



Case study
for small grant projects in the framework
of the UNDP/GEF Project
“Integrating Rio Conventions Provisions
into Ukraine’s National Policy Framework”,
implemented by GEF SGP



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1. International commitments for sustainable development and implementation of the Rio Convention

1.1. National context and purpose of the grant projects of the UNDP/GEF Project

International development commitments adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, revision of ways to create a «green economy» and improve international coordination for sustainable development at the Rio + 20 Conference remain priority objectives of the international community. Models of Sustainable Development were declared an integral part of the Sustainable Development Agenda until 2030.

Like many other countries, Ukraine faces challenges in achieving global environmental priorities caused by a real need to address socio-economic problems, inadequate understanding and effectiveness of national approaches and tools in the implementation of the Rio Conventions, poor institutional capacity and limited funding for implementing the principles of these conventions at the national, regional and local levels. The complexity of the tasks of Ukraine’s transition to sustainable development linked to the transformation process that changed the principles of functioning of Ukrainian society and necessitate the development and implementation of new principles and mechanisms of governance.

At the same time the Law of Ukraine ‘On the Principles (Strategy) of the National Environmental Policy’ provides for stabilization and improvement of the environment by integrating environmental priorities into various areas of social and economic policy of Ukraine, which is the basis for the implementation of the Rio Conventions and the EU Member States requirements in the field of environmental protection.

The UNDP/GEF project ‘Integrating Rio Conventions provisions into Ukraine’s National Policy Framework’ aims to integrate the provisions of the Rio Conventions into sectoral policies, programs, plans and legislation, strengthening of institutional and personal capacity to carry out policies, programs, plans and legislation at the regional level.

With the view of practical demonstration of possibilities of integration of the Rio Conventions provisions, in 2016 three grant community initiatives were supported, namely:

- 2 projects aimed at establishing the Centers of Best Practices of Sustainable Development in Ukraine - one in Eastern Ukraine (Donetsk, Luhansk regions), another - in Central Ukraine (Vygraiv Village, Korsun-Shevchenkivsky District, Cherkasy Region)

- 1 project to reclaim land affected as a result of illegal extraction of mineral resources in valuable natural preserves (Olevsk District, Zhytomyr Region).

The average duration of projects was 8 months, grant project budget – not exceeded 50 000 USD.

The projects were administered and implemented under the Small Grants Programme of UNDP/GEF in Ukraine. It allowed to carry out projects on time with clear and understandable procedures, and focus on achieving practical results in the implementation of community life quality positive change in the context of integrating the provisions of Rio Conventions into the national legislation of Ukraine.

1.2. Current situation regarding challenges and peculiarities of the national environmental policy on the local level

Demonstration of sustainable development models in Eastern Ukraine. The project was carried out on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions controlled by Ukraine.

Over the past three years, Ukraine has experienced severe challenges in political stability, national security and the economy. After the Revolution of Dignity in February 2014 Ukraine suffered several events, including the beginning of combat conflict in Eastern Ukraine, as well as the presidential, parliamentary and local elections. These events dictate new priorities to the Government, including Security and Confidence.

Because of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, which lasts more than two years, the environmental, economic, social and overall development prospects deteriorate, as the economic activity in the largest industrial region of the country is paralyzed. Interruptions in industry, transport, SMEs have increased unemployment and poverty rates, environmental degradation, affected and damaged valuable natural ecosystems. Restoration of the eastern regions is a long-term process that should take into account economic, social and environmental aspects, namely the principles of sustainable development.

This situation has caused some difficulties at the beginning of the project such as the low level of awareness of local communities authorities on the sustainable development principles and their implementation in the conditions of life of the community (including the use of projects of State Regional Development Fund) and psychological effects associated with proximity to ATO area.

At the same time thanks to the versatility of the project, namely active awareness-raising, outreach, analytical and practical activities, the partnership project managed to achieve concrete results at the community level. The project includes research, awareness-raising and demonstration components, each of which contributed to the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, at the local level, particularly in Eastern Ukraine.

The main participants of the Center of Restoring Eastern regions of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development are representatives of local authorities, rural communities, educators, scientists, farmers, small and medium business community, residing in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.



