

Independent Final Evaluation

Support the implementation of the regional
Arab Standardization Strategy with focus
on the regional coordination on
accreditation

UNIDO project number: TE/RAB/10/001



UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

UNIDO EVALUATION GROUP

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We hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will contribute to the continuous improvement and the mobilization of funds for similar programmes.

Abbreviations and acronyms

AFRAC	African Accreditation Cooperation
AIDMO	Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization
ALGERAC	Algerian Accreditation Body
APLAC	Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
ARAC	Arab Accreditation Cooperation Body
EA	European Cooperation for Accreditation
EGAC	Egyptian Accreditation Council
GAFTA	Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement
IAAC	Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation
IAF	International Accreditation Forum
ILAC	International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit (of the United Nations)
MDG(s)	Millennium Development Goal(s)
NCA	National Center of Accreditation (Kazakhstan)
NEAIME	Arab Maghreb Union
OVI(s)	Objectively Verifiable Indicator(s)
QI	Quality Infrastructure
RBM	Result-based Management
ROM	Result-oriented Monitoring
SECO	The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SWEDAC	Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment
TCB	Trade Capacity Building
ToRs	Terms of Reference (of this evaluation)
TUNAC	Tunisian Accreditation Council
TURKAK	Turkish Accreditation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNIDO	United Nations Development Organization
UNSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
WTO	World Trade Organization

Glossary of evaluation related terms

Term	Definition
Baseline	The situation, prior to an intervention, against which progress can be assessed.
Effect	Intended or unintended change due directly or indirectly to an intervention.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development objectives of an intervention were or are expected to be achieved.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically inputs (through activities) are converted into outputs.
Impact	Positive and negative, intended and non-intended, directly and indirectly, long term effects produced by a development intervention.
Indicator	Quantitative or qualitative factors that provide a means to measure the changes caused by an intervention.
Intervention	An external action to assist a national effort to achieve specific development goals.
Lessons learned	Generalizations based on evaluation experiences that abstract from specific to broader circumstances.
Log frame (logical framework approach)	Management tool used to guide the planning, implementation and evaluation of an intervention. System based on MBO (management by objectives) also called RBM (results based management) principles.
Outcomes	The achieved or likely effects of an intervention's outputs.
Outputs	The products in terms of physical and human capacities that result from an intervention.
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of an intervention are consistent with the requirements of the end-users, government and donor's policies.
Risks	Factors, normally outside the scope of an intervention, which may affect the achievement of an intervention's objectives.
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from an intervention, after the development assistance has been completed.
Target groups	The specific individuals or organizations for whose benefit an intervention is undertaken.

Executive Summary

Background, purpose and methodology of this evaluation

This report covers the independent final evaluation of the “AIDMO Regional Programme: Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation” (UNIDO Project TE/RAB/10/001, SAP ID 106030) (“the Programme”). The Programme’s development goal was to “facilitate regional trade and regional harmonization through strengthening the regional coordination mechanisms on quality infrastructure for the delivery, along international best practices, of support services in standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation.” Fully funded by the Swedish Government, it will end on 30 June 2014 after two extensions. Main partner was the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organisation (AIDMO). As per 25 February 2014, € 1,206,468.77 of the total budget excluding support costs (€ 1,421,509.83) had been committed or disbursed. An initial outline for a follow-up phase had been prepared.

Commissioned by UNIDO, the evaluation was conducted by the independent evaluator Mr. Daniel P. Keller. Guided by the Terms of Reference (ToRs) included in [Annex 3](#) and UNIDO’s Evaluation Policy, its emphasis was on organizational learning, while also serving the purpose of UNIDO’s accountability towards AIDMO and the donor. Keeping with UNIDO’s Evaluation Policy and maintaining independence, the evaluator applied a participatory approach, taking the views of all stakeholders into account and seeking alignment on main conclusions and recommendations. The methodological mix included semi-structured interviews (individual and with focal-groups) and an in-depth review of programme documents and reports.

Key limitations were shortcomings in planning and reporting. Furthermore, as most of the outputs had just been delivered, an assessment of outcomes and impact beyond the regional level would be premature. Otherwise, sufficient factual information for a well-founded assessment was available.

Main findings and conclusions

Addressed through an efficient transnational approach to Quality Infrastructure (QI) strengthening, programme objectives were highly relevant to beneficiaries’ needs and international priorities, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Responding to the broader objectives of the Arab Standardization Strategy, support focused on the establishment of regional conformity assessment scheme that enables Arab countries to remove technical barriers to trade and to link them with the international markets. Strengthening regional QI components is at the core of AIDMO’s mandate. The Programme prioritized the strengthening of accreditation through the establishment of an Arab Accreditation Cooperation Body (ARAC). Building upon AIDMO’s existing

cooperation framework, the Programme worked towards integration, harmonization, and effective coordination of QI through a combination of a transnational and a regional approach. Responding well to AIDMO's core objectives, the Programme was fully aligned with expressed needs and priorities. Spurring trade, economic growth and job creation through QI development contributes to MDG 1 (poverty reduction). Beyond its relevance for trade, a well-functioning, accessible QI is also pivotal for social welfare, health and safety, which contributes more directly to poverty reduction. The poor tend to suffer most from substandard and hazardous products, which affect their health and further reduce their purchasing power. Many product and system standards are also environmentally relevant. Ensuring accredited certification capacities potentially contributes to decoupling economic growth from environmental impact, which is relevant to MDG 7 (environmental sustainability).

Effectiveness in terms of outputs delivered and outcomes achieved at the regional level was highly satisfactory. An assessment of outcomes and impact at the level of individual AIDMO Member States (changes generated by the use of technical input provided by UNIDO) or impact (broader economic changes resulting from them) would be premature.

The evaluation validates all outputs reported by the Programme. With a few relatively minor exceptions, services provided by UNIDO were of good quality. This is evidenced by interviews with a selected number of beneficiaries, participants' feed-back on training events recorded by AIDMO, and through desk study of seminar material and reports. Some seminar material was however not really self-explanatory. Also, expert resources (in terms of expert time) allocated for support and coaching of accreditation bodies at the country level were too limited to really meet the demand. At the regional level, support was instrumental to the establishment of ARAC and a significantly improved cooperation among national accreditation bodies in general. Initial results demonstrated were instrumental for Sweden's readiness to consider funding of follow-up initiatives. Last but not least, although no funding decision has been taken, the positive results of the Programme is also likely to positively influence fund mobilization for additional support to AIDMO and its Member States.

Most outputs that are directly linked to expected outcomes at the country level had just been completed. With a few exceptions (the ARAC peer evaluations of TUNAC, ALGERAC & EGAC, the qualification of ARAC peer evaluators, one peer evaluation conducted by ALGERAC, an amendment of a law in Libya, and the establishment of the management systems according to ISO/IEC 17011 for the accreditation bodies in Libya and Yemen), assuming a causal link between programme inputs and changes in AIDMO member countries would not be plausible. Within the limited scope of this evaluation, it would also not be possible to identify external factors that would need to be taken into account for assessing outcomes at the country level (e.g. the degree sustained support to some countries by other development agencies contributed to them).

The programme demonstrated good practices of regional cooperation and transparency, which have the potential for replication in other fields of economic cooperation among AIDMO member countries.

The Programme demonstrated good practices in successfully applying a “North-South-South” or “Triangular” cooperation mechanism. Both are considered as efficient ways to complement the traditional “North-South” approach development assistance. Triangular- and South-South Cooperation is of high relevance to international priorities, including of the UN system. They are widely perceived as a tool to ensure better, more cost efficient and sustainable access of developing countries to know-how. Strengthening an existing cooperation framework, anchoring support within a regional institution and combining support to the regional with the national level were instrumental for the achievement of results. Demonstrating successful principles of regional cooperation in the field of QI has the potential for replication for other technical areas in the Arab Region. The same applies to the principles of transparency promoted through workshops and the establishment of specific draft guidelines on good governance and transparency within the QI.

While no specific “gender-related objectives” were defined, the Programme made initial steps towards demonstrating good practices in mainstreaming gender aspects into QI development.

The Programme capitalized on an opportunity to demonstrate good practices in gender equality, but mainly through awareness raising and the way it delivered its assistance. For instance, reporting on results was disaggregated according to gender. Since the relationship between gender equality and QI development is not obvious, no specific, gender-related objectives were defined. Interviews indicated that as an outcome, awareness on gender issues has been raised among those experts and beneficiaries interviewed during the mission. Awareness on gender is also reflected by AIDMO’s idea to consider the development of a “gender strategy”.

Comparing initial results with the funds disbursed, the value for money was satisfactory. The need of aligning AIDMO Member States resulted in an exceptionally ratio spent for travel and meetings. A follow-up phase to consolidate and expand preliminary results at regional and country levels would significantly increase efficiency.

A detailed analysis of expenditures shows that travel and meeting costs accounted for 44% (€ 529,283) of total expenditures. While clearly above the ratios found in other TCB projects, funding travelling and meetings of stakeholders was the only way to raise initial awareness, strengthen cooperation among Member States and get their alignment on the establishment of ARAC. International expertise and local expertise (€ 341,363 or 28%) include the salaries of ARAC staff, which were fully covered by the Programme. A significant amount of expertise was sourced from AIDMO Member Countries at no cost to the Programme, which resulted in considerable cost savings for international expertise. Considering that despite a remarkable progress, important outcomes have not yet been fully achieved, value for money provided was satisfactory.

Further support to translate initial results into sustainable outcomes has the potential to further increase efficiency.

The Programme was operationally well managed, however with weak result-based planning and monitoring of results.

The Programme was well managed, which is evidenced by the timely delivery of all outputs in good quality. Despite the application of a traditional agency execution mechanism, both AIDMO and Sida were actively involved into decision making. Project Management was flexible and responsive to evolving needs. Programme design and monitoring did however not meet good practices. Partially due to the lack of a proper logical framework, monitoring was mostly activity-based. A detailed financial report linking expenditures according to outputs to UN budget lines was only established in preparation of this evaluation.

Sustainability of the regional cooperation framework in the field of accreditation in general and of ARAC in particular requires further support. While ARAC would be able to maintain its function and mandate as a regional accreditation cooperation body, ARAC would not be able to further develop and expand its services to Member Countries without further donor support.

Priorities at the outcome level are ensuring the achievement of the recognition of ARAC as a regional accreditation cooperation body, addressing the constraints especially related to proficiency testing and traceability and bringing accreditation capacities at the level of AIDMO countries up to par. Running ARAC as a typical UNIDO project operation is not conducive to the objectives to develop an institutionally, technically and financially sustainable regional accreditation cooperation body. An indirect funding mechanism (covering the costs of clearly defined outputs under a subcontract), which is gradually phased out, would help ARAC to gain experience in operating as an independent institution. If approved, follow-up support should be closely coordinated with similar Sida-funded programme in the region in order to ensure synergies. The possibility to share management resources should be explored.

The only recent establishment of ARAC has not allowed for combining technical strengthening sufficiently with institutional strengthening.

Pending formal incorporation, financially supporting ARAC under a project structure (all payments for operational costs channeled through UNIDO in the form of direct subsidies) was the only option. The approach of directly subsidizing partner institutions is not conducive to institutional development and needs to be revisited if further support is provided. After ARAC has formally gained its organizational independence, the best option for further support would probably be to subcontract ARAC for the provision of certain outputs.

Recommendations

A. Recommendations to UNIDO (TCB Branch, project specific)

- (1) Finalize the Programme as planned, including commissioning a management consulting firm to explore the best strategic options for the legal status of ARAC and the development of a comprehensive business plan.
- (2) Apply for an additional non-cost extension until 30 September 2014 or the approval of Sida's funding for the proposed follow-up phase (whatever comes earlier) to complete remaining programme activities, finalize the proposal for a follow-up phase and maintain the operations of ARAC.
- (3) In close coordination with AIDMO, develop a detailed proposal for a possible follow up phase along the following lines:
 - a. Consistently apply good practices in project design, including the proper application of the logical framework tool and result-based budgeting.
 - b. Key objectives of follow-up support should be to (a) achieve recognition and ensure financial, institutional and technical sustainability of ARAC, (b) enhancing accreditation capacities at the national level of AIDMO member countries and (c) addressing the constraints of services, especially for proficiency testing and traceability with the Arab region.
 - c. In order to avoid the development of duplicate capacities, support in the field of traceability and proficiency testing should be provided based on an analysis of demand and existing supply of services.
 - d. Develop a clear strategy to gradually phase out donor-funding support for ARAC and the regional cooperation framework on QI within AIDMO, while maintaining the benefits for Member States.
 - e. After the formal incorporation of ARAC as an independent organization with own legal personality, shift the financial support modality of ARAC from a project structure (directly covering operating costs) to subcontract ARAC for specific project outputs to be delivered. Funding through subcontracts should be gradually phased out upon an agreed schedule.
 - f. Consider using ARAC's expertise for UNIDO projects in other countries to provide ARAC with the opportunity for generating revenues and gaining practical experience outside the region (under subcontracts).
 - g. Define specific synergies (economies of scale and scope) with the planned Regional Food Safety Project and the Aid-for-Trade Project (if approved), including the option to share certain management resources between projects.

- h. Plan for the recruitment of a monitoring specialist (might be shared with the Food Safety and Aid for Trade Project).
- i. Consider applying Result-Oriented Monitoring (ROM) in the form of a self-evaluation with support of an external specialist with extensive experience in evaluation and TCB (might be combined with ROM for the Regional Food Safety Project). ROM might be used instead of an external mid-term review.

B. Recommendations to UNIDO (TCB Branch, general)

- (4) Consider using regional (transnational) approaches to the strengthening of QI system where an existing cooperation framework, including a host organization is already in place. Ensure that support to the regional framework is combined with technical strengthening of individual countries.

C. Recommendations to AIDMO

- (5) Obtain as soon as possible formal endorsement of Member States for a specific funding structure for ARAC, based on the business plan developed under the Programme.
- (6) Consider replicating the approach of regional cooperation in the field of accreditation to other trade-related areas, such as for example intellectual property rights, analyzing successful models in other regions and develop an own approach adapted to the specific Arab context.

D. Recommendations to Sida

- (7) Favorably consider a proposal for a follow-up phase along the outline suggested in recommendation (2) above.
- (8) Approve a request for UNIDO for a non-cost extension until 30 September 2014 or the approval of funding for a follow-up phase (whatever comes earlier) to complete remaining programme activities, finalize the proposal for a follow-up phase and maintain the operations of ARAC until funding for a new project is available.

