



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

A stylized world map composed of numerous colorful triangles in shades of yellow, orange, red, purple, blue, and green, set against a light blue grid background.

EVALUATION

OF THE UNDP STRATEGIC PLAN AND
GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

Independent Evaluation Office

United Nations Development Programme



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FOREWORD

It is my pleasure to present this comprehensive assessment of UNDP's performance over the period 2014 to 2017. This evaluation covers the Executive Board-approved Strategic Plan 2014–2017, Global Programme and five regional programmes. The report focuses attention on key aspects of UNDP's work under the current Strategic Plan and considers the way UNDP provides programme support to partner governments.

The assessment comes at a time when UNDP has undergone significant restructuring and reorganization processes, in efforts to strengthen organizational effectiveness and enhance its contribution to development. This evaluation examines these processes and the reorganization effects through a collaborative effort with the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigation. It also looks at the results that have been delivered during this challenging period.

The UNDP programme portfolio spans about 170 countries and territories, covering a wide-ranging and complex set of issues. The evaluation team was cognizant of the opportunities and challenges such a broad mandate creates. The evaluation used multiple data collection and analysis methods and took an iterative approach to gather and analyse multiple perspectives to measure UNDP performance. Evidence has been obtained and triangulated from document reviews, a meta-analysis of evaluations and audits, regional and country case study missions, interviews, focus groups and surveys.

The analysis covers the work of UNDP in 90 country programmes across the globe. It formed critical country-level narratives of UNDP performance and includes 45 independent country programme evaluations. The assessment was further augmented by more than 1,000 interviews, to cross-check and validate perspectives against a thorough assessment of documentation. Methodological rigour and report quality were ensured

through invaluable guidance from members of the International Evaluation Advisory Panel.

The evaluation concludes that UNDP's integrated and multifaceted approach to development challenges is well suited to respond to national development needs, and at the same time is consistent with United Nations priorities. Aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Strategic Plan adopted an issues-based approach to global development needs and priorities. The evaluation highlights the UNDP role and contribution in support of national and local programmes and policies to protect the environment and adapt to a changing climate. Further, it finds that UNDP has successfully established its niche as a trusted and reliable intermediary and neutral convener on democratic governance issues.

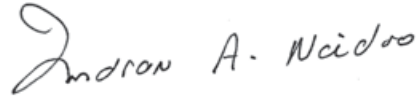
UNDP governance support has filled critical gaps in countries that face significant systemic challenges. In the early stages of crisis recovery, UNDP capacity-building support has helped to stabilize national institutions by working successfully with government partners to address immediate needs. UNDP continues to play an important role in risk reduction and recovery related to conflict and disasters. Disaster risk reduction is an area that has important synergies with UNDP's rapidly expanding support to countries working on climate change adaptation.

In addition to these achievements, the evaluation also calls attention to organizational challenges, including limitations in harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise to improve results and institutional effectiveness. The financial sustainability of UNDP is challenged by declining resources that are mostly tied to specific activities, limiting UNDP's engagement in evolving development priorities. In terms of gender, there have been incremental improvements in implementation of UNDP's gender equality strategy but

also limitations in mainstreaming gender equality across UNDP programme areas.

The evaluation provides a number of recommendations for achieving the overarching strategic objective of UNDP: supporting the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized members of society. As UNDP develops a new Strategic Plan, I hope this evaluation will inform how the orga-

nization can further enhance its contribution to global sustainable development and inclusiveness.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Indran A. Naidoo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

3RP	Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
ADR	Assessment of development results
BMS	Bureau for Management Services
BPPS	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
CPD	Country programme document
CPR-TTF	Crisis prevention and recovery trust fund
CRU	Crisis Response Unit
DPC	Direct programme costs
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECIS	Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
Global Fund	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GP-V	Fifth Global Programme
GSSC	Global Shared Services Centre
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
INDC	Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
IPSAS	International Public Sector Accounting Standards
IRRF	Integrated Results and Resources Framework
ICT	Information and communication technology
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersexual
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MICS	Middle-income countries
NHRI	National human rights institution
OAI	Office of Audit and Investigation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHR	Office of Human Resources
PDNA	Post-disaster needs assessment
POPP	Programme and Operation Policies and Procedures

PR	Principal recipient
QCPR	Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review
RBA	Regional Bureau for Africa
RBAP	Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
RBLAC	Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean
RBM	Results-based management
RBx	Regional bureaux
ROAR	Results-oriented annual report
RP _s	Regional programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGP	Small Grants Programme (GEF)
SSC-TrC	South-South and triangular cooperation
UNAIDS	United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WHO	World Health Organization
XB	Extra-budgetary resources

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has carried out an evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, global programme and regional programmes (2014-2017). The evaluation is part of the IEO medium-term plan (DP/2014/5) approved by the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2014. This document constitutes an executive summary of the evaluation, provided for consideration by the UNDP Executive Board at its second regular session of 2017. The main report is available at <http://web.undp.org/evaluation>.

The evaluation aims to strengthen UNDP accountability to global and national development partners; support the development of the next strategic plan; and support organizational learning. The outcomes of the Strategic Plan have been reviewed and the implementation of global, regional and country-level programming has been assessed, to ascertain whether UNDP is making progress in achieving its stated goals; and whether the Strategic Plan is serving as an effective tool for guiding UNDP programmes, projects and activities.

The evaluation report follows the outline of the Strategic Plan, leading with the three main areas of UNDP development work: sustainable development; governance; and resilience. Not all aspects of UNDP programming are covered. Rather, attention is paid to a select set of outputs and programmes that the evaluation team considers to be important to mention because they are especially significant, new and innovative or especially relevant to the contexts in which UNDP is operating.

Gender equality and women's empowerment are cross-cutting aspects of all UNDP programming, as are the efforts to foster South-South and tri-

angular partnerships and build new partnerships, including with the private sector. The evaluation also considers the performance of UNDP under the fifth Global Programme and five regional programmes. Findings at the regional level have been aggregated to identify common issues. In addition, the evaluation assesses how UNDP has progressed in enhancing institutional effectiveness through various strategies during the current Strategic Plan, building on the joint assessment of institutional effectiveness conducted by IEO and the Office of Audit and Investigations in 2016.

While the Strategic Plan does not have an overarching theory of change, each of its seven outcomes has a theory of change that sets out intended roles and contributions, assumptions, risks and drivers of change. The evaluation sets out an aggregated theory of change to frame the results of UNDP programme support and consider approaches taken, the process of contribution and the significance of the UNDP contribution.

The evaluation used multiple data collection and analysis methods and took an iterative approach to gather and analyse multiple perspectives to measure UNDP performance. Evidence has been obtained and triangulated from document reviews, meta-analysis of evaluations and audits, regional and country case study missions, interviews, focus groups and surveys. The analysis covers the work of UNDP in 90 country programmes, five regional hubs and one subregional office, three global centres and the two global shared service centres (in Kuala Lumpur and Copenhagen). Approximately 1,000 development actors were interviewed and 30 countries visited across all regions.

During the Strategic Plan period, the IEO carried out a series of thematic evaluations, the results of which anchor this report. These include evaluations of UNDP contributions

to fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (2015); Human Development Reports (2015); the Small Grants Programme of UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (2015); protected areas management by UNDP and GEF (2015); gender equality and women's empowerment (2015); mine action (2015); anti-corruption (2016); disabilities-inclusive development (2016); and institutional effectiveness (2017). Each of these evaluations received a management response, including actions planned in response to recommendations.

Data from the UNDP results-based management system, the Integrated Results and Resources Framework and the Atlas enterprise resource planning system (the UNDP financial management system) have been taken into consideration. The evaluation team reviewed the midterm review of the Strategic Plan (2016) as well as country office reporting and decentralized evaluations. National development strategies and country-level publications and documents of national and international agencies have been assessed as pertinent to specific analyses.

II. CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The overarching objectives of UNDP continue to be appropriate and relevant, and the organization's increasingly integrated, multifaceted approach to development challenges is well suited to, and consistent with, United Nations priorities and the needs of national partners. UNDP has taken measures to reconstitute its programme teams globally to facilitate integrated approaches to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals.

For 50 years, UNDP has kept a universal presence; however, the evaluation recognizes that the added value of the UNDP presence is perceived to be eroding in some middle-income countries, as country offices with limited resources struggle to maintain enough staff and make relevant contributions to development. The continued

relevance of UNDP in a large majority of countries needs more appropriate programme models and funding to respond to context specificities. In middle-income countries where UNDP has found a way to maintain its relevance, country offices have focused on becoming a partner in the area of policy, with more upstream initiatives at national level producing neutral and quality knowledge products, positioning the organization as a key partner for its thought leadership, convening power and ability to introduce issues and sensitive themes into policy debate and work as a broker between government and civil society to stimulate debate, build consensus and push for change. To counterbalance, downstream initiatives are more directed towards the subnational level where capacity development is still needed.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

One important change from the previous UNDP Strategic Plan was the coupling of poverty reduction and environment into a combined area of work on sustainable development pathways, which positioned UNDP well for supporting the efforts of national partners to meet the Millennium Development Goals and prepare for the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP support to fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals was particularly relevant and effective during the several years leading up to 2015, with the roll-out of the Millennium Development Goals Acceleration Framework. Since 2015, the effort has shifted towards the broader and more extensive Sustainable Development Goals. It is too early in this process to assess the support that UNDP is providing to countries on fulfilment of the Goals, other than to note the promising work of UNDP, together with other partners in the United Nations development system, on the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support programme, which assists countries in harmonizing the Goals with national planning priorities.

The overarching objective of UNDP continues to be its focus on the poorest of the poor and most marginalized around the world. Evidence suggests that UNDP has embedded a multidimen-

sional perspective of poverty across national and global debates, creating enabling environments to help Governments to develop pro-poor policies and expanding local capacities for pro-poor policymaking and social protection. There are also concerns that UNDP sometimes settles too easily for small-scale livelihood interventions that do not scale up, and that its results and reporting frameworks are not paying sufficient attention to the sustainability of jobs created. UNDP needs to align better its resources and programming with its stated objective: supporting the poorest of the poor and most marginalized members of society, capitalizing on lessons learned to accelerate development results specifically for those left behind.

The evaluation concluded that UNDP is a leading United Nations provider of environmental protection support at national and local levels, which now includes services to help countries adapt to climate change, and has been a significant provider of technical support to Member States during global and regional negotiations on environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss and water pollution. During this Strategic Plan period, UNDP has managed over one third of GEF projects and a similar percentage of projects under the new Green Climate Fund. UNDP is well regarded for its management of these projects, and for its efforts to establish strong partnerships and generate significant co-financing, and capacity to adapt to contextual changes during project implementation. It is through environmental services that UNDP works most directly at the community level, through its management of the GEF Small Grants Programme. The evaluation also acknowledges UNDP achievements in assisting countries to promote greater energy efficiency and more sustainable energy production, focusing on energy development and services to poor and rural communities.

UNDP has a long-standing climate programme and is considered a global leader in the provision of adaptation services, as recognized by the considerable financial resources it has secured through the GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources. The UNDP national and subnational

scope of service, urban and rural development planning, governance, risk-assessment capabilities, experience managing multi-partner trust funds and decades of experience in environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to assist countries with this global development challenge.

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

The evaluation found that UNDP governance support filled critical gaps in countries that face significant systemic challenges in their efforts to improve governance. Evidence indicates that UNDP is an important service provider of democratic governance and public administration support, helping to solidify peaceful and resilient State-society relations. It is the area of work where UNDP raises and expends about half of its resource (48 percent), primarily for institutional strengthening for basic services, as well as accountability, the rule of law, electoral systems and peacebuilding. UNDP is well positioned to promote governance reform, yet it can do more to push for inclusive and accountable processes.

UNDP has helped to strengthen processes for more structured and transparent engagement of parliaments with government and civil society. UNDP is well positioned in providing expert electoral support to Governments and electoral management bodies. UNDP advocated for more credible and inclusive electoral processes, more representative parliaments with stronger legislative and oversight functions and increased citizen voice, and how to localize Sustainable Development Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels). UNDP continues to be a global leader in the provision of parliamentary support, with an increasing number of countries assisted and an enhanced focus on issue-based approaches. There have been improvements in parliamentary strategies and the capacities of parliamentary staff in areas such as legal drafting, oversight and institutionalized mechanisms for public hearings.

UNDP is perceived as a reliable intermediary and neutral convener, which is crucial for engagement on democratic governance issues. UNDP does not always leverage this comparative advantage, which reduced its overall contribution to strengthening electoral systems.

The evaluation notes achievements in areas such as anti-corruption, open governance and facilitating local-level access to public information, particularly initiatives that facilitated citizens' utilization of information to engage in local planning and governance. UNDP contributed to enhancing the role of citizens and community-based organizations in local development planning, giving voice to the needs of women and children, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups. The evaluation also identifies specific areas where UNDP plays a direct role in government services, such as the provision of financial and operational management support for health-care systems through the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. UNDP efforts to secure the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have placed it at the forefront of core government capacity development efforts.

The evaluation calls attention to the work of UNDP to help Governments improve their civil service processes, especially in countries that have been in crisis, yet concerns are raised that UNDP programming often results in a parallel system of government staff paid through UNDP, and therefore outside of the national civil service, which risks undermining civil service reform efforts and government accountability. It is consequently recommended that in its programming requirements, UNDP ensure that capacity-related programming does not carry over from phase to phase without evidence of increasing government capacity and national ownership. UNDP should not undermine national civil services through long-term, off-budget advisory support.

UNDP has carved out a vital role in governance support to countries affected by conflict. UNDP contributions across areas of governance in peace-building and State-building support have been

substantial in the provision of specialist technical expertise along with human resource support to government institutions. UNDP has, to its credit and that of partner Governments, sought to address the most intractable structural causes of conflict. UNDP played a leading role in enhancing the role of youth in peace and security processes, particularly the implementation of Security Council resolution 2250 (2015).

UNDP support in countries affected by conflict has been crucial for the functioning of core governance institutions and consolidating stability and peace while transitioning to development. The UNDP strategy to address pressing capacity issues in the early phase of institutional formation has been appropriate in countries affected by conflict. During the initial stages of State-building, UNDP has played a crucial role, serving as a fiduciary (and procurement) manager in the absence of government capacity. As Governments in countries affected by conflict have weak financial management systems, UNDP procurement and service delivery support has helped to minimize misuse of development funds.

The UNDP contributions to justice sector reforms have been important enablers of capacities to allow justice institutions to function. Typical of countries affected by conflict, the low human resource base and lack of basic infrastructure are challenges. The convening role that UNDP has played in gathering diverse justice stakeholders around common reform themes and strategic planning is significant. UNDP has effectively advocated and supported anti-discrimination legislation and issues in some countries that have improved the situation for ethnic minorities, persons living with a disability or with HIV and AIDS, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender persons. Enhancing citizen security has been an important component of UNDP rule of law initiatives, including for community-oriented policing and the reduction of illicit arms in countries affected by conflict. Improved capacities of government institutions helped strengthen the legitimacy of the State and enabled better service delivery.

The evaluation recognizes that UNDP during this plan period has made a concerted effort to work more collaboratively with Security Council-mandated peacekeeping missions, thereby bringing a more developmental approach to joint peacebuilding and State-building efforts and smoothing post-mission transitions.

RESILIENCE

UNDP is the preferred agency for many nations seeking redevelopment support when conflict and disaster occur. It is the space where UNDP has significant latitude to support major changes in national development policy, and where nations look to UNDP for advice on how to build back better.

UNDP continues to play an important role both in crisis risk reduction and recovery. In the case of risk reduction, the evaluation concludes that funding remains a stumbling block, which is not unique to UNDP but is an issue for most organizations working in this area. Nevertheless, UNDP is considered a valued partner in risk reduction, and its contributions have been important to quantifying and ranking risks and to preparedness. Disaster risk reduction is an area that has important synergies with the rapidly expanding UNDP climate change adaptation support to countries.

The evaluation confirms the UNDP Crisis Response Unit has been effective at deploying staff and consultant resources, and at quickly releasing initial funding to get recovery programmes moving. There is continued logic and value to the UNDP contribution as the chair of the Early Recovery Cluster. UNDP is working collaboratively with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies in response to crises such as the Syrian crisis, where human migrations overwhelm municipal services in host communities. The evaluation identifies ‘cash for work’ programmes as interventions that often receive too much attention in early recovery engagements, at the expense of planning and coordination support where UNDP is especially needed. Furthermore,

the mechanisms in place for quick response to crises are less suitable to slow-onset crises, requiring UNDP to consider new systems and methods.

UNDP work in resilience has evolved and been restructured during this plan period. The evaluation found that the institutional restructuring that occurred dissolved a well-recognized and integrated crisis prevention and recovery bureau. While there were compelling reasons behind consolidating policy functions and merging the two global policy bureaux, for instance to reduce programmatic overlap and redundancy, this move disrupted UNDP service offerings in the risk reduction and recovery space, and in the process, UNDP lost talent and experience that is yet to be recovered.

How UNDP addresses resilience in the future is under discussion as the next strategic plan is being drafted. It will be very useful for UNDP to retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the plan, so that stakeholders see this remains a core area of the UNDP service offering. It will be important for UNDP to revisit its restructuring of the policy bureaux, as the current set-up should be weighed against the advantages of having a dedicated support system in place to respond comprehensively to crisis risk reduction and recovery needs.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF UNDP PROGRAMMING DURING THE PERIOD OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN, 2014–2017

During the Strategic Plan period, UNDP has spent a little over \$12 billion on programmes, out of a total budget of \$14.9 billion. The two current main areas of UNDP focus, sustainable development pathways and governance for peaceful and inclusive societies, show a decline in programme expenditure, while resilience and recovery expenditures increased over the same period.

Regular resources comprised about 10 percent of development programme expenditure in the period 2014–2016. These resources, sometimes referred to as ‘core funds’, are contributions provided to UNDP that are pooled and untied. Since 2014, there has been an 18 percent decline in the

amount of core funding expended, continuing a downward trend during the decade. This decline has wide implications for the organization and has led to a robust effort to identify new sources of revenue. Other resources (non-core) funding of approximately \$4 billion in expenditures each year, are provided by a wide array of donors for specific programming. These expenditures declined in 2016, although this cannot be considered a trend.

In the sustainable development pathways programme area, programme expenditures have been divided relatively equally between outputs linked to poverty and livelihoods programmes and those linked to environment, climate change and energy. Programmes targeting structural transformation of productive capacities and sustainable management of natural resources were the largest output areas.

In the governance for peaceful and inclusive societies area, one third of UNDP expenditures (34 percent) was spent on programmes focusing on the rule of law and security sector. A large portion of it, however, was linked to citizen security programmes in Afghanistan. The second largest output area was for service delivery, especially strengthening capacities for service delivery at the subnational/local level. HIV/AIDS programmes were the third largest group (23 percent), mostly programmes funded by the Global Fund in Africa. Lastly, programmes focusing on State-building represented 13 percent of total spending in this thematic area. Almost one half of the expenditures focused on institutional strengthening in countries affected by conflict.

In the resilience area, 58 percent of expenditures went to early recovery programmes, a large part of which was spent on the output area of early economic revitalization. The Arab States region accounted for the largest share of these expenditures. The remaining 42 percent of expenditures for resilience were focused on peacebuilding and disaster risk management. Expenditures are increasingly focused on the Arab States, with growing programmes in Iraq, Lebanon, State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic.

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES

The Strategic Plan sets expectations for UNDP work on gender and women's empowerment, as well as various partnerships, including South-South cooperation.

Regarding gender, the evaluation concludes that there have been incremental improvements in the UNDP gender equality and women's empowerment policy, institutional measures and programming during this period, and that UNDP work at the global and regional levels takes a strong analytical approach, seeking to identify gaps and good practices to inform gender-related policy and advocacy. UNDP has supported the improvement of economic opportunities for women, helping to usher in upstream policy reforms and downstream micro-credit schemes and employment opportunities. Democratic governance programme support has demonstrated strong gender-inclusive approaches.

The evaluation notes some weaknesses in efforts focused on gender equality and women's empowerment. There have been limitations in the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy, both in terms of providing resources to support gender programming and in mainstreaming gender equality across UNDP programme areas. New management processes and mechanisms, corporate accountability and improvements in the gender architecture, such as locating experts in regional hubs and multidisciplinary focal teams in country offices, have yet to lead to meaningful improvements in gender programming and mainstreaming. The current level of support to gender-responsive crisis risk reduction and response efforts is insufficient. There is also a need for closer arrangements and clearer expectations regarding UNDP cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, take measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas and not confine gender-related work to a gender team.

UNDP has clarified its corporate structure and defined more precisely its operational approaches

to South-South and triangular cooperation through the Strategic Plan. The recently adopted South-South and triangular cooperation strategy has the potential to provide improved direction to manage and facilitate South-South knowledge exchange at the country level. Challenges remain in the mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in UNDP country-level programming, and UNDP has yet to prioritize thematic areas where South-South exchanges will be pursued more systematically. The report draws attention to the need to improve knowledge management on South-South cooperation, especially drawing lessons that UNDP country offices can use to expand such partnerships. The UNDP role as administrative agent for the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation is acknowledged in this report, along with recent improvements made to the office's planning and management.

The evaluation recognizes that achieving the ambitious targets in the Strategic Plan requires robust funding as well as programmatic partnerships. A challenge to expanding partnerships is the lack of a nuanced strategy for developing new long-term partnerships and non-traditional funding mechanisms, although the report acknowledges pilot efforts under way to test innovative mechanisms such as impact investment and crowdsourcing. UNDP has been engaging with the private sector, especially through environmental programming, as well as livelihoods and social protection, and has established due diligence procedures to safeguard these efforts. The evaluation concludes that further engagement with the private sector can leverage significant new funding, including through large corporate social responsibility initiatives. UNDP will need to assess these opportunities against their financial and reputational risks.

UNDP partnerships with other United Nations agencies continue to expand, with examples of effective multi-agency partnerships including the Spanish Millennium Development Goal Fund and the United Nations Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Results from 'Delivering as One' pilot countries and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework pro-

cess suggest that more work is needed to harmonize systems before joint programming can be done routinely, effectively and efficiently. UNDP joint programming with its two affiliated organizations, the United Nations Volunteers programme and United Nations Capital Development Fund, have grown, with positive results. Finally, UNDP partnerships with environmental and health system 'vertical' funds have been mutually advantageous.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

The evaluation analysed the contribution of the fifth global programme and the five regional programmes. With respect to the global programme, the evaluation notes that it fulfils the function of supporting staff positions at UNDP headquarters and the regional hubs that are essential for policy support to UNDP programmes, particularly country offices. The contributions of the policy and technical staff enabled UNDP global advocacy and thought leadership to government partners in the run-up to pivotal international agreements including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The report recommends that UNDP change the global programme into a service line for supporting staff positions at global and regional levels.

