UNECE PEOPLE-FIRST PPP IMPACT ASSESSMENT TOOL

Implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through effective “People-first Public-Private Partnerships”

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I. Avant propos

A new approach to Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) is needed

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for different forms of partnerships, including PPPs as a tool to close the infrastructure gap ...

Trillions of US dollars are needed across a wide spectrum of infrastructure and Governments by themselves do not have the resources to deliver on these projects. This is especially true of the low and middle-income countries.

... but the complexity in the design and management of these long-term public-private arrangements also presents some limitations and challenges ...

These challenges and limitations of PPPs are important to bear in mind when analyzing the potential of PPPs to promote sustainable development. In order to realize their social value beyond their economic value, PPPs need to be ‘fit for purpose’. That means PPPs moving from being a mere financing tool to becoming an instrument that also provides ‘value for people’ and ‘value for the planet’.

... which require a new ‘People-first’ approach.

In this context, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has developed the People-first PPP approach and 10 guiding principles to provide a model that will foster access to essential public services for all with sustainable development as its objective and putting people at the core.

Evaluation methodology as a compass for People-first models of PPPs

Launching a new model of PPPs requires new tools to evaluate the impact of PPPs ...

The UNECE has spearheaded a movement toward a new model of PPPs called ‘People-first’ PPP and in this regard, it has argued for a mechanism to evaluate infrastructure and PPP projects and to determine the extent to which they meet the People-first PPP designation.

... that can measure impact and score projects ...

People-first PPPs are defined according to five specific outcomes: access and equity; economic effectiveness; replicability; environmental sustainability and resilience; and, stakeholder engagement. These generic outcomes can be analyzed, and have benchmarks elaborated added that can be scored to assess the extent to which projects are People-first.

... using the methodology to foster improvements in the projects themselves.

It is important that the methodology is used to improve projects. Some projects will be evaluated and might not meet the criteria. But users of the tool – typically governments - can adjust their projects accordingly. In addition, realistically few projects can deliver on each of the five rather specific outcomes.
The evaluation methodology is not merely a calculus or a ‘pass or fail’

The methodology should however not be used as a slide rule to describe projects as either ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘pass or fail’ but rather...

This methodology should be used incrementally as a path finder to move projects towards People-first solutions and outcomes.

... integrated into a robust Programme to promote People-first PPPs, ...

The Programme needs ‘converts’ and can give incentives to go further as People-first PPPs are more challenging to do than conventional PPPs, where the emphasis is solely on ‘value for money’. Some People-first PPPs might also be more expensive to do.

... building a data base of People-first PPP projects ...

UNECE has a substantial database of case studies that showcase elements of the People-first outcomes that make people the main beneficiaries and which have sustainable development as the core. These projects can become ‘flagships’ to inspire Governments in other countries.

... and this will then become a source of encouragement to project sponsors to go even further in their strategies and aspirations for their projects.

Projects can always be improved upon and challenges are constantly changing. Models need to be tested and adjusted. Learning is a continuous exercise and the evaluation methodology can contribute to this process.

Measurable, neutral, adaptable benchmarks are the key to an effective evaluation methodology

The benchmarks should be both qualitative and quantitative ...

Benchmarks have been elaborated for each of the five outcomes, that leaves as little as possible to subjective interpretation. A major challenge to developing any evaluation methodology is whether the evaluation that is done using such a methodology, can be genuinely presented as ‘non-biased’.

... although not too many.

Realistically, the people who should be using the evaluation methodology to adjust their projects to make them closer to the People-first approach, will be less inclined to use the methodology if it is too complicated, with too many indicators.

Governments need support to properly use the methodology and to develop actual projects

This process to mainstream and scale up the People-first model is only just beginning....

People-first PPP is, after all, a new model that is getting started, often in the most challenging of environments.

... and there are not quick fixes but requires all stakeholders to work together in new forms of partnerships over long periods of time.
Like the SDGs themselves, People-first PPP is an ambitious model coming out of the main drivers for the SDGs, viz, transformative change, environmental sustainability, poverty eradication, transparency and good governance.

No man is an island; and in the same way, no single project can be ringfenced.

People-first PPPs are part and parcel of new integrated infrastructure policies that put sustainable development at the core and people as the main beneficiaries.

Infrastructure projects in countries, especially the low and middle-income ones...

The battlegrounds for the SDGs are precisely where the achievement for success are the most challenging. These are the vulnerable and fragile countries often which have just endured conflicts and where institutions are rather weak.