Lessons learned

Good practices in strengthening a regional accreditation system through a transnational approach as demonstrated by the Programme include:

- Reinforcing the existing cooperation framework among AIDMO Member Countries rather than attempting to create a new cooperation structure. The strengthening of a regional cooperation framework as such, mainly through acting as a catalyzer to achieve alignment among the different Member States, was combined with technical assistance.
- Providing support to the regional and national levels in parallel. Strengthening of regional QI frameworks requires support to the national QIs in parallel, in order to bring all countries to the level that allows them to participate and contribute to the regional framework they are part of. Transnational support is thus only effective if combined with support to individual countries.
- To “anchor” support to regional QI development within the existing structures of AIDMO instead of establishing a parallel implementation mechanism. AIDMO was invited to participate actively during the entire design process from the very beginning. The close cooperation with AIDMO, both prior and during implementation, was used to “embed” the Programme in the region and as a channel to reach out to the different Member States.
- Promoting the sharing of experience and knowledge among countries is a good example of facilitating knowledge transfer from more developed to less developed countries through “South-South-” or “Triangular Cooperation” (North-South-South). Furthermore, UNIDO successfully capitalized on experience in other developing regions to craft a model for ARAC that is tailored to the specific context of the Arab region.

Figure 1: Key strengths and weaknesses of the Programme

Key strengths	Key weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High relevance to (a) AIDMO's strategic objectives and expressed priority needs (b) international priorities (MDGs 1 and 7, South-South Cooperation), (c) donor priorities and (d) UNIDO's core mandate and competencies. • Adequate application of a regional approach to QI strengthening (link into an existing cooperation framework, programme anchored within a regional institution, parallel strengthening of QI at the regional and national levels). • Operational model for ARAC developed and adapted to the regional context based on an analysis of different models of other regional accreditation cooperation bodies (e.g. IAAC). • Programme operationally well managed (flexibility to adapt to changed needs, AIDMO closely involved). • All programme outputs delivered on time and generally in good quality. • Programme results and support to designing "bankable" projects potentially contribute to mobilizing additional donors funding. • Programme successfully demonstrated good practices in regional cooperation, transparency and gender, which are of wider applicability to other fields. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme design does not include a framework for result-based monitoring (logical framework). • Partially as a result of this, progress reporting is activity-based and does not assess achieved against planned results at outcome level. • No regular financial reporting that presents expenditures according to UN lines and different outputs (mainly due to changes in UNIDO's financial accounting system). • No clear sustainability and phase-out strategy at the beginning. • Without further, sustained donor support that also addresses other key constraints to accreditation, ARAC would be able to maintain its coordinating function, but not develop and expand its services to Member States.

1. Background, objectives and methodology

1.1 Background and objectives of the evaluation

This final evaluation covers the “AIDMO Regional Programme: Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation” (UNIDO Project TE/RAB/10/001, SAP ID 106030) (“the Programme”).

The evaluation process was guided by the Terms of Reference (ToRs) dated 23 January 2014, enclosed in [Annex 3](#), the UNIDO Evaluation Policy¹ and the UNEG Evaluation Norms and Standards.² The ToRs were operationalized through an inception report which, after approval by UNIDO, was shared with both the donor and the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO)³. The field work was carried out at AIDMO Headquarters in Rabat (Morocco) between 23 and 28 February 2014 by the international evaluator Mr. Daniel P. Keller.⁴ Appointed by UNIDO following a competitive selection process, he had neither been involved into the preparation nor into the implementation of the Programme⁵. UNIDO’s Evaluation Group provided quality assurance at the different stages of the process. The purpose of this evaluation was threefold:

- Firstly, to provide AIDMO, the Swedish Government, UNIDO and other stakeholders with an assessment of programme performance in terms of achievement of expected results;
- Secondly, to provide an analysis of the approach applied (regional approach to strengthening quality infrastructures, in particular in the field of accreditation) and to identify lessons learned of wider applicability⁶;
- Thirdly, to provide input to decision making for any possible future interventions in terms of possible and required changes in design, management and implementation.

¹ Available from www.unido.org

² United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), Norms for Evaluations in the UN System, April 29, 2005

³ See Inception Report, Final Evaluation of the UNIDO Project “AIDMO Regional Programme: Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation”, funded by the Kingdom of Sweden, 20 February 2014

⁴ Director, Swiss Consulting Co. Ltd, Hanoi - Vietnam

⁵ This principle is underlined in the UNIDO Evaluation Policy: “(...) For independent evaluations, the members of an evaluation team must not have been directly responsible for the policy-setting, design or overall management of the subject of evaluation (nor expect to be so in the near future). (...)”

⁶ In line with the general purpose of final project evaluations to contribute to organizational learning

According to the ToRs, this evaluation focused on the extension phase from 1 January 2013 to 28 February 2014. Prior and subsequent UNIDO support within the Programme was taken into account as contextual information.

1.2 Regional context

The Arab region covered by the Programme encompasses a total of 21 nations, which are all members of the Arab League⁷. The Arab League, formally the League of Arab States, is a regional organization of Arab countries in and around North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Southwest Asia. The Arab region spans over 13 million km² and counts an estimated 350 million inhabitants. Economic development and size of economies measured by their Gross Domestic Products (GDP) and the GDP per capita differ significantly. [Figure 2](#) lists GDPs of the Arab League's member states based on purchasing power parity (PPP).⁸

Figure 2: Gross Domestic Products of Members of the Arab League in billion US\$ (PPP)

	Country	2011	2012	2013	2012 per capita
1	Algeria	295.055	316.007	338.127	7,477
2	Bahrain	33.708	36.453	39.444	28.744
3	Comoros	0.887	0.945	1.005	1,258
4	Djibouti	2.469	2.693	2.924	2,677
5	Egypt	574.03	629.69	690.566	6,545
6	Iraq	220.7	239.3	220.7	7,100
7	Jordan	37.912	40.959	44.185	6,042
8	Kuwait	178.594	193.331	208.569	39,889
9	Lebanon	54.184	57.986	61.963	15,757
10	Libya	113.917	124.826	136.491	12,066
11	Mauritania	8.041	8.98	9.717	2,122
12	Morocco	170.316	183.67	197.934	5,265
13	Oman	84.989	91.488	98.345	29,166
14	Palestine		8.8		2,900
15	Qatar	132.258	147.669	162.193	102,211
16	Saudi Arabia	753.351	810.852	872.675	31,275
17	Somalia (data: 2010)	5,896			600
18	Sudan	89,51	86,590	89,970	2,600
19	Syrian Arab Republic	111.34	118.067	125.203	5,041
20	Tunisia	104.736	113.515	122.861	9,775

⁷ Syria's participation has been suspended since November 2011; South Sudan, and Eritrea are candidates for membership

⁸ Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Report, retrieved on 5 March 2014 from www.ifc.org complemented from information of the CIA World Fact Book (Iraq, Somalia, Sudan)

21	United Arab Emirates	233.54	256.009	280.492	49,012
22	Yemen, Republic of	69.822	74.639	79.59	2,283

The cumulated GDP of Arab League members in 2012 amounted to around 2,689.9 billion US\$ (in comparison 2013: China, 13,370 billion; EU, 15,830; and the US 16,720 billion)⁹.

Efforts to trade integration among Arab countries started with the establishment of the Arab League in 1945. Within this framework, several attempts were made to promote regional political and economic integration: the 1950 Treaty for Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation, the 1953 Convention for Facilitating and Regulating Transit Trade, the 1957 Arab Economic Unity Agreement, the 1964 Arab Common Market, the 1981 Gulf Cooperation Council, the 1989 Arab Cooperation Council as well as the 1989 Arab Maghreb Union (NEAIME) in 2005. Implementation of these agreements remained rather weak. As a result, trade barriers have remained high. Regional trade integration accelerated when many Arab countries embarked on a process of trade liberalization, both at multilateral, bilateral and regional level. So far, 11 Arab countries have joined the World Trade Organization (WTO)¹⁰. In parallel, the number of bilateral free trade agreements has increased. The regional Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA)¹¹ was signed in 1997, whereas Morocco, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia concluded the Agadir Agreement in 2004. At the last Economic and Social Summit in January 2013, the Arab Leaders confirmed their commitment to complete the process of implementing GAFTA before the end of 2013. GAFTA aims at multiple objectives. Firstly, reducing trade barriers aims at increasing intra-regional trade. Secondly, exploiting comparative advantages and scale of economies among the member countries is expected to lead to higher productivity. Thirdly, promoting increased competition within domestic markets aims at enhancing product variety and quality and lowering prices for consumers. Fourthly, due to the decrease of import prices, terms of trade are expected to improve.

AIDMO based in Rabat (Morocco) is the responsible regional organization for industrial development in the Arab region. One of AIDMO's core mandates is to work towards a harmonized and integrated support quality infrastructure (QI), with the aim to enable the 22 AIDMO Member Countries to comply with international trade rules and regulations, while reducing costs of proving product conformity of products and enterprises with international standards. Enhancing the QI at regional and national levels is an integral part of AIDMO's trade facilitation and economic integration objectives.

⁹ Source: CIA World Fact Book, retrieved on 5 March 2014 from www.cia.gov

¹⁰ WTO members as of 2010: Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania

¹¹ GAFTA Members: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

The Arab Standardization Strategy (2009 - 2013)¹² outlines specific actions aiming at ensuring a well functioning regional quality system. The Arab Accreditation (ARAC) is one of the main pillars of the Pan Arab QI. Established through a Ministerial Decree of AIDMO in June 2008, ARAC's current membership includes 14 Arab Accreditation bodies.¹³ Since its launch on 12 June 2011 in Cairo, ARAC has acted as the Arab planning and coordination agency on QI. Its main goal is to improve the competitiveness and trust in Arab goods and services and protect health and safety of the public and the environment.

1.3 Programme description and intervention logic

AIDMO initiated programme identification through a request to the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) for assistance. AIDMO knew Sida due to its long history in training regional experts in fields related to QI in cooperation with the Swedish Board for Accreditation and Conformity Assessment (SWEDAC). Sida suggested AIDMO to explore the option of cooperating with UNIDO. Following Sida's agreement in principle to provide funding, the Programme was jointly designed by UNIDO and AIDMO to support the implementation of the Arab Standardization Strategy (2009 – 2013).

The Programme's overall development objective was to "facilitate regional trade and regional harmonization through strengthening the regional coordination mechanisms on quality infrastructure for the delivery, along international best practices, of support services in standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation". In line with this general objective, the Programme addressed standard and conformity related issues of trade capacity building (TCB) through a regional approach, with a particular focus on accreditation. Support targeted national accreditation bodies and ARAC as a regional accreditation body in parallel. Expected outcomes included:

- Outcome 1: AIDMO technical and regional coordination capacities strengthened for the planning, implementation and management of Quality Infrastructure related technical assistance programmes within the framework of the Arab Strategy 2009 - 2013.
- Outcome 2: An effective Arab Cooperation Body for Accreditation¹⁴ established and in operation for cooperating in the set-up of the accreditation at the regional level.

Fully funded through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) with an initial budget of € 750,000¹⁵ for a planned duration of

¹² A revised strategy for 2014 – 2018 has been developed; its approval is pending.

¹³ Current members (as per 30 January 2014): Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Iraq, Oman, Palestine, Libya, Egypt, Morocco, Mauritania and Yemen. All Arab Accreditation Bodies are however invited to become ARAC members.

¹⁴ Subsequently named ARAC; original text in Programme Document: "(...) The regional coordination and cooperation on accreditation enhanced and strengthened. (...)"

two years, the Programme was implemented by AIDMO with support from UNIDO, but applying agency execution modalities. The AIDMO Regional Committee and the AIDMO Executive Board were responsible to act the Programme's Steering Committee.

The project document was signed between AIDMO, Sida, and UNIDO on 16 December 2010.¹⁶ Programme implementation started in May 2011, after a three month inception phase and endorsement of an "action plan" by the AIDMO Regional Committee Meeting on 26 – 29 April 2011. The Project underwent an independent external mid-term review in December 2012.¹⁷ Based on its generally positive conclusions and the recommendations, Sida granted additional funding of €752,500 (including 13% support cost) and an extension of the Programme until December 2013. Subsequently, the Programme received a second, non-cost extension until June 2014.

As per 25 February 2014, € 1,206,468.77 of the total budget excluding support costs (€ 1,421,509.83) had been committed or disbursed.¹⁸

AIDMO and its Member States provided substantial in-kind contributions in terms of staff input, expert mobilization and in covering some of the costs (logistics) in hosting a number of meetings¹⁹.

By 18 December 2013, UNIDO reported the following key outputs (in chronological order following the implementation report)²⁰:

- Support to AIDMO in drafting its revised Standardization Strategy (2014 – 2018) to bring it in line with good international practices
- Validating the draft through meetings and conferences. Work on an action plan is reported as still ongoing and expected to be finalized in May 2014
- Advice AIDMO in establishing ARAC and funding technical committee meetings
- The development of a methodology for and the mapping of accreditation capacities of eight AIDMO member countries
- Support AIDMO in the design of regional support programmes (referring to an outline for a second phase of this Programme)
- Support AIDMO in drafting country support programmes
- Conducting a Regional Workshop for the Establishment of the Arab Code of Good Practices in NQI (Good Governance), including the production of a training kit and Guidelines for a "Code of Ethics"

¹⁵ Excluding UNIDO support cost of € 97,500, thus the total budget amounted to € 847,500

¹⁶ Programme Document: Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation (dated December 2010).

¹⁷ Report on Mid-Term Review of Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation, by Roberto PERISSI, UNIDO 2012.

¹⁸ See implementation report dated 18 December 2013, page 74 (official figures) and summary as per 25 February 2014

¹⁹ See section 10 of implementation report (page 71 – 72)

²⁰ Implementation Report as per 18 December 2013, reporting from April 2011 to December 2013.

- Capacity building and technical interventions: Training of peer evaluators, assessors; seminars on accreditation, mapping of accreditation capacities, peer evaluations, a technical seminar with the Islamic Development Bank, various technical meetings
- Capacity development of AIDMO/ARAC to support member countries through conducting analyses of NQI and implement technical support programmes in Mauretania, Libya Yemen, Sudan and Palestine.

At the time of the evaluation, most of the planned outputs had been delivered. The work on a Code of Practice and a consulting project that aims at providing AIDMO with advice on a strategy and operational model for ARAC, which were originally not planned are ongoing.

Furthermore, all staff-related costs of ARAC are still funded under the Programme.

1.4 Methodology and evaluation approach

While complying with UNIDO's evaluation policy and maintaining independence the evaluator applied a participatory approach, seeking the views of all Programme stakeholders. Enrolment of key stakeholders in the process and seeking alignment on key findings, conclusions and recommendations significantly contributes to organizational learning, which was the main purpose of this evaluation.