The global programme supports six global policy centres, which were established at different points of time in the past decade. The centres provide research support, organize technical workshops and enable UNDP to leverage partnerships for global policy engagement. There is greater potential for the global policy centres to facilitate knowledge exchange across the organization and to support UNDP in its global policy and advocacy roles.

With respect to regional programming, progress has been made in developing a coherent regional response in the five regions and consolidating policy support. The diversity of country offices' programme support requirements is too wide and specialized, and funding constraints have meant that regional hubs have had to make hard staffing choices that leave advisory gaps.

The regional programmes have made special efforts to support new approaches to development solutions. The evaluation finds that innovative techniques to meet development needs have been launched in many regions, including new ways to capture and utilize knowledge. Challenges remain in the application of knowledge and lessons for improved programming, and additional efforts are needed to more systematically promote innovation and knowledge management at the regional level.

Regional programming is an important asset for engaging countries on sensitive issues, such as anti-corruption and citizen voice, although care is needed to avoid overlap between regional and country-level programming. While regional programmes enabled country offices to pursue issues that could be sensitive for them to initiate, the lack of a regional dimension limited these initiatives in many cases. Cross-border initiatives are valuable additions to regional programmes, but such efforts need further consolidation. Too many country-related activities have diluted the regional focus.

Regional programmes successfully fostered strategic partnerships with new agreements and funding. The regional programme for Africa has had a clear regional orientation, focused on strengthening the capacities of regional intergovernmental institutions, building regional normative frameworks and fostering knowledge management. In the Asia and Pacific region, while not all areas that are priorities for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation match those of UNDP, there has been engagement on mutually reinforcing development agendas, such as the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP is also expanding its partnerships with regional institutions elsewhere, such as with the League of Arab States. A strength of the regional programmes is their emphasis on subregional priorities and specific measures to support them.

The evaluation notes that although the regional programme model is an effective modality and UNDP is well positioned to play a convening role at the regional level on development issues, the

UNDP organizational restructuring posed additional challenges to the achievement of results.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Strategic Plan sets out expectations for higher-quality programming; greater organizational openness, agility and adaptability to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise; and improved management of human and financial resources. The evaluation reports on achievements in these areas, building also from a recent joint assessment on institutional effectiveness conducted by IEO and the Office of Audit and Investigation.

Evidence suggests there are signs of improvement at UNDP in terms of higher-quality programming, openness, agility and adaptability, but these have had limited impact on harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise to improve results and institutional effectiveness, as envisaged in the Strategic Plan. To better promote a results culture, UNDP leadership should encourage an environment that welcomes critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness. Investment in results-based management and knowledge management should be prioritized. Beyond reporting for compliance and capturing best practices, the focus should be on using lessons learned to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise to improve results and effectiveness. In building this culture, UNDP should also improve transparency and communication at the most senior levels of the organization, to encourage and improve openness and engagement.

With respect to human resources management, the evaluation considers that the Office of Human Resources is limited in its ability to contribute effectively to institutional effectiveness, as it is not part of formal high-level decision-making structures and as such cannot make sufficient and timely input into corporate strategic and budgetary decisions which may affect country office results. UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional

restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership and management across complex systems should be prioritized.

Although UNDP is now a leaner and more cost-conscious organization, there has been insufficient progress on results-based budgeting, and the organization's financial sustainability is challenged by diminishing regular resources, inadequate funding models and exchange rate losses. UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and results-based budgeting process, so that results are more effectively linked to resources to help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP should also work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on multidimensional integrated approaches to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.

III. CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: The current Strategic Plan builds on previous plans to narrow the UNDP development mandate while maintaining flexibility to adjust to local needs. The integrated approach taken is well suited to the overarching objectives of UNDP and consistent with United Nations priorities. It enables the organization to provide a multifaceted response to development support requests from national partners.

Conclusion 2: The presence of UNDP in middle-income countries remains relevant but is increasingly challenged by diminishing regular resources. This financial reality stretches the sometimes tenuous connection between the long-term strategic aims of UNDP and its programme expectations, calling into question the relevance of the Strategic Plan in some contexts.

Conclusion 3: UNDP played a positive supporting role to Governments in fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular value during the later stages, helping countries accelerate their efforts as the 2015 deadline loomed. UNDP is now broadening this assistance to integrate and prioritize the Sustainable Development Goals into national development planning.

Conclusion 4: UNDP has made a difference by embedding a multidimensional perspective of poverty in national and global debates; creating enabling environments to help Governments develop pro-poor policies; and expanding local capacities for pro-poor policymaking. UNDP has in some cases settled too easily for small-scale livelihood interventions that do not scale up and may be more suitable for other actors.

Conclusion 5: UNDP has continued to enhance its standing as a country-level implementer of a range of environmental programmes, including on climate change, biodiversity loss, water pollution, land degradation and the control of persistent organic pollutants. UNDP has a long-standing climate programme and is considered a global leader in the provision of adaptation services, as recognized by the considerable financial resources it has secured through the GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources.

Conclusion 6: UNDP contributed to strengthening institutions and reform processes, including by filling critical gaps in countries facing significant systemic challenges in public administration, service delivery and democratic governance. Banking on incremental approaches and cumulative impacts did not always enable a sustained increase in governance capacities.

Conclusion 7: UNDP has successfully established its niche as a trusted and reliable intermediary and neutral convener on democratic governance issues. UNDP appears reluctant at times to take advantage of its trusted position and push for more inclusive and accountable government processes. By taking an overly cautious approach, UNDP risks missing opportunities to

trigger significant governance reforms. In delivering governance assistance and capacity-building, the issue of norms and the UNDP role in upholding them needs to be addressed.

Conclusion 8: In countries affected by conflict, UNDP specialist technical expertise and human resource support has enabled core governance institutions to function, which is critical for consolidating stability and peace and transitioning to development. More sustained efforts are needed to support sector-specific capacity-development strategies and a systematic approach to strengthening core institutional capacities.

Conclusion 9: UNDP has made a concerted effort to work more collaboratively with peacekeeping missions mandated by the Security Council. This brings a more developmental approach to joint peacebuilding and State-building efforts, helping to smooth post-mission transitions.

Conclusion 10: In the early stages of crisis recovery, UNDP capacity-building support has helped to stabilize national institutions by working successfully with government partners to address immediate needs. Yet funding and operational constraints often limit progress during the longer transitional phase back to peaceful development, impeding national efforts to address the structural causes of conflict.

Conclusion 11: Structural changes involving establishment of a single global policy bureau for policy and programme support and a small, free-standing crisis response unit have weakened the programme coherence of UNDP and its service offering on crisis risk reduction and recovery.

Conclusion 12: UNDP is providing valuable services to national partners on disaster risk reduction strategies, and is especially well positioned to develop contextual analyses at the country level. Funding support for risk reduction remains weak.

Conclusion 13: UNDP is considered an especially valued partner in the aftermath of conflicts and disasters, as countries look to recover and

rebuild. It has increased the pace and quality of its early recovery and transitional development services. Yet the organization remains ad hoc in its response to crises and focuses too much effort on short-term employment creation and cash assistance programming. This diverts attention from the more complex but critical planning and governance-related aspects of recovery where UNDP support is especially needed.

Conclusion 14: UNDP has more effectively organized and promoted its work on gender equality and women's empowerment, but faces continuing challenges in mainstreaming this work across the organization and meeting relevant corporate financial and results targets.

Conclusion 15: UNDP has strengthened its commitment to South-South cooperation through the development of a corporate strategy and continued administrative support to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. There remains a lack of prioritization and systematic use of South-South and triangular cooperation, and limited sharing of knowledge.

Conclusion 16: The global programme fulfils an important policy support function and has enabled UNDP to maintain intellectual engagement in the global development arena by participating in major international events and channeling country-level lessons to global agreements. The programme's results framework and indicators are excessive in their expectations, which cover the breadth of UNDP work under the Strategic Plan, including country-level results. The global programme is more a funding line to support staff positions for achieving corporate-wide results than a distinct global programme.

Conclusion 17: Progress has been made in developing a coherent regional response across the five regional programmes. To differing degrees, each of the regional programmes has expanded support for new approaches and innovative solutions and promoted subregional programming. The potential of the regional programmes to facilitate a holistic response to regional engage-

ment and country office support is not fully realized. Although the regional programme model is an effective modality to support regional initiatives, it is constrained by its large scope. In some regions there remain too many country-related activities that overlap with country office programming. Further attention is needed for regional public goods and services and management of cross-border externalities.

Conclusion 18: There are signs that UNDP is improving both the quality of its programming and its openness, agility and adaptability. But these have had limited impact on harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise due to insufficient investment in results-based management and knowledge management and an excessive focus on compliance rather than organizational learning.

Conclusion 19: The Office of Human Resources is limited in its ability to contribute effectively to institutional effectiveness, as it is not part of formal high-level decision-making structures and as such cannot make sufficient and timely input into corporate-level strategic and budgetary decisions that may affect country office results.

Conclusion 20: The financial sustainability of UNDP is challenged by declining resources that are mostly tied to specific funder objectives, inadequate funding models and exchange rate losses. This situation makes it increasingly difficult for UNDP to work in an integrated fashion, break down silos and align projects to the priorities of the Strategic Plan. Although UNDP is now a leaner and more cost-conscious organization, additional and more effective clustering of operational functions could have further lowered UNDP transaction costs and generated further efficiencies and economies of scale. UNDP has made insufficient progress on results-based budgeting, and does not effectively cost solutions or assess programmatic value for money.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Support for fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals should be a

cross-cutting issue for all UNDP country offices. Integrated approaches to development are essential for fulfilment of the Goals and should be pursued where possible, taking national contexts and implementation efficiency into consideration.

Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP will continue and further expand its support to national partners in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans, through the MAPS missions and other forms of support together with other United Nations development system partners. UNDP will provide policy support to countries through the application of tools and quantitative methodologies that can help Governments to make informed decisions on prioritization and implementation of the Goals in line with national priorities and context.

Upon request from Governments, UNDP is committed to supporting countries in the follow-up and review of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal fulfillment through the voluntary national reviews as part of the formal process that culminates at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Following the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) guidelines for preparation of country-led national Sustainable Development Goal reports and on the request of Governments, UNDP is supporting the production of the first cohort of reports, which include in-depth national and subnational reviews of the countries' processes of monitoring and reviewing national implementation of the Goals.

Recommendation 2: The overarching strategic objective of UNDP — supporting the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized members of society — remains valid. Future resources and programming should aim to help countries accelerate the achievement of development results especially for those left behind, based on fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation, and the 2030 Agenda's ambition of "leaving no one behind" will be proposed

as an important element of the 2018–2021 Strategic Plan, including in the integrated results and resources framework (IRRF). UNDP intends to implement this recommendation through its support to national and local partners on the Sustainable Development Goals, and including through tools and promoting development solutions identified through South–South and triangular cooperation, and fostering partnerships that have a strong potential to harness transformational change and support achievement of the 2030 Agenda on the ground.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should retain its global reach. Programming in middle-income countries should align with the Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks, placing vulnerable populations at the forefront while seizing opportunities to expand assistance at subnational levels.

***Management response:** UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in conjunction with the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action, to ensure that countries make effective use of all available resources and means to advance their development goals. Through dedicated methodologies for development finance assessments and integrated financing solutions, UNDP assists Member States in the development of their integrated national financing frameworks linking planning, budgeting, partnerships and resource mobilization as requested by the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. Recognizing the specific challenges facing middle-income countries (MICs) in continuing development processes in a fundamentally different financing environment, UNDP will consider continuing to undertake development finance assessments in MICs.*

The new UNDAF guidance, issued in February 2017, informs UNDP programming in MICs and focuses on alignment with global frameworks, in particular the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. The guidance prioritizes leaving no one behind and financing strategies that ensure continuity in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP will continue supporting localization of the 2030 Agenda as a central focus of support through the MAPS approach.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should strongly emphasize its climate change adaptation capabilities and services in the next strategic plan. The UNDP national and subnational scope of service; capabilities for urban and rural development planning, governance and risk assessment; experience managing multi-partner trust funds; and decades of environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to ably assist national and subnational governments to meet this global development challenge. Specific attention should be paid to the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction linkages.

***Management response:** UNDP management agrees with the recommendation and intends to expand its work in the area of adaptation, in close coordination and synergy with disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts. As the evaluation acknowledged, there has been good progress in linking the DRR and adaptation portfolios at country and regional levels, which could be further systematized and institutionalized throughout all of UNDP.*

In response to the growing demands to support climate action and DRR, UNDP has already scaled up and expanded assistance to countries to integrate climate change adaptation and DRR into their subnational/national policies, plans, and strategies. Efforts towards integrated approaches to climate change adaptation and DRR are being pursued in various regional and country programmes and projects. As the co-facilitator of the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action, member of the Climate Principals Group and member of the Climate Core Group, UNDP will further systematize and institutionalize this integrated approach throughout all policies, programmes and projects and its work with partner agencies and stakeholders.

UNDP is playing an increasingly significant role in supporting countries to mobilize climate finance, including through the GCF, to undertake adaptation actions for climate-resilient development. UNDP is uniquely positioned to accelerate adaptation services, building on its decade-long portfolio, and has been expanding its technical capacity. For instance, GCF

project development is being undertaken through expanded task teams that include experts from different technical areas (social and environmental safeguards, gender and economic analysis) to support the scale and scope of adaptation investments to which countries aspire. UNDP will continue to expand its roster of experts to deliver adaptation services at global, regional and national levels.

Recommendation 5: Recognizing that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP should be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and more persuasive in promoting democratic governance reforms.

***Management response:** UNDP management takes note of the recommendation and concurs that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP strives to be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and to be persuasive in promoting democratic governance reform, while fully recognizing that its support for reforms is based on requests from national Governments in line with national contexts and priorities. UNDP governance work builds on long-standing broad and innovative partnerships with international, national and local actors to create an enabling environment for sustainable peace and development to take root. For example, the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections is one of the flagship mechanisms that UNDP employs to deliver coordinated rule of law assistance. Co-led by UNDP and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the mechanism brings together the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other United Nations entities to facilitate joint planning and programming and resource mobilization in service of the whole system. UNDP also works with the Department of Political Affairs on conflict prevention and electoral assistance.*

Recommendation 6: Analysis of institutional capacities at the national level should guide UNDP governance programming in countries

affected by conflict. Governance support needs to be targeted to critical government functions that are essential to stability. UNDP should more strategically support Sustainable Development Goal 16 and related intergovernmental agreements on peacebuilding and State-building.

***Management response:** UNDP gives specific consideration to this recommendation in its strategic plan, 2018–2021 which is currently under formulation. Given the strategic importance of Goal 16 for the entire 2030 Agenda, UNDP has been instrumental in launching the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, which brings together Member States, civil society and the private sector, supported by a group of United Nations partner entities. UNDP is also closely engaged in the piloting of Goal 16 monitoring in cooperation with the Open Government Partnership and the Community of Democracies.*

Recognizing the interconnectedness of the peace and development agendas, UNDP will continue to engage in international networks such as the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building and its strategic relationship with the g7+ group of countries, having signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016. As part of that engagement, UNDP in 2016 developed “SDG-Ready”, the UNDP offer on Sustainable Development Goal implementation in fragile situations. UNDP will continue to advocate for the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States internationally as well as at country level, promoting the principles of the New Deal in aid coordination, use of country systems, Sustainable Development Goal implementation, the Sustaining Peace Agenda and peacebuilding and State-building efforts.

In June 2017 the United Nations and the World Bank completed and officially released the first joint diagnostic framework on core government functions in fragile and conflict-affected settings, for which UNDP has played a leading role within the United Nations system. The framework includes a set of joint principles for assessing critical government functions that are essential to stability, peacebuilding and State-building processes. Its objective is to pro-

vide an initial assessment of key issues, priorities and entry points around the six core government functions of executive coordination at the centre of government, local governance, public financial management, civil service, security sector and aid management. UNDP is already providing support in a number of countries based on the diagnostic, including the Central African Republic, Libya and South Sudan, and initial discussions are underway to apply some aspects in Cameroon and Yemen. UNDP is working through the Inter-Agency Platform on Core Government Functions (co-chaired by UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs) to embed this framework in existing assessment and planning processes such as recovery and peacebuilding assessments and conflict-related development analyses.

Recommendation 7: UNDP should retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the next strategic plan so that stakeholders see this remaining a core area of the UNDP service offering. To strengthen the coherence of its crisis risk-reduction and recovery support, UNDP should continue to refine the roles and scope of service of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and the Crisis Response Unit.

Management response: UNDP agrees with the recommendation and will consider its approach to resilience building in the next strategic plan, 2018–2021, drawing on findings and recommendations of an external evaluation of the lessons learned from its role in early recovery coordination. The UNDP approach to early recovery coordination will be revisited in light of the QCPR and the New Way of Working.

UNDP takes note of the recommendation about strengthening the coherence of its crisis prevention and recovery support, while recognizing that details regarding potential reforms of the United Nations peace and security architecture and wider development system will also guide UNDP work in these areas.

Recommendation 8: UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, taking measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas.

Work on gender equality and women's empowerment should not be confined to a gender team alone but should ensure that all large programmes have dedicated gender expertise. Specific attention needs to be paid to such areas as environment, energy and crisis response, where gender mainstreaming remains weak.

Management response: UNDP agrees with the recommendation and aims to address it in the forthcoming gender equality strategy which will include a more robust gender architecture, stronger accountability mechanisms and budgetary commitments as well as reporting targets. Progress will be reported through a strengthened Gender Steering and Implementation Committee and the annual report to the Executive Board. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening partnerships with UN-Women and other technical partners to deliver gender results across all programming areas.

Recommendation 9: UNDP should take a more systematic approach to South-South cooperation, selecting specific areas and partners for expanded cooperation.

Management response: UNDP agrees with the recommendation and commits to strengthening its systematic approach to South-South and triangular cooperation through leveraging opportunities offered by the implementation of the South-South cooperation corporate strategy. Through its strategic roles (knowledge broker, capacity builder and partnership facilitator), UNDP will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by continuously taking stock of the challenges facing developing countries, systematically fostering exchanges and partnerships, supporting policy frameworks and institutional capacities, stimulating targeted research to inform global policy dialogues and relying more heavily on country programming as an efficient way to leverage South-South cooperation at the national level. In addition, UNDP continues to support the UN Development System through hosting the UN Office for South-South Cooperation.

Recommendation 10: UNDP should change the global programme to a service line for supporting

staff positions at global and regional levels, as its shared deliverables and blurred boundaries make it unsuitable as a specific programme.

Management response: *UNDP management takes note of the recommendation. The relevance and role of programmatic instruments including the global and regional programmes will be further reviewed in the coming year(s). UNDP will explore the idea of converting the current global programme into a service line as one of the options going forward.*

Recommendation 11: UNDP should determine specialties within its sustainable development, governance and resilience areas of work. This will help it to build world-class technical expertise and focus its resources on building capacities in those areas.

Management response: *UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP is committed to having world-class technical expertise in the areas of sustainable development, governance and resilience. Once the new strategic plan is endorsed by the Executive Board later this year, UNDP will identify the specialized capacities needed to best implement these stated priorities and support country offices to respond to the priorities of national partners. The UNDP knowledge management strategy, which the evaluation recognizes as “comprehensive” and providing “considerable emphasis recognized as on knowledge facilitation and learning”, asks UNDP to leverage knowledge management for identification, development, mobilization and management of talent and expertise in ways that allow the organization to draw from a pool of qualified practitioners and experts at any time, mobilize staff members to be available for ad-hoc initiatives and virtual projects. To realize this vision, UNDP is investing in the development of an improved, cost-effective mechanism to map and track staff expertise across the organization. Through improved personnel profiles and searches, this offering aims to assist staff and managers to identify expertise rapidly and systematically. This will also allow tracking of expertise to assess strengths and weaknesses in order to build and bolster capacities where needed. Regional bureaux will continue developing and implementing Sustainable Development Goal*

toolkits, and investing in the capacity of UNDP staff and other partners through trainings, community of practice meetings, and others.

Recommendation 12: UNDP should reassess the roles and financial sustainability of the regional hubs, striving to make them centres of excellence for innovation and learning while expanding cooperation and partnerships with regional institutions. It should reduce overlap between regional and country-level programming.

Management response: *UNDP management takes note of this recommendation and will review the financial sustainability and roles of the regional hubs over the next Strategic Plan 2018–2021.*

Recommendation 13: Regional programming, if better defined, has the potential to be a valuable tool to prioritize and organize UNDP regional engagement and support to country offices. UNDP should develop its regional programmes as frameworks, outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed. To maximize its activities at the regional level and position UNDP to make a meaningful contribution, there should be more focus on a select number of areas at the regional level. For regional programmes to be effective, the activities that are considered should be realistic and pay sufficient attention to regionality principles.

Management response: *Management agrees with the recommendation that regional programmes should be developed as frameworks outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed within a select number of areas in support of the 2030 Agenda.*

Recommendation 14: UNDP should promote a results culture that encourages critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness.

Management response: *UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. As the Executive Board noted in several decisions, UNDP has made significant progress in strengthening its analytical capacities. To build a strong results culture across*

the organization, UNDP will streamline its results architecture, reporting and performance analysis systems to allow all parts of the organization to use results and evidence for learning and strategic decisions. During the current Strategic Plan cycle, UNDP developed an integrated corporate planning system to manage the programme and inform development and institutional performance analyses. The strength of the UNDP programme management was well recognized in the results-based management audit conducted by OAI in 2016, which rated the system satisfactory, the highest rate possible and the first to have been received for results-based management. To inform the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, UNDP also conducted analyses of lessons learned from results-oriented annual reports and decentralized evaluations. A complete roll-out of an upgraded knowledge sharing infrastructure and the relaunch of the UNDP public library of knowledge products along with new mechanisms to measure their quality, reach and impact also took place within this strategic plan timeframe.

To ensure programme management and evaluation support learning, UNDP works on: (a) designing a tool for capturing quality lessons learned in the corporate system and the Evaluation Resource Centre; (b) fostering exchange and learning through recently relaunched knowledge networks and an improved corporate social networking platform, in addition to a newly established One United Nations network for inter-agency collaboration, exchange and learning (as per a recommendation of the QCPR); and (c) offering dedicated training and outreach to empower staff to use these mechanisms effectively for learning and knowledge exchange. UNDP has taken practical steps to operationalize self-learning from experiments, from what works and what does not, through the establishment of the Innovation Facility in 2014. A key component of the mandate of this facility is the provision of risk capital and advisory services to country offices to test new approaches to solve development problems. The Innovation Facility documents successes, learning and lessons in its annual reviews and through regular blogging by offices supported by the facility.

