change and the water/food/energy/ecosystem nexus in the transboundary context.

Annex B - Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation sub-question
Q1 Relevance - Are we doing the right things? (Program design, approach, partnerships and beneficiaries)	1. Is the program design still relevant in the current water crisis and the pandemic context?
	2. Is the programme approach (design, method, location and duration) and organization appropriate to meet the objectives?
	3. Are the established partnerships relevant to attain the proposed objectives?
	4. Are all intended beneficiaries at the three different levels (regional, national and local) being targeted?
Q2: Coherence - How well does the intervention fit? The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions under the GPW transboundary/water & peace umbrella; and in the national/regional context?	1. Are the Water Governance programme's interventions aligned with national priorities and policies of partner countries and partner institutions?
	2. Are the Water Governance programme's interventions coordinated with other project/programmes (both inside and outside the programme – including within the 3 programmes and other donor funded programmes) in the concerned sector and are they complementary?
	3. Are the programmes synergized with the Blue Peace programme in terms of the vision and goals?
Q3 Effectiveness - The extent to which interventions have achieved objectives and overall goals as planned?	1. To what extent have the outputs been achieved and to what extent have they contributed to the achievement of the expected outcomes?
	2. Is the transfer of know-how sufficient and adequate in the program? Have strategies been developed and implemented to replicate the achievements of the programme?
	3. Has the program supported an existing or new development of a policy or legal framework?
Q4: Efficiency and sustainability - Were the results achieved in a cost-effective way and what will remain?	1. Are the program funds currently being used with efficiency (cost-benefit analysis)? What measures have been taken during planning and implementation to ensure that resources are used efficiently?
	2. Has project management adjusted when faced with unexpected delays which hamper normal implementation i.e. difficult contexts, emergencies hamper the normal implementation of the program i.e. due to COVID-19?
	3. Are measures and strategies in place to sustain achievements of the program?
	4. How are the implementing organizations embedded in national, regional or global structures that can support their sustainability and effectiveness? Have project activities supported such institutional embedding and consolidation?
	5. What is the level of satisfaction amongst direct beneficiaries?
	6. What is the potential for scaling up?

Q5 Impact - How are we contributing to the overall goal? Recommendation level questions:	1. To what extent do the actual impacts caused by the programme interventions match the targeted impacts?
	2. Has there been impact delivered at basin level against SDG 6 (specifically Target 6.5)?
	3. How did the results of the partial actions translate into actual policy adaptation / reform, or led to governmental action in terms of allocation of funds and concrete action?
	4. Which unexpected and unintended positive and negative effects have occurred?
	5. Did a specific part of the programme have a greater impact than another?