Methodology

The evaluator's assessment of whether the Programme provided the right type of support in the right way was made based on the following evaluation criteria:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which project objectives were consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, AIDMO and its Member Countries' needs, global priorities and policies
- **Efficiency:** How economically resources/inputs (e.g. funds, expertise, time) were converted into results²¹ - i.e. "value for money", including an assessment of quality of service delivery and possible synergies achieved with other similar programmes
- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance (e.g. significance of results for companies in terms of financial or environmental performance). Planned outputs refer to the amended list in the latest progress report as per 25 February 2014. This evaluation further explored possible unplanned/unexpected negative/positive outcomes

²¹ This is an economic term which is used to assess the extent to which aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted.

- Sustainability: An assessment of the likelihood that programme benefits will continue after the assistance has been completed.

Data was collected through desk study (see list of documents included in [Annex 1](#)) and during a field mission to AIDMO headquarters in Morocco between 23 and 28 February 2014. The evaluator conducted in-depth discussions with all key stakeholders of the Programme, both in the form of focal-groups and individually (see list of organizations and persons met enclosed in [Annex 2](#)). The Project Manager, the donor, representatives of national accreditation bodies and a sample of regional experts involved into the Programme were interviewed through conference calls. In-depth discussions with AIDMO and ARAC management were used to validate and complement the monitoring reports. The combination of different evaluation tools aimed at ensuring an evidence-based qualitative and quantitative assessment. Particular emphasis was given to triangulation (cross-validation) of data sources and an assessment of plausibility of the results obtained.

The evaluation mainly applied deductive reasoning, i.e. based its conclusions and recommendations are based on evaluation findings. The use of inductive reasoning²² is specifically mentioned in the report.

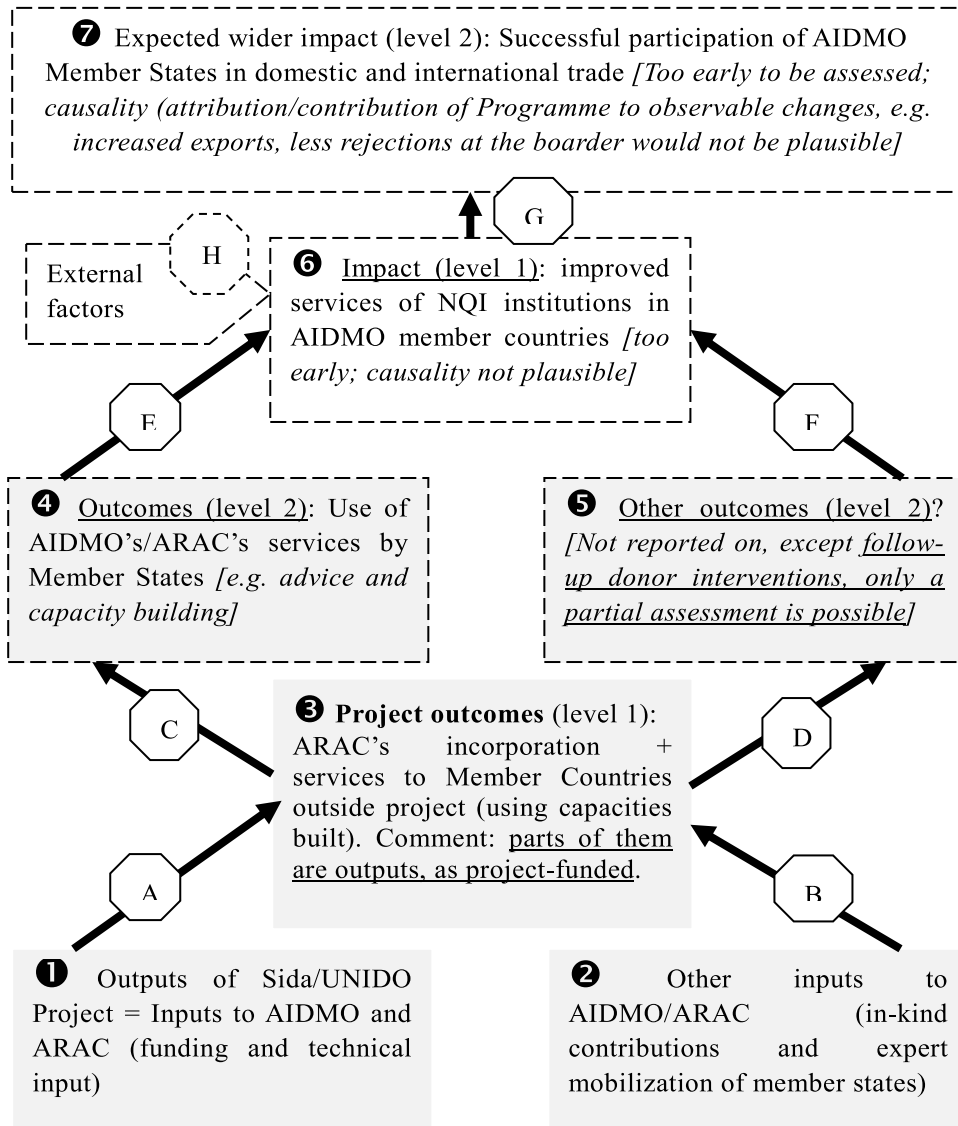
Factors external to the UNIDO support that may have facilitated or impeded the achievement of the expected impacts were taken into account. Thus, the evaluation applied the basic principle of “realistic evaluation”: “Intervention + Environment = Impact”.²³ The relative importance of external contributions to the changes observed (e.g. AIDMO member states) was taken into account. [Figure 3](#) aims at capturing the different “result-levels” and the causalities between them.

During the evaluation, evolving findings were taken into account and subsequently validated, as far as this was possible (iterative approach).

²² Inductive reasoning (as opposed to deductive reasoning) is reasoning seeking evidence for a conclusion.

²³ PAWSON, RAY AND TILLEY, Nick; Realistic evaluation; 1997

Figure 3: Causal Chain



Explanations:

1. Inputs to AIDMO and ARAC (after its establishment) = outputs, refers to UNIDO's services, such as trainings, technical committee meetings, the mapping of member countries, the design of projects and financial support (currently only directly and not yet indirectly through commissioning services to ARAC funded by the Project).
2. Other inputs to AIDMO/ARAC: the evaluation looked at other support AIDMO and ARAC might have received (such as through member states, other donors)
3. Establishment of ARAC and ARAC/AIDMO's services (some are outputs funded by the Programme; some are not funded by the Programme and

thus project outcomes). Examples include trainings and support to Accreditation Bodies of Member States

4. Changes generated within member states through the use of ARAC's/AIDMO's services (specifically: the ARAC peer evaluations of TUNAC, ALGERAC and EGAC, the qualification of ARAC peer evaluators, an amendment of a law in Libya, and the establishment of the Management Systems according to ISO/IEC 17011 for the accreditation bodies in Libya and Yemen)
5. Other outcomes observed, e.g. fund mobilization
6. Improved services of national institutions at the level AIDMO/ARAC Member States. Due to the short duration of programme support, causality or attribution seems to be unlikely and was not assessed.
7. Broader economic changes generated in the Arab region (e.g. increased exports, less rejections at the boarder). Due to the short duration of programme support, causality or attribution seems to be unlikely and was not assessed.

All stakeholders were ready to openly share relevant all information. Beyond this AIDMO/ARAC management expressed clear and candid views, not only on the Programme, but also on their vision for their future development and the support needed to achieve their objectives. Furthermore, the UNIDO Project Manager was able to spell out a clear strategy on how to respond to AIDMO's and ARAC's request for further assistance.

Preliminary findings were discussed in detail with management of AIDMO/ARAC on 28 February 2014. On 11 March 2014 a first draft report was circulated in preparation of a physical de-briefing on 24 March 2014 with the Project Manager, the Evaluation Group and the donor. Purpose of the de-briefing was a factual verification of key findings and an in-depth discussion of conclusions and recommendations. [All factual corrections received were taken into account]. Overall, evaluation findings were consistent and clear. The evaluation results presented below were fully endorsed by key stakeholders.

1.5 Limitations

Firstly, the project logic as reflected in the programme document and the latest progress report (as per 18 December 2014) is not entirely clear. Although partially applied, the logical framework did neither specify impact objectives nor link results to clear and objectively verifiable indicators. Many of the outputs defined would rather be qualified as outcomes (use of UNIDO's technical assistance). In order to assess results, the evaluator attempted to reconstitute the original intervention logic based on desk study and interviews (see [Figure 3](#) above), to the degree this was possible.

Secondly, monitoring reports list activities or actions undertaken rather than assessing planned against achieved results. Additional extensive fact finding during a relatively short field mission was necessary to establish the factual basis for this report.

Thirdly, while providing detailed recommendations, the report of the mid-term review does not always clearly link them to findings and conclusions. It was thus necessary to revisit the implementation prior to 2013 in more detail in order to establish as solid evidence base for this final evaluation.

Fourthly, most of the key outputs (UNIDO inputs) relevant to the achievement of outcomes were only completed during the extension phase in 2013 or still ongoing (in particular the support at the level of strategic development and business planning, which will only be delivered after this evaluation). For these reasons, it seems not plausible that the Programme led/contributed to any broader changes in terms of trade facilitation at the level of individual countries. Even if it was possible to observe positive changes at the macro-level, a causal link to project inputs (attribution/contribution) would be highly unlikely. An assessment of wider project benefits in terms of improved services of NQI institutions in ARAC member countries and other outcomes or even impact was thus not possible. Therefore, the evaluation focused on assessing effectiveness of outputs and outcomes at the level of ARAC/AIDMO.

The Programme did initially not have gender-related and good public governance outcome objectives. The evaluator attempted to identify effects generated by outputs relating to gender and good governance that were discussed at the outset of the programme and added during implementation. The limited number of interviews (mainly with programme staff and experts) might however not have provided a comprehensive picture.

Despite these various limitations, sufficient factual information for a well founded assessment was available.

Figure 4: Brief description of accreditation

What is accreditation?

The prime responsibility of accreditation is to give formal recognition that laboratories (e.g. testing, calibration, pathology, etc.), certification bodies, inspection bodies, proficiency scheme providers and good laboratory practice test facilities are competent to carry out specific tasks. The accreditation process is based on international standards such as ISO/IEC 17020, ISO/IEC 17021, ISO/IEC 17025, ISO/IEC 17065 and others. Accreditation is a prerequisite for the recognition of the results from conformity assessment service providers in technical regulation and in the market place at the local and international level.

The International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) and the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) provide international recognition of Accreditation Bodies. The ILAC manages recognition for laboratory and inspection accreditation. The IAF is responsible for the fields of management systems, products, services, personnel and other similar programs of conformity assessment. ILAC and IAF coordinate their efforts to enhance the accreditation and the conformity assessment worldwide. In order to gain such international recognition, Accreditation Bodies need to demonstrate its own competency viz. a viz. its peers. This is a lengthy process which may take between beyond five to seven years.

Source: summarized from KELLERMANN, Martin and KELLER, Daniel P., Analysis of donor practices in supporting Quality Infrastructure reforms, developed on behalf of Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, draft for publication (2014)

2. Findings and assessment

2.1 Programme preparation

This section assesses the quality of project preparation reflected in the original programme document²⁴ and the “declaration”²⁵ through which the extension phase was approved, including its identification and design.

A. Identification

The Programme was identified based on a specific request of AIDMO directly addressed to the donor (Sida) for assistance in implementing the Arab Standardization Strategy. Sida encouraged AIDMO to explore the possibility to source expertise from UNIDO. Sida looks back to a long history of support to the training of regional QI experts. For several years, Sweden has funded in-depth training courses hosted by SWEDAC. For Sida, the Programme was also a way to capitalize on its prior human resource development efforts.

B. Formulation

Within the overall theme of TCB, the Programme aimed at responding to the challenge of trade barriers caused by a weak QI. It is widely recognized that removing barriers to trade relating is one among several key factors for trade facilitation. Spurring intra- and inter-regional trade and harmonization among Arab states in order to promote economic prosperity and job creation in the Arab region is a key priority of AIDMO Member States.

Embedded into the existing cooperation framework of AIDMO, the Programme addressed integration, harmonization, and effective coordination of QI through a combination of a transnational and a regional approach²⁶. Strengthening regional QI components is at the core of AIDMO’s mandate, reflected in its specific standardization strategy. Within these broader objectives, the Programme provided AIDMO with support to the establishment of regional conformity assessment scheme that enables Arab countries to remove technical barriers to trade and to link them with the international markets. Among the different elements of QI, the Programme clearly focused on the strengthening of accreditation.

The programme concept developed by UNIDO was innovative in several ways:

²⁴ Programme Document (TE/RAB/10001): Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation (dated December 2010)

²⁵ Proposed project extension (TE/RAB/10001) and document “declaration on the AIDMO-UNIDO-Sida technical cooperation programme” dated March 2013

²⁶ Transnational approaches aim at strengthening regional institutions, while regional approaches deliver assistance to several countries through a single project.

- Rather than implementing its standard repertoire of services, UNIDO combined strengthening of a regional cooperation framework as such, mainly through acting as a catalyzer to achieve alignment among the different Member States through its technical assistance.
- Jointly crafted by the Project Manager and AIDMO, the overall strategy is specifically tailored to the clearly expressed priority needs of AIDMO. Moreover, UNIDO rightly recognized that AIDMO's driving force would be pivotal for ensuring a smooth programme implementation. As a central coordinating body between all countries, AIDMO was invited to participate actively during the entire design process from the very beginning. The close cooperation with AIDMO, both prior and during implementation, was used to “anchor” the Programme in the region and as a channel to reach out to the different Member States.
- Arab countries have different levels of capacities ranging from extremely low to moderately advanced. In this light, the Programme's strategy to promote the sharing of experience and knowledge among countries is a good example of facilitating knowledge transfer from less developed to more developed countries through “South-South-” or “Triangular Cooperation” (North-South-South), which will be further discussed in section 2.2 on Relevance.
- UNIDO recognized that it would not be effective to strengthen a regional quality system without parallel support to individual countries that enables them to make use of it. By allocating resources for a mapping of QI at the level of AIDMO Member States and designing tailored support projects, lessons learned from UNIDO's prior support to the strengthening of regional QI were taken into account.²⁷ Prior experience showed indeed that the strengthening of regional QI frameworks often requires support to the national QIs in parallel, in order to bring all countries to a level that allows them to participate and contribute to the regional framework they are part of. Also, delegating national functions to a regional body does not replace basic national QI. Countries must for instance still be able to respond to certain basic metrology and testing needs. Transnational support is thus only effective if combined with support to individual countries²⁸.
- Promoting good governance principles within national and regional QI through a regional guideline on good governance and best practices.