Recommendation 15: UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership, relationship management and management across complex systems should be prioritized.

Management response: UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP is committed to ensuring pivotal importance of human resources matters, including OHR representation at early stages of decision-making.

Recommendation 16: UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and results-based budgeting process, to more effectively link results to resources. This will help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. UNDP should work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on integrated multidimensional approaches to support fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.

Management response: The UNDP management concurs with this recommendation. To build solid results to resources linkages, UNDP will strengthen its results based budgeting process through the analysis of demand (from country programme documents) and supply (from pipelines and donor intelligence). To better analyze resources invested and results achieved, UNDP will establish a close link between the IRRF indicator targets and the resource plan in the Integrated Budget, which will enable the organization to analyze investment gaps and facilitate dialogue with stakeholders.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has carried out an ‘Evaluation of the UNDP Strategic Plan, Global Programme, and Regional Programmes (2014-17).’ The evaluation is part of the IEO medium-term plan (DP/2014/5) approved by the Executive Board in January 2014.¹

The purpose of the evaluation is threefold: to strengthen UNDP accountability to global and national development partners, including the UNDP Executive Board; to support the development of the next Strategic Plan; and to support organizational learning. The evaluation was designed to inform both internal and external stakeholders of how UNDP is addressing development challenges.

The evaluation assessed the outcomes of the Strategic Plan and the implementation of global, regional and country-level programming. The purpose was to ascertain whether UNDP is making progress in achieving its stated goals and whether the Strategic Plan, global programme and regional programmes are serving as effective tools for organizing and guiding UNDP programming and activities.

1.2 EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation focuses on the current UNDP Strategic Plan (2014–2017) and related global and regional programmes. Many ongoing programmes and projects predate the current Strategic Plan, and accordingly the evaluation has

considered the sum total of UNDP activities during this period, regardless of when the programmes commenced. In assessing UNDP results during this period, the evaluation by necessity has been selective in scope, focusing on key priorities of the organization as articulated through its annual business plans, observed through programme expenditure decisions, and identified as significant in IEO evaluations.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS

The evaluation touched on all aspects of the Strategic Plan and considered UNDP’s contribution to the goals established in the Strategic Plan’s results framework, covering the three main areas of UNDP development work:

- Sustainable development pathways
- Governance for peaceful and inclusive societies
- Resilience

Within these three areas, the evaluation has sought to determine progress made. It does not cover all aspects of UNDP programming within each area of work, but rather pays greater attention to outputs and programmes perceived to be particularly significant, new and rapidly evolving during this strategic planning period, and where strong evaluative data are available.

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMMATIC PRINCIPLES

The evaluation assessed the cross-cutting programmatic principles outlined in the Strategic

¹ Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS agenda item document, ‘Evaluation Office of UNDP: Medium-term evaluation plan’ (2014-2017) (DP/2014/5), January 2014.

Plan: gender equality and women's empowerment; South-South and triangular cooperation (SSC-TrC); and partnerships. The Strategic Plan acknowledges the pivotal significance of women and recognizes that sustainable human development cannot be fully achieved unless and until women and girls can contribute on an equal basis with men and boys in their societies. In 2015, IEO carried out a global assessment of the work of UNDP on gender equality and women's empowerment, which underpins this analysis.

SSC and TrC are established as core mechanisms for implementing programmes and operations. The evaluation assessed UNDP's role as a knowledge broker, builder of capacities and facilitator of exchanges driven primarily by programme countries.

The Strategic Plan also sets expectations for other partnerships. For instance, it emphasizes public-private partnerships, which help to expand markets for sustainable products and improve adherence to national and international environmental and social standards. The evaluation assessed UNDP's progress on its commitments to expand cooperation with the private sector and strengthen the UN development system. It paid specific attention to cooperation between UNDP and its associated funds and programmes: the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL POLICY AND ADVOCACY

The evaluation assessed the performance of UNDP under the fifth Global Programme (GP-V) and the regional programmes in the five regions. Findings at the regional level have been aggregated to identify common issues.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation assesses how UNDP has progressed in enhancing institutional effectiveness through various strategies during the current Strategic Plan. This builds on the Institutional Effec-

tiveness Joint Assessment conducted by IEO and the Office of Audit and Investigations.

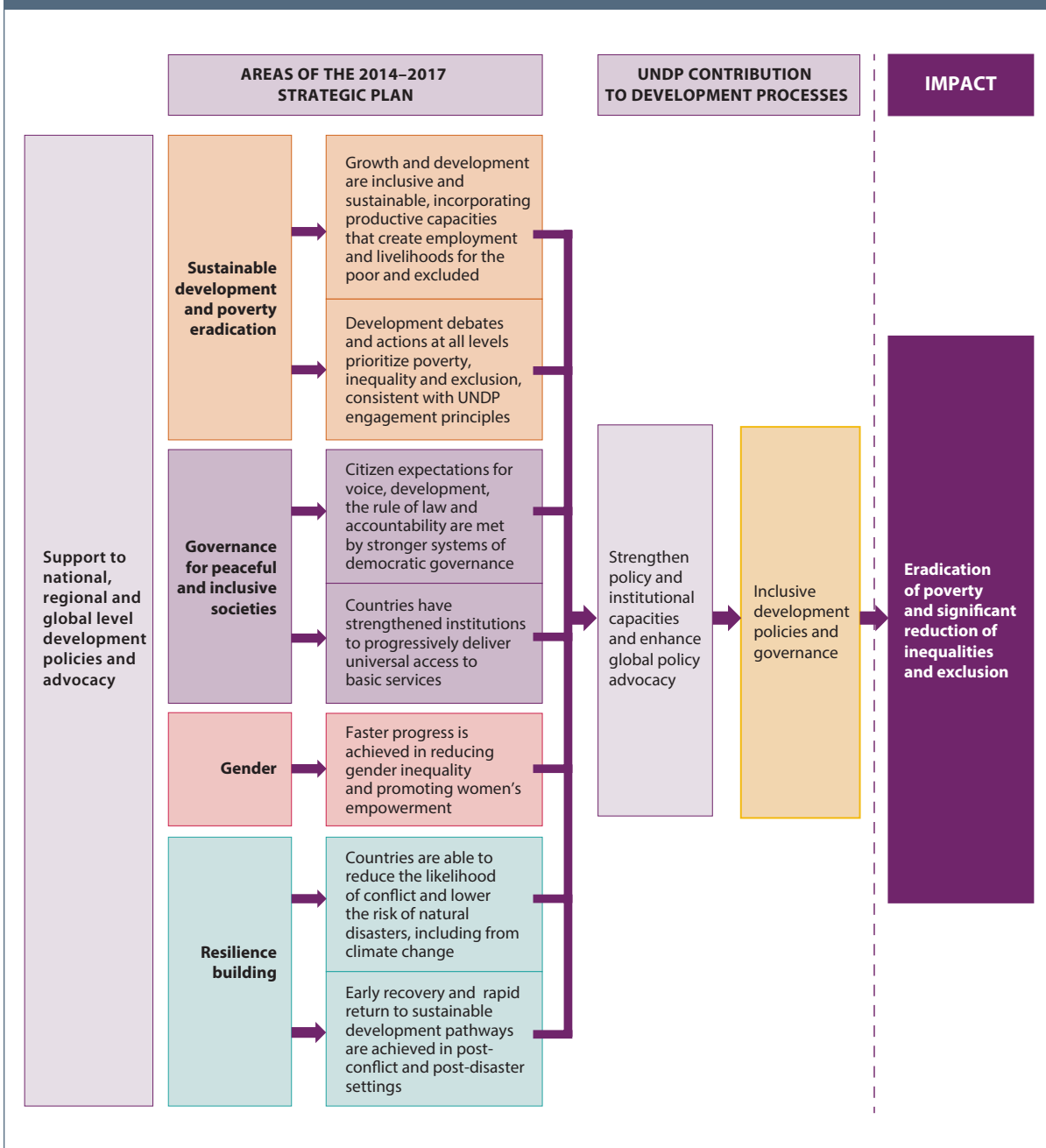
1.3 A THEORY-BASED APPROACH

While the Strategic Plan does not have an overarching theory of change, each of its seven outcomes has a theory of change that sets out intended roles and contributions, assumptions, risks and drivers of change. The evaluation has established an aggregated theory of change to frame the results of UNDP programme support and consider approaches taken, the process of contribution and the significance of UNDP's contribution (as presented schematically in Figure 1).

Pertinent evaluation factors include whether UNDP support is strategic for development, peacebuilding and crisis prevention outcomes in the country; the nature of the contributions; whether UNDP support enabled partnerships at the country level; and whether UNDP has maximized its comparative advantage across the areas UNDP supported. The evaluation recognizes that contextual factors have considerable bearing on the pace and extent of the UNDP contribution. The contributory linkages outlined in the theory of change are intended to identify the level of contribution that is commensurate with the scope of a UNDP programme. The theory of change, therefore, does not propose to link UNDP contributions directly to reductions in poverty and inequality or to the lack of it, but to processes that enable such changes.

The theory of change distinguishes between immediate, intermediate and long-term outcomes, recognizing that some of the components are iterative. Immediate outcomes are outputs of UNDP initiatives that have the likelihood of contributing to programme outcomes. This implies UNDP programme strategies and choices of activities are appropriate to the policy environment and respond to the capacity needs of governments and civil society. Intermediate outcomes comprise enhanced capacities of government institutions and State and non-State actors to pursue a development agenda. The the-

Figure 1. Strategic Plan 2014–2017, theory of change



ory of change also presumes that the scope and scale of UNDP programmes are reasonably sufficient to contribute to intermediate outcomes.

Long-term outcomes are contributions to macro-level policy and institutional processes and changes leading to reductions in poverty and inequality. Establishing contribution is more complex for long-term outcomes because

of the multiple actors and numerous factors involved. The certainty of the UNDP contribution, therefore, is greater at the immediate and intermediate outcome levels. The evaluation gives primary emphasis to immediate and intermediate outcomes, where UNDP programme contributions are likely to be evident and to correspond to approximate levels of boundaries for accountability.

1.4 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS

Evaluation questions used in making the overall assessment of UNDP contribution are presented in Box 1.

1.5 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The evaluation has used multiple methods and taken an iterative approach to gathering multiple perspectives to measure UNDP performance. Evidence has been gathered from document reviews, a meta-analysis of evaluations, regional and country case study missions, interviews and surveys (see Table 1).

A wide range of strategy, guidance and programme-specific documents have been reviewed

(see Annex 4). During this period, the IEO evaluated UNDP contributions to fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2015); Human Development Reports (2015); the Small Grants Programme of UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (2015); protected areas management by UNDP and GEF (2015); gender equality and women's empowerment (2015); mine action (2015); anti-corruption (2016); disabilities-inclusive development (2016); and institutional effectiveness (2017). Each of these evaluations received a management response, including actions planned in response to recommendations.

Data from the UNDP results-based management (RBM) system, the Integrated Results and Resources Framework (IRRF) and the Atlas enterprise resources planning system (UNDP's

Box 1. Evaluation criteria and questions		
Evaluation parameters	Criteria	Questions
Positioning of UNDP	Identifying and prioritizing issues consistent with UNDP's mandate; adopting a strategy supporting UNDP's efforts to make a useful contribution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How did UNDP position itself in the development areas prioritized by the Strategic Plan? 2. How did UNDP position itself in development/crisis/post-crisis contexts? 3. What factors facilitated this positioning?
Capacity development	Strengthening national policy and institutional capacities (broadening human, institutional and resource capacities)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. What is UNDP's contribution to strengthening national human and institutional capacities in development and crisis/post-crisis contexts? 5. What is UNDP's contribution to institutionalizing development practices and arrangements to 'carry' and further develop important issues? 6. What is UNDP's contribution to norm situating, i.e., facilitating adoption and implementation of international norms and practices into local contexts? 7. Did institutional effectiveness measures enable UNDP to enhance its contribution?
Global and regional policy discourse	Establishing and maintaining policy and inter-institutional dialogues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. What is UNDP's contribution to global and regional policy debates and advocacy?
Convening role	Bringing together actors/parties to address relevant development/crisis issues and strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. What is UNDP's contribution to UN coordination and the resident coordinator function in different country contexts?
Partnerships	Enabling development partnerships to accelerate development outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. To what extent has UNDP sought and established partnerships at global, regional and country levels to enhance development outcomes?

Table 1. Data collection, methods and sources for the evaluation

Method	Sources	Coverage
Country case studies	30 countries, including 2016 ADRs* and country offices visited during hub visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa – Cameroon, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, South Sudan, Zambia • Arab States – Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Somalia • Asia and the Pacific – Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand • Europe and CIS – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Turkey, Ukraine • Latin America and the Caribbean – Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Peru
Desk studies	7 countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa – Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Republic of Tanzania • Arab States – Morocco • Asia and the Pacific – Fiji, Lao People’s Democratic Republic • Europe and CIS – Tajikistan • Latin America and the Caribbean – Dominican Republic
Regional studies	5 regional hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa – Regional Service Centre, Addis Ababa • Arab States – Amman regional hub • Asia and the Pacific – Bangkok regional hub; Global Shared Service Centre, Malaysia • Europe and CIS – Istanbul regional hub • Latin America and the Caribbean – Regional Service Centre, Panama
Global centres	4 centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oslo – Oslo Governance Centre • Singapore – Global Centre for Public Service Excellence • Rio de Janeiro – World Centre for Sustainable Development (RIO+ Centre) • Malaysia – Global Shared Service Centre
Meta-synthesis of evaluations and audits	47 countries; 118 evaluations and 7 audit reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa – Angola, Gambia, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe • Arab States – Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan • Asia and the Pacific – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Viet Nam • Europe and CIS – Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo,² Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan • Latin America and the Caribbean – Brazil, Guatemala, Guyana
Interviews	About 1,000 development actors (see Annex 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNDP headquarters, regional hubs and country office management and staff • Donor representatives in New York and their headquarters • Representatives of relevant UN programmes, funds and agencies • Executive Board members from each region • Multilateral and bilateral agencies and other development organizations • Representatives of international civil society organizations • Partner national governments • Multilateral and bilateral representatives based in programme countries • Private sector

(continued)

² All references to Kosovo are understood to be in the context of UN Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

(continued)

Table 1. Data collection, methods and sources for the evaluation		
Method	Sources	Coverage
Surveys	6, focused on organizational performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Country offices participating in pilot phases of the quality-of-programme measures, 70 responses (67% response rate) Survey of staff involved in project design, 70 responses Survey of quality assurers, including programme specialists and management, 70 responses (100% response rate) Survey of quality approvers at country office senior management, 70 responses (34% response rate) Survey of country programme documents (CPDs), from country offices that submitted new CPDs to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2015 and first regular session of 2016, 26 responses (59% response rate) Survey of country office operations managers, with 113 respondents (43% response rate)

* Assessments of development results

financial management system) were also taken into consideration. The evaluation team reviewed the midterm review of the Strategic Plan (2016) as well as country reporting and decentralized evaluations. National development strategies and country-level publications and documents of national and international agencies have been assessed as pertinent to specific analyses.

A **meta-analysis** of the evaluations conducted since the start of the Strategic Plan in 2014 was carried out to assess UNDP performance across different regions and contexts. This analysis considers all evaluations conducted by IEO during this period, focused at the global thematic and country levels. Decentralized evaluations commissioned by UNDP units at the headquarters, regional and county levels and other credible evaluative evidence have served as information sources. When using self-reported data as sources of information, the team took into consideration the potential limitation that such reports tend to focus on successes rather than on challenges experienced.

Regional studies were carried out across each of the five regions: Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Latin America and the Caribbean. This provided a comparative analysis of actions and achievements under their

respective programmes during this cycle. All five regional hubs were visited as part of the fact-finding exercise. In-depth semi-structured interviews were also conducted with staff from the Global Shared Service Centres (GSSCs) in Kuala Lumpur and Copenhagen.

Desk studies were carried out for approximately 10 percent of countries where UNDP operates. The point was to broaden the evaluative evidence of UNDP's contribution and related processes and to consider different governance contexts.

Country case studies were carried out to provide in-depth insights into the contribution of UNDP support. The country case studies are not intended to draw generalizations of UNDP's contribution but rather to provide further insights into processes, outcomes and the factors impacting UNDP performance and results. The country case studies support the comprehensive analysis of the development context, analysis of relevant literature and data, analysis of government strategies, interviews with a range of development stakeholders, and cross-checking of data collected from different sources. The country case studies cover the entire range of UNDP support.

The evaluation carried out **stakeholder consultations** with a range of development actors at coun-

try level (e.g. government, civil society and NGO representatives; donors; multilateral and bilateral agencies; and other national and international development organizations); representatives of Member States; donor representatives in their respective headquarters; UNDP management and staff in the programme units at headquarters, regional hubs and country offices; representatives of other relevant UN agencies; and international civil society organizations. In all, more than 1,100 development actors were interviewed, in person or long distance.

1.6 EVALUATION CONSIDERATIONS

UNDP organizational performance and programming results have been assessed in an

environment in which staff perceptions may be obfuscated in some areas due to job insecurity and an overall climate of distress linked to organizational restructuring and decentralization. Missions to regional and country offices revealed the difficulties in generalizing about the effects of organizational reforms. Some regional offices, such as the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP) or for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC), were already relatively more decentralized from headquarters, with large advisory teams, while others were less so. The reforms therefore cannot be expected to have a uniform effect across the different regional systems. Delays in programme implementation due to structural reform were taken into consideration.

Chapter 2

CONTEXT FOR THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2014–2017

This chapter outlines the planning, evolution and adoption of the current UNDP Strategic Plan. This is followed by a brief overview of the current Strategic Plan and the structural changes at UNDP during this period. The last section analyses programme expenditures.

2.1 LEAD-UP TO THE CURRENT STRATEGIC PLAN

UNDP developed its first corporate plan in 1995.³ This was followed two years later by a planning and results management system that led to the first and second Multi Year Funding Frameworks (MYFFs), in 2000 (covering 2000–2003) and 2004 (covering 2004–2007),⁴ and the Strategic Plan for 2008–2011, which was extended to 2013.⁵ The Executive Board, in its 2007 discussions on the previous Strategic Plan (2008–2013), highlighted the diverse expectations from UNDP programme support. According to the official report of the annual meeting, the issue of UNDP's role in supporting human rights was a core aspect of disagreements. Some delegations pointed out that UNDP, as a United Nations organization, had a continuing obligation to uphold respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Others urged UNDP to remain focused on its core development mandate and steer clear of political conditionality in supporting capacity-development efforts.⁶

The strategic planning process was influenced by the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of United Nations development activities.⁷ The Strategic Plan approved in 2008 included an addendum containing development and institutional results frameworks.⁸ At the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2009, a decision was made to extend the Strategic Plan to 2013.⁹ The same decision aligned the UNDP global and regional programmes with the Strategic Plan time frame.

At the Executive Board's second regular session in September 2013, UNDP formally presented and received approval of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014–2017.¹⁰ As with its predecessor, this plan builds on the directions for development set out by the UN through the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR),¹¹ with its five overarching development issues: poverty eradication, sustainable development, gender equality and women's empowerment, the transition from relief to development, and resilience. The QCPR also

3 UNDP, 'Initiatives for Change: Follow-up to Decision 95/22' (DP/1996/2), 1996.

4 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 'Report on the Multi-Year Funding Framework 2000–2003: Supplementary Information and Revised Integrated Resources'; Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA, 'Second Multi-Year Funding Framework 2004–2007', September 2003.

5 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 'UNDP strategic plan, 2008–2011: Accelerating global progress on human development' (DP/2007/43/Rev.1), May 2008. See: <http://web.undp.org/execbrd/pdf/dp07-43Rev1.pdf>.

6 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 'Report of the Executive Board on its work during 2008' (E/2008/35).

7 After the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, the United Nations moved to a system of four-year reviews in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

8 UNDP, 'Strategic Plan 2008–2011 Addendum 1: Development and Institutional Results Frameworks', 2013.

9 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 'Decision Adopted by the Executive Board 2009', November 2009.

10 UNDP, 'Strategic Plan, 2014–2017', DP/2013/40, 2013.

11 UN General Assembly resolution 67/226, 2013.

highlighted other issues that received prominence in the UNDP Strategic Plan: capacity development should be a core function of the UN development system, and South-South and triangular cooperation need to be mainstreamed.

2.2 STRATEGIC PLAN 2014–2017

The Strategic Plan 2014–2017 (henceforth Strategic Plan) starts with a vision “to help countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion”. It then sets out seven outcomes, designed to “support the priorities and needs of each country and region, and capture the development changes UNDP will contribute towards directly, significantly and verifiably during the course of the Strategic Plan”.¹² The seven outcomes are:

1. Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and the excluded.
2. Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance.
3. Countries have strengthened institutions to progressively deliver universal access to basic services.
4. Faster progress is achieved in reducing gender inequality and promoting women’s empowerment.
5. Countries are able to reduce the likelihood of conflict and lower the risk of natural disasters, including from climate change.
6. Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster settings.
7. Development debates and actions at all levels prioritize poverty, inequality and exclusion, consistent with UNDP’s engagement principles.

The seven outcomes are addressed through three areas of work:

- How to adopt sustainable development pathways
- How to strengthen governance for peaceful and inclusive societies
- How to build resilience for sustaining development outcomes achieved

These three areas of work are closely aligned with the four areas of work set out in the previous Strategic Plan. In addition, they reflect a coupling of poverty and environmental programming into a combined sustainable development pathways area, and a closer integration of work on peacebuilding and State-building across the governance and resilience portfolios.

The Strategic Plan notes that the vision, outcomes and areas of work are relevant for all programme countries where UNDP works, though in different combinations and various degrees of emphasis. They were therefore designed as a ‘global offer’ that also enables UNDP to adopt an issues-based rather than a practice-based approach to development needs and priorities.