..... are desperately needed, and Governments in these countries need support in facilitating such projects.

Support needs to be offered to countries wishing to use the methodology in order to deliver impactful projects. Such support to Governments needs to be project-based and comprehensive if the evaluation methodology is to deliver high valued quality, People-first projects. It is important that the methodology is implemented through support and capacity-building project facilitation in order to assist Governments and to help them meet their SDG targets.

The People-first PPP Evaluation Methodology should thus not be the ‘end of the story’. Rather it must be the beginning.

II. Introduction

The following is a description of a tool composed of a self-assessment and a certification scheme (see further details below) for evaluating PPP projects that aspire to be described as ‘People-first’.

This Evaluation Methodology1 consists of three elements:

(i) Benchmarks and evaluation criteria that demonstrate achievement in each of the five People-first PPP outcomes;

(ii) A weighting and ranking of these outcomes along with other issues pertinent to scoring; and,

(iii) A scoring system that can provide various stakeholders2 with the evaluations needed to revise and adjust their project designs and operations to make them more compliant with the People-first outcomes and the SDGs.

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1 The UNECE PPP standards, methodologies, guiding principles, best practices, declarations and recommendations are endorsed and adopted by acclamation by the UNECE intergovernmental bodies – the Working Party on Public-Private Partnerships and the Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and Public-Private Partnerships – and do not impose any obligations on member States as their implementation is entirely voluntary.
The benchmarks identified below are grouped under each of the five outcomes that together constitute what is called ‘People-first’ PPPs, namely:

1. Access and equity;
2. Economic effectiveness and fiscal sustainability;
3. Environmental sustainability and resilience;
4. Replicability; and
5. Stakeholder engagement.

This document draws extensively from other methodologies, namely the EASIER\(^3\) methodology and its accompanying Practical Guide\(^4\) based on the People-first outcomes developed by the Specialist Centre of Excellence on PPPs in Smart and Sustainable cities in Barcelona, Spain, affiliated to the UNECE International PPP Centre of Excellence; and Envision\(^5\), sustainable infrastructure framework and rating system developed and administered by the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI)\(^6\).

### III. Benchmarks and evaluation criteria for the People-first outcomes

#### 1. Access and Equity

**Definition**

The SDGs are first and foremost concerned with improving access to critical services for social development and poverty eradication, recognizing that depriving access to one service can have huge negative impacts on people’s livelihoods and wellbeing.

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\(^2\) Mainly governments, but the tool is also suited for the private sector, lenders and civil society.


\(^4\) Practical guide to answer EASIER evaluation (2019), Specialist Centre of Excellence on PPPs in Smart and Sustainable Cities, IESE Business School, Barcelona, Spain.

\(^5\) Envision is used to evaluate the sustainability and resiliency of all types and sizes of civil infrastructure. Originally developed in joint collaboration between the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) and the Zofnass Program for Sustainable Infrastructure at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, it has been used to evaluate billions of dollars of infrastructure development globally: [www.sustainableinfrastructure.org](http://www.sustainableinfrastructure.org).

\(^6\) ISI, Washington, DC, United States, is a non-profit education and research organization founded in 2010 by the American Public Works Association (APWA), the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) and the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC): [www.sustainableinfrastructure.org](http://www.sustainableinfrastructure.org)
Equity could be broadly defined as equal access to the PPP project outputs/services, and that proactive measures are employed, where necessary, to ensure that the economically disadvantaged and those who suffer from social exclusion can also share in the project benefits. This outcome most reflects the SDG orientation on poverty eradication and social impact and more equitable forms of development.

**Benchmarks**

The following four benchmarks have been identified for the access and equity outcome, namely:

1. **Provision of basic quality services to previously unserved groups.**
2. **Affordability of the services to all citizens (universal access).**
3. **Advance equity and social justice.**
4. **Access and equity during project life cycle.**

**Evaluation criteria**

A total of 22 evaluation criteria were developed to accompany the four benchmarks and these are listed below under each benchmark.