²⁷ See in particular: BENNET B., LOEWE P., and KELLER D. Thematic Evaluation Report, UNIDO activities in the area of Standards, Metrology, Testing and Quality (SMTQ), (co-funded by SECO). Vienna: UNIDO, 2010 (published on www.unido.org)

²⁸ See KELLERMANN M., KELLER, D., Draft text for publication, Analysis of donor practices in supporting Quality Infrastructure reforms, developed on behalf of the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, October 2013, in particular section on regional quality infrastructure (page 43 – 55) and best practice in supporting regional quality infrastructure (page 61)

C. Quality of the programme document

Preparation was based on a detailed assessment the regional economy and the QI context (see programme document, section A).

A reasonably **clear overall concept is not translated into proper project logic**. Both the original programme document and the “declaration” for the extension phase do not allow for steering, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme through applying standard tools for result-based management (RBM). The targets in the logical framework are not clearly spelled-out and are not linked to specific, measurable, ambitious, relevant and time-bound (“SMART”) Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs).

Furthermore, no budget that presents the different in a matrix form according to budget lines and different outcomes was established. As a result, it must have been impossible for the donor and AIDMO to get a clear picture on how their funds would be spent (see also comments in Section 2.4). Assumptions were defined, but they are generic. No analysis of risks and the way they will be mitigated was undertaken. Unlike planned outputs, outcome objectives are clearly overambitious. Considering the limited scope, resources and duration of the Programme, they are clearly unachievable.

A **sustainability strategy** on how to achieve continuation of benefits beyond the Programme’s duration was not spelled out.

An **inception phase** served the purpose to “operationalize” the initial design and to establish a detailed implementation plan. Results of the inception phase are however not documented trough an inception report. A subsequently defined more specific set of outputs with indicators is included into the progress reports. AIDMO and UNIDO confirmed that these outputs have been agreed upon during the Steering Committee Meeting in April 2011 (although the minutes just refer to an implementation plan and budget).

The programme document includes an outline for a **project governance and management structure**. It makes reference to detailed “operational guidelines”, which were however never established. Procedures for programme management were developed and applied ad hoc. Due to the excellent work of the Project Manager, his team and the strong support of AIDMO, the previous issues mentioned above **did not result in a negative impact on quality of implementation**.

The lack of a proper planning framework makes project quality highly dependent on the performance of individual persons. Besides, it is not possible to apply internationally agreed principles of measuring aid effectiveness. Without a proper project planning framework, changes in management on the donor’s, UNIDO’s or the partner’s side are likely to lead to disruptions. New management will not be able to capture what was planned and how it should be implemented. This could also lead to disputes among partners. Furthermore, there is a risk that by applying “an ad hoc planning mechanism”, projects loose the original focus and venture into all types of activities that are not related to original objectives. Experience from many evaluations show a strong correlation between good planning and project

quality during implementation. The exception of this Programme confirms the general rule.

It should be emphasized that the Project Manager undertook all preparation work by himself, without external support and besides his many other responsibilities. No specific budget for preparation was available to him. Achieving a better project quality at the design stage might warrant the commissioning of project preparation to outside specialists, complemented by a more stringent quality control at the project appraisal stage. Most donors recognize the importance of proper project preparation and would possibly be willing to fund it, if they are approached by UNIDO.²⁹

Overall, the quality of project preparation was satisfactory, with the exception of the programme document, which is unsatisfactory.

2.2 Relevance

The assessment of relevance looks at the extent to which the objectives of the projects were consistent with the requirements of key beneficiaries, international priorities, donor policies and UNIDO.

A. Relevance to AIDMO and its Member States

Through its three regional Advisory Committees on Standardization, Accreditation and Metrology, AIDMO is responsible of implementing the Arab Standardization Strategy, which addresses all components of QI (standardization, metrology, certification, accreditation, testing and conformity assessment) under a regional perspective³⁰.

Regarding accreditation (component 6), the Arab Standardization Strategy calls for regional cooperation and unifying Arab efforts in various aspects of accreditation, through: (a) unifying the process of mutual recognition agreements by certificates of conformity among Arab countries; (b) mutual recognition of certificates of conformity concerning Arab countries through bilateral agreements; (c) the development of Arab Accreditation Organs; (d) the foundation of an Arab cooperation body for Accreditation; (e) achieving mutual recognition of the accreditation certificates issued by the Arab accreditation Bodies; (f) ensuring access to international recognition of the Arab cooperation body for Accreditation.

²⁹ For example Switzerland (SECO) as one of UNIDO's key donor has directly funded the preparation of two projects in 2012 and 2013, one in Vietnam and one in Indonesia.

³⁰ See for details pages 15 – 16 of the programme document, which recapitalizes the seven different components of the Arab Standardization Strategy (summarized by evaluator): (1) standard harmonization, (2) coordination in standard development, (3) coordinating laboratory infrastructure, (4) coordination of metrology, (5) harmonizing certification and quality marks (including the establishment of an Arab quality mark, (6) accreditation, (7) information centers on standards and technical regulations and (8) facilitating membership of Arab countries membership in international organizations and bodies operating in the field of standardization.

The Programme responded well to AIDMO's core objectives and was fully aligned with its needs and priorities. The Programme's focus on accreditation only (support to the establishment of ARAC and its international recognition) responded to a priority and was fully endorsed by AIDMO. The high relevance of the Programme's objectives was confirmed by both AIDMO and a selection of representatives from national accreditation bodies.

Accreditation is only one among many important elements of a QI. Addressing other key constraints to a well-functioning QI within a possible follow-up phase would further increase the relevance of Sida/UNIDO support. Regional experts interviewed considered for instance the problem of weak capabilities for proficiency testing and traceability within the region as a serious constraint. Accreditation bodies might fulfill the applicable international standards requirements, but will not be used if their potential clients (e.g. conformity assessment bodies) are unable to fulfill the accreditation requirements.

The appropriate approach for further support that is not directly related to accreditation would be to define key industries and export-related constraints (e.g. for food it might be the problem of rejection at the boarder) and then to see what areas of the QI will need to be strengthened to address them.

Assessing or mapping the existing QI of Member Countries without considering (a) the demand for certification/conformity assessment and (b) what services are already available/accessible bears the risk of creating overlaps and duplications!

B. Relevance to international priorities

The Programme is potentially highly relevant to Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 (eradicating extreme hunger and poverty) through facilitating export-oriented industrial development. Compliance with standards required by buyers and importing countries is a core element of industrial competitiveness. System certification standards (e.g. ISO 9000, ISO 14000, ISO 22000), also tend to enhance product quality and productivity (e.g. less waste through standardized production processes, food safety). Higher productivity and better product quality contribute to higher profitability of enterprises. Profitable companies are more likely to create employment, to pay higher salaries and to contribute more taxes to the state budget, which all contributes to poverty reduction.

The importance of a well-functioning QI goes however beyond the purpose of trade facilitation. It plays a pivotal role in ensuring public health, safety, and the protection of the environment. All of this contributes in more direct ways to poverty alleviation and improved living standards. Substandard products for example undermine the limited purchasing power of poor consumers and threaten public health, safety and welfare.

The Programme further contributes to MDG 7 (environmental sustainability).

Many product and management system standards (e.g. ISO 14000 and ISO 50001)³¹ relate to environmental aspects. Product standards might for instance ban the use of hazardous substances. The implementation of environmental- and energy-related quality management systems contributes to decoupling economic growth from increased resource use and further environmental degradation.

Sustainable production and poverty reduction are closely linked. Environmental hazards also affect the livelihood of the population in terms of health, income and wellbeing. Medical costs to cure environment related diseases poses a heavy financial burden to public health systems, especially the poor. Improved environmental performance of industries contributes thus to a broader aim to reduce “multidimensional” poverty. The importance of a well-functioning QI goes clearly beyond the trade facilitation objectives defined for the Programme.³²

Through its approach to strengthen AIDMO’s existing cooperation framework that includes mainly developing and least developed countries, the Programme strategy promotes the principle of **South-South cooperation**³³, in particular in terms of ensuring knowledge and information exchange. More precisely, considering the funding by Sweden, it is more accurate to characterize the Programme as a form of “triangular cooperation”³⁴. Promoting South-South cooperation is one of the UN’s strategic objectives, which is inter alia reflected by the establishment of the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNSSC). UNSSC, formerly a part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is mandated to promote, coordinate and support South-South and triangular cooperation. The high relevance of South-South cooperation in regards to the UN’s policy objectives is also evidenced by the recent two specific recommendations of the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) to governing bodies, which aim at strengthening South-South cooperation within the UN system. The JIU recommended to all UN Organizations the establishment of a dedicated structure for South-South cooperation and to allocate specific resources to South-South cooperation.³⁵

Last but not least, the Programme’s efforts to promote **good governance and transparency** within the regional and national QI systems respond to a high UN

³¹ It should be noted that ISO 14000 and ISO 50001 are not only relevant for the environment, but also contribute to competitiveness through promoting an economic use of production resources.

³² See also Desk review, What has UNIDO done to reduce poverty – Evidence from UNIDO evaluations 2008 and 2009, UNIDO 2010

³³ While clearly not aimed at substituting North-South Cooperation, South-South cooperation and trilateral North-South-South cooperation is widely considered as a parallel channel to delivering technical assistance to developing countries and LDCs.

³⁴ Collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organizations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, and management and technological systems as well as other forms of support is referred to as triangular cooperation.

³⁵ See recommendations JIU/REP/2011/3 South-South and Triangular Cooperation in the United Nations System. Specifically: recommendation 3 and recommendation 9

priority, as expressed by the statement of the UN Secretary General: "To achieve an equitable, inclusive and more prosperous future for all, we must foster a culture of integrity, transparency, and accountability and good governance".³⁶

C. Relevance for UNIDO

The Programme matches the operational mandate and core competencies, expertise and experience in TCB of UNIDO. Programme objectives are fully aligned to one of UNIDO's core objectives, which is to promote the integration of developing countries into global trade.

D. Relevance to the Government of Sweden

Programme objectives were well aligned with the core objective of poverty reduction of Sweden's international cooperation activities (see also comments to MDG 1). Sida particularly highlighted the importance of promoting gender equality and good governance/transparency as core objectives of its international cooperation activities. While no specific objectives relating to these "cross-cutting issues" were defined, the Programme addressed them through specific activities (see section 2.3 below).

2.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness looks at the extent to which the development objectives of an intervention were or are expected to be achieved.

The Programme's development objective was to "facilitate regional trade and regional harmonization through strengthening the regional coordination mechanisms on quality infrastructure for the delivery, along international best practices, of support services in standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation". According to the Programme title, the focus was on enhancing the accreditation system.

Within these broader objectives, the Programme aimed at the following two outcomes:

- "Outcome 1: AIDMO technical and regional coordination capacities strengthened for the planning, implementation and management of Quality Infrastructure related technical assistant programs within the framework of the Arab Strategy 2009 - 2013:
- Outcome 2: The regional coordination and cooperation on accreditation enhanced and strengthened."

For each outcome objective, specific output objectives were defined and linked to (mostly) objectively verifiable indicators. As explained in sections 1.4 and 2.1 above, the logical framework confuses output- and outcome levels

³⁶ Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary General (International Anti-Corruption Day, 2013)

and does not define outcome and impact indicators. For these reasons, the evaluator tried to reconstitute the intervention logic as a basis to assess results based on interviews with the Programme Team and AIDMO (see explanations in section 1.4 and 2.1).

For the output level, the evaluator based the assessment on existing indicators. Results reported in the latest implementation report as per 18 December 2013 were validated on a sampling basis through in-depth interviews and desks study. The following section looks at UNIDO inputs provided and results achieved at different levels, as reflected in the causal chain developed by the evaluators, which is presented in [Figure 3](#) above.

A. Project outputs³⁷ = UNIDO inputs to AIDMO and its Member States

- The Programme reported that during a three months inception phase (first quarter 2011), a budget and implementation plan were established, which were subsequently discussed with AIDMO management and endorsed by the AIDMO Regional Committee Meeting. While the endorsement of the implementation plan is documented, the evaluation was unable to determine on what basis decisions were taken. No formal inception report or implementation plan is available. Agreement of AIDMO is however evidenced by the approval of subsequent implementation reports. This leads to the conclusions that the outputs reported on are those that were agreed.
- [Output 1.1.1](#): The Programme provided support to revise AIDMO's standardization strategy to bring it in line with international best practices and to validate it through different meetings with Member States (7 meetings with 190 participants). A draft standardization strategy (2014 – 2018) was prepared and submitted to AIDMO's decision making bodies. Currently, it is still in the process of being fine-tuned. The document is only available in Arabic, so it was not possible to assess its quality.
- [Output 1.1.2](#): An outline for a follow-up phase of the Programme under evaluation (to be funded by Sweden executed by UNIDO)³⁸ was designed by a working group established under AIMDO with representatives from AIDMO Member States and discussed during three regional meetings (which attracted 57 participants). The document translates expressed needs into a feasible outline, but suffers from similar design weaknesses identified for the current programme phase.
- [Output 1.1.3](#): The aim was to develop “bankable projects” in order to help countries mobilize the necessary funding for the implementation of QI

³⁷ Numbering according to progress report dated 18 December 2013 (not the original logical framework). For better understanding, outputs are presented under the outcome they are related to, following the reconstituted intervention logic presented in [Figure 4](#) above.

³⁸ See [regional programme](#) document and action plan presented by UNIDO and AIDMO in 2012 titled “Establishing the Regional Arab Conformity Assessment Scheme, Phase II of project “Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation”.

support interventions. Four country programmes were developed for Sudan, Mauritania, Yemen and Libya. Their focus is building the national QI of these countries. The design of the projects was supported by AIDMO and UNIDO, following the mapping and validation exercise (output 2.1.1) in each of the countries. The projects' content reflects the conclusions of the mapping, but again, the application of RBM practices leaves room for improvement.