UNDP acknowledges that its comparative advantage and core strengths build from its perceived neutrality and trustworthiness; its knowledge and expertise gained in all development settings; its willingness to address development issues as they exist; its capacity to advise partners on the ‘big’ issues of economic and social transformation, environmental sustainability and democratic governance; its strong operational capability; and its ability to tap into the combined talents and assets of the UN development system. Included in the Strategic Plan are a set of engagement principles:

- Placing emphasis on persons living in poverty and experiencing the greatest inequalities and exclusion

12 UNDP, ‘Strategic plan 2014–2017’ (DP/2013/40), 2013, p. 3.

- Being guided by national ownership and capacity
- Recognizing the intrinsic value of the body of economic, political, social, civil and cultural rights established by the UN
- Utilizing sustainable development as a guide
- Reflecting the pivotal significance of gender equality and women's empowerment
- Ensuring participation and voice in pursuit of equitable access to development
- Advancing South-South and triangular cooperation
- Assisting countries to play an active role as global citizens
- Adhering to universality, offering all programme countries access to services

Building from the previous Strategic Plan and its Development and Institutional Results Framework, the current Strategic Plan provided an IRRF. This responded to Executive Board concerns that the “UNDP revised development results framework does not fully allow UNDP to clearly define its contribution to development results or adequately report and monitor progress on results for the remainder of this strategic plan”. The Board indicated that UNDP should: “Develop robust results frameworks that demonstrate a complete results chain and establish expected results at output, outcome and impact levels, and that focus on the delivery of outputs and contributions to outcomes by UNDP, not on the performance of programme countries.”¹³

The IRRF sets targets for regular and other resources across each of the seven Strategic Plan outcomes, and 38 associated outputs. It also sets

targets for organizational efficiency and coordination of the UN development system.

2.3 STRUCTURAL CHANGE

The environment in which UNDP operates has faced significant changes over the past decade. On the financial front, the volume of official development assistance (ODA) channelled by member countries of the Development Assistance Committee increased by 60 percent between 2003 and 2015 (from \$82.39¹⁴ billion to \$131.55 billion).¹⁵ This increase, however, is not reflected in the resources received by UNDP.

On the socioeconomic front, countries are progressing up the income ladder. In 1994, there were 64 low-income countries, containing 56.1 percent of the world's population (3.1 billion people). In 2014, this was down to 31 low-income countries, with 8.5 percent, or 613 million people.¹⁶ Over the last five years, the focus and aims of ODA have moved from targeted technical assistance primarily addressing locally contained problems, to more ambitious, multisector programmes that seek to address systemic constraints, often of a regional or global nature. Many development donors have reduced the number of countries and programmes they fund, leading to larger, more complex programmes.

To adjust to this new context, UNDP laid out the 2011 Agenda for Organizational Change.¹⁷ Its aim is to reinforce institutional effectiveness by improving UNDP internal decision-making structures, making critical corporate investments and streamlining recruitment processes. Specific elements include efforts to control costs and expenditures and a review of the UNDP business model. Four challenges required attention from management to ensure that UNDP remained

13 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, ‘Decision Adopted by the Executive Board in 2013’ (DP/2014/2), 2016.

14 All dollar figures are in US currency.

15 OECD data, see: <https://data.oecd.org/oda/net-oda.htm>.

16 World Bank data, see: <http://data.worldbank.org/income-level/lower-middle-income?view=chart>.

17 UNDP, ‘An Agenda for Organizational Change: Lifting UNDP Performance from Good to Great’, 2011.

effective: staff excellence, surge readiness, organizational readjustment and budgetary efficiency. There was also a proposal to update the organization's knowledge management strategy. In relation to human resources, the Agenda outlined the need for improved and clear leadership, culture and behaviour; capturing of accountabilities in performance agreements; improved communication and transparency; a strengthened performance management system; and becoming an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the right talent.

The structural changes implemented to address these changes are as follows:

- **The Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) was created through the merger of the Bureau for Development Policy and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and a separate Crisis Response Unit was established.** UNDP reverted to its pre-MYFF model of organizational structure with a single policy bureau. Policy development and technical advisory services were integrated into BPPS to deploy teams for multidisciplinary development solutions. Policy development is now concentrated at headquarters, while policy and programme implementation and support to country offices are mainly provided by advisers in the regional hubs. A Development Impact Group was established in BPPS to work on programme and development effectiveness, with a focus on quality assurance, results-based management and improvements in data analysis capacities.
- **Regional hubs were expanded to streamline headquarters staff and strengthen regional presence.** Functions previously handled in New York, such as those of desk officers, were transferred to regional hubs to be closer to country offices, reducing travel distances and

time zone differences. To empower regional bureaux, the management oversight function was redefined and delegated there. Regional bureaux have become cost centres, managing their own resources and taking more responsibility for oversight, risk management and decision-making. The establishment of the Regional Hub for Europe and the CIS in Istanbul came during the corporate structural change of UNDP, in 2014–2015. This hub was physically relocated from Bratislava to Istanbul, and additional efforts were required to consolidate staff presence.

- **A new Bureau for Management Services (BMS) was launched, with a focus on client-oriented service delivery and integrated services.** A business coordination function was established and the groundwork was laid to develop an operations hub in New York and strengthen regional presence in the hubs. The BMS vision is to provide UNDP staff and clients with integrated management support for results. A new BMS integrated service delivery model aimed to ensure more strategic, agile, efficient and lean services to country offices, by focusing on four main areas: business partnering; corporate management oversight; strategy and policy development; and global shared services. The model promised to offer services that are solutions-focused and customer-centric, proactive and innovative, accountable and measurable, and consistent and cost-efficient in execution.

The 2013 QCPR¹⁸ recommended an increase in “financial contributions to the United Nations development system, in particular, core resources” and drew attention to several other issues. These included the need to establish common support services and joint initiatives with UN partners and make the resources of the United Nations development system, including the knowledge

18 The QCPR is the mechanism through which the General Assembly assesses the effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and impact of UN operational activities for development, and establishes system-wide policy orientations for development cooperation and country-level modalities of the UN system in response to the evolving international development and cooperation environment.

and expertise of all resident and non-resident agencies, available to developing countries.

Similarly, the QCPR called upon the organizations of the UN development system to exchange information, best practices and lessons learned and to “establish and/or improve mechanisms to promote knowledge-sharing and compile successful development experiences and best practices through South-South cooperation or triangular schemes”. The QCPR also called for establishing a clear link between development results and the financial and human resource inputs required to deliver them.

The Strategic Plan 2014–2017 was based on the QCPR as well as on the MDGs and the evolving post-2015 development agenda, which ultimately became the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP sought to lift its performance and ensure that it is ‘fit for purpose’. Structural change was needed for UNDP to implement the QCPR recommendations, create new cost recovery policies, reduce cross-subsidization within the organization, and deliver effectively, responsibly and with greater cost efficiency.

2.4 PROGRAMME EXPENDITURES

Prior to the consideration of results under the current Strategic Plan, it is useful to briefly sketch out the financial resources that have been at the disposal of UNDP during this period.¹⁹ In general, strong international support for UNDP’s work is evident, although with changing inter-

national cooperation dynamics that have major implications for the organization going forward. During this period, UNDP has experienced a continuing erosion of regular (core) resources, yet solid growth in government cost-sharing and a set of global ‘vertical’ funding mechanisms. These include particularly the GEF and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund).

During the Strategic Plan period, UNDP has spent a little over \$12 billion on programmes, out of a total budget of \$14.9 billion (see Table 2). The two main areas of UNDP’s current focus, sustainable development pathways and governance for peaceful and inclusive societies, show a decline in programme expenditure, while resilience and recovery expenditures increased over the same period (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Overall programme budget and expenditure by year, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

	Programme budget*	Programme expenditure**
2014	5,059	4,308
2015	5,099	4,254
2016	4,748	3,948
Total	14,906	12,509

* Budget amounts are indicative and based on the Executive Snapshot page (accessed 9 June 2017)

** Expenditure amounts are based on provisional BPPS/ Development Impact Group financial data. Total amount excludes management expenditure

Table 3. Total expenditures by Strategic Plan focus area, 2010–2016 (US\$ millions)

Strategic Plan focus area	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Sustainable development pathways	1,747	1,805	1,900	1,969	1,322	1,317	1,181
Governance for peaceful and inclusive societies	1,110	1,176	1,011	1,030	2,105	1,988	1,790
Resilience and recovery	1,054	1,081	995	1,011	534	587	615
Unaligned/other	714	411	359	257	347	361	362
Total	4,625	4,473	4,266	4,267	4,308	4,254	3,948

¹⁹ This discussion on finances focuses especially on expenditures — what UNDP has actually spent during the strategic planning period — rather than on budgets and projected revenues.

In the **sustainable development pathways** programme area, programme expenditure has been divided relatively equally between outputs linked to poverty and livelihoods programmes and those linked to environment, climate change and energy. Programmes targeting structural transformation of productive capacities and sustainable management of natural resources were the largest output areas.

In the **governance for peaceful and inclusive societies** area, a third of UNDP expenditures (34 percent) was spent on programmes focusing on the rule of law and security sector. A large portion of it, however, was linked to citizen security programmes in Afghanistan. The second largest output area was voice and service delivery, specifically on strengthening capacities for service delivery at the subnational or local level. HIV/AIDS programmes were the third largest group (23 percent), mostly programmes funded by the Global Fund in Africa. Lastly, programmes focusing on State-building represented 13 percent of the total spending in this thematic area. Almost half of the

expenditures focused on institutional strengthening in countries affected by conflict.

In the **resilience and recovery** area, 58 percent of expenditures went to early recovery programmes, a large part of which was spent on the output area of early economic revitalization. The Arab States represented the largest share of these expenditures. The remaining 42 percent of expenditures in resilience was focused on peacebuilding and disaster risk management. Expenditures are increasingly concentrated in the Arab States, with growing programmes in Iraq, Lebanon, State of Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Table 4 presents programme expenditure by Strategic Plan outcomes. Combined outcomes 2 and 3, representing the governance for peaceful and inclusive societies area, had the highest expenditure, followed by outcomes 1 and 7 of the sustainable development pathways area. Gender-related programmes of outcome 4 had the least expenditure among development outcomes.

Table 4. Total programme expenditure by Strategic Plan outcome, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

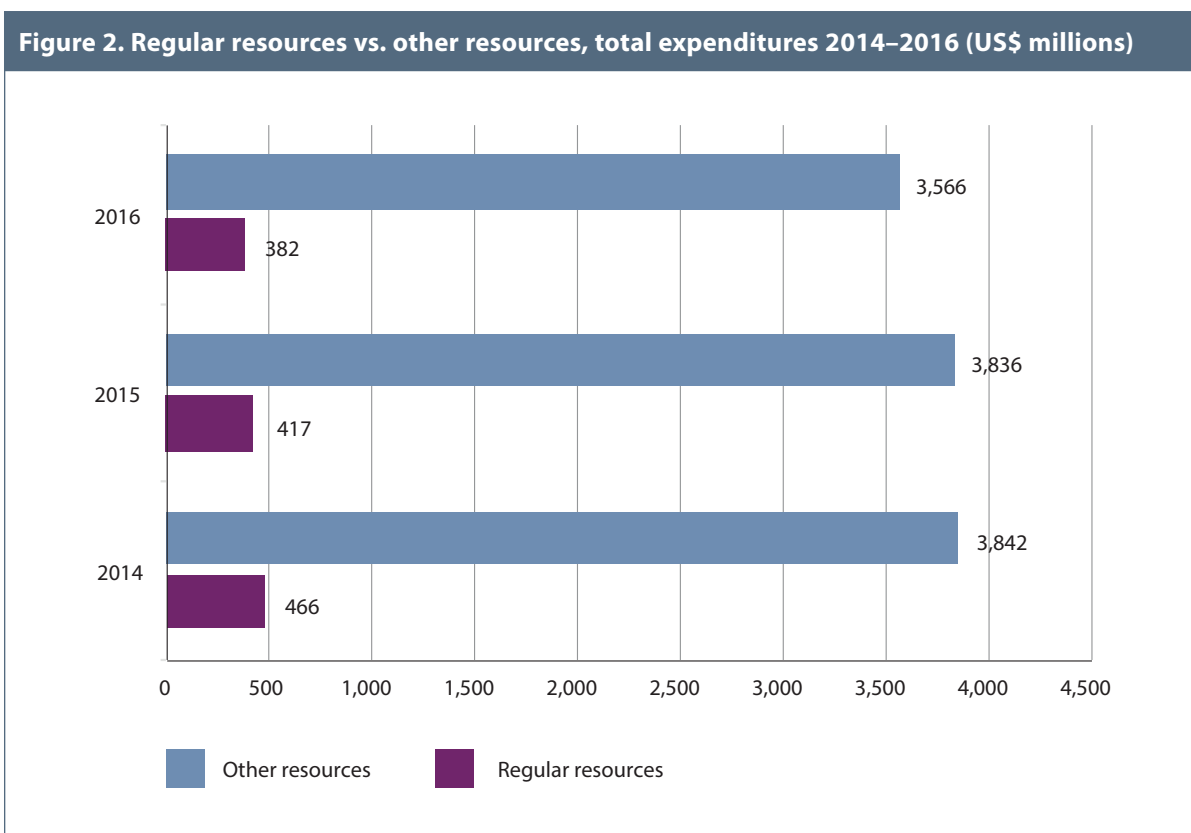
Strategic Plan outcome	2014–2016 expenditure	Percent of total expenditure
Outcome 1: Growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for poor and excluded people	3,263	26%
Outcome 2: Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance	1,564	13%
Outcome 3: Countries have strengthened institutions to progressively deliver universal access to basic services	4,320	35%
Outcome 4: Faster progress is achieved in reducing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment	84	1%
Outcome 5: Countries are able to reduce the likelihood of conflict and lower the risk of natural disasters, including from climate change	724	6%
Outcome 6: Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in post-conflict and post-disaster settings	1,012	8%
Outcome 7: Development debates and actions at all levels prioritize poverty, inequality and exclusion, consistent with our engagement principles	557	4%
Unaligned/others	916	7%
Total development outcomes	12,439	99%
Organizational effectiveness	71	1%
Total	12,509	100%

The midterm review²⁰ of the Strategic Plan in 2016 highlighted funding shortfall in outcomes 2, 4, 6 and 7. It is evident that UNDP was not successful in resource mobilization in these outcomes, with as little as 14 percent of the planned amount spent in the area of outcome 4 (when combining regular and other resources), and 28 percent in the area of outcome 6, with only one year left in the Strategic Plan period. For outcome 3, however, UNDP has already spent more than planned, and expenditures on outcomes 1 and 5 show good progress since the midterm review.

Regular resources comprised about 10 percent of development programme expenditure in the 2014–2016 period (see Figure 2). These resources, also sometimes referred to as UNDP core funds, are contributions provided to UNDP that are pooled and untied. Since 2014, there has been an 18 percent decline in the amount of core funding expended, continuing a downward trend during

the decade. This decline has wide implications for the organization and has led to a robust effort to identify new sources of revenue. The non-core funding of approximately \$4 billion in expenditures each year comes from other resources, provided by a wide array of funders for specific programming. As noted in Figure 2, these expenditures declined in 2016, although this cannot be considered a trend.

A large proportion of UNDP’s regular resources are spent in the Africa region (53 percent for 2014–2016), followed by Asia-Pacific (22 percent) and headquarters (9 percent) (see Table 5). Between 2014 and 2016, total expenditures from regular resources decreased across all regions, but increased slightly — in value and total share — for headquarters bureaux, where increased spending by the Crisis Response Unit (CRU) has driven this trend. (Around 75 percent of CRU expenditures are funded by regular resources.)



20 UNDP, ‘Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, including the Annual Report of the Administrator for 2015’ (DP/2016/9), June 2016.

Table 5. Total expenditures by region and source of funds, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

Region	Regular resources (RR)	Percent of total RR	Other resources	Total	Percent of total
Africa	672	53%	2,440	3,111	25%
Arab States	80	6%	1,732	1,812	14%
Asia and the Pacific	278	22%	3,032	3,309	26%
Europe and the CIS	59	5%	1,048	1,106	9%
Latin America and the Caribbean	58	5%	2,355	2,413	19%
Headquarters/other	120	9%	638	758	6%
Total	1,265	100%	11,245	12,510	100%

Bilateral and multilateral funds account for 49 percent of total development programme expenditures (see Table B in Annex 1). This funding category is the modality by which donor governments (mostly OECD-DAC countries) and multilateral partners contribute to individual UNDP programmes and projects. Approximately 41 percent of donor funds are spent in the Asia-Pacific region, two thirds of which are expenditures for programmes in Afghanistan. However, donor-funded expenditures in Afghanistan have significantly decreased since 2014. About 18 percent of bilateral and multilateral funds are spent in the Africa region, where donors are focused mainly on humanitarian programmes in three countries: Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. Contributions from donors to the Arab States region have increased significantly, particularly in response to the Syrian refugee crisis and in support of reconstruction efforts.

The regional distribution of total expenditures (Tables 6 and 7) shows that the Asia-Pacific region is the largest recipient of UNDP's expenditures, but its share has decreased from 29 percent to 25 percent. Asia-Pacific is followed by Africa, which accounts for a relatively stable portion of total spending, at around 25 percent for all three years. Expenditures in Latin America and the Caribbean have fallen from 21 percent to 18 percent of total spending. Spending in the Arab States has increased from 12 percent to 17 percent of the total. Programmes in Europe and the CIS have remained between 8 percent and 10 percent of the total for all three years.

Afghanistan alone accounted for an average of 55 percent of the regional spending in Asia and the Pacific. With programme expenditures declining from over \$750 million in 2014 to \$495 million in 2016, Afghanistan accounts for most of the region's spending decrease.

Table 6. Regional distribution of programme expenditure, 2014–2016 (in US\$ million)

Region	2014	2015	2016	Total	Percent of total
Africa	1,050	1,094	967	3,111	25%
Arab States	530	562	720	1,812	14%
Asia and the Pacific	1,263	1,074	973	3,309	26%
Europe and the CIS	335	393	378	1,106	9%
Latin America and the Caribbean	895	858	660	2,413	19%
Headquarters / other	236	272	249	758	6%
Total	4,308	4,254	3,948	12,509	100%

Table 7. Programme government cost-sharing expenditures by region, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

Region	2014	2015	2016	Total
Africa	41	84	105	230
Arab States	137	133	134	403
Asia and the Pacific	28	31	57	115
Europe and the CIS	63	62	105	231
Latin America and the Caribbean	636	596	443	1,675
Total	906	905	844	2,655

Cost-sharing by the programme government is the second largest source of funding for UNDP's development programmes, representing 21 percent of total expenditures. Table 7 shows an increasing trend in government programme cost-sharing across regions, with the exception of the Arab States, where the status quo is maintained. Cost-sharing by programme governments is by far the largest source of funds in the Latin America and Caribbean region, although it significantly decreased between 2014 (\$636 million) and 2016 (\$443 million). In this region, the largest contributors are Argentina (35 percent of all programme

government cost-sharing, and 22 percent globally), followed by Peru, Brazil and Colombia.

Representing 19 percent of total spending, vertical funds comprise the Global Fund (54 percent) and GEF (42 percent). Asia and the Pacific is the largest recipient of GEF funds, 27 percent, followed by Africa with 22 percent. For the Global Fund, Africa (Zambia and Zimbabwe) is the largest recipient of the funds managed by UNDP, at 65 percent, followed by the Arab States, representing 15 percent, spent mostly in Sudan (see Table C in Annex 1).

Chapter 3

CONTRIBUTIONS TO DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

This section presents findings and analysis from the evaluation covering the three main programmatic areas of work: sustainable development, governance and resilience. The analysis takes contextual factors into account. Special attention has been paid to UNDP outputs and programmes perceived to be especially significant, new and/or rapidly evolving during this period.

The Strategic Plan serves as a useful tool to frame the focus areas of UNDP. It appropriately sets expectations for further integration across programmatic pillars, recognizing that most development challenges require integrated, multifaceted responses. The 2014–2017 Strategic Plan is substantially more integrated than previous plans. It emphasizes, for example, that improved governance is essential in crisis contexts; development requires an integrated and multidimensional response; civil unrest and violent extremism are closely linked to economic opportunity; and gender equality and women's empowerment must be mainstreamed across all programme areas to be achieved.

3.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

One of the significant changes in strategic planning from the 2007–2013 Plan to the current one is the coupling of two separate areas of work — poverty reduction and environmental protection — into a single area focused on sustainable development. The current Strategic Plan states that UNDP will “assist programme countries to design and implement development pathways that can tackle the connected issues of poverty, inequality and exclusion while transforming productive capacities, avoiding the irreversible depletion of social and natural capital and lowering risks arising from shocks”.

In this section of the evaluation, the results of UNDP's work towards sustainable development are considered in three aspects: a) support to fulfilment of the MDGs and SDGs; b) livelihoods and social protection; and c) environmental protection, climate change and energy.

Evidence for this discussion comes especially from the series of evaluations the IEO has carried out. The IEO evaluated UNDP contributions to poverty reduction in 2013, and the issue is considered in all country-level evaluations (assessments of development results, or ADRs). More recently, in 2015 the IEO assessed UNDP's role in supporting national achievement of the MDGs, and an evaluation of disabilities-inclusive development at UNDP was carried out in 2016. With respect to environmental programming, the IEO developed two joint evaluations with the GEF IEO in 2015/2016, covering the UNDP/GEF Small Grants Programme, and joint work on protected areas management. It is noteworthy that back in 2010 the IEO issued an evaluation of UNDP's contribution to environmental management for poverty reduction, referred to as the poverty-environment nexus, which supported a closer coupling of environmental and poverty programming.

Financial flows in this area of work show that output 1.1 — structural transformation of productive capacities, which captures livelihoods and poverty alleviation — used 31 percent of the \$3.8 billion total expenditures from 2014–2016 (see Table D in Annex 1). It also has the maximum number of countries linked to the output (137). Other outputs in outcome 1 — inclusive and sustainable social protection; sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste; and climate change adaptation and mitigation — have been the next highest areas

of spending, from 13 percent to 19 percent. This area of work also considers UNDP's contributions to outcome 7 on the MDGs and the post-2015 agenda, which account for a much smaller share of the utilization.

Programme government co-financing (38 percent) and bilateral and multilateral funds (27 percent) are the major funding sources for programming in sustainable development pathways. In the Poverty and Livelihoods area, vertical funds cover 4 percent of expenditures; in Environment and Climate Change, GEF funding alone accounts for 45 percent of total expenditures.

SUPPORT TO FULFILMENT OF THE MDGS AND SDGS

UNDP support to MDG fulfilment was particularly relevant during the several years leading up to 2015. The roll-out of the MDG Acceleration Framework created opportunities for cross-practice collaboration to accelerate MDG fulfilment and positioned the organization well to help countries achieve the SDGs.