Reducing the negative impact on biodiversity through the implementation of sustainable community initiatives in Central Ukraine.



The peculiarity of the project to demonstrate sustainable community initiatives in central Ukraine is primarily the area of its implementation - a buffer zone for protected areas. The project was implemented in the vicinity of Kholodnyi Yar - the relic forest of historical and environmental significance, and directly at the ‘Vyhrayivskyy’ general zoological reserve.

The Information and Educational Center for the local community was established on the basis of the non-operating school of Vyhraiv, practical activities was organized and demonstration models put into operation.

To achieve positive results for all target groups of the project learning by doing method was actively used. In particular seminars, workshops, roundtables were aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the relationship between the Rio Conventions principles and priorities of socio-economic development.



Introducing reasonable and responsible environmental management in Polissia.

The illegal extraction of amber was one of acute and pressing problems for the Ukrainian Woodlands (Polissia) as such causing irreparable environmental damage. Usually the amber extraction sites are turned into sand and dug careers that resemble lunar landscape. The soil erosion results in destruction of root system, which leads to the destruction of hundreds of hectares of forest. Ecosystems in amber mining areas are completely devastated while their self-renewal can last several decades. In addition, the local population of Zhytomyr region are not sufficiently informed about the negative consequences of illegal extraction of amber and exhibits consumer-like attitude to the natural resources of Polissia.



Restoration of the areas affected through illegal extraction is extremely important because the Polissia forests are a unique natural heritage. They perform an important climatic and habitat forming functions, have both natural and resource value. Ukraine as a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity is obliged to take measures for the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded ecosystems and promote the recovery of endangered species.



Recultivation is one of the most effective methods of restoring areas affected by economic activity. The volume of illegal amber extraction activities reached the point where comprehensive scientific and governmental decisions are badly needed. The project, together with scientists and the public, has elaborated the respective methodology, which is used in the document on soil recultivation in northern Ukraine, damaged by illegal extraction of amber. The document has been approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on November 30, 2016

http://www.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/article?art_id=249540139&cat_id=244276429.

2. Types of activity and multifunctionality of the projects

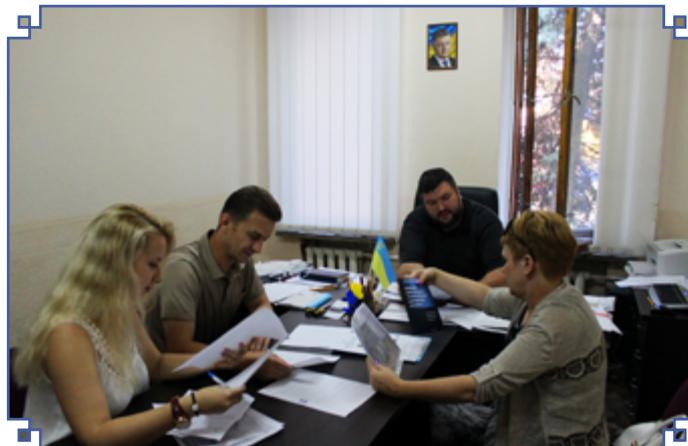
Project name	Grantee	Location	Types of activity
Center of best and sustainable development in Eastern regions of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development	All-Ukrainian charitable organization for the new generation ‘Stork’	Donetsk and Luhansk regions (territories controlled by Ukraine)	<p>Includes practical, informational and analytical components. The following activities were introduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a pilot program of sustainable development of Svyatogirsk is developed (for further replication and utilization by other cities of Donetsk and Luhansk regions); - assistance in building the infrastructure of the places affected by the armed conflict in Donbas (monitoring of water and biota in the Siversky Donets river and prepared proposals for the rehabilitation of the river basin; equipped football field of School #7, Sloviansk, Donetsk region; a pilot project implemented on the separate collection of household waste in Aleksandriivka, Donetsk region, restored ecological path in the «Holy mountains» park); - work of Expert Advisory Panel to provide citizens with information on international, national and local programs on energy saving, starting their own small businesses is organized; - four workshops for small and medium businesses, farmers, teachers, heads of rural communities; 2 regional round tables «Local community partnership for recovery on the principles of sustainable development»; 2 study visits to exchange experiences on creating conditions for sustainable development and providing communities in Lviv, Kyiv. - developed and distributed information and educational materials on innovative approaches and use of renewable energy, sustainable living of communities, basics of organic farming, creating an integrated system of waste management. Special attention was paid to gender issues, in particular the «Business Women of Donbas» club was established to support the business and social initiatives of women, the activity of «University of the Third Age» was supported.
Center of best practices and sustainable development in Ukraine	All-Ukrainian Environmental League	Vyhraiv, Korsun-Shevchenkivsky District, Cherkasy Region	<p>The demonstration Center of best practices of sustainable development was established on the basis of the rural school in Vyhraiv Cvillage, Cherkasy region. In particular, the practices that will be spread and replicated in other communities considering the environmental challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstration of the benefits of sustainable living of communities, a model of «green offices» involving the set up of a specialized classroom introduced; operating model ‘Dry toilet’ established; «Composting» working model organized;