- Output 1.2: Planned but not implemented was to provide technical assistance to Arab Standardization Centre (under AIDMO) with the aim to strengthen the delivery and coordination of technical assistant and training services within the region. During the inception phase, it was reportedly agreed to drop this output in order to focus on the field of accreditation only. Funds were reallocated to other activities.
- Output 1.2.1 – added during extension phase: Good Governance: Regional Workshops for the Establishment of the Arab Code of Good Practices in QI. With programme support, AIDMO organized a series of regional workshops which attracted more than 200 participants aiming to develop the capacities and awareness of the Arab region about the importance of ethical practices for the development. A draft of the guidelines of the Code of Ethics³⁹ was circulated to AIDMO Member Countries for their comments. Publication of the final draft of the Code will be on April 2014 in three languages: Arabic, French and English. The draft code is of good quality, in particular because it explains how “good governance” within QI is linked to other good practices and the existing internationally recognized rules (e.g. the applicable ISO standards). The intention of adding this output was to capitalize on the experience of the anti-corruption rules included in the design of a Sida/UNIDO project in Iraq (project XXIRQ 11001, under implementation).
- Output 1.2.2, implement selected technical interventions within the region to coordinate and support the regional accreditation efforts within the countries: AIDMO organized a number of technical interventions to support the regional cooperation on accreditation and to promote ARAC. Activities included the training of peer-evaluators, assessors, a peer evaluation, the development of a twinning programme (TUNAC with Palestine), conferences, and support to committee meetings. In-country technical support through three field visits and subsequent follow-up by phone/email was provided to Yemen, Libya, Sudan and Mauritania. This included three field visits of regional experts combined with home-based technical follow-up. Generally, interviews confirmed the good quality and usefulness of support provided. Expert resources (working time) allocated were however clearly not commensurate with the tasks the experts were expected to achieve. For details, please refer to the implementation report and the

³⁹ See: The Regional Arab Guideline on Good Governance and Professional Practices for Organizations and Personnel of the National Quality Infrastructure (draft, version 1)

detailed summaries⁴⁰ of support provided to each of these countries. The awareness seminars on the mapping in eight countries and 600 participants seem to be reported twice (see also output 2.1.1 below, which reported on six seminars with 600 participants).

- “Output 2.1” (which is an outcome): An effective Arab Cooperation Center for Accreditation (now ARAC) established and in operation. At the output level, UNIDO provided assistance to the set-up of ARAC, which is now completed (2.2.1) (17 peer evaluators trained, three ARAC peer evaluators qualified, 16 assessors trained, one pre-peer evaluation and two peer evaluations conducted). This is evidenced by by-laws approved by AIDMO Member States (only available in Arab) and the fact that ARAC became an ILAC and IAF member with the status of regional accreditation cooperation body and regional accreditation group. However, ARAC MLA is no yet officially recognized by ILAC and IAF. Recognition requires transforming ARAC into an independent legal entity. Prior to the end of the project, UNIDO plans to provide assistance in identifying the most effective legal framework and support AIDMO in developing a clear strategy and business plan (under preparation⁴¹). The establishment of ARAC required an intensive consultation process within AIDMO (output 2.2.2), which was facilitated and funded by the Programme (financial support to the travelling of participants to regional meetings).
- As output 2.1.1, a detailed situation assessment and update of the existing AIDMO survey on the regional accreditation status (including an assessment of laboratories according to ISO 17025) and map countries based on their accreditation capacities and status was undertaken by five regional experts. UNIDO provided input to the mapping methodology. National awareness seminars were organized in six countries 600 delegates (also reported under output 1.2.2 above). The mapping reports for eight countries⁴² are detailed and of good quality. While the participants’ feed-back collected by the AIDMO was positive, the quality of seminar documentation is rather mixed; some of the material (slides) is not self-explaining, which would be important to ensure a subsequent follow up. The evaluator was able to interview a sample of experts, but not direct beneficiaries.
- As an additional, unplanned output, several project/programme documents were developed, with the intention to submit them to donors for funding⁴³.

⁴⁰ Briefing notes, country programmes, dated 18 March 2014 (for Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen) and summary of work undertaken for Libya, Yemen, Sudan and Mauretania)

⁴¹ Evidenced by ToRs on Legal Setup and Sustainability Options for ARAC, Vienna, February 2013, reportedly a call for offer has been initiated, but the evaluator was unable to verify this.

⁴² Mapping country reports for Algeria, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Committee for Accreditation), Libya, Mauretania, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen (comment evaluator: some of them include also action plans).

⁴³ Project Document for Aid for Trade Project Document to be implemented through the UN Interagency Cluster (funding decision pending); Regional Food Safety Programme (Project Document submitted to Sida, decision pending); Project Document “Strengthening the National Quality Infrastructure to Facilitate Trade

We noted that the objectives of the “Aid for Trade” Project are largely identical with those of the Programme. UNIDO intends to design specific activities in a way that they are complementary to a possible follow-up phase.

B. Key outcomes observed at the regional level (level 1)

(a) The establishment of ARAC

ARAC is operational with a full quality management system and four committees. ARAC has currently 14 member countries and has entered into partnership agreements with regional and international accreditation cooperation bodies⁴⁴. The clearly agreed governance structure seems to be functioning in practice (evidenced by meeting minutes). While not yet a signatory member of ILAC and IAF, ARAC is officially recognized as a regional accreditation cooperation body. ARAC is however not yet officially incorporated, but legally still a part of AIDMO.

(b) Enhanced regional cooperation

All stakeholders interviewed confirmed that the Programme significantly contributed to a much stronger cooperation framework within the region. This is evidenced by a regular formal and informal communication of different national accreditation bodies with AIDMO/ARAC and among themselves. Another indication is the willingness of several members of ARAC to actively contribute to regional capacity building (e.g. by hosting trainings). Stakeholders interviewed perceived the improvement of cooperation and communication in practice as one of the key achievements of the Programme.

(c) Services provided by AIDMO and ARAC to member countries

Beyond activities funded by the Programme, AIDMO and ARAC took the initiative to implement own technical cooperation activities with their Member States.

(d) Fund mobilization

Initial programme results demonstrated were instrumental for Sweden’s readiness to consider the funding of follow-up initiatives. Although no decision has been taken, the encouraging results of the Programme are also likely to positively influence donors’ willingness to fund additional regional activities. Funds under mobilization through project proposals prepared under the Programme amount to a total of US\$16.3 million: US\$ 7 million for the area of food safety⁴⁵, a follow-up phase for the Programme under evaluation (US\$5.5

and Enhance Consumer Protection” for Iraq (XXIRQ 11001) dated 7 December 2011 (already funded by Sida).

⁴⁴ See MoUs with IAAC, APLAC, EA, AFRAC, TURKAK, and NCA (Kazakhstan)

⁴⁵ Signed in December 2013

million), the “Aid for Trade” initiative (US\$ 1.8 million) and a capacity building for AIDMO (US\$ 2 million)⁴⁶. If all these negotiations are successful, which has yet to be confirmed, the Programme would have contributed to the mobilization of US\$16.5 million for the purpose of regional and national QI development, which is impressive.

(e) The demonstration of good practices in regional cooperation

Practices of approaching a development challenge through regional cooperation are of wider applicability to AIDMO. Other areas related to trade and economic development offer the potential to apply the same mechanisms that were piloted. An example is the field of intellectual property rights management, where successful models in other parts of the world (e.g. Europe) already exist (e.g. through sharing resources for the substantive assessment of patent applications, “regional patents”). AIDMO would be well positioned to use the experience gained in the field of QI and to enroll member states in expanding regional technical cooperation to other areas. The likelihood of whether this will happen is currently too early to be assessed.

(f) The demonstration of good practices in gender equality and good governance

The Programme was able to raise awareness on gender and good governance issues that are relevant far beyond the thematic areas covered. Principles of good governance are a key pillar of the international system of standards, metrology, testing on quality. Therefore, QI development is an appropriate area to demonstrate good practices of wider applicability in public services in general and to trigger broader changes. Considering the relatively high percentage of female experts working in QI-related fields in the Arab region, the same applies to gender issues. Again, it was not yet possible to observe specific changes beyond awareness.

C. Outcomes at the level of AIDMO Member States (level 2)

Generally, as most of the outputs had been delivered within the last 18 months only, it would be too early to observe significant changes at the level of AIDMO Member States. Also, the support provided has so far been marginal, considering the significant challenges especially the less developed countries need to address.

Moreover, as an external factor, many of the countries in the AIDMO region have benefitted from extensive donor support (e.g. Lebanon, Palestine, Tunisia, Egypt), including from UNIDO, PTB, the EU and other development agencies. Experts who provided technical assistance to member countries

⁴⁶ Sida has generally shifted to covering Arab countries through a regional approach, with the exception of Iraq and Palestine. Some AIDMO countries are not eligible for Sida assistance, due to their level of economic development.

confirmed some positive developments, but within the scope of this evaluation, it was not possible to independently validate them. A remarkable outcome is that - based on advice provided by the Programme - Libya amended its legal framework to establish an independent accreditation body. As a direct outcome of technical assistance, ALGERAC reportedly underwent a peer evaluation (not programme-funded).

D. Impact (level 3)

It was not possible to assess impact at this stage. But for any future follow-up phase, it would be important to monitor impact indicators that have a direct causal link to a well-functioning QI, as for instance the number of rejections of imported products at the boarder (data for the US and the EU is publically available). Driven by multiple factors (not only TCB), the causality of QI for export volumes and values would be much weaker.

E. External factors

Key external factors that contributed to results at all levels included:

- The strong political will of AIDMO and its Member States to bring regional cooperation in the field of QI to a new level (evidenced by the request for assistance addressed by Sida and the significant in-kind contributions made)
- The availability of regional expertise (already prior to the Programme, some of them trained through Sida support) significantly contributed to results. In terms of building expertise, the Programme did clearly not start from scratch.
- Extensive prior donor support related to QI to many of AIDMO member countries

In conclusion: Overall, effectiveness was highly satisfactory.

2.4 Efficiency

This section looks at how economically inputs were converted into outputs.

A. Approach

Evidenced by the impressive outcomes achieved at the level of AIDMO, the core elements of UNIDO's strategic approach to the strengthening the regional accreditation system through its cooperation with AIDMO (described in more detail in Section 2.1.B above) proved to be efficient. Key success factors were in particular the emphasis on:

- Reinforcing the existing cooperation framework among AIDMO Member Countries;
- Providing support to the regional and national levels in parallel and

- To anchor the Programme within the existing structures of AIDMO rather than to establish a parallel implementation mechanism.

The preliminary concept for ARAC developed at the beginning of the Programme was fine-tuned during implementation. This was done by deriving good practices from an analysis of different models for regional accreditation bodies (e.g. the IAAC) and a replication of successful principles that were most adapted to the context of the Arab region.

Since ARAC has just been established in April 2011, the aspect of **organizational capacity building** has so far been insufficiently addressed. UNIDO's support has mainly focused on strengthening technical capacities, which is not sufficient to transform ARAC into a strong, independent and sustainable institution. The now planned support to ARAC's "institutional development" in all areas that enable ARAC to successfully fulfill its mandate independent from further donor support will be pivotal. UNIDO is apparently in the process of retaining an international management consultancy firm with the purpose to provide AIDMO with input on possible legal structures and funding models for ARAC (see Section 2.3).

B. Quality of technical input

Technical input provided fully met the needs of AIDMO and in general of high quality. UNIDO selected the right experts, mostly from the region, and provided the appropriate trainings to the right beneficiaries in the right form, as evidenced by participants' positive feed-back for trainings, the generally good quality of expert reports and of most seminar material.⁴⁷ Selecting experts from the region allows UNIDO to capitalize on prior capacity building by other development agencies, including Sida (SWEDAC).

Funding mechanism of ARAC: Considering that ARAC does not yet have a legally independent status, funding most expenditures of ARAC (including staff salaries) directly, applying UNIDO procedures and rates was the only possible option for UNIDO. Running ARAC financially as a typical "UNIDO project operation", is however not conducive to the building ARAC as an independent institution⁴⁸. A gradual shift to a model where ARAC is contracted to deliver clearly defined outputs would significantly contribute to institutional strengthening⁴⁹. ARAC would get accustomed to manage its own budget efficiently and to assume also financial accountability towards its stakeholders. The process of shifting from a project operation to a service

⁴⁷ As an example: the draft Arab Code of Good Practices in QI (output 1.2.1) and the mapping reports (output 2.1.1).

⁴⁸ See also: Independent Final Evaluation of the UNIDO Project "Strengthening international certification capability in Sri Lanka with particular reference to Social Accountability Standard (SA8000) and Food Safety (HACCP/ISO 22000) standard", funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), UNIDO 2014. This project supported the establishment of a certification body.

⁴⁹ Also validated by other UNIDO projects, e.g. the support to the more mature among the National Cleaner Production Centers (see for example: LOEWE, P./KELLER, D; Independent Impact Evaluation UNIDO support to the Vietnam Cleaner Production Center (1998 - 2010) funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), UNIDO Projects US/VIE/96/063, US/VIE/04/063 and US/VIE/04/064; UNIDO 2012.

provider needs to be accompanied by further capacity building and coaching to ARAC, including on management. If programme delivery is partially subcontracted to ARAC, proper monitoring of results by UNIDO is essential (see below).

C. Analysis of financial implementation

An analysis of financial data in progress reports in [Figure 6](#) below shows that as per 25 February 2014, € 1,206,468.77 out of the total budget (excluding UNIDO support cost) of € 1,421,510.83 or 84.87% had been committed or spent.

This leaves a remaining budget of € 185,041.06.

Figure 5: Expenditures according to UN budget lines and outputs in €

SL #	BL	Details	Output 1.1	Output 1.2	Output 2.1	Total	Percent of Total
1	1100	International Experts	84,777.27	112,665.48	143,921.40	341,364.15	28.29%
2	1500	Local travel	41,984.01	5,957.33	62,202.70	110,144.04	9.13%
3	1600	Travel of project staff	42,472.27	15,870.77	13,222.08	71,565.12	5.93%
4	1700	Nat. Consult. /Staff	76,152.47	0.00	28,200.70	104,353.17	8.65%
5	2100	Subcontracts	19,854.73	0.00	108,570.25	128,424.98	10.56%
6	3000	Train/Fellowship/Study	2,567.48	636.36	2,524.82	5,728.66	0.48%
7	3500	International meetings	76,624.07	98,935.55	172,014.07	347,573.69	28.80%
8	4500	Equipment	4,558.74	0.00	1,681.52	6,240.26	0.52%
9	5100	Other direct costs	71,087.64	1,218.44	18,768.62	91,074.70	7.55%
Total (excl. support costs)			420,078.68	235,283.93	551,106.16	1,206,468.77	100%

Source: as reported by UNIDO on 25 February 2014 and analyzed by the evaluator

The largest proportion expenditures relate to international expertise (€ 341,363 or 28%) and international meetings (€ 347,574 or 29%). Travel costs of project staff are relatively high (€ 71,565 or 6%) and local travel (€ 110,144 or 9%). Travel and meeting costs add to 44% of expenditures (€ 529,283), which is very high, but explainable with the specific nature of the Programme, in particular the need of enrolling and aligning interests AIDMO Member States. Significant cost savings were achieved through sourcing expertise from Member States and partner accreditation bodies (in particular TURKAK, IAAC) at no cost. International expertise and local expertise include the salaries of ARAC and are in line with the parameters of other projects with a strong focus on technical capacity building.