During the past decade, UNDP established trust funds, regional initiatives and various institutional support tools to help partner countries fulfil their MDG commitments. A 2015 evaluation of this support indicated that early on UNDP developed an impressive set of tools for MDG support. It noted that collaboration with other UN agencies should have been stronger; and that UNDP support for MDG planning often did not adequately consider the means of implementation. The evaluation went on to suggest that UNDP was well positioned to help countries achieve the SDGs, but that the emerging post-2015 agenda would be significantly more comprehensive and complex than the MDG targets, and would prove a real test of the capacity of the United Nations to 'deliver as one'.²¹

The Strategic Plan notes an expectation during this period that UNDP would roll out an MDG Acceleration Framework, providing guidance to countries on how to accelerate their goal achievement during the final years leading up to the 2015 deadline. UNDP was highly praised for this work, which assisted 35 countries in developing action plans that address unfinished MDG work and the transition to the SDGs.

UNDP fostered a multitude of inclusive multi-stakeholder participatory processes at regional, national and even subnational levels during the MDG era. It did so through numerous forums, using its convening power with governments, civil society, the private sector, academia and foundations. Outreach efforts, such as 'My World' and 'The World We Want' surveys, generated over 10 million public comments. Innovative crowdsourcing platforms have facilitated participation by more than 50 countries on climate change policies.

Together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP co-chaired the UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda. The team was mandated by the UN Secretary-General to support system-wide preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda. Interviews with senior management at UNDP headquarters and regional bureaux suggest that UNDP sees its added value as helping countries integrate the 17 SDGs into their national programming. To that end, UNDP has championed the UN Development Group (UNDG) Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) approach, designed to assist countries in harmonizing the SDGs with national planning priorities. The MAPS approach includes specific guidelines on "adopting an integrated approach, ensuring effective multi-stakeholder engagement" and "leaving no one behind". UNDP led 9 MAPS missions in 2016, with an additional 40 countries in the pipeline. By the end of July, 10 MAPS missions will have been completed in 2017.

21 UNDP IEO, 'Evaluation of the Role of UNDP in Supporting National Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals', May 2015.

LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

UNDP has helped governments and other stakeholders through policy and capacity development with job creation, income generation and livelihoods in countries across the globe. UNDP job creation claims can be neither affirmed nor refuted. While corporate guidance and methodological notes on accounting for job creation have been established within the IRRF, country office interpretation is variable, and there has been insufficient attention paid to tracking the longer term sustainability of job creation and entrepreneurship support.

UNDP assists national and subnational governments in diversifying and reforming economies; creating enabling business environments; and formulating employment, microfinance and small and medium-size enterprise strategies. UNDP supports job creation for young people and women through vocational training initiatives focused on technology, clean energy and manufacturing.

In 2013, the IEO published an evaluation of UNDP contributions to poverty reduction between 2000 and 2013. It recognized the important contributions made by UNDP to poverty reduction in many areas, including in embedding a multidimensional perspective of poverty across national and global debates; creating enabling environments to help governments develop pro-poor policies; developing local capacities for pro-poor policymaking; taking flexible approaches to poverty reduction depending on national contexts; and increasing the sustainability of poverty reduction. The evaluation also found some gaps. Notably, it recognized that efforts to improve the enabling environment for poverty reduction have not always led to improved pro-poor policymaking.²² The evaluation made a series of recommendations:

- Strengthen links with national stakeholders, especially civil society and academia, to

ensure that UNDP ideas and lessons may influence national policy agendas.

- Design programmes and projects with an explicit pro-poor bias, adding specific elements to enhance the likelihood that poor people will benefit.
- Improve integration between thematic clusters and strengthen partnerships with United Nations organizations.
- Ensure that activities contribute to scaling up and feeding into upstream policy advice and enhancing institutionalized learning.

At the UNDP Executive Board in September 2016, UNDP noted its progress on all four recommendations, which this evaluation confirms. UNDP has sought to further strengthen its links with national stakeholders and civil society on poverty issues, including through the Civil Society Advisory Committee, which offers a forum for substantive inputs into UNDP strategy and policy development. Also, UNDP's revised programme and project development guidance requires theories of change with overarching goals that contain an explicit pro-poor bias.

UNDP estimated that between 2014 and 2016, its support helped 24.7 million people (51 percent women) benefit from improved livelihoods initiatives in 119 countries, including through economic transformation, natural resource management, and early recovery; and aided the creation of over two million new jobs (36 percent for women) in 98 countries. These figures have not been validated through this evaluation, as few studies have been done on the permanence of job programmes supported by UNDP and most programme evaluations have not endeavoured to substantiate the employment figures provided by programme teams.

One example of a longer timeline of assessment is the Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS project,

22 UNDP IEO, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Poverty Reduction', January 2013.

now in its third phase. A 2016 evaluation of phase II, carried out two years after project completion, found positive results and high sustainability from microfinancing schemes. Overall achievement and sustainability of the six country subprojects were highly variable. This was due in large part to changing political and economic contexts in the six participating countries.²³

UNDP has contributed to improved social protection, at national scales, in many countries, yet measuring impact at the beneficiary level remains a challenge. Social protection programming is one of the few areas where UNDP commonly takes into consideration persons with disabilities.

UNDP has identified 133 projects in over 50 countries that relate to social protection, with a combined budget of more than \$170 million.²⁴ Latest figures show an increase in the number of countries covered, to 62 countries. Most of the activities in these countries are focused on either strengthening the financial sustainability of social protection systems or introducing policy and institutional measures to increase access and coverage.²⁵

Expectations during the current strategic planning period were that UNDP would continue assisting countries to consider options and test scalable innovations for phased progress towards a) universal access to social protection, b) more transparent and lower cost delivery systems, c) improved targeting of non-universal benefits schemes, and d) better feedback from citizens on the coverage, quality and cost of services.

UNDP is guided by a 'rights based' approach to social protection, advocating for universal social protection. UNDP advocates for combining universal social protection programmes with tar-

geted programmes for people who face barriers to accessing social protection, and targeting depends on country context and other available programming. In some cases, the country programme defines vulnerable groups, while in other cases they are identified on a more ad hoc basis.

For example, vulnerable groups targeted by UNDP social protection initiatives have extended to women subject to sexual abuse and exploitation, marginalized indigenous people, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, rural landless and land-poor people, bonded and forced labourers, urban slum dwellers, people with HIV/AIDS, people affected by conflict, and underemployed and unemployed youth. There are limited data available on the impacts of UNDP's work in social protection, including at the beneficiary level. Partly this is because UNDP's support often concentrates on developing policies and systems that enable social protection programmes to function.

The recent IEO evaluation of UNDP Support to Disability-Inclusive Development found social protection programming to be one of the few areas that commonly address disability issues. Two thirds of staff respondents from a survey used in the evaluation indicated there were requests for UNDP to work on disability-inclusive development in their respective countries, and nearly half indicated that the requests were for social protection support. The evaluation found that though individuals with disabilities were typically addressed in government social protection programmes, they were often seen merely as beneficiaries of services, rather than as active and informed stakeholders to be consulted.²⁶ The evaluation also pointed to an important role for UNDP in advocating for stepped-up deinstitutionalization efforts and better support for community-based living programmes.

23 UNDP, 'Final Evaluation Report: Wider Europe: Aid for Trade for Central Asia, South Caucasus and Western CIS (Phase II)', April 2016.

24 UNDP, 'Our Projects', 2016. Available from: <http://open.undp.org/#2016>.

25 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 'Cumulative Review of the Strategic Plan and the Annual Report of the Administrator' (DP/2017/15), April 2017.

26 UNDP IEO, 'Evaluation of Disability-Inclusive Development at UNDP', December 2016, p. 39.

UNDP has established programming principles and quality assurance standards to emphasize gender in social protection systems support and is helping countries develop social protection services that have direct impact on women, such as care services. Yet gender too often remains an afterthought or stand-alone component in some country programming. UNDP has yet to fully integrate the gender dimensions of social protection across its work, including from early programme design stages through to implementation and evaluation stages.

Social protection programmes have potential as powerful tools for achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. The primary reason for mainstreaming gender through work on social inclusion is that protection systems often are aimed at the household or are gender blind, thus many times effectively short-changing women's and girls' rights and options. Social exclusion of women can muffle their voices and their ability to influence decisions that affect their lives, limiting their prospects for a better future and engendering social isolation.²⁷

After several years of piloting and extensive consultations on social and environmental screening procedures, the UNDP Social and Environmental Standards and related Accountability Mechanism²⁸ came into effect on 1 January 2015.

There were both external and internal drivers compelling the effort to develop these standards. The GEF and other partners urged UNDP to take such an approach, and it meshed with UNDP internal efforts to improve programming quality. In 2010, the evaluation of UNDP's contribution to environmental management for pov-

erty reduction noted that the further elaboration of safeguards beyond the screening procedure could “enhance cross-sectoral coordination for poverty alleviation and environmental protection”.²⁹ In response, UNDP management committed to moving forward with safeguards as evidenced in the management response to the evaluation. Because of its efforts, UNDP is now seen as a leader and early adopter within the UN system. It serves as co-chair of the UN Environment Management Group process to establish a common approach to social and environmental standards in the UN system.

The objectives of the social and environmental standards are to:

- Strengthen the social and environmental outcomes of UNDP programmes and projects
- Avoid adverse impacts to people and the environment
- Minimize, mitigate and manage adverse impacts where avoidance is not possible
- Strengthen UNDP and partner capacities for managing social and environmental risks
- Ensure full and effective stakeholder engagement, including through a mechanism to respond to complaints from project-affected people

UNDP has indicated that it will ensure the objectives and requirements of the standards are taken into account in the UNDP programme and project management cycle and that potential social and environmental risks and impacts, as well as opportunities, are systematically identified and addressed in all UNDP programmes.³⁰ With one year of data on the impact of instituting the standards, UNDP has found that 80 percent of projects

27 UNICEF, ‘Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017’ (E/ICEF/2014/CRP.12), p. 17.

28 The Accountability Mechanism provides a grievance mechanism to project-affected persons. See: www.undp.org/secu-srm.

29 UNDP IEO, ‘Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Environmental Management for Poverty Reduction: The Poverty-Environment Nexus’, December 2010, p. 36.

30 UNDP, ‘Social and Environmental Standards’, 2014. See: www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/operations1/undp-social-and-environmental-standards.html.

met or exceeded the social and environmental standards.³¹ It is not clear what this means in terms of how many programmes were significantly changed or cancelled as a result. Nor is it clear whether there are lessons to be learned for future programming from the 20 percent that did not meet the standards. At the time of this evaluation, UNDP was reviewing a sample of projects to assess the quality of the completed social and environmental screening procedures and to obtain feedback and lessons learned from users on how the screening has informed the design of UNDP programming.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

There are many aspects to UNDP's environmental support. In addition to helping programme partners to access, value and share in the benefits provided by ecosystem services and products, it covers management practices on sustainable land and water resources and protected areas; forest conservation and restoration; responsible management of chemicals, hazardous materials and wastes; and other environmental concerns. Just a few of these aspects are considered in this evaluation report.

UNDP's strategy has been multidimensional. It has addressed the root causes of environmental degradation while also developing local and national institutional capacities, so they are addressed in a manner that sustains their development impacts beyond the end of project funding.

UNDP continues to be an important implementing partner to the Global Environment Facility. In its environmental programming, UNDP has demonstrated success in securing environmental benefits at global, national and community levels.

UNDP managed \$711 million worth of GEF-funded projects on biodiversity, natural resources management and environmental contamination

during the current Strategic Plan, which corresponds closely with GEF's Sixth Replenishment cycle (GEF-6, 2014–2016). This represents over 83 percent of vertical trust fund contributions during that period. These funds supported 335 projects in over 140 countries, representing 32 percent of total GEF grant funds and 39 percent of the approved projects. An additional \$3.5 billion in co-financing was leveraged from a range of partners in support of these projects during GEF-6. In addition, \$109 million in grants for 129 'enabling activities' projects was approved by GEF for such projects implemented by UNDP.

UNDP environmental project delivery under the GEF has been evaluated positively. UNDP implemented half of the 618 non-marine-protected-area projects funded by the GEF, and over 90 percent had "moderately satisfactory" or better ratings for both annual implementation progress and achievement of development outcomes. This compared to GEF's international benchmark of 80 percent.³²

While these figures indicate a robust and successful partnership with the GEF, competition is increasing, as the number of GEF partner agencies has grown from 3 to 18. Similarly, UNDP has garnered a third of the Green Climate Fund business, yet there are 48 'accredited entities' to the Green Climate Fund, with a pipeline of over 150 other organizations now seeking accredited entity status.

UNDP's deepest global engagement at community level is through its management of the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). This programme has successfully delivered grants to communities in over 125 countries since 1992, directly affecting biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, land and water resources, and the use of chemicals. These grants, and the SGP in general, have been used efficiently and are relevant.

31 Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, 'Cumulative Review of the Strategic Plan and the Annual Report of the Administrator' (DP/2017/15), April 2017.

32 UNDP, '2015 UNDP-GEF Annual Performance Report', May 2016.

The IEOs of UNDP and GEF jointly evaluated the SGP in 2015, considering its role, effectiveness and relevance; broader adoption issues; strategic positioning; and efficiency. The evaluation noted that the SGP had awarded more than 18,000 small grants (each up to \$50,000) in more than 125 countries. The evaluation team noted that the SGP continues to support communities with effective, efficient and relevant projects that are helping to achieve environmental benefits. The programme is well-aligned with GEF, UNDP and national and local priorities, remaining coherent yet flexible.

The evaluation also noted that the SGP's governance and management structures were increasingly under strain and that monitoring and evaluation systems did not adequately support decision-making.³³ Concerning governance and management structures, Conclusion 4 of the 2015 Joint Evaluation states that "the SGP governance and management structure has evolved with the SGP and has been on the whole effective in supporting the SGP". Further, it states that "SGP governance and management structure have been adequate, but are increasingly strained by an ever rapidly changing context, (including) absence of a mechanism for high-level interactions between the GEF and UNDP, and upgrading process that led to stresses on the governance and management structure".³⁴ Since the joint evaluation of SGP in 2015, active steps have been taken to follow up on evaluation recommendations, including by establishing a new monitoring and evaluation (M&E) specialist position at the SGP office.

UNDP has helped partner countries make progress in developing sound management practices for hazardous waste management, including for extractive industries. UNDP has been an important implementing partner in

the successful global effort to reduce ozone-depleting substances.

Currently, UNDP has 55 active 'ozone and chemicals' projects (including 'waste' projects) supported by \$147.1 million in GEF funds. This includes a project jointly funded by UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (Persistent Organic Pollutants [POPs] Legacy Elimination and Release Reduction Project) in Koaeçi, Turkey. It aims to permanently and safely destroy (by incineration) the world's largest stockpile of wastes contaminated by persistent organic pollutants.

Because of the efforts made to implement the Montreal Protocol, today the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substance has decreased by over 98 percent.³⁵ The ozone hole in Antarctica is slowly recovering, and is expected to return to 1980 levels within the next 30 to 50 years. However, while the Montreal Protocol has successfully phased out ozone-depleting substances, it has also led to a shift towards the use of other types of chlorofluorocarbons like hydrochlorofluorocarbons, methyl bromide and halons used as refrigerants and fire retardants and in air conditioners, particularly in the developing world.

Like the ozone-depleting substances they replaced, hydrochlorofluorocarbons are potent greenhouse gases that can be hundreds to thousands of times more potent than carbon dioxide in terms of their contribution to climate change, and their emissions are projected to increase nearly twentyfold in the coming decades. This would offset much of the climate benefit achieved by phasing out ozone-depleting substances. These serious concerns notwithstanding, the international efforts to control ozone-depleting substances have by some estimates

33 UNDP IEO and GEF IEO, 'Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation of the Small Grants Programme', July 2015.

34 Ibid.

35 UNEP Ozone Secretariat, 'Montreal Protocol — Achievements to Date and Challenges Ahead', see: <http://ozone.unep.org/en/focus/montreal-protocol-achievements-date-and-challenges-ahead>.

been four times more effective than the Kyoto Protocol in reducing greenhouse gases.³⁶ Over 25 years, UNDP has helped partner developing countries access \$630 million in funding from the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol and \$33.5 million from the GEF to help countries eliminate ozone-depleting substances.

UNDP has focused attention on the environmental and economic implications of extractive industries (oil, gas and minerals) and the mining sector. UNDP has created an Extractives Dependency Index that ranks 80 countries' level of dependence on revenues generated from extractive industries. Numerous country-level programmes are also being implemented. One is the Proyecto Alianza para el Diálogo (Alliance for Dialogue Project) in Peru, which is aimed at preventing or minimizing social conflicts in rural areas mostly populated by indigenous communities. It also works to create greater social and economic equity in decision-making involving exploitation of natural resources and sharing of the benefits derived from them. This project has been a successful model in Peru and is being replicated in seven more indigenous communes in other parts of the country.

UNDP has a wide-ranging climate change programme in place. It played a prominent role in regional and global policy debates on global climate change in support of countries preparing for and then responding to the 2015 Paris Agreement. It is well positioned to support countries in their fulfilment of the SDGs relating to climate and energy.

The climate change programme includes ongoing country level projects supporting climate change mitigation, forest preservation, a rapidly expanding portfolio of climate change adaptation projects and linkages with sustainable energy production. These efforts are elaborated through two

2016 publications: 'Scaling Up Climate Action to Achieve the SDGs' and 'A Climate Resilient, Zero-Carbon Future: UNDP's vision for sustainable development through the Paris Agreement'.

The current UNDP Strategic Plan became effective during the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, agreed at the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP18) in late 2012. In the lead-up to the Paris Agreement (December 2015), UNDP developed a Guidance Note on Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and provided support to 43 countries in preparing and submitting their INDCs. This assistance positioned UNDP to help programme countries turn their INDCs into Nationally Determined Contributions that can be implemented now that the Paris Agreement has been ratified and has entered into force. UNDP also contributed to the development of 60 Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, 17 greenhouse gas national inventory systems and 13 Low-Emission Development Strategies.³⁷

UNDP has a long-standing climate programme experience, particularly over the past decade. It is considered a global leader in the provision of adaptation services, as recognized by the considerable financial resources it has secured through the GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources. UNDP has a strong platform from which to assist countries with this global development challenge, based on its national and subnational scope of service; its urban and rural development planning, governance and risk-assessment capabilities; its experience managing multi-partner trust funds; and the decades of environmental protection and disaster prevention and recovery work it has carried out.

UNDP partners with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in imple-

36 Guus J.M. Velders, et al., 'The importance of the Montreal Protocol in protecting climate', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 104, no. 12, 2007.

37 UNDP and World Resources Institute, 'Designing and Preparing Intended Nationally Determined Contributions', August 2015.

menting the UN Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (UN REDD). Through this programme it supports nationally led processes in 64 countries in accordance with the REDD+ mechanism developed by the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

UN-REDD was independently evaluated in July 2014.³⁸ The evaluation noted that “overall, the UN-REDD Programme is effective in terms of producing key outputs, and progress towards outcomes is improving. Specifically, notable achievements are being made in terms of forest monitoring, reporting and verification, stakeholder engagement and the development of national REDD+ governance systems. With regards to outcomes, the Programme is credited with raising awareness on the critical importance of forests and the need for stakeholder engagement, as well as providing forest-dependent communities with a unique platform to voice their rights, needs, and concerns”.

The evaluation also found that “countries participating in national programmes are not progressing as planned. The time, effort and resources needed to achieve REDD+ readiness were greatly under-estimated. Though countries differ considerably in terms of their initial capacity and ability to achieve stated objectives, all face considerable challenges, and none of the reviewed countries have so far achieved satisfactory ratings in all outcome areas”.

UNDP restructuring combined three practice areas into a Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Cluster. The process of integrating tools and methodologies from these disciplines remains a work in progress, and an actionable internal framework for integrating disaster risk reduction/climate change adaptation into programming has yet to be completed. Yet climate change action/disaster risk reduction (DRR) approaches are being applied to develop

community, subnational and national capacities to support risk-informed development in many countries.

As part of the restructuring process started in 2014, UNDP established a Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Cluster integrating three thematic areas: disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable energy. While the process has been challenging, the change is expected to enable a more integrated service to help national and local governments mitigate and respond to climate change-related shocks. Since the cluster was formed, UNDP has launched a new sustainable energy strategy and an integrated corporate vision and service offering on zero-carbon and climate-resilient sustainable development.

UNDP is working at the country level to integrate DRR into climate change proposals and sustainable energy support in post-disaster and conflict recovery settings. Adaptation measures are being designed and implemented at country and regional levels to a) build capacities and protect assets from climate-change induced disasters, b) prepare communities and institutions to cope with and manage climate risks and disasters, and c) increase the resilience of communities to recover from disasters. Climate change action/DRR approaches are also being brought to bear to improve decision-making for saving lives, agricultural planning, water resource management planning, etc.

UNDP support to partner governments to improve access to clean, affordable, renewable energy and its support for adoption of more energy-efficient technologies has been positive, though constrained by limited financial resources, policies and practices in many developing countries.

UNDP’s current sustainable energy portfolio includes close to 260 projects (excluding small projects). It comprises a portfolio of \$1 billion

38 UNEP, UNDP, FAO, ‘External Evaluation of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (the UN-REDD Programme)’, vol. 1, July 2014.

in grant financing while leveraging close to \$6 billion more in co-financing from the public and private sectors. Expenditures for energy-related activities increased 53 percent from 2014 to 2016, reaching a total of \$270 million for the three years, and rising from \$70 million in 2014 to over \$108 million in 2016. This expansion is built on an 85 percent increase in ‘local’ or government cost-sharing and an increase of 59 percent in vertical fund support.

UNDP has tackled some of the more difficult aspects of increasing access to sustainable energy technology and services. This includes supporting energy development and services to poor rural areas where private sector participation is inhibited by lower population densities, sometimes difficult terrain and the lack of large customers. UNDP completed a sustainable energy strategy in December 2016 that is designed to provide a cohesive and coherent strategy for its work during the next five years.

3.2 GOVERNANCE FOR INCLUSIVE AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

The UNDP approach to inclusive governance rests on the premise that resilient governance systems depend on robust State and societal engagement to maintain State legitimacy at national and local levels and solidify peaceful and resilient State-society relations. Institutional strengthening measures are also considered essential to achieving both the SDGs and national development priorities. This entails addressing challenges to achieving sustainable development, such as corruption, poor public services and lack of equal rights for all. Stronger systems of democratic governance are considered critical to respond to citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability. The Strategic Plan takes up matters of governance in outcome 2, ‘Citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability are met by stronger systems of democratic governance’ and outcome 3, ‘Countries have strengthened institutions to progressively deliver universal access to basic services.’