Project name	Grantee	Location	Types of activity
<p>Recultivating lands degraded due to illegal extraction of minerals on environmentally valuable areas</p>	<p>Interregional Center of Scientific Studies and Expertise</p>	<p>Z h y t o m y r R e g i o n , O l e v s k y District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction of negative impact on biodiversity near protected areas: setup of the site for introduction of snowdrop to restore the only plain population of the species in the territory of the complex nature monument of national importance «Kholodny Yar»; organized ecological trail to promote knowledge about the protection, restoration of ecosystems; • introducing innovative approaches and use of renewable energy sources: installation of demonstration model of the PV panel, a demonstration model of solid fuel boiler, energy-efficient lighting system in the building and in the center, planting a demonstration plot with energy willow. <p>The core project implemented activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - develop of detail design of soil recultivation affected as a result of the illegal extraction of amber and its implementation; - define types of vegetation for planting on the reclaimed site; - practical recovery of 3 ha area affected due to the illegal extraction of amber in the territory of the oxbow of the Ubort river; - conduct botanical and zoological research on the affected area; - run information campaign to raise awareness of the local communities on the negative effects of illegal extraction of amber; - hold information events on the importance of restoring areas affected due to the illegal extraction of amber; conduct information meetings with various target groups on economic and environmental damage illegal mining; - elaborate a business plan of sustainable environmental management and creation of new jobs; - prepare materials to include mandatory reclamation requirements for legal documents, license conditions; - development guidelines on assessing damage caused to the environment due to illegal extraction of amber; - prepare justification for the establishment of local natural reserve.

3. Outputs, achievements and impact. The role of community capacity

The East Ukraine’s communities gained experience in preparing documents on sustainable development.

With the guidance and information support of the Center of Restoring Eastern regions of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development the Sustainable Development Program of Svyatogirsk until 2020 was elaborated. It’s called to transform Svyatogirsk into a modern European city and fundamentally change the approach to all areas of its life, based on the principles of sustainable development. In particular, the program includes:



development of a comprehensive program of recreational area in the heart of Svyatogirsk and landscaping of the city, increase of green areas in the city, planting forests around the city; landscape reconstruction of existing facilities of green economy; development of the solid waste management program; elaboration of schemes of sanitary cleaning of the city; preventing of illegal dumping; reconstruction of water supply and sewage systems; improvement of the Siversky Donets river and Lake Banne and quality of drinking water and other measures. On July 20, 2016 the City Council of Svyatogirsk approved the Programme for implementation. The process of implementation of local programs for sustainable development will involve a great deal of experts, public figures, scientists within their scope of competence that will help to ensure that the ‘Svyatogirsk-2020» program will become practical heritage of the community. The development of a fundamentally new document on the territory of Eastern Ukraine will encourage the sustainable use of the Sustainable Development Program of Svyatogirsk until 2020 by other communities who seek a new vector of development taking advantage of the international standards and goals.