Based on an assessment of the funds spent against the initial results reported in Section 2.3, the Programme's value for money was satisfactory. Efficiency

of fund use would be further increased through a follow-up phase that would allow to expand and deepen the results achieved, by the translating the initial positive outcomes at the regional level into more tangible outcomes at the country levels.

D. Project management and implementation

The Programme was well managed. Although a programme extension with additional funding was required, planned outputs were delivered on time and in good quality. The need for a programme extension was mainly a result of overambitious initial planning. The crucial success factor was a competent and highly committed programme team, both at UNIDO headquarters and in the field, which was hands-on and able to move implementation forward. While not directly involved into operational management, Sida but followed the Programme closely, participated regularly in activities and provided valuable strategic input.

Many of the substantial outcomes achieved are a result of UNIDO's **flexibility to respond to AIDMO's evolving needs**. Although the Programme formally implemented under a traditional "agency execution modality", **AIDMO was actively and closely involved on a day-to-day basis**. Despite of active support by his team and AIDMO, the Project Manager remained instrumental in driving implementation. The likelihood that his absence would have caused undesirable frictions is high. Especially if UNIDO's regional programme portfolio is expanded as envisaged (Food Safety, Aid for Trade, follow-up phase AIDMO/ARAC), UNIDO's needs to address this significant key person risk through appointing a "Deputy Project Manager" who is able to fully replace the Project Manager in case of absence.

Project monitoring and reporting does not meet good practices of result-based management. While very detailed, the progress reports are activity-based and do not report planned against achieved results. This is partially a result of poor project planning. For a possible follow-up phase of the size and scope that UNIDO plans to submit to Sida for funding, proper monitoring would require additional, dedicated personnel resources.

The need for regular quality control: The rapidly evolving QI-context in the region might furthermore call for monitoring programme quality more regularly than just through a mid-term review. Assessing programme quality is usually done through a mid-term review and goes beyond the aspect of effectiveness and also includes the aspects of ongoing relevance, efficiency and potential sustainability. The experience from many prior evaluations shows that input from mid-term reviews comes usually late to address major challenges, since budgets have already been spent. For this type of compressive, multi-faceted programmes, a more regular, comprehensive outside view on the Programme would help the Steering Committees to timely respond to arising challenges. This is one of the reasons why the European Commission (EC) monitors all its projects with a budget of above 1 million € through external Result-Oriented

Monitoring (ROM) once a year⁵⁰. The Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) applies a modified approach of ROM⁵¹ for certain types of its economic development cooperation programmes⁵². Besides the need of providing the Steering Committee with timely and accurate information on decision making, it is also important to build capacities for a regular assessment of programme quality within AIDMO, especially in the light of future cooperation programmes funded by Member States.

Applying ROM in the form of a “guided self-evaluation” with active participation of AIDMO in the ROM process might fulfill both the purpose regular quality control and capacity building for AIDMO in evaluation. AIDMO would be eager to develop capacities in evaluating its own support programmes to Member States. AIDMO management would thus welcome the application of ROM for a possible follow-up phase, in particular in the form of a self-evaluation that allows for gaining evaluation experience.

Synergies with other UNIDO interventions

Although the Programme potentially complements other donor interventions in the field of QI strengthening in individual countries (including the Sida-funded project in Iraq), the evaluation found no evidence of significant direct synergies or systematic coordination.

In conclusion: Efficiency of the Project was satisfactory.

2.5 Sustainability

This section looks at the likelihood of continued benefits beyond the end of the Programme.

Financial sustainability: The regional cooperation framework is to a large degree functioning, but only because the Programme supports most of the costs for organizing technical meetings and conferences. Interviews confirmed that delegates from poorer countries would not be able to actively participate if their travel costs were not covered. Operational costs of ARAC are currently still fully covered through UNIDO (including the salaries of management and support staff). Member States have agreed in principle to a funding mechanism through annual fees that would allow ARAC to continue organizing activities and coordinating technical support, but the details have yet to be worked out.

⁵⁰ EC, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, ROM Handbook Results-oriented Monitoring, April 2012

⁵¹ See ROM-template developed in January 2014 for the Swiss State Secretariat of Economic Affairs (SECO) by Daniel P. Keller, Swiss Consulting@ Co Ltd Vietnam. SECO applies a more in-depth approach to ROM with a detailed follow-up. SECO typically commissions the same consultant for all ROM-missions of one project.

⁵² SECO decides on a case-to-case basis, whether ROM will be applied for projects with highly innovative approaches, in volatile environments, projects with multiple implementing partners, projects with planned adjustments on project design and targets after project approval (inception phases). ROM has so far been piloted in two UN-programmes in which UNIDO was involved.

Without additional external funding, there is a high risk that regional cooperation would not continue in its current form. ARAC would be able to maintain its function and mandate as a regional accreditation cooperation body, but not to develop and expand its services to Member States. AIDMO and ARAC are fully aware of their financial dependence on donor funding. Gaining independence from international donor support is a top priority for AIDMO's management. This will however need time beyond March 2014.

Technical sustainability: The technical capacities within ARAC depend mainly upon the staff that is currently working under the Programme. The picture at the level of individual countries is mixed. The more advanced countries are also those who would possibly be able to continue developing their accreditation system without further support. The picture looks different for countries, which have just started to set up their accreditation bodies. While regional expertise is available, all experts worked under UNIDO contracts. It is unlikely that the countries that are most in need would be able to cover expert fees from their budgets.

In other words, the technical sustainability both at regional and national level is still dependent on the availability of donor funding to cover staff fees and expert costs. As these funds are currently not yet available within the regular budget of AIDMO, the likelihood that expertise built at the regional and national levels would be lost is high.

Sustainability of ARAC: While AIDMO hosts ARAC in its premises and some Member States provide experts at no cost, most other expenditures are directly covered through UNIDO. The current expenditures for staff and travel ([Figure 5](#) above) provide a rough idea of ARAC's future operational costs. The process of developing a business plan on how ARAC will generate cost-covering revenues through membership fees and services has just started. Moreover, institutional sustainability of ARAC as a regional accreditation cooperation body requires an independent legal status, which is at the same time a condition for the recognition by ILAC and IAF. The legal and operational structure for ARAC has yet to be defined and agreed upon by the Member States. Experience shows that it might take several years to get recognition. Prior to obtaining ILAC/IAF recognition ARAC will not be able to perform accreditations against fees and sign the ARAC. Without additional support to ARAC, the risk that the existing staff would leave ARAC is high, as no budget is available to pay their salaries.

While the need for a follow-up phase to expand and consolidate results is obvious, support should be tailored in a way that it enables AIDMO and ARAC to continue add value to Member States without donor-funding on a long-term basis. Prior to embarking on a new project phase, a clear concept (sustainability plan or phase-out strategy) on how donor-funding will be gradually phased out and replaced through other revenue sources is needed. The concept should be submitted to AIDMO's Member States for formal endorsement.

In conclusion: While ARAC would be able to maintain its function and mandate as a regional accreditation cooperation body, ARAC would not be able to further

develop and expand its services to Member Countries without further donor support. Most of the initial results would almost certainly be lost. The same is likely to happen in case of a longer funding gap prior to a follow-up phase.

At this stage, the sustainability of results is unsatisfactory.

3. Conclusions and overall rating

3.1 Conclusions

- i. *Addressed through an efficient transnational approach to Quality Infrastructure (QI) strengthening, programme objectives were highly relevant to beneficiaries' needs and international priorities, including the MDGs.***

Responding to the broader objectives of the Arab Standardization Strategy, support focused on the establishment of regional conformity assessment scheme that enables Arab countries to remove technical barriers to trade and to link them with the international markets. Strengthening regional QI components is at the core of AIDMO's mandate. The Programme prioritized the strengthening of accreditation through the establishment of an Arab Accreditation Cooperation Body (ARAC). Building upon AIDMO's existing cooperation framework, the Programme worked towards integration, harmonization, and effective coordination of QI through a combination of a transnational and a regional approach. Responding well to AIDMO's core objectives, the Programme was fully aligned with expressed needs and priorities. Spurring trade, economic growth and job creation through QI development contributes to MDG 1 (poverty reduction). Beyond its relevance for trade, a well functioning, accessible QI is also pivotal for social welfare, health and safety, which contributes more directly to poverty reduction. The poor tend to suffer most from substandard and hazardous products, which affect their health and further reduce their purchasing power. Many product and system standards are also environmentally relevant. Ensuring accredited certification capacities potentially contributes to decoupling economic growth from environmental impact, which is relevant to MDG 7 (environmental sustainability).

- ii. *Effectiveness in terms of outputs delivered and outcomes achieved at the regional level was highly satisfactory. An assessment of programme outcomes or even impact at the level of individual AIDMO Member States (changes generated by the use of technical input provided by UNIDO) or impact (broader economic changes resulting from them) would be premature.***

The evaluation validates all outputs reported by the Programme. With a few relatively minor exceptions, services provided by UNIDO were of good quality. This is evidenced by interviews with a selected number of beneficiaries, participants' feed-back on training events recorded by AIDMO, and through desk study of seminar material and reports. Some seminar material was however not really self-explanatory. Also, expert resources allocated for support and coaching of accreditation bodies at the country level were too limited to really meet the demand. At the regional level, support was

instrumental to the establishment of ARAC and a significantly improved cooperation among national accreditation bodies in general. Initial results demonstrated were instrumental for Sweden's readiness to consider funding of follow-up initiatives. Although no funding decision has been taken, the positive Programme results are also likely to positively influence fund mobilization for additional support to AIDMO and its Member States.

Most outputs that are directly linked to expected outcomes at the country level had just been completed. With a few exceptions (ARAC peer evaluations of TUNAC, ALGERAC and EGAC, the qualification of ARAC peer evaluators, an amendment of a law in Libya, and the establishment of the Management Systems according to ISO/IEC 17011 for the accreditation bodies in Libya and Yemen), assuming a causal link between programme inputs and changes in AIDMO member countries would not be plausible. Within the limited scope of this evaluation, it would also not be possible to identify external factors that would need to be taken into account for assessing outcomes at the country level (e.g. the degree sustained support to some countries by other development agencies contributed to them).

- iii. ***The programme demonstrated good practices of regional cooperation and transparency, which have the potential for replication in other fields of economic cooperation among AIDMO member countries.***

The Programme demonstrated good practices in successfully applying a "North-South-South" or "Triangular" cooperation mechanism. Both are considered as efficient ways to complement the traditional "North-South" approach development assistance. Triangular- and South-South Cooperation is of high relevance to international priorities, including of the UN system. They are widely perceived as a tool to ensure better, more cost efficient and sustainable access of developing countries to know-how. Strengthening an existing cooperation framework, anchoring support within a regional institution and combining support to the regional with the national level were instrumental for the achievement of results. Demonstrating successful principles of regional cooperation in the field of QI has the potential for replication for other technical areas in the Arab Region. The same applies to the principles of transparency promoted through workshops and the establishment of specific draft guidelines on good governance and transparency within the QI.

- iv. ***While no specific "gender-related objectives" were defined, the Programme made initial steps towards demonstrating good practices in mainstreaming gender aspects into QI development.***

The Programme capitalized on an opportunity to demonstrate good practices in gender equality, but mainly through awareness raising and the way it delivered its assistance. For instance, reporting on results was disaggregated according to gender. Since the relationship between gender equality and QI development is not obvious, no specific, gender-related objectives were defined. Interviews indicated that as an outcome, awareness on gender issues has been raised among those experts and beneficiaries interviewed during the mission.

Awareness on gender is also reflected by AIDMO's idea to consider the development of a "gender strategy".

- v. ***Comparing initial results with the funds disbursed, the value for money was satisfactory. The need of aligning AIDMO Member States resulted in an exceptionally ratio spent for travel and meetings. A follow-up phase to consolidate and expand preliminary results at regional and country levels would significantly increase efficiency.***

A detailed analysis of expenditures shows that travel and meeting costs accounted for 44% (€ 529,283) of total expenditures. While clearly above the ratios found in other TCB projects, funding travelling and meetings of stakeholders was the only way to raise initial awareness, strengthen cooperation among Member States and get their alignment on the establishment of ARAC. International expertise and local expertise (€ 341,363 or 28%) include the salaries of ARAC staff, which were fully covered by the Programme. A significant amount of expertise was sourced from AIDMO Member Countries at no cost to the Programme, which resulted in considerable cost savings for international expertise. Considering that despite a remarkable progress, important outcomes have not yet been fully achieved, value for money provided was satisfactory. Further support to translate initial results into sustainable outcomes has the potential to further and significantly increase efficiency.

- vi. ***The Programme was operationally well managed, with the exception of result-based planning and monitoring of results.***

The Programme was well managed, which is evidenced by the timely delivery of all outputs in good quality. Despite the application of a traditional agency execution mechanism, both AIDMO and Sida were actively involved into decision making. Project Management was flexible and responsive to evolving needs. Programme design and monitoring did however not meet good practices. Partially due to the lack of a proper logical framework, monitoring was mostly activity-based. A detailed financial report linking expenditures according to outputs to UN budget lines was only established in preparation of this evaluation.

- vii. ***Sustainability of the regional cooperation framework in the field of accreditation in general and of ARAC in particular requires further support. While ARAC would be able to maintain its function and mandate as a regional accreditation cooperation body, ARAC would not be able to further develop and expand its services to Member Countries without further donor support.***

Priorities at the outcome level are ensuring the achievement of the recognition of ARAC as a regional accreditation cooperation body, addressing the constraint of proficiency testing and traceability and bringing accreditation capacities at the level of AIDMO countries up to par. Running ARAC as a typical UNIDO project operation is not conducive to the objectives to develop an institutionally, technically and financially sustainable regional

accreditation body. An indirect funding mechanism (covering the costs of clearly defined outputs under a subcontract), which is gradually phased out, would help ARAC to gain experience in operating as an independent institution. If approved, follow-up support should be closely coordinated with similar Sida-funded programme in the region in order to ensure synergies. The possibility to share management resources should be explored.