Overall, governance programmes comprised the largest expenditure area during the Strategic Plan, with more than \$5.8 billion in programmatic expenditure (see Table 3 in chapter 2). The inclusive governance area, represented by initiatives on democratic institutions, voice and accountability, comprised 27 percent of the spending. Institutional strengthening for basic services — including for HIV/AIDS-related services, the rule of law and access to justice — comprised approximately 73 percent of the overall governance expenditure. Although a large proportion of the resources were mobilized at the country level, declining core resources had an impact on country-level prioritization of UNDP’s engagement and contribution.

UNDP GOVERNANCE STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMME RESPONSES

UNDP has engaged on a range of governance issues during the current Strategic Plan period, reflecting the increasing complexity and diversity of the governance agenda at the country level. Broadly defining areas of support and approaches has enabled UNDP to be more flexible in its country support and minimized a predisposition towards any particular approach. UNDP’s consolidation of its support to conflict prevention, governance and peacebuilding under one unit has enabled a more integrated and holistic approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

UNDP outlined a more balanced approach on governance, in which effective State institutions and citizen-centric governance underpin sustainable development and peaceful societies. Governance areas UNDP supported are essential to achieving SDG 16 (on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies), which is in turn fundamental to the achievement of all the other SDGs and central to national stability. Through an integrated approach, UNDP aimed to address inter-related areas of governance work to strengthen the institutional capacity of State and non-State actors to meet public expectations. Support to inclusive governance comprises outcomes 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan and a component of outcome 5. Table E in Annex 1 presents the number

of countries where UNDP provides governance support related to the two outcomes.

Conflict prevention underpins UNDP's governance support in countries affected by conflict. In post-conflict contexts, State-building is supported to improve capacities, accountability, responsiveness and legitimacy. Table F in Annex 1 provides disaggregated information on programme support in countries in the development context and those affected by conflict. While the prioritization of one or more governance areas was demand driven, UNDP emphasized initiatives that promote the rule of law, justice and human rights; enhance inclusive participation and political processes; and enable accountability and transparency in public sector functioning. Like the overall trends in development assistance, voice-related issues were identified for programme support. Stronger systems of democratic governance respond to citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability.

Over the years, UNDP has emphasized the importance of stronger institutions for sustainable development processes. UNDP thinking on governance has evolved over the past decade, and some of the reformulations during the current Strategic Plan period reflect the lessons from this long-term engagement. UNDP revised its approach to strengthening the core functions of government and expanded its support for local governance and service delivery. Responding to the post-2015 priority areas, UNDP acknowledged that institutional and legal responses are required for increasing transparency, expanding access to information, maintaining adherence to the rule of law, building trust between the State and civil society, and addressing corruption.

UNDP created a Governance and Peacebuilding Cluster within BPPS to consolidate the organization's expertise in conflict prevention, governance and peacebuilding into a single entity. The institutional changes were intended to enable a more integrated and holistic approach to peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It is noteworthy that aspects of State-building and economic recovery

are mentioned as explicit parts of peacebuilding. As part of a more comprehensive corporate reorganization, BPPS also placed many of its advisers in the regional centres where they can provide expertise and support to regional institutions and country offices.

CONTRIBUTION TO GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES AND PROCESSES

Strengthening Constitutional Bodies and Democratic Processes

Democratic governance areas were supported, including in countries affected by conflict, to assist countries that are strengthening democratic institutions and reforming legal, parliamentary and electoral systems. During this period, more equitable roles for men and women were emphasized in democratic governance support. UNDP advocated for more credible and inclusive electoral processes; more representative parliaments with stronger legislative and oversight functions and increased citizen voice; and strategies to localize SDG 16. UNDP's global and regional events have provided opportunities for policy dialogue on issues related to democratic governance and helped to forge greater consensus on critical governance issues. The evaluation has assessed support to parliamentary and electoral processes but did not closely consider UNDP support for legal and constitutional reform.

UNDP is globally well positioned in providing expert electoral support to governments and electoral management bodies.

During the current Strategic Plan period, UNDP provided electoral assistance in 39 countries, including countries affected by conflict. Electoral processes were strengthened, and there is increased professionalism of election monitoring bodies and other related institutions, resulting in more competently administered elections. In non-mission contexts, UNDP's coordination role and its support to chief electoral advisers through the basket fund placed UNDP in a strategic position, and at the centre of discussions and decision-making by governments and the international community

on the levels and use of electoral support. Country-level programming for elections addressed gender equality and promoted more inclusive processes. In several countries, UNDP enabled a more peaceful electoral climate and safer elections than would have been the case without its support. Limited attention to early warning systems or ones that could address threats throughout the electoral cycle remains an issue.

More professional administration of elections alone was not enough to resolve underlying political disputes and ensure the credibility of electoral processes. This was notable in some countries that had a highly volatile political context or a legacy of autocratic governance.

The use of flexible corporate mechanisms and the availability of fast-track mechanisms for electoral assistance have helped to enhance their relevance and flexibility. The Democratic Governance Thematic Trust Fund and global thematic projects used flexible programme designs that allowed UNDP to adapt quickly to different contexts. For the global elections project (GPECS II) this allowed for the rapid deployment of funds that “assured the credibility of UNDP in complex situations”.³⁹ UNDP also created a fast-track procurement mechanism for time-sensitive projects such as elections assistance.⁴⁰ UNDP created a joint roster with the United Nations Electoral Assistance Division of vetted electoral experts who could be recruited and deployed rapidly. This was an important effort in a time-critical process such as elections support.

UNDP has helped strengthen processes for more structured and transparent engagement of parliaments with governments and civil society. Issue-based approaches have enhanced parlia-

mentary capacities in development discussions and decisions.

UNDP has developed an extensive presence in parliamentary support. Beginning with assistance to a small number of countries in the 1990s, UNDP has significantly increased its support to about 80 countries in the past two decades, contributing in various ways to parliamentary strengthening.⁴¹ In line with overall trends in parliamentary support, UNDP has moved towards more issue-based approaches. This has involved an initial focus on strengthening the role of parliaments in monitoring and oversight of the MDGs and now the SDGs. Other priority issues pursued include anti-corruption, human rights and women’s political empowerment. UNDP has become an important provider of global knowledge and a supporter of networking on parliamentary development.

Contributions to parliamentary development processes have been evident with improvements in parliamentary strategies. They also show in increased staff competence in legal drafting, oversight and institutionalization of mechanisms for public hearings. Parliamentary committees have been strengthened and in many countries have increased capacities to debate and influence draft legislation. In addition, monitoring of public finance expenditure committees has improved the scope for budget oversight. The functioning of parliaments and parliamentary debates has benefited from the modernization of legislative operations through information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as infrastructure and facilities for research and analysis.

UNDP has given significant attention to women’s political empowerment within parliamentary

39 UN Office of Internal Oversight Services, ‘Audit Report: Audit of the Electoral Assistance Division’, May 2012.

40 This mechanism is not always adopted by a country office on a timely basis, which can hinder project implementation and the effectiveness of its efforts (such as in United Republic of Tanzania for the Democracy Empowerment Project).

41 In 2015, according to UNDP’s own reporting, 42 country offices achieved notable results in terms of parliamentary development. (Source: UNDP, Parliamentary Development, 2015 Highlights). In 2014, UNDP provided support to 26 parliamentary projects in Africa, 20 in Asia-Pacific, 9 in Arab States, 8 in Europe and the CIS, and 7 in Latin America and the Caribbean (Source: UNDP, ‘Overview of parliamentary support’, 2014.)

assistance initiatives and has contributed to important change processes in over 15 countries. Cross-party women's caucuses have successfully lobbied for gender-sensitive policies and legislation, including with the help of UNDP-supported outreach activities, networking support, technical assistance and training. In many countries, UNDP has contributed to advocacy for the introduction of gender quotas in parliaments and party lists, although with mixed results.

Parliamentary support has paid dividends on specific development issues. For instance, UNDP programming support has helped to achieve parliamentary approvals of increased budgetary resources for renewable energy. In at least five countries UNDP supported the preparation of legislative and regulatory frameworks necessary for promoting renewable energy. UNDP initiatives have influenced government decisions on increased funding for renewable energy, amounting to \$1 billion across target countries.⁴²

UNDP has aided further expansion of global networking and knowledge generation on parliamentary development. The AGORA platform (for which UNDP is one of the implementing partners) remains the leading global knowledge platform on parliamentary development. It offers resources and news updates on parliamentary development in three languages and an interactive platform where members of parliament, parliamentary staff and the broader community of practice can interact and share information. Similarly, UNDP is a partner in iKNOW Politics, an international knowledge network on women in politics.

UNDP has successfully established its niche as a trusted and reliable intermediary and neutral convener on democratic governance issues. Its approach tends to be overly cautious, to avoid pre-empting and jeopardizing government relationships. While prudent, this approach

has led to some missed opportunities to make significant contributions to electoral and parliamentary reform.

UNDP initiatives provided a neutral and safe space for participants to engage on some of the sensitive issues related to voice, such as election results, executive oversight, human rights and civil society engagement. In middle-income countries, it also provided a neutral channel for governments to fund activities to engage civil society organizations. UNDP often serves as the link between governments and the international donor community, enabling UNDP to raise common interests and mobilize significant cost-sharing for electoral and parliamentary assistance. This is especially the case for electoral basket funds in the mission context.

UNDP support to elections generally reflects the process nature of elections and takes a holistic approach. However, such initiatives do not always address deeper issues of electoral system reform, such as advocating for political commitment. UNDP, given its close and long-term relationship with national governments, is well positioned to take on a stronger normative role. In practice, however, this seldom happens due to the project-driven approach, the increasing service-delivery orientation of support, and the way each country office sees its role.

While there are examples of UNDP's support for the successful conduct of national or local elections despite the political and security challenges, its efforts for electoral reform and support for general elections have been stymied by the lack of political action in these areas. When UNDP has not leveraged its long-term presence and close partnerships to advocate for independent and credible electoral institutions and processes, other development partners have questioned its role and effectiveness, and in some cases withdrawn financial support.

⁴² UNDP, Particip GmbH, 'Evaluation of the EC Contribution to the Parliamentary Action for Renewable Energy (PARE) Project', final report, UNDP, 2014.

It was challenging for UNDP, as well as for other international agencies in general, to address the political dimensions of the governance agenda. Indirect approaches that circumvent political sensitivities are an option where there is limited room for engaging on political dimensions of reforms. Constitutional reform initiatives, a growing area for UNDP support, use the rule of law and adherence to international conventions signed by the country as the way to (indirectly) make changes to political, constitutional and electoral systems. Such approaches, while important, are yet to be widely used.

INCREASED INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Direct measures to reduce corruption, such as the establishment of anti-corruption commissions, had limited outcomes. Comparatively, strengthening accountability processes in specific sectors had greater potential for anti-corruption outcomes.

UNDP has taken a pragmatic approach to facilitating an anti-corruption agenda. While it has supported specific anti-corruption initiatives, UNDP has focused more on addressing drivers of corruption, particularly by enhancing mechanisms for citizens to demand accountability. UNDP took a two-pronged approach to anti-corruption, supporting an anti-corruption programme while emphasizing the importance of accountability and transparency in national and subnational public institutions for improved governance and reduced corruption. Anti-corruption initiatives were supported in 65 countries and efforts to address the drivers of corruption in public administration in 124 countries. Especially noteworthy has been UNDP's work to help usher in anti-corruption and accountability efforts in countries with challenging political environments.

UNDP demonstrated that it is well positioned to support countries in implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption, and it enabled countries to fulfil their basic requirements for compliance with it. UNDP's global reach,

ongoing close partnerships with government institutions and knowledge of on-the-ground opportunities are useful attributes. UNDP contributions to the implementation of the Convention are notable, particularly in establishing links between its enforcement, accountability and transparency dimensions.

Anti-corruption programme success often depends on well-structured governance systems, an independent and apolitical judiciary, and anti-corruption institutions with unfettered powers to investigate illegal activity. Unless drivers of corruption are addressed, conventional mechanisms such as anti-corruption commissions and legislative reviews often fail to reduce corruption. For this reason, UNDP contributions have been important as inputs to the processes of strengthening institutional capacities. This is where UNDP impacts have been felt, rather than in actual corruption reduction measures and actions, which are the purview of national governments.

UNDP support to accountability and transparency initiatives enabled countries to set up systems, strengthen national institutional capacities and provide viable models for enhancing local-level accountability and transparency. UNDP contributed to quite different change processes in different countries. UNDP contributions to accountability initiatives had the potential to inform and influence public policy processes and practices to enhance government accountability. In several instances, accountability and transparency efforts supported by UNDP had the potential to enhance anti-corruption processes. The contribution of such measures to anti-corruption was comparatively more evident in local-level service delivery and local development than at central level. The contributions were not sufficient in all cases to enable transparent governance or public management accountability. Anti-corruption achievements were undermined by the lack of political impetus, government commitment to governance and institutional reforms, and the small scope of UNDP interventions.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE, COMMUNITY SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

UNDP support contributed to enhancing institutional capacities, specifically institutional frameworks, and processes necessary for delivering justice and security. In countries affected by conflict, UNDP's contributions to justice sector reforms were important in developing capacities allowing justice institutions to function. The ability to work at different levels of government and diverse national actors is a strength of UNDP.

UNDP's role and contribution in building up institutions in the justice sector and enabling them to function is widely acknowledged. UNDP support has contributed to strengthening capacities of the justice system in 29 countries. In countries affected by conflict, UNDP support has improved the justice sector's capacity. This is significant considering that institutions were newly built or needed considerable human resources substitutions in these countries. Basic systems were instituted where none existed, and measures were taken to professionalize and modernize judicial systems.

The UNDP role has been important in improving institutional coordination in the justice sector and decentralizing services to facilitate access to justice. With UNDP support countries developed legal frameworks and laws, improved human resources and established justice institutions, often drawing from the international standard. Frequently the change processes were used to restructure the judicial system. Court monitoring enabled countries to evaluate the quality of judicial decisions. An important area of UNDP support has been harmonizing the informal justice system with formal justice institutions and human rights laws and practices. Legal advocacy of civil society organizations was supported to disseminate information about laws and fundamental rights to the population to increase confidence in the system. UNDP has acted as a convener of justice sector actors at country level to foster discussions on sector reforms.

UNDP support for modernizing court systems through electronic case management systems and other data systems has led governments to develop them further. Electronic case management has enabled easy access to the body of cases, a transparent case system and uniform application of laws and impartiality of court decisions. Electronic case management systems were resource intensive and technology dependent. They also required a significant measure of the political will of the judiciary to implement and maintain, which was a challenge in most countries. In few instances has UNDP been able to do much more than pilot such interventions. However, without sustained investment there is a risk that the hardware and software will become obsolete.

Judicial training improved the performance of justice actors and the quality of justice services. In this area UNDP's contributions were found to be important in developing nascent capacities in countries affected by conflict. The knowledge and skills of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and justice ministry officials were strengthened through legal training. Gender sensitivity training was supported, as were the special needs of victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in court hearings and prosecutorial investigations.

A limitation of training initiatives is the unmet demand for periodic training and orientation. Demand persists for training in the proper application of the law; civil and criminal codes and procedure; professional ethics; and specialized areas of the law. While UNDP strengthened legal training centres, filling this gap to a certain extent, in most countries resources were insufficient to provide higher quality training and strengthen the capacities for training centres to play an accreditation role.

UNDP contributed to decentralizing and localizing justice services to provide legal services to most vulnerable groups. Mechanisms for accessing justice at the local level have been strengthened, including mobile courts and collaboration between the formal justice sector and traditional authorities.

Access to justice is an important component of dispute resolution and conflict prevention at the local level. UNDP support enhanced mechanisms for such access, including mobile courts, and strengthened legal aid, paralegal services and partnerships between the formal justice sector and traditional authorities. Community legal awareness to help disadvantaged groups access justice was enhanced through working directly with justice and security institutions. Providing legal aid through mobile courts proved to be very effective in rural areas and for women, particularly in crisis-affected countries.⁴³

Specialized benches at courts were established to deal with domestic violence and SGBV cases and provide women with safe environments within which to address their rights. Special police investigative and prosecutorial units and family support units to provide dedicated resources to combat SGBV and domestic violence were prioritized (for example in Iraq's Kurdistan region, and Liberia). UNDP in partnership with other UN agencies (i.e. the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN-Women] and the United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF]) has supported family courts and enabled maintenance and support mechanisms for abused women.

UNDP partnered with civil society organizations to implement national legal aid schemes and provide legal aid and counselling services in urban areas and in remote and conflict-prone regions, including in countries affected by conflict. Standardized guidelines and training curricula were developed for civil society-led legal aid initiatives. In Iraq partnerships with local and international NGOs were critical in developing the capacities of legal aid centres and in aiding access to justice for women and victims of SGBV. In Afghanistan help desks at police stations increased the number of cases registered. An assessment is needed to determine whether

the quality of rights-based services has improved and whether specialized legal aid and reporting mechanisms led to increased access to justice beyond the entry point.

The low human resource base and the lack of basic justice sector infrastructure are challenges in countries affected by conflict. UNDP capacity-development initiatives in the justice sector are most successful when grounded in detailed situation analyses, including assessments of institutional capacities and contexts, and use of context-specific models.

Working simultaneously on judicial reforms, courts and prosecution provided UNDP with the advantage of addressing interrelated issues of the justice sector. In comparison to smaller scale programmes, the outcomes were more tangible when the scale of the programme was large, which allowed the government to consolidate its efforts around more substantive assistance. More engagement of the government enabled faster results in strengthening human resource capacities, particularly when international assistance was well coordinated by the government.

Similar to other international organizations, UNDP used international technical assistance to support the functioning of institutions and perform judicial, court and prosecutorial functions. While such support was inevitable, given the short- to medium-term nature of the initiatives, a systematic approach was needed to develop national human resources. International advisers played an important role in providing policy advice, training and strategic thinking for the host institutions on critical access to justice issues and line functions. Yet national capacities did not develop at a pace that would reduce dependence on international expertise. UNDP used a variety of strategies, such as bringing in people from the diaspora, triangular cooperation and twinning arrangements. Despite such efforts, challenges

43 For example, in Puntland in Somalia in 2015, mobile courts adjudicated 413 cases in 16 districts and villages, in which 158 women were assisted and 117 judgments were successfully endorsed. In State of Palestine, mobile legal clinics in Gaza aided over 6,800 beneficiaries in 2015, 70% of whom were women.

remain in finding context-specific, time-bound responses and an institutionalized approach.

There are examples — in Haiti, Jordan, Lebanon and the State of Palestine — where institutional analysis enabled a better response to country needs. The number of nationals in the legal profession gradually increased, reducing reliance on international staff, who were often fulfilling line functions in justice institutions. However, the pace of change remained slow, and time-bound planning was lacking. Poor coordination among international agencies remains a factor in a less structured approach to human resource capacity development and in developing a self-reliant justice system. Lessons are yet to be learned on the phased development of human resource capacities.

While important progress was made in different areas of the justice sector, improved systems and policies did not always result in better justice services. Structural challenges need to be addressed, particularly in the implementation of legislation and policies. In countries where UNDP provided long-term support and functional justice systems have been established, continued strengthening of capacities is needed to sustain the progress made. Guaranteeing assistance and effective legal aid particularly to the most disadvantaged sections required sustained efforts by governments. There is increasing national ownership of the progress made and pressure to further strengthen judicial processes.

Corruption in the judicial system, which makes it ineffective, is an area often beyond the scope of UNDP support. However, the justice sector strategies supported by UNDP in some countries included elements to strengthen the judicial selection process and the quality of appointments. A larger issue is establishing links between justice sector initiatives and other rule-of-law initiatives, such as anti-corruption. International cooperation, in general, did not work on these interrelated areas. The need for linking support to the justice sector with initiatives and institutions related to accountability and transparency was not addressed. While such linkages are less likely

in the first phase of institution building, a holistic approach in most cases was lacking.

Citizen security initiatives supported by UNDP have been critical, and they have responded to the peacebuilding and State-building priorities of the countries.

Enhancing citizen security has been an important component of the UNDP rule-of-law initiatives. Contributions were made to police reforms, establishment of community-oriented policing and measures to reduce illicit arms. While UNDP support under civilian police and community security projects has contributed to improved capacities at individual and institutional levels, sustaining what has been achieved remains a challenge, given the enormity of the need.

Citizen security has been a priority for UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean. Collaboration with civil society networks in Guatemala (Mesa de Análisis Especializado) and Honduras (Alianza por la Paz y la Justicia) have helped to raise awareness on security and conflict resolution. So too has the support provided to the Salvadoran National Council on Citizen Security. In El Salvador, the technical secretariat of the National Council on Citizen Security and Coexistence — a collaborative effort of UNDP, the European Union and the Organization of American States — provided the platform for implementing a holistic security plan. At the municipal level, UNDP has contributed to strengthening institutional capacities, helping to reduce the homicide rate. Formulation of strategic plans to address violence affecting youth has empowered security sector institutions in the region. So too has the development of plans including interventions linked to secondary and tertiary prevention of violence.

UNDP's engagement through the project on strengthening safety and security in South East Europe (SEESAC) contributed to building the capacities of national partners to address security deficits by focusing on controlling and reducing the proliferation and misuse of small arms

and light weapons. There is now better understanding among government partners on how to frame and address the threats posed by small arms and light weapons, and better framing of control policies. There are improved capacities to combat illicit proliferation and increased transparency of arms transfers. Another aspect was advancing gender equality in security sector reforms.

The effectiveness of SEESAC at the country level is a) its flexibility and ability to accommodate emerging needs of the countries and variable capacities of the governments and other stakeholders, and b) its ability to work at different levels (local, regional, international). Enabling access to high-quality practical expertise, including by drawing on peer experience ('uniforms speaking to uniforms') has been an added value. Although the countries' level of involvement in the programme varies, overall SEESAC has been effective in contributing to mainstreaming gender in policing and strengthened cooperation on gender mainstreaming in security sector reform in the Western Balkans.⁴⁴

Community policing in Latin America and the Caribbean has facilitated dialogue between communities and the police that serve and protect them. UNDP has established community policing forums at the local and village level in a number of countries. This has made police more aware not only of the needs of local citizens and inhabitants but also of special segments of the population such as youth and refugees. Community policing has tended to show improvements in beneficiary locations in terms of a reduction in the homicide rate and increased feelings of safety and security among the population, etc. There is evidence in some locations that such initiatives contribute to lower crime rates and increase citizens' confidence in the police. It has, however, been a challenge for UNDP to demonstrate the impact of these initiatives beyond the targeted communities themselves.

UNDP support to legislative reforms for human rights, particularly on criminal justice and anti-discrimination, has contributed to the incorporation of international human rights norms into domestic legal processes.