1. **Provision of basic quality services to previously unserved groups:**
   1.1 Does the project directly or indirectly improve access to basic quality infrastructure services (e.g., water, waste, transportation, education, healthcare, energy) that are aligned with city, regional and/or community development objectives? (e.g. number of people with new access to a basic service as a direct or indirect result of the project, who previously had no access to this service)
   1.2 Does the project directly or indirectly provide access to a basic quality infrastructure service, where this service was not previously accessible or where service was unsatisfactory or of poor quality? (e.g. number of people with improved access to a basic service as a direct or indirect result of the project who previously had unsatisfactory access to this service)
   1.3 Is the utility or IT service continuously available on a 24-hour basis?
   1.4 Has the project extended its services to the local or affected communities?
   1.5 Have stakeholder lives been transformed as a result of better and more equitable access to the service? (i.e. to establish whether access contributes to the human wellbeing of the overall population, including the more vulnerable population)

2. **Affordability of the service to all citizens (universal access):**
   2.1 Is the service easily affordable for all users, including marginalized and most vulnerable groups of the population?
   2.2 Has it been found necessary to protect poorer members of the community through subsidies or other similar schemes?
   2.3 Has a Poverty Impact Assessment (PIA) been conducted for the project’s intended service area?
   2.4 Have measures to improve affordability to low-income users been identified, and are there plans to implement and monitor these measures for ongoing effectiveness (e.g., to ensure...
users are able to continue to afford the service(s) provided) throughout the life of the project?

1.2.5 Has the project defined indicators for effective access compared with nominal access (e.g., number of people user of a service vs. those with physical access to the service but who are unable to afford to pay for the service(s) provided).

1.3 Advance equity and social justice:

1.3.1 Does the project provide equal access to the users, including marginalized and most vulnerable groups of the population (i.e. youth, women, elderly, people living below poverty line, ethnic minorities, persons with disability etc.)?

1.3.2 Does the project take into account the historic context of equity and social justice for the area(s) it is intended to serve?

1.3.3 Has the project assessed and explicitly addressed the social impacts the project will have on the affected communities?

1.3.4 Can the project demonstrate that both benefits and impacts of the project will be distributed equitably throughout affected communities?

1.3.5 Does the project address or correct an existing or historical injustice?

1.3.6 Have the public and private members of the project team make commitments to equity and social justice within their institutions/organizations? (Commitments to equity and social justice in this case may refer to non-discrimination clauses, commitments to diversity and inclusion, pay equity, etc.).

1.3.7 Has the project comprehensively assessed accessibility needs?

1.3.8 Has the project incorporated measures to address accessibility needs?

1.3.9 Is there a plan in place to monitor accessibility and implement corrective measures as needed throughout the life of the project?

1.4 Access and equity during project life cycle:

1.4.1 Does the risks matrix incorporate access and equity issues that could prevent maintaining expected level and quality of service over the project life cycle?

1.4.2 How does the project anticipate the maintenance and evolution of access to the service over contract duration? (including life cycle, maintenance, renewals and technical evolutions etc. and in countries with high demography increase)

1.4.3 Does the project have a monitoring mechanism to achieve a satisfactory level of access and equity?

2. Economic Effectiveness and Fiscal Sustainability

Definition

Economic effectiveness and fiscal sustainability refer to the project’s contribution to economic growth and development through good quality jobs, technology and innovation, women empowerment etc. It also stems from the project’s ability to utilize efficiently all economic assets, generate profitability from affordable tariffs, while allowing sustainable budget and effective debt management by the public party.

Because corruption is one of the biggest challenges to the achievement of People-first PPPs, the UNECE has developed a Standard on a Zero Tolerance Approach to Corruption in PPP Procurement
which contains anti-corruption principles and recommendations specifically targeted toward PPPs. By implementing this standard, governments can put procedures and processes in place to lower the risk of corruption taking place, therefore building trust with all stakeholders involved in a project.

**Benchmarks**

The following five benchmarks have been identified for the economic effectiveness and fiscal sustainability outcome, namely:

1. Anticorruption measures and open and transparent procurement.
2. Economic viability and fiscal sustainability of the infrastructure.
3. Financial viability, including the profitability, of the project.
4. Quality employment and economic opportunities for all.
5. Contribution to innovation and technology transfer.

**Evaluation criteria**

A total of 25 evaluation criteria were developed to accompany the five benchmarks and these are listed below under each benchmark.

1.1 Generally, has the UNECE Standard on a Zero Tolerance Approach to Corruption in PPP Procurement (ZTC) been complied with?
1.2 Have approvals (of the project, PPP contract and private sponsor/shareholder) been processed according to law (government approval under a proven legal framework, or special law enacted by parliament for a one-off project, etc.) and in full transparency?
1.3 Was the project awarded through an open and transparent competitive tender or, in case of an unsolicited proposal, subject to the safeguards stipulated in the above-referenced ZTC?
1.4 Is there an absence of evidence of corruption or undue influence (from judicial sources or credible opposition or media sources)?
1.5 Was the PPP the result of a structured process (e.g. involving experienced advisors) resulting in a balanced contract (e.g. ensuring tariff affordability and appropriate risk allocation)?
1.6 Are project costs and, where applicable, obligatory upfront payments to the public authority strictly related to the infrastructure project implementation?