The project conducted geocological and biological monitoring of the Siversky Donets basin in 2015, the results of which prepared recommendations for the improvement of rivers Siversky Donets Basin. In the long run this will help to improve the condition of water bodies of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and provide public access to safe drinking water.



Other communities took interest in development of the strategic local documents using the principles of sustainable development, the replicability of the elaborated strategic documents on sustainable development has been achieved. Thus, at the request of Varvarivka community (Luhansk region) the project experts have developed a Sustainable Development Strategy of local community of Varvarovsky village council, Kreminna district, Luhansk region until 2020. The objective of the Strategy is to ensure the well-being of residents by developing infrastructure, improving the spiritual and cultural

level of the residents, increased socioeconomic standards and ensure a favourable and safe for health and life state of environment.

Project activists from different regions of Donetsk and Luhansk region who participated in the project activities to restore the East of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development, expressed their intention to create the «Sustainable Development - East» NGO that will share the achievements of the project and ensure its sustainability and replicability.

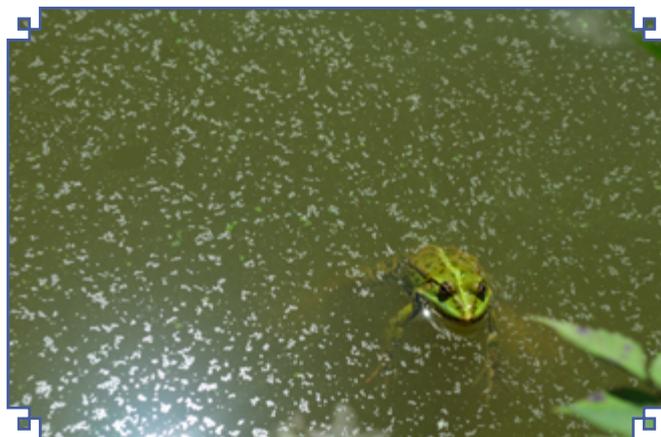
The modern way of Ukraine’s development is the transition to sustainable development. Under these conditions, the basis for implementation of the transition to sustainable development must be the principle of providing multi-level actions and measures. Only effective cooperation of local authorities, educators, representatives of the public and businesses will help improve the capacity of communities at regional and local level. The outputs of project implementation show interest and support of the communities in creating sustainable development strategies for their territories.

Issues of preventing the loss of biodiversity in community focus and national support.

New partnerships between local communities and national partners were initiated within the framework of the project to restore the East of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development. National partners joined the environmental action in Olexandrivka Village, Donetsk region in particular the M. Grishko National Botanical Garden supplied pedigree seedlings for laying lilac walkway on illegal dumping site. The action is aimed not only at preserving and restoring the natural



resources of East Ukraine, but also to encourage a responsible attitude to the environment and form ecological culture. A total of 6 km of ‘Oak wood’ ecological trail was restored in the «Holy Mountain» National Park (Donetsk region). The environmental action is unique as the ecotrail runs along the left bank of the Siversky Donets river, 300-year old oxbow wood of seed origin occupying 100 hectares and along the chalk mountains where rare plants are preserved (e.g. chalk pine survived from the pre-glacial period). As a result of the implementation of this component the number of visitors of the restored ecological trail «Oak Wood» at the ‘Holy Mountains’ NP increased (for the period of July-October 2016, the environmental trail was attended by around 120 people including pupils, students, indicating the increase in environmental culture).



The project on establishing the Center of Best Practices of Sustainable Development (Vyhraiv, Cherkasy region) made impact on 140 ha and 4 km of the territory protected by the community. The project was implemented nearby Holodny Yar - the relic forest of historical and environmental significance, and directly on the territory of ‘Vyhrayivskyy’ zoological reserve.

Hands-on activity of communities to appropriate the demonstration models of sustainable development in Central Ukraine.

The community of Vyhrayiv Village, Korsun-Shevchenkivsky district was directly involved in the project on establishing the Center of Best Practices of Sustainable Development on the basis of the local school at all stages, from planning to practical activities and evaluation in order to show the benefits of sustainable development for the community. Demonstration models of sustainable development included display areas of energy willow, introduction of snowdrop folded, model of «Green office», model of «Dry toilet», «Composting» model, utilization of solar energy and energy efficient lighting for the needs of the Center etc. To achieve positive results the learning by doing technique was widely used during workshops, training sessions, round tables. Special attention during the informational events was paid to understanding and implementing the principles of the relationship between the Rio Conventions and priorities of social and economic development of communities.