Support to legislative reforms for human rights and access to justice in 27 countries, particularly with regard to the criminal justice sector, was critical in enabling a policy environment. Reforms of criminal codes and criminal procedure codes have been undertaken and efforts are under way to operationalize judicial codes of conduct.

Human rights-based legislative mapping and anti-discrimination legislation have been established in a number of countries with UNDP support. National human rights legislation and strategic plans were formulated and institutional capacity assessments were carried out to help national human rights institutions (NHRIs) better identify their needs and priorities. UNDP support has been instrumental in ensuring that NHRIs adhere to the Paris Principals and qualify for accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (formerly the International Coordinating Committee). Facilitation of NHRIs to engage with regional human rights networks, such as the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, enabled the exchange of practices among participating countries.

UNDP support has proved crucial in the establishment and capacity-building of human rights commissions in a number of countries. UNDP has engaged significantly on anti-discrimination policy issues, particularly through support for legislation protecting the rights of ethnic minorities, as well as advocacy and protection mechanisms in a variety of countries and settings. Issues addressed include ensuring access to natural resources, land and development for minorities; universal access to health care; and access to justice.

⁴⁴ UNDP, Lilit Melikyan and Olena Krylova, 'UNDP Regional Programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2014–2017): Midterm Outcome Evaluation', UNDP, 2016.

UNDP supported the development of national legislation and constitutional provisions and processes, allowing members of ethnic minority groups to exercise their rights, for example, in Colombia, Guatemala, Myanmar and Nepal. Such support has enabled minorities to participate in local decisions relating to the agro-extractive industries within or near their communities in Brazil. UNDP has worked to address human trafficking in Lebanon, including sexual exploitation of Syrian refugee women and girls, as well as forced labour and abuse of domestic workers. In Asia, anti-trafficking initiatives have been undertaken (such as United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons), and the subregional action plan on anti-trafficking in the Mekong region is substantially advanced.⁴⁵

Support to NHRIs and the universal periodic review processes has also shed light on the gaps in legislation and implementation of national human rights strategies. Such support has served the needs of governments while also strengthening civil society efforts. UNDP has supported NHRIs to establish subnational offices and representation (in Mongolia, Sierra Leone, Tunisia and Ukraine, among others). It has also enabled NHRIs to effectively respond to emergencies and mediate conflict at the local level.⁴⁶

A significant outcome of this support has been an increase in the number of citizen complaints handled by NHRIs. This has resulted from increased monitoring capacities, improved procedures for handling complaints and an extended subnational presence (in Bangladesh, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Ukraine). The universal periodic review recommendations have served as a catalyst for reform in the rule of law, justice, human rights and security sectors. The universal periodic review process

and UNDP's participation has also informed the work of other members of the UN country team including activities of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (for example, in Eritrea, Malawi, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan).

STRENGTHENING CORE GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS AND BASIC SERVICES

The public administration and local governance area of support in the development context is more crowded than in the conflict context, but UNDP's efforts to implement the SDG global agenda have placed it at the forefront of core government capacity development efforts.

Core government functions combined with local governance were supported in 41 countries and local governance alone in 92 countries. UNDP is well positioned to address the issue of core government functions, especially in countries affected by conflict. At the time the SDGs were being developed, UNDP realigned its approaches to core government functions and to strengthening local government. The opening of centres for public service excellence in Singapore and Kazakhstan provided UNDP with global and regional opportunities for policy discussions on public administration and for documentation of best practices. UNDP is well positioned to work between sectors and with central and local levels of government, given its long-term support for governance more broadly, its experience working with national and subnational governments, and its long-term presence in those countries. UNDP and the World Bank are each working in their areas of comparative advantage; UNDP focuses on developing and securing the pathways to achievement of the SDGs while the World Bank focuses on the financial management aspects of government administration.

45 UNDP is also working through Partners for Prevention on violence against women.

46 In Sierra Leone, UNDP supported the National Human Rights Commission to de-escalate tensions between youth and the police in restoring peace in Sierra Leone's Kono District. In Nepal, UNDP supported the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the National Dalit Commission to investigate and mediate in situations of ethnic tension and disputes. In Nigeria UNDP supported the NHRC to deploy 60 human rights monitors to regions affected by Boko Haram, with a resulting reduction in deaths related to human rights abuses. Source: UNDP IEO, 'Assessment of Development Results: Sierra Leone', August 2014.

UNDP worked through partnerships on all of its support to strengthen institutions and service delivery. These partnerships expanded the depth of its work, strengthened its contribution and significantly increased its visibility and reach. In a key partnership with the World Bank on core government functions in countries affected by conflict, the two institutions seemed to have worked together productively, each leveraging its institutional advantages. Partnerships have also been developed with several other strategically placed institutions and initiatives, including with a view to localize the SDGs, promote local development financing and strengthen policy dialogue in these and other areas related to public sector reform.

Yet in several countries, UNDP-supported governance and service delivery projects worked in isolation from other UNDP and donor projects, and potential synergies were not tapped that could have significantly increased their contribution. Others had scattered activities and were focused on delivering activities rather than outcomes, also reducing their effectiveness.

UNDP filled a well-documented policy gap with the development of diagnostic tools and a policy framework to (re)build core government functions in countries affected by conflict. UNDP worked with the World Bank to develop a diagnostic tool to assess core government functions and guidelines for each of the five core government sectors, critical tools for crisis contexts. The tools provide a common framework for use across multilateral institutions.

A good example is the new integrated framework for support to local governance and local development, which is expected to facilitate joint UN system efforts in this area and reduce fragmentation and transaction costs. Such initiatives also facilitated standardization of support to core government functions and help to ensure quicker and more effective responses. Several agencies are engaged in initiatives related to these functions, including the World Bank, the UN system and the European Union. This indicates these agen-

cies' acceptance of the approach and the tools, making use of them more likely.

UNDP support for addressing immediate public administration and service delivery needs at country level strengthened public administrations beyond addressing immediate needs; they also strengthened structures and systems that will form the basis for further reforms. UNDP used several models in strengthening core public administration functions. While public administration processes were strengthened, including in countries affected by conflict, challenges remain in developing sustainable national models. UNDP used a twinning approach in several countries, and this had relatively better outcomes than models in which government capacities were substituted for a long period. For example, a twinning programme in South Sudan helped to rebuild the civil service system.

UNDP systematically promoted gender equity and more inclusive service delivery at country levels. As a result, in many countries more attention was paid to gender and inclusion issues in the areas assisted by UNDP, as reflected in women's participation in local governance structures and access to service delivery schemes. In most countries, however, women's economic and political empowerment remains a major challenge, especially at the local level.

The absence of strong public administration capacity exacerbated the challenges of crisis response in Ebola-affected countries. One of UNDP's significant initiatives was the emergency public service sector payments programme for Ebola health care workers in West Africa. It helped to keep health care workers on the job during the epidemic by ensuring that timely payments and hazard incentives were provided to about 50,000 community and health care workers on the front lines. Despite the risks, UNDP determined that it was best placed to provide the assistance and had the moral imperative to support. The digitized payment system used also had the unintended benefit of bringing health workers into the formal banking system,

as receiving payments required them to open bank accounts.⁴⁷

UNDP built sustainability elements into its approach and efforts to strengthen government institutions and service delivery, yet implementation challenges remained, differing according to the country context. Changing public sector governance is a long-term project, requiring changes to mechanisms, processes, systems, attitudes and government responses. UNDP's focus on developing structures and systems to manage and coordinate policymaking and its implementation at national and subnational levels helped to institutionalize change processes.

The 'strengthening capacities for governance management' (SIGOB) approach used in Latin America was replicated in other regions. The initial focus on aid coordination has been expanded, especially with UNDP's support to e-governance systems, and so has support for open data and web-based monitoring and tracking systems. These practices not only improved standardization of services but also helped to increase equity, transparency and accessibility for citizens. Policy and regulatory changes have been made because of the assistance, necessary in many cases to implement the institutional reforms. The lack of systematic data makes it hard to determine the extent of success at an aggregate level.

Resource challenges for UNDP were more intense in middle- and upper-middle-income countries, which received an even smaller share of regular resources or nothing at all. Because donors reduced development support to such countries or moved towards a bilateral/budget support modality, it was hard for UNDP to mobilize programme resources. The UNDP governance programme portfolios of middle-income countries sharply fell, with concomitant decreases in programme scope and size. While some country offices were successful in working out gov-

ernment cost-sharing, this primarily resulted in UNDP supporting governments in the areas they needed and prioritized.

External pressure was an important factor in the initiation of public administration reforms. This was particularly the case in countries with budget support, those that were preparing for European Union candidature and accession, and those with extensive external development assistance. Governance reforms are central to European Union membership, making these a particular concern for countries in the European Union accession process. The countries are primarily motivated by European Union candidature to pursue reforms, an impetus that would be hard for UNDP or other agency programmes to generate. However, this did not guarantee a bigger role for UNDP. With the European Union taking a lead in governance-related support and choosing not to work through other agencies, the UNDP role in addressing drivers of corruption and anti-corruption in European Union accession countries is shrinking. UNDP was considered an alternative when the European Union chose not to engage where it would be perceived as intervening in a country's internal politics.

HIV, Health and Development

As an implementing partner, primarily for the Global Fund, UNDP has been successful working in fragile and challenging political circumstances and weak governance contexts. UNDP's technical support has been important in the management of Global Fund grants. Challenges remain for UNDP as it transitions out of its principal recipient (PR) role. Another challenge is in enabling national institutions to take over the management of Global Fund grants and address systemic issues rather than just specific bottlenecks.

Enhancing governance capacities to reduce the inequalities and social exclusion that drive HIV

47 UN Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, 'Third interim report', Office of the Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Climate Change Multi Partner Trust Fund Office, UNDP. See: <http://mdtf.undp.org/document/download/16728>.

and poor health underpins UNDP's approach to HIV and AIDS. For approximately 15 years UNDP has served as a Global Fund PR in approximately 45 countries. In this role, it managed and implemented grants covering HIV/AIDS as well as tuberculosis and malaria, along with health systems strengthening. This work continued during the current Strategic Plan period, as UNDP supported the management of Global Fund grants in more than 23 countries. UNDP has been a co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) since its establishment in 1996.

UNDP is well-positioned to play a principal recipient role in fragile states and where there is a lack of public health and civil society capacity to successfully implement the HIV grants. However, country ownership is a core principle of the Global Fund, and UNDP is often seen as the PR agency of last resort. In managing Global Fund grants, UNDP works closely with UN partners, especially the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). UNDP invested in the capacity development of national entities so that it can eventually hand over the grants to national entities.

UNDP-managed grants achieved the objectives as agreed upon in Global Fund-UNDP grant agreements. In many cases UNDP PR activities included helping to strengthen national HIV/AIDS strategies, improve health infrastructure development, and bring rigour to health products procurement and supply chain management, enabling significant reductions in the prices of antiretrovirals and other health products.⁴⁸ However, these priorities were not necessarily determined by UNDP, but rather (under the Global Fund's principle of country ownership) by the country coordinating mechanism, a local governance structure involving government, civil society and development partners. UNDP has played

a lesser role in national HIV/AIDS strategic planning because, under the UNAIDS division of labour, the World Bank leads in this area.

Regardless, UNDP's prominence in working with governments to address issues related to key populations is significant. In several countries, UNDP has made important contributions in addressing sensitive issues concerning HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. UNDP's leadership role in the Global Commission on HIV and the Law enabled it to have greater influence at country level on the links between legal responses and human rights. It resulted in national dialogues in 62 countries to address legal and policy barriers preventing access to services by people living with HIV and other populations.

Since 2006 UNDP has transitioned out of its principal recipient role in more than 25 countries. This has brought challenges, such as late preparation of national institutions to take over Global Fund management. In some countries UNDP has remained engaged in a technical support role. Most illustrative of UNDP's transition from its PR role to a technical support role was in Zambia, where UNDP strengthened the Ministry of Health's capacities to take over the PR role.

In all the countries where it serves as the interim PR, UNDP faces a conflict of interest inherent in building the capacity of other organizations (governmental and non-governmental) to take over a role for which UNDP earns a fee. Even though UNDP's Global Fund grants are conditioned on UNDP building local capacity for eventual handover, this conflict of interest raises concerns among local stakeholders. That is especially the case when there are delays in handover, regardless of who is responsible for them.

Other partnerships UNDP built have been important in advocacy against prejudice, violence,

48 UNDP worked to significantly reduce the price of HIV medicines it procured, bringing down the cost of the most common treatment combination to \$100 per patient per year in Equatorial Guinea, Haiti, Mali, South Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Source: UNDP, 'United Nations Development Programme partnership with the Global Fund, Annual Report 2015–2016'.

stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and at-risk populations. For example, in Latin America and the Caribbean, a partnership with UNAIDS led to finalization of the zero discrimination targets and indicators that governments in the region will report. In Asia, UNDP's strong partnerships with UNAIDS and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) enabled several regional policy and advocacy initiatives. Along with UNAIDS, UNDP supported ESCAP in organizing an Asia-Pacific intergovernmental meeting on HIV and AIDS, which endorsed the regional HIV and AIDS framework for action. UNDP's multi-country programmes in Asia and the Pacific on men having sex with men and transgender-related HIV issues enabled countries to adopt legislation on the subject.

Notwithstanding the acknowledgment of UNDP's positive contributions in managing Global Fund programmes, there is a need for better articulation of UNDP's role in HIV and other health-related work.

In addition to its Global Fund role, the entry point for UNDP in HIV is governance and its well-established partnerships with governments in public sector capacity development. UNDP is recognized for its convening role in HIV (and other health issues). It is also known for tackling the underlying economic and social determinants of health issues. UNDP's Global Fund role provides an opportunity for UNDP to advocate for and help design integrated risk reduction approaches to health, strengthen related institutions and address the drivers that weaken health services, such as lack of accountability. Health sector risk assessment is one of the sectors that was prioritized in UNDP's governance work.

Despite UNDP's comparative advantage in addressing HIV/AIDS governance issues and health sector governance, there were mandate constraints. There are challenges in articulating UNDP's distinct role, given that two UN agencies have mandates and the technical expertise to address HIV/AIDS: UNAIDS and WHO. Cur-

rently, UNDP's health activities focus on developing the capacities of national institutions, systems, laws and policies for the effective delivery of HIV and related services. In addition, UNDP supports a range of HIV/AIDS activities undertaken at country level, such as malaria-related activities and technical support to tobacco control and non-communicable diseases.

UNDP's strongest areas in addressing HIV and engaging in the health sector included support to strengthening HIV-related legal frameworks, developing health system capacities, enabling global policy debate and engaging with key populations. Considering the consistent and substantial revenue stream resulting from its roles both as a Global Fund PR and as an emerging technical assistance provider, UNDP has taken steps to streamline its work in the health sector and HIV. UNDP has been supporting HIV and health work in about 50 countries at any given point of time, and its work has been guided by UNDP's HIV, Health and Development Strategy 2012–2015 and the HIV, Health and Development Strategy 2016–2021: Connecting the Dots.

The latter was developed in consultation with UN, government and civil society partners and is fully aligned with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs as well as the UNDP Strategic Plan and the strategies of key partners such as WHO and the Global Fund. Both these strategies clearly define UNDP's role in HIV and health, which is supporting countries to address the social and economic determinants of HIV and health. UNDP's HIV and health-related support is carried out in partnership with WHO, UNAIDS and other partners, and roles are shaped by country capacities and needs.

Global-level stakeholders emphasized UNDP's convening role in addressing HIV, stigma and discrimination, key affected populations and the law. However, views on this differed. At the national level, health sector actors emphasized programme implementation support and technical inputs as key strengths of UNDP. Agencies working in the health sector believed that UNDP had exceeded

its role as a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, going beyond what the PR role should entail.

As a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, UNDP had the convening or lead role regarding several categories of people: men who have sex with men, sex workers and transgender people. Specifically this included enabling them to protect themselves from HIV infection and fully access antiretroviral therapy; supporting the removal of punitive laws and policies; addressing the stigma and discrimination that block effective responses to AIDS; meeting the HIV needs of women and girls; and stopping sexual and gender-based violence. It is evident that UNDP has been largely successful in fulfilling these roles. Its support to eliminating punitive laws, policies and practices covers people living with HIV and key populations as well as gender and GBV. UNDP has a significant portfolio of work on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersexual (LGBTI) inclusion in Asia, Eastern Europe and Africa, and the contribution has been important in advocating for LGBTI inclusion.

Over the past few years, UNDP has taken significant steps to strengthen synergies between its UNAIDS policy work and Global Fund HIV grants. UNDP, however, has also taken on additional responsibilities relative to HIV/AIDS, primarily through its role as the PR of the Global Fund grants in many countries. While this is an expectation of its PR role, there is a perception that UNDP is expanding its work in the HIV and health sector.

Strengthening Civil Service Processes

Measures that strengthened the relationship between citizens and administrations had greater potential to enhance public accountability of civil servants.

UNDP contributed to enhancing the capacities of civil servants through training and implementation support, and also through direct support to strengthening the integrity of government staff. These initiatives have complemented ongoing civil service reform efforts by the partner gov-

ernments. There are competing objectives to this effort, and the pace of reform has been slow in many countries. One of the major challenges has been linking anti-corruption measures to civil service processes.

In countries transitioning from crisis to development, critical aspects of civil service reform include management of government staff, streamlining and downsizing of government staff, and strengthening of merit-based recruitment. Addressing salaries and job descriptions is extremely critical in streamlining government functions and ensuring accountability and transparency. A particularly sensitive issue in such contexts is phasing out international staff. Civil service reform is typically a long and politically charged process, and UNDP has demonstrated limited results when helping governments address these systemic issues.

Initiatives to strengthen the capacities of government institutions are often at risk when new layers of bureaucracy are added outside the civil service. For example, in Lebanon, most of the personnel in the Office of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform are UNDP staff, whose role is to support the development of plans for reform projects and follow up on their execution. The office has been working on various measures to reinforce governance, accountability and transparency. The outcomes have yet to be manifested in a self-sustained and transparent civil service. In countries with high human resource capacities such as Lebanon, such an approach to augmenting government civil service capacities was considered problematic. Such an approach, where substituted staff are not part of the civil service, risks undermining the development of a robust civil service system and inadvertently undermining government accountability.

Improving Access to Information and Enhancing the Role of Citizens

UNDP contributions have been important in facilitating local access to public information, particularly through initiatives that facilitated citizens' use of information to engage in local

planning and governance. Improvements in access to information have been more promising in increasing accountability at the local level.

UNDP initiatives to modernize government systems and support e-governance contributed to changes in service delivery and opening of channels for more transparent governance. These efforts were notable in several country case studies. Access to information processes was strengthened in 34 countries. Access to information policies at national and local levels was strengthened; ICTs for information sharing were developed; national databases were integrated through communication technologies, information portals and e-governance; and awareness-raising and advocacy were increased.

Public administration modernization efforts enhanced government effectiveness and contributed to transparency in government functioning. UNDP used ICTs to launch e-governance initiatives, information portals and other measures to improve the functioning of ministries. This has increased access to official information, improved interactions between the government and citizens, and enabled reporting and campaigning on corruption.

Given the importance of citizen access to information and the dearth of information access initiatives, governments became more responsive to the demand for transparency in public functioning. Such initiatives were scaled up by governments (for example, in Bangladesh); were critical to informing government policies (for example, in Egypt and India); enhanced implementation of national legislation (in Cambodia); promoted fiscal transparency (in Kosovo); and yielded incremental improvements in several countries through contributions to transparent budget processes at the local level. UNDP promoted the use of ICTs in anti-corruption initiatives, such as by enabling citizens to send SMS-based alerts to anti-corruption authorities (for example, in Kosovo and Papua New Guinea). This generated considerable public enthusiasm, although challenges remain in following up on complaints.

UNDP outcomes for ICT use varied considerably, with access to information and public services improving in over a quarter of the countries assessed. Although a number of factors are responsible for the low level of progress in improving access to information, successful cases such as Bangladesh point to critical factors such as government buy-in, a certain level of scale, anchorage in policy or institutional processes, and attention to technical and logistics issues. Also, contextual triggers are critical in generating momentum for implementing access to information policies and adopting legislation and the use of ICTs for streamlining government staff information. Most UNDP initiatives, however, did not have the necessary scale or could not ensure that the processes were institutionalized, and therefore results were confined to project-level outcomes.

In 18 of the countries assessed, UNDP support made tangible improvements in areas that used local-level e-governance. When used in the service sector, e-governance reduced the number of middlemen and thus potential corruption opportunities in service provision. Access to public information and services was strengthened through several one-stop-shop initiatives, the establishment of public information centres and an electronic document management system for local governments. Although local initiatives take more time to be institutionalized, they were of greater salience in politically complex contexts. The increase in access to information on government services increased the demand for such services. While there is also an increasing preference for using ICTs for public services, in most cases, these demands have gone unmet, or governments have only just started to respond.

UNDP contributed to enhancing the role of citizens and community-based organizations in local development planning. In the absence of links to broader governance processes, local-level efforts had incremental outcomes and remained one-off or isolated initiatives without much impact on accountability and transparency policies and practices.

Local participatory mechanisms were supported in several countries, with a fair degree of success in accomplishing the objective of raising citizen demand for accountability in public services. UNDP support has contributed to providing viable models for citizen participation in enhancing local accountability and transparency and sector governance.

Engaging civil society organizations and communities has contributed to improving service delivery, particularly in the education, health and water and sanitation sectors. Increased participation of communities in the financial management and budgetary oversight increased transparency and reduced the misuse of public funds. The extent to which decentralization contributed to accountability was determined by country specificities and the reform approach. Local governance strategies had the greatest success when combined with high levels of community participation and when pre-implementation efforts included building the capacities of local government staff and infrastructure.

Considering the short duration and scope of the UNDP initiatives, there were challenges in ensuring replicability or influencing government policies and practices. Often, different agencies had similar initiatives operating at the local level. Adequately leveraging government policies or institutionalizing the pilot initiatives was critical for broader application by governments and development agencies.

Links between local initiatives and national-level policies were weak (an issue that was not solely a problem for UNDP) and serious measures to establish such links were often lacking. The immediate challenge in a number of countries where the initiatives were fairly successful was institutionalizing them in local government systems. Where UNDP also supported development of local governance processes, the opportunities for taking forward demand-side accountability measures were relatively better.

A lack of citizen willingness to demand accountability limited the outcomes of local-level initia-

tives. Although there is rising awareness of citizens' right to information, it did not always translate into demand for public information. Whether due to their preoccupation, systematic inequalities or other reasons, citizens tended to be less confrontational with local authorities. In some cases facilitation by community-based organizations to demand information on public fund management and services was important. In Kenya, for example, UNDP supported a basket fund for civil society organizations, which was an enabler for community engagement with policymakers. Such initiatives gave the necessary thrust for enhancing citizen demand for public information.