2.2 Economic viability and fiscal sustainability of the infrastructure:

2.2.1 Will the infrastructure project deliver net tangible and intangible benefits to society by providing services to a consistently higher standard (e.g., quality school infrastructure leading to improved educational outcomes; improved cleanliness of the hospital leading to lower in-hospital infection rates) and can these benefits be verified (e.g. through certification, ISO or otherwise)?

2.2.2 Will the infrastructure project generate positive value-for-money (applying an appropriate discount rate for the country, sector and nature of the project, e.g. ‘green’ projects) by comparing the costs (e.g. higher cost of funds and other externalities) and benefits (e.g. fixed price certainty, shorter implementation period, higher design and technical standards
applied, consistent maintenance, whole life costing of the infrastructure etc.) of the PPP model vs. a public procurement model?

2.2.3 Has the fiscal sustainability of the PPP contract and creditworthiness of the public authority been positively assessed (and openly disclosed to interested parties) including the burden of any direct payment (availability payment or otherwise), the fiscal return to the public authority (from taxes accrued directly or indirectly from the project) and the potential burden of the debt (where contingent liabilities are involved in case of PPP contract termination)?

2.2.4 (Where needed) Has technical assistance been sought from another government or an international agency or competent advisors (domestic or international) to help prepare the project?

2.2.5 Is the project designed to maximise socio-economic impact by facilitating women empowerment (decision making, occupational training, entrepreneurship support etc.) and taking into account the needs of vulnerable groups?

2.3 Financial viability, including the profitability, of the project:

2.3.1 Is the project’s private sponsor/shareholder of adequate technical, financial and reputational standing to successfully finance, implement, operate and maintain the project over its life, including having access to necessary resources, financial and otherwise?

2.3.2 Will the revenues under the PPP contract derived from tariffs, affordability payments or otherwise enable the project to cover operating & maintenance costs and repay the capital invested (debt & equity, including interest and shareholder return as applicable)? Are tariffs secured by an acceptable regulatory regime? Are payments to be made by the public authority (where applicable) committed (or guaranteed) by an acceptable counterparty (sovereign, special fund or budget or otherwise)?

2.3.3 Is the contractual risk allocation deemed appropriate (namely the party more able to control a specific risk is deemed to bear that risk under the contractual arrangement), including inter alia country, inflation and currency risks, construction and operating risks, demand and price risks?

2.3.4 Is the project’s tariff (where applicable) deemed affordable for intended users (comparing with average household income), including no material adverse effect on the lower income quartile of the affected population (subject to any existing social safety net applicable)?

2.3.5 (Where possible) Have the phasing of project development been considered, the design requirements been specified or other risk mitigation measures been implemented as a way to limit execution risks?

2.4 Quality employment and economic opportunities for all:

2.4.1 Are there many direct and sustainable jobs (commensurate to country characteristics, project size and services offered) to be created locally by the construction, operation and maintenance of new facilities (engineering staff, construction staff, professional staff, technical maintenance and cleaning personnel etc.) in line with SDG8?

2.4.2 Is there significant indirect employment to be generated locally by the project?

2.4.3 Are quality jobs involved, in line with the ILO Decent Work Indicators and representing a competency upgrade in the local market, and are training plans proposed to allow local people to successfully apply to such positions?
2.4.4 Are there detailed plans (including KPIs) in place to ensure diversity of the workforce, for example women, youth, people with disabilities etc.

2.4.5 Are there commitments for the protection of women’s rights and non-discrimination (e.g. enforcement of ILO regulation, equal pay, access to education and other essential services, prevention of violence and harassment against women etc.)?

2.5 Contribution to innovation and technology transfer:

2.5.1 (Where applicable) Does the project contribute to achieving industrialization (SDG9) and sustainable agriculture (SDG2) (including the development of technological capabilities recommended in both cases)?

2.5.2 Is there a transfer of know-how through the use of best international practice, new technology or an innovative business model, in either case in the context of the local market?