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Effective measures in restoring ecosystems damaged by illegal extraction of amber.

The role of local communities in implementing models of sustainable management in Olevsk district, Zhytomyr region is extremely important, says the team of the project on recultivation of soil affected by illegal extraction of mineral resources on valuable natural areas. This is because what the locals are direct forest users, while mainly locals are engaged in illegal extraction of amber. The future of Polissia forests is contingent upon realizing the responsibility for the state of environment by the local population.



With a view of comprehensive solution of this difficult problem, the project has taken integrated measures, including the preparation of draft legal, methodological documents, practical testing of scientific recommendations on pilot sites with a total area of 3 hectares of degraded land (2.6 ha and 0.4 ha plots) in Olevsk district, Zhitomir region and conducting outreach and awareness-raising in local communities. As consequence the project developed dendroplan of the affected area, which includes a planting pattern of trees exclusively of local species, creating conditions for restoring the territory to the natural state; recultivation design was developed to include a description of earth work, types and number of heavy machinery, implementation of the recultivation plan. The business plan for sustainable environmental management and the creation of new jobs in the region was elaborated. Rehabilitation of areas and planting them with wood species (pine, birch, oak) will result in restoring plant communities and increasing the number of rare species including yellow rhododendron that is listed in the Green Book of Ukraine. In addition, recultivation allowed to prevent the breeding of dangerous invasive alien species of North American origin - Canadian horseweed (*Conyza canadensis*).

It should be noted that the recovery of the pilot area has a multiplier effect and positive impact on neighboring ecosystems because species from the adjacent habitats have the opportunity to expand the territory of existence. The recultivation had positive effect on the ecosystem of the Polissya Nature Reserve, located in the buffer zone of the pilot landscape. Thus, another 10 hectares of critical ecosystems with conservation status are added to the project environmental impact indicators.

Gender-sensitive outcomes of project implementation.

Ukraine on the path of sustainable development is aimed at creating gender balance between women and men in all spheres of public life. Ukrainian legislation has virtually no provisions that would perpetuate discrimination against women or men. Nonetheless the daily practice shows that gender equality enshrined in law, in reality requires constant monitoring and efforts to achieve this balance.



The implemented projects can serve as a demonstration of best practices in introduction of the gender component. In particular, the success in implementing the initiative to create a center of sustainable development in Eastern Ukraine given the complex geopolitical and socio-economic conditions, can be attributed to the unification initiatives of women participating in the project, their leadership qualities that are more democratic in comparison with male autocratic and directive leadership.

Thus, women have been involved in local governance, were the initiators and activists of public organizations and business structures that successfully demonstrated the ability to solve difficult task of rebuilding the East of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development. Women were involved in all stages of the project cycle from planning to implementation, monitoring and evaluation to identify prospects and ensuring the sustainability of projects. Ludmyla Borisevich, the Chairman of the Olexandrivka Village Council (Donetsk region), not only provided assistance to the project team implementing the the pilot project on the creation of new jobs under the small business project on separate collection of household waste, but rather put forward a new initiative of creating green zone in the center of the village. As a result of such cooperation a lilac walkway was planted in Olexandrivka with contribution of the scientists from the M. Grishko National Botanical Garden and community members. Paulina Zhurova, Deputy Director of NPP “Holy Mountains”, has been actively involved in the restoration of ecological path «Oak Wood» and has undertaken commitments to further expand the project initiatives as well as continuously monitor and control the state of infrastructure facilities (information boards, signs, benches, tables etc.) procured with the support of the project.

During the workshop for representatives of local communities in July 2016 held in Kreminna, Luhansk region, Olena Kachur, head of Varvarivka village council requested the project team to provide expert assistance in the development and writing strategies for sustainable development for the community of Varvarivka. As a result the Strategy of sustainable development of the local community of Varvarivka, Kreminna district, Luhansk region until 2020 was developed.