- viii. ***The only recent establishment of ARAC has not allowed for combining technical strengthening sufficiently with institutional strengthening.***

Pending formal incorporation, financially supporting ARAC under a project structure (all payments for operational costs channeled through UNIDO in the form of direct subsidies) was the only option. The approach of directly subsidizing partner institutions is not conducive to institutional development and needs to be revisited if further support is provided. After ARAC has formally gained its organizational independence, the best option for further support would probably be to subcontract ARAC for the provision of certain outputs.

3.2 Overall rating of the Programme

Criterion	Evaluators' comments	Evaluators' rating
Relevance	Fully in line with international priorities, AIDMO's policies and strategies.	Highly satisfactory
Achievement of results		
Effectiveness	Substantial, tangible results achieved at regional level; outcomes/impact at country level too early to be assessed, unlikely to be significant.	Satisfactory
Efficiency	Innovative, appropriate approach well implemented. Follow-up phase would have potential to significantly increase efficiency	Satisfactory
Project management		Satisfactory
National management	High degree of ownership of AIDMO, active involvement in management, candid and clear view on future development of ARAC and regional QI	Highly satisfactory
UNIDO management	Flexible to adapt the Project, innovative, close involvement of beneficiaries and responsive to needs to beneficiaries.	Highly satisfactory Excellent job!
Monitoring/self-evaluation	Detailed reporting on outputs, but mostly activity-based. Last financial reporting meets good practices	Satisfactory
Synergies	Complementary to other donor-funded projects at country level, but no synergies defined and no evidence for coordination.	Satisfactory
Sustainability of outcomes		Moderately likely
Outcomes	Financial sustainability of ARAC and ability to provide services to member states at this stage unlikely	Unlikely
Contextual factors	AIDMO Member States have agreed in principle to pay membership fees to ARAC, but decision making and applying for budget might take time; recognition of ARAC by ILAC/IAF.	Moderately likely

4. Recommendations and lessons learned

UNIDO-specific ratings		Satisfactory
Quality at entry	Project document (RBM tools)	Unsatisfactory
Implementation approach		Highly satisfactory
Overall rating		Satisfactory

4.1 Recommendations

A. Recommendations to UNIDO (TCB Branch, project specific)

- (1) Finalize the Programme as planned, including commissioning a management consulting firm to explore the best strategic options for the legal status of ARAC, the development of a comprehensive business plan.
- (2) Apply for an additional non-cost extension until 30 September 2014 or the approval of Sida's funding for the proposed follow-up phase (whatever comes earlier) to complete remaining programme activities, finalize the proposal for a follow-up phase and maintain the operations of ARAC.
- (3) In close coordination with AIDMO, develop a detailed proposal for a possible follow up phase along the following lines:
 - a. Consistently apply good practices in project design, including the proper application of the logical framework tool and result-based budgeting.
 - b. Key objectives of follow-up support should be to (a) achieve recognition and ensure financial, institutional and technical sustainability of ARAC, (b) enhancing accreditation capacities at the national level of AIDMO member countries and (c) addressing the constraints of services for proficiency testing and traceability with the ARAB region.
 - c. In order to avoid the development of duplicate capacities, support to in the field of traceability and proficiency testing should be provided based on an analysis of demand and existing supply of services.
 - d. Develop a clear strategy to gradually phase out donor-funding support for ARAC and the regional cooperation framework on QI within AIDMO, while maintaining the benefits for Member States.
 - e. After the formal incorporation of ARAC as an independent organization with own legal personality, shift the financial support modality of ARAC from a project structure (directly covering operating costs) to subcontract ARAC for specific project outputs to

be delivered. Funding through subcontracts should be gradually phased out upon an agreed schedule.

- f. Consider using ARAC's expertise for UNIDO projects in other countries to provide ARAC with the opportunity for generating revenues and gaining practical experience outside the region (under subcontracts).
- g. Define specific synergies (economies of scale and scope) with the planned Regional Food Safety Project and the Aid-for-Trade Project (if approved), including the option to share certain management resources between projects.
- h. Plan for the recruitment of a monitoring specialist (might be shared with the Food Safety and Aid for Trade Project).
- i. Consider applying ROM in the form of a self-evaluation with support of an external specialist with extensive experience in evaluation and TCB (might be combined with ROM for the Regional Food Safety Project). ROM might be used instead of an external mid-term review.

B. Recommendations to UNIDO (TCB Branch, general)

- (4) Consider using regional (transnational) approaches to the strengthening of QI system where an existing cooperation framework, including a host organization is already in place. Ensure that support to the regional framework is combined with technical strengthening of individual countries.

C. Recommendations to AIDMO

- (5) Obtain as soon as possible formal endorsement of Member States for a specific funding structure for ARAC, based on the business plan developed under the Programme.
- (6) Consider replicating the approach of regional cooperation in the field of accreditation to other trade-related areas, such as for example intellectual property rights, analyzing successful models in other regions and develop an own approach adapted to the specific Arab context.

D. Recommendations to Sida

- (7) Favorably consider a proposal for a follow-up phase along the outline suggested in recommendation (2) above.
- (8) Approve a request for UNIDO for a non-cost extension until 30 September 2014 or the approval of funding for a follow-up phase (whatever comes earlier) to complete remaining programme activities, finalize the proposal for a follow-up phase and maintain the operations of ARAC until funding for a new project is available.

4.2 Lessons learned

Good practices in strengthening a regional accreditation system through a transnational approach as demonstrated by the Programme include:

- Reinforcing the existing cooperation framework among AIDMO Member Countries rather than attempting to create a new cooperation structure. The strengthening of a regional cooperation framework as such, mainly through acting as a catalyzer to achieve alignment among the different Member States, was combined with technical assistance.
- Providing support to the regional and national levels in parallel. Strengthening of regional QI frameworks requires support to the national QIs in parallel, in order to bring all countries to the level that allows them to participate and contribute to the regional framework they are part of. Transnational support is thus only effective if combined with support to individual countries
- To “anchor” support to regional QI development within the existing structures of AIDMO instead of establishing a parallel implementation mechanism. AIDMO was invited to participate actively during the entire design process from the very beginning. The close cooperation with AIDMO, both prior and during implementation, was used to “embed” the Programme in the region and as a channel to reach out to the different Member States.
- Promoting the sharing of experience and knowledge among countries is a good example of facilitating knowledge transfer from more developed to less developed countries through “South-South-” or “Triangular Cooperation” (North-South-South). Furthermore, UNIDO successfully capitalized on experience in other developing regions to craft a model for ARAC that is tailored to the specific context of the Arab region.

Annex 1: List of reference documents

1. Project planning and evaluation documents

- 1.1 Programme document (TE/RAB/10001): Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation (dated December 2010)
- 1.2 Document extension phase: Proposed project extension (TE/RAB/10001) and document “declaration on the AIDMO-UNIDO-Sida technical cooperation programme” dated March 2013
- 1.3 Draft project document phase II: Establishing the Regional Arab Conformity Assessment Scheme Phase II of project “Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation”
- 1.4 Report on Mid-Term Review of Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation, by Roberto PERISSI, SMTQ Senior Expert, UNIDO 2012 – on file
- 1.5 ARAC Brochure (downloaded from ARAC Website)

2. Reporting

- 2.1 Annual progress report as per December 2012 (prepared by Project)
- 2.2 Progress report as per 18 December 2013 (prepared by Project)
- 2.3 Excerpts of various meeting minutes of AIDMO Executive Board, AIDMO Regional Committee on Accreditation and AIDMO Regional Consultative Committee on Standardization (partial translations of Arab texts)
- 2.4 Event summary ARAC International Conference and ARAC 2nd General Assembly 25 March 2013
- 2.5 Management report: Disbursements per output and UN budget line (unofficial figures)
- 2.6 Briefing notes, country programmes, dated 18 March 2014 (for Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen) and summary of work undertaken for Libya, Yemen, Sudan and Mauretania) [received after the field mission].

3. Documents relating to programme outputs

- 3.1 Output 1.1.1: Final draft of the regional standardization strategy *only available in Arab language and summarized for the evaluator during the field mission*
- 3.2 Output 1.1.2: Regional programme document and action plan presented by UNIDO and AIDMO in 2012 titled “Establishing the Regional Arab Conformity Assessment Scheme Phase II of project “Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation”.
- 3.3 Output 1.1.3: Country programmes developed for Sudan, Mauritania, Yemen and Libya

- 3.4 Output 1.2.1 The Regional Arab Guideline on Good Governance and Professional Practices for Organizations and Personnel of the National Quality Infrastructure (draft, version 1, February 2014)
- 3.5 Output 2.1.1 “Mapping toolkit” developed by the Programme and mapping country reports for Algeria, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Committee for Accreditation), Libya, Mauretania, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen
- 3.6 Output 2.3: samples of course outlines and training material relating to training activities conducted by AIDMO/ARAC
- 3.7 Project Document Aid for Trade Project *[undated]*
- 3.8 Project Document Regional Food Safety Programme (Project Document) *[undated]*
- 3.9 Project document “Strengthening the National Quality Infrastructure to Facilitate Trade and Enhance Consumer Protection” for Iraq (XXIRQ 11001) dated 7 December 2011 (for funding by Sida)
- 3.10 Terms of Reference for contracting a consultant to establish a sustainability strategy for ARAC (time of assignment: 1 February 2014 – 31 March 2014).

4. Documents AIDMO and ARAC

- 4.1 Memoranda of Understanding between AIDMO and the following ARAC members: Algeria, Mauretania, Libya, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen
- 4.2 Technical Cooperation Agreements between ARAC and: the African Accreditation Cooperation (AFRAC), the European Cooperation on Accreditation (EA), the Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation (IAAC), the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC), the National Centre of Accreditation of the Republic of Kazakhstan (NAC), and the Turkish Accreditation Agency (TURKAK).

5. Other reference documents

- 5.1 BENNET B, LOEWE P, KELLER D, Thematic Evaluation Report, UNIDO activities in the area of Standards, Metrology, Testing and Quality (SMTQ), (co-funded by SECO). Vienna: UNIDO, 2010 (published on www.unido.org)
- 5.2 KELLERMANN M, KELLER D, Draft Text for the Publication, Analysis of donor practices in supporting Quality Infrastructure reforms, Developed on behalf of Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, October 2013, in particular section on regional quality infrastructure (page 43 – 55) and best practice in supporting regional quality infrastructure (page 61)
- 5.3 KELLER D, GUNASHINGE K.G.S.D, Independent Final Evaluation of the UNIDO Project “Strengthening international certification capability in Sri Lanka with particular reference to Social Accountability Standard (SA8000) and Food Safety (HACCP/ISO 22000) standard”, funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), UNIDO 2014.
- 5.4 LOEWE, P./KELLER, D; Independent Impact Evaluation UNIDO support to the Vietnam Cleaner Production Center (1998 - 2010) funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), UNIDO Projects US/VIE/96/063, US/VIE/04/063 and US/VIE/04/064; UNIDO 2012.

Annex 2: Persons and organizations met

Name	Job title/Position in company/organization	Name of company/organization
Mr Ali Badarneh	Project Manager	UNIDO, Vienna
Ms Samira Akoudad	National Project Coordinator	UNIDO, Rabat
Mr Moslem Barrak	ARAC Coordinator	ARAC, Rabat
Mr Mahmoud Eltayeb	Chair	ARAC, Cairo (physical meeting in Rabat)
Mr Hasan Qasem	SMC Supervisor	AIDMO, Rabat
Ms Margareta Davidson Abdelli	Project Manager	Sida, Cairo (by phone)
Mr Javier Guarnizo	Evaluation Officer	UNIDO Evaluation Group
Mrs Dorsaf Zangar Labidi	Regional expert	ARAC, Tunisia (by phone)
Mrs Sonia Mahdoui	TUNAC QM/ Regional Expert	TUNAC, Tunisia (by phone)
Mrs Lana Marashdeh	Accreditation Unit Director- JSMO	ARAC, Jordan (by phone)
Mr Jaime Moll De Alba	UNIDO Representative	UNIDO, Rabat
Mrs Lina Qudah	Regional expert	ARAC expert, Jordan (by phone)
Mr Adel Rezk	Accreditation Director- EGAC/ Regional Expert	EGAC, Cairo (by phone)
Mr AbdelouahebToubal	Accreditation Manager- ALGERAC	ALGERAC, Alger (by phone)

Annex 3: Terms of reference

Term of Reference Final Evaluation of the UNIDO Project:

Project TE/RAB/10/001 (SAP ID 106030)

**Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy
with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation**

1. Background and context

Project title:	Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation
	TE/RAB/10/001 SAP ID106030
Donor	SIDA
Counterparts	Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organisation (AIDMO) Arab Accreditation Accreditation cooperation body (ARAC)
Project input	1,600,000 euros (including 13% support costs)

The Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organisation (AIDMO) is the responsible regional organization for industrial development in the Arab region with clear mandate to achieve several objectives of which to achieve a harmonized and integrated quality infrastructure in the Arab region.

By hosting the Arab Standards Centre, AIDMO is in charge of the regional activities on standards and Quality Infrastructure and acts as the coordinating regional body between all standard institutes in the region. AIDMO has three regional Advisory Committees on Standardization, Accreditation and Metrology with the responsibility of setting up and implementing the Arab Standardization strategy.

In response to a request from AIDMO, UNIDO designed a technical cooperation project to support AIDMO in the implementation of its regional strategy, the project has been designed and planned jointly between UNIDO and AIDMO in line with the Arab Standardization Strategy and based on

UNIDO experience in similar interventions in other regions, the focus will be on selected components of the strategy based on the priorities identified.

Under the project, AIDMO, through its committees and councils, has developed the Arab Standardization Strategy 2009-2013 adopted by the Arab States in 2008 which addresses all the components of the Quality Infrastructure (Standardization, Metrology, certification, accreditation, testing and conformity assessment) with a regional focus.

The broader objective of the project was to support the regional efforts, coordinated by AIDMO, aiming at achieving regional integration, harmonization and effective coordination in the quality infrastructure ensuring compliance with international trade rules and regulations, through the establishment and the strengthening of regional support quality infrastructures for the improvement of quality, and for the delivery, along international good practice, of support services in standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation.

The development goal was to facilitate regional trade and regional harmonization through strengthening the regional coordination mechanisms on quality infrastructure for the delivery, along international best practices, of support services in standardization, conformity assessment and accreditation

The project has been designed to ensure the achievement of the following two main outcomes:

- Outcome 1: AIDMO technical and regional coordination capacities strengthened for the planning, implementation and management of Quality Infrastructure related technical assistant programs within the framework of the Arab Strategy 2009-2013.
- Outcome 2: An effective Arab Coordination Center for Accreditation (ACCA) established and in operation for coordinating the accreditation setup at the regional level.