2.5.3 Does the project increase revenue and/or reduce costs (or otherwise) over its whole lifecycle through optimized design, resource efficiency, appropriate commercialisation or an innovative business model, in either case in the context of the local market and according to local constraints and capabilities?

2.5.4 (Where applicable) Does the project allow competition between different technologies by measuring the impacts and results which each technology brings?

3. Environmental sustainability and resilience

Definition

Environmental sustainability refers to the protection and preservation of the planet and is a basic requirement of sustainability. Acting to combat climate change and its impacts is integral to the successful implementation to the SDGs.

Resilience refers to “the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and the restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management” (United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, 2017).7

Benchmarks

The following seven benchmarks have been identified for the environmental sustainability and resilience outcome, namely:

Environmental sustainability:

3.1 Atmospheric environmental sustainability.
3.2 Land Environmental Sustainability.
3.3 Water Environmental Sustainability.

3.4 Biodiversity Sustainability.

Resilience:

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7 The UN organization is now called the United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR).
Evaluation criteria

A total of 28 evaluation criteria were developed to accompany the seven benchmarks and these are listed below under each benchmark.

3.1 Atmospheric environmental sustainability:
- 3.1.1 Percentage of expected CO2 equivalent GHG emissions reduction compared to global norms.
- 3.1.2 Does the project have a plan incorporating mitigation measures such as tree plantations or other products capable of capturing the CO2 and methane generated by the project?
- 3.1.3 Percentage reduced energy consumption per unit of output/service for the project over a year compared to the national norms.
- 3.1.4 Percentage improved Energy Performance Index (EPI) of buildings in the project measured by the total energy consumed in a building over a year divided by total built up area compared to the national norms.

3.2 Land environmental sustainability:
- 3.2.1 Percentage reduced raw material intensity in the project compared to the national norms.
- 3.2.2 Percentage reduction in solid (including hazardous) waste generated per unit of output or service per year compared to the national industrial norms.
- 3.2.3 Percentage of solid (including hazardous) waste disposed compared to the solid (including hazardous waste) generated by the project as in ESR 2.2.
- 3.2.4 Percentage of degraded land restored out of the total degraded land within the project area.

3.3 Water environmental sustainability:
- 3.3.1 Percentage reduced fresh water consumed per unit of output/service in the project compared to the national norms.
- 3.3.2 Percentage of wastewater treated compared to the total wastewater generated by the project.

3.4 Biodiversity sustainability:
- 3.4.1 Percentage of degraded ecosystems in the project’s impact area restored/ enhanced by establishing green cover out of the total impact area.
- 3.4.2 Does the project have an environmental impact assessment (EIA) and an environmental management plan (EMP) identifying and quantifying the biodiversity (to the extent feasible) and incorporating appropriate mitigation measures such as afforestation, animal movement corridors etc.?

3.5 Disaster management strategy:
- 3.5.1 Does the project identify funds from different sources and provide a budget for Asset Losses to be met by the project?
3.5.2 Does the project identify funds from different sources and provide a budget for Wellbeing Losses to be met by the project?

3.5.3 Is there a well-articulated Disaster Management Strategy with Disaster Financial Inclusiveness prepared for the project (that incorporates all the elements described for the benchmark)?

3.5.4 Is there a risk map for types and scale of different disasters indicating loss of assets and number of persons likely to be affected by the disaster?

3.6 Strengthening institutional and community capacity on disaster mitigation:

3.6.1 Funds to turnover (%) allocated for disaster research and capacity development.

3.6.2 Is there a plan for strengthening stakeholder disaster awareness through a capacity development for adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer, and development actions?

3.6.3 Is there a plan for developing pre-disaster early warning systems and sensors?

3.6.4 Is there a plan to prepare a web-based interactive map of high, medium and low alert areas (identified in the risk map), to propagate confirmed hazard information on real-time basis through social media platforms?

3.6.5 Does the project propose to use sustainable construction methodologies including identifying natural barriers and flood buffering structures?

3.6.6 Does the project consider assessing identification of changes in land-use planning and use of appropriate building codes for disaster resilience?

3.7 People-first community development program aligned with National Disaster Mitigation Legal Framework:

3.7.1 What plan does the project have to assess poverty related measures?

3.7.2 What plan does the project have to establish the community socio-economic resilience indicator?

3.7.3 Does the project identify preparatory actions before, emergency actions during and recovery and reconstruction actions after natural disasters?

3.7.4 Is there a defined Community Driven Development Program during and after disaster recovery and reconstruction to enhance community participation?