The project outputs will be maintained and further expanded by the «Business Women of Donbas» club established within the framework of the project. The club’s main purpose is to promote business and social initiatives of women in East Ukraine. In addition, the project provided methodological assistance in the development of another public initiative - University of Third Age, which combines

various target and age groups for the purpose of building communities based on sustainable development, using the experience and expertise of all its members.

4. Lessons learned, ways of further development and sustainability

The projects have been developed so as to be resilient and relevant after their completion. **Recultivation demo plots are the example for other amber-producing regions.**

Partner of the project on Recultivating lands degraded due to illegal extraction of minerals on environmentally valuable areas - Institute of Environmental Geochemistry of NASU

conducted geological and botanical studies, developed dendroplan of the affected site specifically tailored for maximum restoration of the territory to its initial state. Guidelines on restoring the land affected by the illegal extraction of amber is relevant for other regions of Ukraine (Rivne, Volyn, Zhytomyr and other regions), where the amber is extracted. The established recultivation demo site in Olevsk district, Zhitomir region will serve as



a successful example of the restoration of the affected areas and will be used as a model for other communities. The amendments to the Law of Ukraine ‘On amending the laws of Ukraine (regarding reclamation of lands affected by mining and exploration activities)’ developed under the project, were submitted to the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, and will be an important component for the settlement of illegal extraction of amber on the legislative level.

Local communities for restoring the destroyed infrastructure on the principles of sustainable development.

The East Ukrainian communities play a key role in the implementation of initiatives to restore the East of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development. Local community members who returned to their homes despite the devastated infrastructure, job losses and tense psychological situation, advocate the support of infrastructure changes on the principles of sustainable development. Developed as part of the restoration of the



East of Ukraine on the principles of sustainable development, the initiatives to elaborate local development strategies of cities and villages, demo projects of solar energy use, energy-efficient lighting, support for women’s associations are easily replicable and demonstrate the benefits of sustainable living. Thus, representatives of 10 local communities addressed to the project team, NGOs and academics for advice and expert assistance on the development of local sustainable development programs, conducting ecological actions of gardening, introduction of separate collection of solid waste, creating and legalization of community representatives during the project implementation period. Partnerships with local authorities of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, including cities of Kramatorsk, Slavyansk, Svyatogirsk (Donetsk region) and Severodonetsk, Starobelsk, Kreminna (Luhansk region), the East Ukrainian Environmental Institute laid the foundations for further development and use of the project experience in preparing local strategies for sustainable development, building awareness and capacity of communities, expanding opportunities for recovery of affected areas on the basis of the sustainable development principles.

Youth as a driver of sustainable development initiatives.

The Center of best practices of sustainable development in Vyhrayiv, Cherkasy region project was supported by young people who actively involved in awareness-raising, practical and demonstration activities. Project partners including Cherkassy State Technological University, Cherkassy Regional Organization of Ukrainian Children’s Union «Ecological Guard», Korsun-Shevchenkivsky District Council, Vyhrayivka Village Council, Department of Education of Korsun-Shevchenkivsky District Administration will provide further methodological and awareness-raising work of the Centre. In project events were attended by 550 persons (women - 60% men - 40%). The project created 20 jobs for the local community; laid down conditions for environmentally friendly activities in their spare time for the community (approximately 200 persons); some 15 new communities have expressed interest in establishing similar centers of sustainable development in their communities; supported the establishment of database and library of best practices of sustainable development. The project laid the conditions for quality informal education opportunities and encouraging lifelong learning for the local community, children and young people which is one of the priorities for regional implementation of the UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development at the national and local levels.



To ensure the sustainability of completed projects it would be good to further disseminate the outputs via the CSO’s Networks, Knowledge fairs, events of national and international character to demonstrate the best practices and experiences of communities in the practical implementation of the principles of the Rio Conventions on the national and local levels using electronic and print media, social media and other information and

communication capacities and the Networks’ tools in the dissemination of results, and making national partners and decision makers aware of the practical aspects, best practices and opportunities for the implementation of international commitments under local conditions.