The project will be completed by March 2014. Under the project a regional accreditation body was established by assisting AIDMO to establish ARAC based in Rabat, Morocco. ARAC has 14 member countries and is operational with a full quality management system and 4 committees, and is internationally recognized enjoying 6 partnerships with regional and international accreditation bodies.

A mid-term independent evaluation of the project took place in November 2012 and resulted in project extension and additional funds were granted by the donor. The project was extended for one additional year. The 3 parties UNIDO- AIDMO- SIDA decided to reschedule the completion of few activities for the extension period 2013 and the additional activities including

good governance practices within the region took place during the extension. The extension agreement was signed in March 2013.

2. Evaluation rationale and purpose

The programme has been in implementation since January 2011 and will come to an end next March 2014. The evaluation is intended to provide an independent and systematic assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the programme.

The key users of this evaluation will be UNIDO management and staff at Headquarters, the donor agency (SIDA), the main beneficiary (AIDMO), as well as to the key stakeholders

In summary, the main purposes are the following:

- To assess the performance and progress of the project towards the expected outcomes outlined in the programme documents;
- To generate key findings, draw lessons and provide a set of clear and forward-looking recommendations.

3. Scope and focus

In line with the above the evaluation shall:

- Review the whole project lifecycle
- Focus on the period after the mid-term evaluation and the project extension in 2013; earlier activities will be taken into account if found necessary

4. Evaluation issues and key evaluation questions

The following key evaluation questions will be answered:

Project coordination and management:

- The extent to which the national management and overall field coordination mechanisms of the project have been efficient and effective to date;
- The UNIDO management, coordination, quality control and input delivery mechanisms have been efficient and effective;
- The extent to which changes in original project plans were transparently reflected in project documentation and related correspondence;

- Synergy benefits can be found in relation to other UN activities in the region.

-

Project ownership:

- The extent to which counterparts were involved in project formulation and are actively supporting the implementation of the project;
- Counterpart contributions and other inputs have been received as compared to the project document work plan.

Design:

- The extent to which the project design is coherent with plausible links between activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts?
- Have the relevant external factors (assumptions, risks) been taken into account?
- Are the objectives at different levels measurable and achievable?
- Have other relevant initiatives been taken into account?
- Has the local context been well analysed?
- Does the original project design contain comprehensive and relevant information on the baseline situation?

Relevance:

- The extent to which the project objectives are consistent with the requirements of the needs of the end-users and donor's policies;
- The extent to which the project addresses regional priorities and plans.
- Does the project address the needs and priorities of the private sector?
- Is the project relevant in the context of local economic development?

Efficiency

- The extent to which UNIDO provided high quality services (expertise, training, equipment, methodologies, etc) that led to the production of outputs;
- The resources and inputs were converted to results in a timely and cost-effective manner;
- Coordination amongst and within components of the programme lead to collaboration and cooperation among stakeholders and to the production of outputs;
- The same results could not have been achieved in another, more cost-effective manner; and
- Outputs were produced in a timely manner.

Effectiveness

- The extent to which the outcomes and outputs of the project are achieved?
- What is the quality of the outputs produced and how the target beneficiaries use these outputs, with particular attention to gender aspects; the outcomes, which have occurred or which are likely to happen through utilization of outputs?

Impact and sustainability

- Which long term developmental changes have occurred or are likely to occur as a result of the intervention and are these sustainable?
- Was the project replicated/can it have a multiplying effect.
- Was any sustainability strategy formulated?
- What is the prospect for technical, organizational and financial sustainability?

5. Evaluation approach and methodology

While maintaining independence, the evaluation will be carried out based on a participatory approach, which seeks the views and assessments of all parties. The full methodology of the evaluation will be outlined by the team leader (senior evaluator) in an Inception Report due prior to the field mission.

The evaluation team will triangulate findings, and elaborate conclusions and recommendations on the basis of the analysis of the information gathered through:

- A comprehensive review of project related documentation, including the mid-term evaluation report.
- Review of relevant evaluation reports (including UNIDO thematic evaluation of SMTQ initiatives)
- Interviews with UNIDO and project staff
- Interviews with counterparts and related stakeholders
- Interviews with target beneficiaries
-

Based on the above analysis the evaluation will draw specific conclusions and make proposals for any necessary further action by AIDMO, ARAC, UNIDO and the donor to ensure sustainable development, including any need for additional assistance and activities of the project after its completion.

- Recommendations must be actionable; addressed to a specific officer, group or entity who can act on it; have a proposed timeline for implementation
- Recommendations should be structured by addressees

Lessons learnt should describe elements or aspects of the project that are of wider applicability for similar interventions. They should be well justified and include prescriptive proposals for project stakeholders as to how the lessons can be built into future cooperation initiatives.

6. Time schedule and deliverables/outputs

The following preliminary schedule is expected:

Activity	Estimated date
Collection of documentation at HQ and desk review	February 2014
Inception report (including evaluation methodology and tools)	February 2014
Evaluation Field Mission to Rabat	February 2014
Drafting of report and sharing with stakeholders	March 2014
Collection and incorporation of comments	March 2014
Issuance of final report	April 2014

7. Evaluation team

The International Evaluation Consultant needs to have the following qualifications:

- Evaluation skills appropriate to the area of Quality Infrastructure and Trade Capacity Building
- Technical competence
- Ability to address relevant cross-cutting thematic issues
- Adequate understanding of local social and cultural issues
- Appropriate language skills
- Process management skills, including facilitation skills
- Writing and communications skills
- Good interpersonal skills
- Adequate mix of national and international expertise

8. Reporting

After reviewing the project documentation and initial interviews with project manager(s) the International Evaluation Consultant will prepare a short inception report that will operationalize the TOR relating the evaluation questions to information on what type of and how the evidence will be collected (methodology). It will be discussed with and approved by the responsible UNIDO Evaluation Officer. The Inception Report will focus on

the following elements: preliminary project theory model(s); elaboration of evaluation methodology including quantitative and qualitative approaches through an evaluation framework (“evaluation matrix”); findings of Final Term Evaluation and a reporting timetable.

The evaluation report shall follow the structure given in Annex 1. Reporting language will be English.

Draft reports submitted to project manager for initial review and consultation. They may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. The consultation also seeks agreement on the findings and recommendations. The evaluator will take the comments into consideration in preparing the final version of the report.

9. Governance and Management of the evaluation process

The TOR was formulated based on the UNIDO Evaluation group TOR Guidance template and using information gathered throughout the duration of the project. The first draft was prepared by the Project Manager & Assistant, before being addressed to the Evaluation Group, government and donor for their inputs.

Report will be reviewed and commented on by all parties required by the TOR Guidance template; that is to say the Project team, UNIDO Evaluation Group, the counterparts and the donor.

It will be assessed against the TOR and the criteria set out in the checklist on evaluation report quality attached in Annex III.



All UNIDO evaluations are subject to quality assessments by the UNIDO Evaluation Group. Quality control is exercised throughout the evaluation process as the above chart predicts. The quality of the evaluation report will be assessed and rated against the criteria set forth in the Checklist on evaluation report quality, attached as Annex III.

ANNEX 1

Template for evaluation report

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements
Acronyms and Abbreviations
Glossary of Evaluation Terms
Map
Executive Summary

1. Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Background (include a project factsheet, project formulation process, project structure, objectives, donors (and their specific requirements/objectives, e.g. the relevant fund's priorities and guidelines) counterparts, timing, cost etc – everything that is not an 'assessment' and provides background to make the reader understand what the project was/is about without delving into details of LogFrame design and management – the background to design and management should come under the assessment chapter.)

2. Evaluation purpose, scope and methodology

2.1 Purpose

2.2 Scope

2.3 Methodology

2.4 Limitations of the evaluation

3. Region/country/programme context

3.1 Overall situation and trends (national and regional context, especially as relevant to project area)

3.2 Government strategies and Policies (including local and regional, as relevant)

3.3 UN frameworks (how the project fits into the Arab Region programme)

3.4 Initiatives of international cooperation partners (describe relevant info on what other donors are doing)

4. Assessment

The assessment is based on the analysis carried out in chapters I & III and. It assesses the underlying intervention theory (causal chain: inputs-activities-outputs-outcomes). Did it prove to be plausible and realistic? Has it changed during implementation? This chapter includes the following aspects:

- 4.1 Design (include logframe assessment)
- 4.2 Management (include details of arrangements and make an assessment)
- 4.3 Relevance and ownership
- 4.4 Efficiency
- 4.5 Effectiveness (include a table giving actual status of Outputs and Outcomes against the project logframe)
- 4.6 Sustainability
- 4.7 Impact
- 4.8 Crosscutting issues (gender, environmental sustainability, South/South cooperation, contribution to international development goals)

5. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned

5.1 Conclusions

5.2 Recommendations

- Recommendations must be based on evaluation findings, forward looking and related to future phases of the project
- Recommendations must be actionable; addressed to a specific officer, group or entity who can act on it; have a proposed timeline for implementation
- Recommendations should be structured by addressees:
 - UNIDO
 - Government and/or Counterpart Organizations
 - Donor

5.3 Lessons learned

Annex A. Terms of Reference

Annex B. Organizations visited and persons met

Annex C. Bibliography

Annex D. Logframe

Annex E. Evaluation Matrix

Annex F. Interview Guidelines Etc.

ANNEX 2

UNITED NATIONS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (UNIDO)

TERAB10001/106030

Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy
with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation

JOB DESCRIPTION

Post title: Senior Expert - Terminal Independent Evaluation

Duration: 30 working days

Date required: 22 February - 4 April 2014

Duty station: Home-based with one mission to Rabat (Morocco)

Duties: Under the supervision of the UNIDO Project Manager (UNIDO HQs) and in close consultation with the national counterparts; the senior expert will perform the following duties:

Main duties	Expected duration	Location	Expected results
1. Review the framework of the project extension; the progress reports and other available documentation. Preparation of methodology and evaluations tools (to be shared with Project Manager and ODG/EVA before undertaking the mission).	8 working days	Home-based	Review and evaluation mission plan developed.
2. Field mission, to carry out the evaluation in line with the Independent Evaluation TOR . The evaluation mission is expected to include meetings with AIDMO and ARAC staffs and all relevant stakeholders	6 working days	Rabat (Morocco)	Evaluation field mission undertaken.
4. Prepare the first draft of the evaluation report for review by UNIDO project team.	9 working days	Home-based	First draft of evaluation report.
4. Prepare a final/terminal evaluation report at the end of the contract comprising all relevant information including conclusions and recommendations.	7 working days	Home-based	Final report.

REQUIRED COMPETENCIES

Core values:

1. Integrity
2. Professionalism
3. Respect for diversity

Core competencies:

1. Results orientation and accountability
2. Planning and organizing
3. Communication and trust
4. Team orientation
5. Client orientation
6. Organizational development and innovation

Managerial competencies (as applicable):

1. Strategy and direction
2. Managing people and performance
3. Judgement and decision making
4. Conflict resolution

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIREMENTS

- Graduate level degree in science or engineering. At least 15 years of progressive and proven professional experience in operation and management of standardization, product and system certification and accreditation activities at the regional level.
- Evaluation skills and experience in conducting and managing evaluations
- Knowledge about multilateral technical cooperation and the UN, international development priorities and frameworks (MDGs, Paris Declaration, One UN, etc.) desirable;
- Knowledge of issues related to sustainable industrial development, knowledge of UNIDO activities an asset;

Language: English and French.

Additional competencies:

- Technical competence
- Ability to address relevant cross-cutting thematic issues, including gender
- Adequate understanding of local social and cultural issues
- Process management skills, including facilitation skills
- Writing and communications skills
- Good interpersonal skills

Impartiality:

According to UNIDO rules, the consultant must not have been involved in the preparation, implementation or supervision of any of the programmes/projects under evaluation.

ANNEX 3

Checklist on evaluation report quality

Independent Final Evaluation of the UNIDO Project

TERAB10001/106030

Support the implementation of the regional Arab Standardization Strategy
with focus on the regional coordination on accreditation

Evaluation team leader:

Quality review done by:

Date:

Report quality criteria	UNIDO Evaluation Group	Rating
Report Structure and quality of writing		
The report is written in clear language, correct grammar and use of evaluation terminology. The report is logically structured with clarity and coherence. It contains a concise executive summary and all other necessary elements as per TOR.		
Evaluation objective, scope and methodology		
<p>The evaluation objective is explained and the scope defined. The methods employed are explained and appropriate for answering the evaluation questions.</p> <p>The evaluation report gives a complete description of stakeholder's consultation process in the evaluation.</p> <p>The report describes the data sources and collection methods and their limitations.</p> <p>The evaluation report was delivered in a timely manner so that the evaluation objective (e.g. important deadlines for presentations) was not affected.</p>		

Evaluation object		
<p>The logic model and/or the expected results chain (inputs, outputs and outcomes) of the object is clearly described.</p> <p>The key social, political, economic, demographic, and institutional factors that have a direct bearing on the object are described.</p> <p>The key stakeholders involved in the object implementation, including the implementing agency(s) and partners, other key stakeholders and their roles are described.</p> <p>The report identifies the implementation status of the object, including its phase of implementation and any significant changes (e.g. plans, strategies, logical frameworks) that have occurred over time and explains the implications of those changes for the evaluation.</p>		
Findings and conclusions		
<p>The report is consistent and the evidence is complete (covering all aspects defined in the TOR) and convincing.</p> <p>The report presents an assessment of relevant outcomes and achievement of project objectives.</p> <p>The report presents an assessment of relevant external factors (assumptions, risks, impact drivers) and how they influenced the evaluation object and the achievement of results.</p> <p>The report presents a sound assessment of sustainability of outcomes or it explains why this is not (yet) possible.</p> <p>The report analyses the budget and actual project costs.</p> <p>Findings respond directly to the evaluation criteria and questions detailed in the scope and objectives section of the report and are based on evidence derived from data</p>		

<p>collection and analysis methods described in the methodology section of the report.</p> <p>Reasons for accomplishments and failures, especially continuing constraints, are identified as much as possible.</p> <p>Conclusions are well substantiated by the evidence presented and are logically connected to evaluation findings.</p> <p>Relevant cross-cutting issues, such as gender, human rights, and environment are appropriately covered.</p>		
Recommendations and lessons learned		
<p>The lessons and recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions presented in the report.</p> <p>The recommendations specify the actions necessary to correct existing conditions or improve operations ('who?' 'what?' 'where?' 'when?').</p> <p>Recommendations are implementable and take resource implications into account.</p> <p>Lessons are readily applicable in other contexts and suggest prescriptive action.</p>		

Rating system for quality of evaluation reports

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1, and unable to assess = 0.