3.7.5 Is there a national Disaster Mitigation Law that has been established or is there an operationalized integrated policy/strategy/ plan to address disaster and climate change resilience?

3.7.6 Does the project define an institutional arrangement with qualified staff for disaster emergency response?

4. Replicability

Definition

Success in achieving the SDGs will come by scaling up programmes and projects. This will require a considerable number of People-first PPPs. Such scalability can be achieved if the projects are replicable. Replicability is the way in which a project can lead to the development of further projects. This can be done by a project itself training local staff and public administrations. At the same time, such scalability cannot come at the expense of higher environmental costs (i.e. litter, waste, air soil, noise and water pollution).
The training provided by the private partner contributes to the better development of the project itself as enhanced local skills lead to a higher quality of projects in so far as the staff is better qualified, can also enhance global partnerships as well as promoting regional cooperation.

In addition, the training might be dedicated towards local personnel, which represents an increase in their capabilities to do similar projects themselves leading to scalability from the project itself. This is furthermore related to SDG target 4.7 “by 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development”.

**Benchmarks**

The following three benchmarks have been identified for the replicability outcome, namely:

- **4.1 Replicability and scalability of PPP projects.**
- **4.2 Capacity building enhancing the replicability and sustainability.**
- **4.3 Enhancement of governance and institutions.**

**Evaluation criteria**

A total of 10 evaluation criteria were developed to accompany the three benchmarks and these are listed below under each benchmark.

4.1 Replicability and scalability of PPP projects:

4.1.1 Is the project replicable, allowing potential economies of scale for a PPP programme and affording wider benefits across the economy?

4.1.2 Is it possible to replicate or enlarge the project without any significant social cost (while ensuring that such scaling up would not be deemed to be anti-competitive in terms of procurement guidelines/transparency rules and other regulations)?

4.1.3 Is it possible to replicate, enlarge or expand the project without any significant environmental cost (while ensuring that such scaling up/expansion would not be deemed to be anti-competitive in terms of procurement guidelines/transparency rules and other regulations)?

4.1.4 Is the structure of the project sufficiently simple, straightforward and innovative in order for it to be replicated across sectors and industries?

4.2 Capacity building enhancing the replicability and sustainability:

4.2.1 Project/industry capacity: Does the PPP project benefits include providing/facilitating training by the private partner and/or its financiers to the public administration, independent professionals and/or to local communities, businesses and private sector that resulted in building local capacity (that is, service/works can now be delivered by local personnel without foreign assistance or personnel); and can those benefits be verified (e.g. through certification of trained personnel, trainings module elaboration, education facilities, number of trainings provided or otherwise)?

4.2.2 Government capacity: Has the project resulted in obtaining capacity building programs, trainings or educational activities from donors, third parties or gaining technical assistance from another government or an international agency that lead to creation of local capacities within PPP Unit/public and/or private sector, and/or academia?
4.2.3 Local community capacity: Does the project contribute to transfer of knowledge and skills to local communities, local businesses, building of local capacity for vulnerable social groups; does it contribute to empowering women, ensuring equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality education, and protection of human rights?

4.3 Enhancement of governance and institutions:

4.3.1 Are there any improvements in regulatory quality (legal regulations, public policies or administrative rules etc.) as a result of the project that would lead to possibility to replicate, scale up or expand PPP projects without significant financial, social and environmental costs?

4.3.2 Are there any enhancements of government effectiveness, transparency (zero tolerance to corruption practices) and local capacity (of PPP Unit\line ministries, central and local governments\public and private sector) resulting from the PPP project?

4.3.3 Are there new or improved industry standards\sectoral standards (including but not limited to best practice guidelines, standards, manuals and toolkits) adopted or enhanced based on transfer of knowledge and adaptation of best international practices to the local context as a result of the project that would lead to replicability of the PPP projects\scalability at lower financial, social, environmental costs?

5. Stakeholder engagement

Definition

Stakeholder engagement is arguably the most important ingredient for successful project delivery, and yet is often regarded as a fringe activity or one that can be outsourced to business-as-usual functions. It is therefore important that it is the first consideration in the initial design of the project. Project managers depend on people to respond to the outputs and benefits that they deliver. People will only respond if they are engaged. Thus, best practice in stakeholder management is typically about how the government and private sector reach out to stakeholders to make them feel part of the project.

However, arguably, stakeholder engagement in People-first PPP is a bit more than this. Who, for example, are the stakeholders in the projects and precisely how should they be engaged? It also means creating the right incentives for stakeholders’ engagement and encouraging investors to recognise its value. The difficulty is that much of the value will be recognised by the wider community and not necessarily by the private investor directly. Hence the importance of the ‘Public’ inclusion in PPPs, allowing the government to realise that there are wider social, environmental and economic values that can be realised through an inclusive stakeholder engagement. This underlies the strategic necessity of People-first PPPs in order to achieve the SDGs, particularly for the people that are typically ‘left behind’.

A more significant type of engagement and more in tune with the ethos of ‘People-first’ is engaging directly with the communities affected by the projects: get them mobilized even in some type of collective body. The latter can be a conduit for the community’s views on the project and these can be addressed by the sponsor in open and transparent dialogues on the project.
It is worth noting here the relevance of SDG 17, which refers to strengthening global partnerships to support and achieve the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda. This goal reinforces the need for multi-stakeholder engagement, including national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors. It recognises that more needs to be done to accelerate progress.

**Benchmarks**

The following four benchmarks have been identified for the stakeholder engagement outcome, namely:

5.1 Stakeholder engagement and participation in project decision-making.
5.2 Impact of stakeholder contributions to the project.
5.3 Transparent, understandable and quality information about the project.
5.4 Putting social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits back to the community.

**Evaluation criteria**

A total of 19 evaluation criteria were developed to accompany the four benchmarks and these are listed below under each benchmark.

5.1 Stakeholder engagement and participation in project decision-making:

5.1.1 Have all relevant stakeholders been identified (including from marginalized and vulnerable groups and the communities affected by the project) and included in the project decision-making?
5.1.2 Has a Stakeholder Engagement Plan, or similar, been developed during the project identification stage and followed in a timely manner?
5.1.3 Have stakeholder meetings been held on an inclusive and regular basis during the whole lifecycle of the project?
5.1.4 Is there a mechanism for stakeholders to provide feedback and raise their concerns that is inclusive and accessible?
5.1.5 Are the views of the wider community being captured through a method that is accessible to everyone?

5.2 Impact of stakeholder contributions to the project:

5.2.1 Were the views and feedback of all stakeholders reviewed and fully considered, at all stages of the project?
5.2.2 Have there been metrics/key benefits (social and cultural, economic and environmental), devised which demonstrate that stakeholder engagement has had an impact?
5.2.3 In the context of problems and challenges affecting the project, are there instances where stakeholders and managers have reached agreements, such as joint declarations?

5.3 Transparent, understandable and quality information about the project:

5.3.1 Is relevant information about the project readily accessible to all stakeholders in a transparent way?
5.3.2 Have reports been published regularly on the outcomes (summary and agreements) of the stakeholder engagement meetings, and provided by an independent oversight committee?
5.3.3 Has the information provided by the project been verified, as to its veracity?
5.4 Putting social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits back to the community:

5.4.1 Economic: As a result of stakeholder engagement, were local suppliers, e.g. woman-led companies, used by the project?

5.4.2 Economic: Were investments made on local training facilities and special courses devised for prospective employees?

5.4.3 Cultural: As a result of stakeholder engagement, did the project contribute to local culture and education?

5.4.4 Cultural: As a result of stakeholder engagement, were local cultural sensitivities taken into account in the project identification, development and implementation, e.g. appearance, design, location, languages?

5.4.5 Environmental: As a result of stakeholder engagement, what measures were taken to minimize the disruption caused by the construction?

5.4.6 Environmental: As a result of stakeholder engagement, are there local environmental benefits that could be derived through the project?

5.4.7 Social: Were measures taken to protect the safety of construction workers?

5.4.8 Social: Has there been emergency support given to local communities to mitigate the huge impact of COVID-19?

IV Weighting and scoring of the outcomes

Weighting and scoring

Equal weighting is the default setting with 100 points being allocated to each outcome for a total score of 500 points. Another option is to assign points to each outcome in proportion to the number of benchmarks. This aspect of the Evaluation Methodology will be further elaborated during the testing phase of the self-assessment tool (see further below), during which time a number of actual infrastructure projects in different phases of development (e.g. design, construction, operation) will be evaluated.

Other factors that should be scored

There are three factors that affect projects which the Project Team agreed that should also be part of the project evaluation, namely:

(a) Statement of intent. This would involve the parties structuring the project, coming together and stating explicitly their intention to generate positive social and environmental impacts from the project. This could also be achieved by reference in the statement to the SDGs and/or the People-first PPP model.

(b) Verifiable and measurable data. It is important that the outcomes of the project be tied to specific metrics and measured against a base case or benchmark. Examples of specific metrics might be the number of jobs created under (b) the outcome “economic effectiveness” and under (a) “access and equity”, litres of water purified. In addition, project data that could be verified by an independent source would merit also an additional score. This means establishing proof that the invested capital itself is positively correlated with the intended outcome. Proof of verification requires scientific and/or statistical tests.
linking impact to outcome. For example, if the stated benefit is cleaner drinking water, and measurement includes the number of litres of available clean water, supporting data showing proof that the investment made (that is, in better quality pipes) led to this outcome, would be important.

(c) Location of the project. Obviously, a project taking place in a challenging region or country where there is a lack of all types of infrastructure and where poverty is especially prevalent should receive a different score from a project taking place in a developed country.

Other points about presenting the project

The Evaluation Methodology, as stated above, is part of a programme to sensitize the international community on the value of taking a new approach to PPPs that is more compliant with the SDGs. Many of the benchmarks can be statistically shown and can use certain scoring mechanisms to demonstrate compliance. But often people are moved less by statistics than by actual personal ‘stories’ about a project changing ordinary people’s lives.

To this end, it is proposed that in the methodology a space should be found for a reply from the project’s sponsors that demonstrates how the project can change peoples’ lives for the better: the more personal and direct, the better will be the message. Such a short paragraph about the project can also be used to illustrate the People-first approach in a database and website.

V Implementation

The benchmarks and the evaluation criteria will provide a foundation to develop two distinct elements, namely:

1. A self-assessment tool; and
2. A certification scheme.

Self-assessment tool

The self-assessment tool offers a tremendous mechanism for implementation. The tool will offer applicants to get a score on their infrastructure projects by completing an online questionnaire based on the benchmarks and evaluation criteria. This tool will be initially developed as an Excel platform for testing purposes before it is integrated into an online platform, such as the SOURCE platform operated by with the Sustainable Infrastructure Foundation (SIF).8

8 At the request of the member States, the UNECE secretariat is collaborating with the Sustainable Infrastructure Foundation (SIF) and its SOURCE software in the implementation of this methodology. SIF is not-for-profit NGO funded by the Multilateral Development Banks and provides practical guidance to countries in project development.
The self-assessment tool would be provided free of charge as an international public good and it will be available in 2020.9

**Certification scheme**

A certification or validation scheme would assess the compliance of projects with the UN SDGs. To get a People-first PPP designation, applicants (government entities, the private sector, lenders, civil society organisations) will need to demonstrate that the infrastructure project complies with the UNECE People-first PPP evaluation methodology. The model will be based on similar existing certification or validation schemes and will include a series of checks and balances to ensure the scheme is credible, reliable, accessible without excessive bureaucracy, while at the same time complying with the United Nations rules and regulations.

**VI Next steps**

The comments and feedback received during the public review stage10 will be factored into a revised evaluation methodology with a view to have a wholesome document finalised and presented to the Bureau of the Working Party on PPPs in time for the next Working Party session in December 2020.

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9 The testing phase of the self-assessment tool is done over the summer months (June to August 2020). This phase will also be useful to test the benchmarks, the evaluation criteria and the scoring against actual case studies from the UNECE database of case studies collected since 2015 and showcased in various UNECE PPP events. The self-assessment tool is expected to be formally launched at the Working Party session in Geneva in December 2020.

10 The 60-day public review stage runs from 12 June to 12 August 2020.
Annex I. Project Team Members (in alphabetical order)

**Co-leaders:** Melissa Peneycad (Canada), Joan-Enric Ricart (Spain), and James Stewart (United Kingdom).

**Sub-group leaders:** Tetiana Bessarab (Ukraine), Doris Chevalier (France), Anand Chiplunkar (India), Amanda Loeffen (United Kingdom), and Jean-Patrick Marquet (Switzerland).

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<td>Ms.</td>
<td>Gavkhar</td>
<td>Ashirova</td>
<td>Bishkek City Development Agency under Bishkek Mayor’s office, Investment &amp; Public-private partnership (PPP) department.</td>
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<td>Former Director, Central and West Asia, Asian Development Bank, Philippines.</td>
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<td>Mr. Syed</td>
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<td>Senior Director, Partnership Development / Public Private Partnerships Office, Alberta Infrastructure, Government of Alberta, Canada</td>
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