Transition Challenges in Countries affected by Conflict

The preceding sections analysing UNDP's governance support and contribution also address support to countries affected by conflict. This section examines specific challenges in responding to capacity needs in countries affected by conflict and UNDP's engagement in global peacebuilding initiatives and architecture.

UNDP has carved out an important niche providing governance support to countries affected by conflict. Its contributions have been substantial in providing specialist technical expertise along with human resource support to government institutions. UNDP, to its credit and that of its partner governments, has sought to address each of the most intractable structural causes of conflict.

UNDP support in countries affected by conflict has been critical for the functioning of core governance institutions. It has also been an important structural contribution to consolidating stability and peace and transitioning to development. UNDP's strategy of focusing on pressing capacity issues in the early phase of institution formation was appropriate for countries affected by conflict. UNDP provided services for the international community and served as a fiduciary (and procurement) manager where bilateral agencies were not prepared to accept the risks inherent in weak government capacity, and it substituted

in the absence of government capacity. In this, UNDP's role and contribution were critical in the initial stages of State-building. As governments in countries affected by conflict typically have weak financial management systems, UNDP's procurement and service delivery support is widely considered critical to minimizing misuse of development funds.

UNDP is well positioned to make strategic contributions in areas of programming that affect peacebuilding and State-building, and it provided such services in more than 40 conflict-affected States. It contributed to conduct of elections and helped in strengthening parliamentary institutions, justice and the rule of law, the security sector, and human rights institutions. It enabled service delivery and social assistance. UNDP also supported politically sensitive institutions such as truth and reconciliation commissions, but the scope of such support does not match the scale of the issues and the underlying drivers of conflict.

As discussed previously, extended support in areas such as elections and the justice sector, alongside support for enabling institutional capacities to overcome technical and human resource capacities, was critical to institution building in countries affected by conflict. Notable also has been the establishment of governance structures and strengthening of public administration, local institutions, parliamentary institutions and human rights bodies. Capacities that UNDP contributed were often the basis for further consolidation by governments and support by other organizations.

In a peacekeeping mission context, UNDP contributions in priority State-building areas were strong when partnerships were established with such missions. UNDP's proportionally small contribution requires careful transition planning and strategic programme design and implementation. Liberia and Timor-Leste are contemporary examples of strong coordination at the time of mission drawdown. And Somalia, through the robust Integrated Strategic Framework, provides an excellent example of cohesive written coordination between UN agencies and the national government.

While UNDP's early recovery support was often critical in building state institutions and capacities that are important for peacebuilding and transition to development, UNDP programmes often fell short of the governance needs in transition contexts. More sustained efforts are needed to support sector-specific capacity development strategies and a systematic approach to strengthening core institution capacities. UNDP strategies and approaches did not always respond to the evolving capacities and often rapidly changing needs and conditions.

One of the challenges is delays in building national capacities to take charge of development and programmes funded by ODA. This is often reflected in a degree of frustration and resentment at the national level. Also, the programme investment in State-building did not always correspond to the level of needs for pursuing long-term institutional capacity-development support. A comprehensive peacebuilding strategy (often lacking in UNDP support) is required to support sustained governance capacities. Lessons from Liberia and South Sudan point out the need for a more comprehensive approach to strengthening public sector administration, in order to synergize governance objectives and use citizen participation more strategically.

Capacity-development programme design greatly impacts the sustainable transfer of skills and knowledge in peacebuilding and State-building contexts.

UNDP has developed an analytical approach to restoring basic government functions in countries affected by conflict and in peacebuilding contexts, which seems appropriate to address the immediate human resource needs of crisis periods. The design of UNDP's capacity-development programmes, however, had challenges in enabling sustainable transfer of skills and knowledge. A strategic prioritization to guide UNDP's programming in institutional capacity development was found to be lacking.

Government capacity in crisis countries is low because of their history and context. Each of

the peacebuilding or State-building countries assessed received UNDP support to improve intuitional and human resource capacities. These programmes contributed to results and increased capacity. However, the small scale of the programmes limited the reach and sustainability of the capacities developed. Capacity development programmes require specific funding partnerships so they can be sustained in the long term. This allows them to maintain capacities and target critical government functions that are essential to stability. In the absence of prioritization of technical support, UNDP's institutional capacity development efforts did not contribute to sustainable national processes.

UNDP has been engaged in both direct capacity development and capacity substitution, to enable government institutions to function and consolidate. Both approaches are critical in countries affected by conflict, for institutional development and government functioning. UNDP tried different models to enable quicker and more sustainable capacity-building. For example, South Sudan implemented a promising model of South-South cooperation and long-term capacity development through the Intergovernmental Authority for Development programme. It worked with regional 'twin' countries to directly transfer needed skills to professionals in South Sudan. Other human capacity development programming in peacebuilding and State-building States included short-term, small-scale training of national professional staff. Though these programmes improved national and institutional capacity, they did not replace long-term capacity development programmes.

Capacity substitution programmes had more tangible outcomes in quickly enabling national institutions to function. Long-term results enabling national processes for developing human resource capacities were more evident when measures of national financial ownership were addressed. In some countries affected by conflict, however, this

was not well thought through. The lack of a mentoring component led to slow development of national human resource capacities and excessive reliance on international human resources.

For example, Timor-Leste's government, after several cycles of capacity substitution programming, sought a greater decision-making role in its relationship with international advisers. The national government took over partial funding of international advisers without cultivating efforts to develop national capacity. The result is that several government ministries in Timor-Leste, such as the Ministry of Justice, are now dependent on international advisers, and the skills of national staff are not being cultivated.

UNDP is a natural collaborator in the UN peacebuilding architecture, given its interest in building peace through development. Lacking a clear strategy and measurement framework for engaging in fragile countries undermines UNDP's contribution and its ability to leverage its comparative advantage to engage in global and regional policy debates.

UNDP support has been critical in enabling the engagement of the g7+ member countries in the SDG process. UNDP collaborated with them in the development of SDG 16 to create a goal that would address the needs of peacebuilding and State-building countries.

UNDP has supported the New Deal⁴⁹ in providing small amounts of direct funding to g7+ member countries for related activities and attendance at member meetings. However, it has not prioritized peacebuilding and State-building strategically. The added value of the New Deal is that 20 conflict-affected governments have provided international partners with the political space to collaboratively address the root causes of conflict in their countries. Peacebuilding and State-building country typologies require recognition of their unique challenges and goals. Designing and implementing

49 An agreement involving fragile and conflict-affected States in which development partners and civil society work to improve development policy and practice.

the UNDP New Deal Support Facility created an opportunity for UNDP to engage in global and regional policy debates. Yet UNDP has done little to take advantage of this strategic position. Though it facilitated discussion among countries, the Facility lacked any broader organizational structure to facilitate or orchestrate implementation of country-level peer support groups. Peacebuilding countries require recognition of their unique challenges and goals. Fragility assessment findings are yet to be used as anchors in the development of SDG roadmaps and national development planning in g7+ countries.

UNDP did not play a discernible role in establishing funding priorities, country contexts for intervention, or development priorities through the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). UN-Women collaborated with the Peacebuilding Support Office to create a gender strategy for peacebuilding; the World Bank has formalized a partnership, as have International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and Interpeace. UNDP is conspicuously missing in the list of important development partners engaging actively with the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, limiting its decision-making role in this important global body. Although UNDP engaged in the priorities established by the Peacebuilding Commission, it has always taken the implementer role and missed the opportunity to position itself strongly in a strategic role.

In fragile environments, conflict prevention and peacebuilding needs are significant. There is great potential for strategic gains through the PBF. Because a conflict analysis is required to receive funding through the PBF, the peacebuilding architecture has the potential to reduce the technical gap in conventional funding flows. Though it was designed to support ‘aid orphan’ countries overlooked by other donor funds, the scope of support has broadened since creation of

the PBF. It has included countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the peace process is well-established and ongoing. The ambiguity of the PBF’s funding is potentially problematic because no strategic role has been established for it. Articulating the scope of the PBF and its goals, approach and position in funding flows would improve its reliability and utility. UNDP has yet to play a stronger role in monitoring the pooled funding mechanisms in peacebuilding and State-building countries, in terms of both applicability and use.

The UNDP New Deal Support Facility was established in 2013 with a two-year mandate to coordinate technical and financial support to g7+ pilot and non-pilot countries.⁵⁰ In 2014, UNDP secured funding for the Facility from several donors, including Australia, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Despite initial enthusiasm for the promise of the New Deal in 2011, donor support for an overarching implementation support facility has waned in the last few years. The facility’s activities, therefore, largely remained a peripheral support to adoption of New Deal principles and donor coordination.⁵¹

Several factors contributed to the contraction of support for the New Deal, including changes in donor government priorities. Currently, donor engagement is largely confined to coordination among member countries, rather than country-level support for a mechanism supporting international cooperation for endogenous peacebuilding and State-building processes. The New Deal is yet to be used as the basis for interventions or programming in countries with an existing or developing New Deal compact. There is also a shift towards SDG 16 at the expense of the New Deal. The global nature of SDG 16 is far bigger than the New Deal, and the donor’s contribution to the New Deal Facility is rapidly declining. What

50 The Facility managed around \$7 million in the two-year cycle, contributing funds to support New Deal activities in g7+ member countries.

51 Sarah Hearn, ‘Independent Review of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States for the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building’, New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University, 2016.

is relevant are the instruments developed and how these could be used. Also, several donors engage bilaterally with New Deal implementation on a country-by-country basis, such as Norway, with its direct support to Somalia's New Deal Process.

UNDP largely coordinates information sharing at International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding steering groups and internal working groups, and in coordination with the World Bank. UNDP has not engaged in the New Deal peacebuilding process in a way that has meaningfully influenced strategic planning and priorities. Designing and implementing the New Deal Support Facility and supporting the convening role of member countries created a space for UNDP in global and regional policy debates. UNDP lost opportunities in more directly supporting the New Deal Framework, implementation and alignment of peer support groups in country level programming.

3.3 RESILIENCE FOR ENHANCED DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

The Strategic Plan set out an area of work on resilience, entailing support to disaster risk reduction, response and recovery. It includes a set of activities under outcome 5, 'Countries are able to reduce the likelihood of conflict and lower the risk of natural disasters, including from climate change', and outcome 6, 'Early recovery and rapid return to sustainable development pathways are achieved in countries affected by conflict and post disaster settings'. The aim is to assist countries improve their ability to prepare for and then deal with the consequences of crises and natural disasters, and provide rapid and effective recovery from conflict-induced crises in cases where prevention has fallen short.

Under the current strategy, UNDP indicates that it builds resilience into all aspects of crisis response and recovery, starting with support to mitigate disaster effects, and then to help countries recover lost capacities, assets and resources. During crises, UNDP serves as Global Cluster Lead for Early Recovery, supporting the human-

itarian coordinators and the humanitarian country teams through inter-agency coordination and deployment of early recovery advisers. Overall spending on the resilience portfolio for the period 2014–2016 was \$1,735 million. Table G in Annex 1 presents key areas of programmes related to resilience and number of countries where they are implemented.

During the 2014–2017 period there was a fundamental change in UNDP's organizational structure. Among other things the Bureau for Development Policy and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery were combined into the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) and a separate Crisis Response Unit was created. After these structural changes, aspects of crisis response and early recovery were divided between BPPS and CRU. CRU handles humanitarian interface and policy relationships (with processes related to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] and the World Humanitarian Summit and their follow-up, including the humanitarian-development nexus and the New Way of Working). It also handles immediate crisis response, working through a whole-of-UNDP approach (using standard operating procedures etc.), internal crisis response, early warning/early action and the management of the Early Recovery Cluster.

The regional bureaux and BPPS support country offices with technical and programmatic aspects of recovery and provide advisory services. BPPS and CRU jointly support, per an internal division of labour, post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) and recovery and peacebuilding assessment processes, working closely with regional bureaux during implementation.

Institutional restructuring dissolved a well-recognized and integrated crisis prevention and recovery unit. Evidence from several recent disaster recovery efforts demonstrates continuing confusion over the respective roles and responsibilities of BPPS and CRU since the transition. These structural changes encouraged a separation of response (CRU) from

recovery (BPPS and regional bureaux) at precisely the moment when global actors were trying to bring these together through the World Humanitarian Summit. This occurred during a time of dynamic changes in the risk reduction programme environment, with the emergence of new financial mechanisms designed to cope with climate change.

The restructuring of UNDP's prevention and recovery support system did not improve service delivery. Reportedly, the restructuring was designed to consolidate overlapping policy functions and reduce management inefficiencies, including in relationship and fund management.⁵² While achieving some of these aims, the restructuring also had the effect of dissolving a well-functioning integrated crisis prevention and recovery bureau. While the Strategic Plan midterm review reported that programming was moving forward as planned, the 2016 after-action review of the Ebola response⁵³ and the case study of UNDP support to Nepal following the April 2015 earthquake revealed continuing confusion over the respective roles of BPPS and CRU in the year following the transition. In late 2016 there were internal reports that country offices did not know who to contact for what, resulting in multiple communication channels and duplication of effort.

DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk management was highlighted as a priority in the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, and the global context for risk management has evolved over this period. The world was jolted out of complacency by the growth of violent extremism, with countries across North Africa, the Middle East and Europe reeling from the shocks of migrations resulting from crises and poverty that are partly the consequence of massive risk management failure. At the same time, the understanding

of climate risk has grown, and there is an urgent call for response to what the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has described as “the largest humanitarian crisis since the United Nations was founded in 1945, with more than 20 million people in four countries at risk of starvation and famine...”⁵⁴ This includes a food crisis that is a complex blend of natural and man-made factors — most of which were foreseeable and foreseen.

The major development and humanitarian conferences have signaled the importance of stepping up on risk management. These include especially the Sendai Framework for Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the World Humanitarian Summit declaration, all of which recognize that risk is an important connector of the humanitarian, development and peace-building domains.

Echoing this call for increased attention to risk, the QCPR “emphasizes that in countries facing humanitarian emergencies there is a need to work collaboratively to move beyond short-term assistance towards contributing to longer term development gains, including by engaging, as appropriate, in joint risk analysis, needs assessments, practice [sic] response and a coherent multi-year timeframe, with the aim of reducing need, vulnerability and risk over time.” It calls on the Secretary-General to support the UN development system and especially the resident coordinators “to ensure improved risk management within the system”.

During this strategic planning period, UNDP has actively participated in regional and global advocacy concerning disaster risk management.

UNDP actively supported national partners in the drafting efforts leading to the Sendai global

52 This statement on purpose and design was derived from multiple interviews with senior UNDP management during the course of the evaluation.

53 UNDP, ‘After Action Review of Ebola’, 2016.

54 UN News Centre, ‘UN aid chief urges global action as starvation, famine loom for 20 million across four countries’, 10 March 2017. See: www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56339#.WVP6z2jyuUk.

agreement. It has also played important roles in the normative work, implementation and monitoring processes of the other major global conferences and conventions confronting disaster risk: The World Humanitarian Summit, Habitat III and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. UNDP has taken a lead position in working with governments to decipher the implications of relevant global commitments in disaster management. It has produced a global consultation risk assessment report focusing attention on the Sendai agreement expectations relating to recovery and risk governance. UNDP's global advocacy and policy analysis in the run-up to Sendai helped to rally support for having recovery and risk governance recognized as priorities in the Framework.

UNDP is one of the multiple international players in the disaster risk management sector, including international financial institutions and non-resident UN agencies. While the participants are many, the funding is limited. The lack of long-term funding sources for disaster risk reduction is due in part to the short-term, disaster relief orientation of many funders.

The World Humanitarian Summit highlighted the need for longer term financing for integrated disaster prevention and recovery. Yet the lack of long-term funding sources, and a tendency of donors to focus especially on short-term, humanitarian-related disaster relief, remains a barrier. UNDP's work with international financing institutions demonstrated great potential for disaster risk and prevention programming. However, partnerships have yet to be fully exploited for scaling up UNDP's strategic work and/or carrying forward institutional sector-wide approaches.

UNDP regularly coordinated with international financial institutions on PDNAs and loss and damage assessments and developed disaster databases at the request of governments. In Myanmar,

for example, UNDP and the Asian Development Bank worked on a damage and loss database and discussed other joint support for institutional development. In September 2015 the Government of Rwanda launched its first National Risk Atlas, the first-ever comprehensive risk profile developed in Africa. Prepared in collaboration with UNDP, the World Bank and the European Union, the Risk Atlas sets guidance in national planning and policymaking on disaster risk reduction.⁵⁵

UNDP expended over \$430 million in 2015–2016 for disaster risk reduction activities globally. There was positive news in the acceleration of funding support for climate change adaptation, through the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund. While the total DRR portfolio grew during the strategic planning period, global level DRR funding suffered a significant downturn, hampering disaster risk management support from UNDP headquarters. Before the institutional restructuring in 2015–2016, the UNDP crisis prevention and recovery trust fund (CPR-TTF) was instrumental in supporting programming to prevent disasters and conflicts, providing seed funding for country programmes and an entry point for the global policy unit to engage and provide assistance. No new contributions were received into the CPR-TTF after December 2015, although expenditures from it have continued after that date, using prior contributions.

UNDP is a valued partner on disaster risk reduction, providing demand-driven, strategic and substantive support to countries. Missing from most country-level UNDP (and UN country team) risk work are the political economy analyses that can yield better risk-informed planning and decision-making.

UNDP's support to national partners in the disaster risk management sector has been a long-term engagement. It has involved support at upstream and downstream levels, such as by integrating

55 UNDP press release, 'Rwanda launches the National Risk Atlas, first-ever comprehensive risk profile developed in Africa', 10 September 2015. See: www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2015/09/10/rwanda-launches-the-national-risk-atlas-first-ever-comprehensive-risk-profile-developed-in-africa.html.

disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation into local development and through the critically important work on post-disaster recovery. UNDP has helped to build capacities of government agencies for actions in cross-sectoral disaster risk reduction, response and recovery.

Programme partners frequently cite UNDP's ability to provide them with access to globally proven risk models and practices, and to new streams of global finance to address the risks of climate change. Operational risk analysis (for example, project risks, financial risks, security risks, business continuity risks) and 'environmental' risks (extreme weather, climate and natural disaster risks) lend themselves to different types of management measures. Yet they are not inherently in opposition, and UNDP has tools for combining these different risk analyses.

More challenging and important is the country-level risk assessment work that touches upon political, economic and social factors, and that also looks at vested interests, the real distribution of power, institutional capacities and policy coherence. This type of political economy risk analysis helps to understand and manage the risks of factors like violent extremism and sectarian conflict, yet it touches on sensitive issues of sovereignty and political power. Interim guidance (2016) for UN development assistance frameworks (UNDAFs) calls upon UN country teams to carry out institutional and context analyses to develop risk-informed UNDAFs. Evidence suggests that some of the country teams are refraining from providing this level of contextual analysis as part of the UNDAF process, due in part to national partner ambivalence.

CRISIS RECOVERY

The global and operational context of early recovery has changed significantly during the Strategic Plan period. While the incidence of country risk has not changed significantly between 2013 and 2017, the number of people in need, and the humanitarian funding required, have both increased substantially since 2012. This has been

driven primarily by the Syrian displacement and the conflicts in Burundi, Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen. Displacement crises have also become increasingly protracted, as many of the world's 65 million refugees and displaced people have reduced prospects of returning home.

Additionally, the impacts of natural disasters and climate events have been exacerbated by underlying poverty and vulnerability. This has caused donor resources to shift from long-term development (and middle-income countries) to countries whose development is chronically stunted by crisis and displacement.

Four major development and humanitarian summits of the 2014–2016 period have made their mark. The first was the March 2015 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which called for recovery to “build back better” in ways that enhance risk reduction and resilience. The second, the July 2015 Addis Ababa conference on Financing for Development, recognized “the need for the coherence of developmental and humanitarian finance to ensure more timely, comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective approaches to the management and mitigation of natural disasters and complex emergencies”. Third was the Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. It did not focus on response to the crisis but importantly anchored the principles of “leave no one behind” and “reaching the furthest behind first.” These principles were carried forward in the UN Secretary-General's report *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility*, presented at the World Humanitarian Summit of May 2016.

Over the same period, and culminating in the Commitment to Action at the World Humanitarian Summit, the previous linear model of progression from humanitarian to development assistance in the aftermath of a crisis has been replaced by the concept of the humanitarian-development nexus. It views humanitarian and development needs and programmes as coexisting in the same place at the same time, and as relating in more complex ways. This is underscored by the IASC assertion that recovery should be

built into all aspects of humanitarian response from the start.

UNDP has been an important participant in the evolving international effort to more closely coordinate humanitarian and development efforts in crisis situations.

For several decades, there has been an ongoing debate about whether and to what extent humanitarian and development work in crisis settings are distinct and should be kept separate.⁵⁶ In part this is due to different institutional cultures and perspectives, and competition for resources, but it is also because of different operational modalities. Yet this perspective of divide and disagreement is overstated, and it fails to recognize the quite significant cooperation that exists and that is likely to further expand through the efforts to achieve the SDGs.

In just the domain of UNDP cooperation with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced people, there have been least seven signature initiatives going back to the 1980s. In all cases UNDP and UNHCR have endeavoured to coordinate on humanitarian and development aspects. Recent policy progress has taken place in formal forums such as the Emergency Director's Group and the IASC, and through informal settings surrounding events such as the World Humanitarian Summit.

In addition, UNDP has contributed to independent policy analysis, such as the valuable work done by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University, which culminated in the Secretary-General's report *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility*. It provided sharper focus, new impetus and mainstream legitimacy on the need to bridge the humanitarian-development divide. Cooperation between UNDP and UNHCR has also reached a new height since 2014, through

their coordinated efforts in the five 'refugee and resilience' country programmes in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in response to the Syrian crisis.

UNDP has a comparative advantage in supporting country efforts to restore the capacity of national and local governments to provide essential services after crises.

In terms of recovery priorities, UNDP has a comparative advantage in restoring the capacity of national and especially local governments to provide essential services. UNDP's added value can be seen especially in sudden onset natural disasters (such as recently in Haiti, Nepal and the Ebola outbreak) and in countries recovering from conflict, such as UNDP's work during this period in Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen.

There is high demand for UNDP services at the municipal level during crisis recovery periods, especially when they are accompanied by large-scale human migration. In the Syrian crisis, roughly 10 percent of the more than 4 million refugees dwelling in neighbouring countries are in UNHCR-managed camps. The rest live in cities and towns, pushing overstretched infrastructure to the breaking point. Through the five Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) country programmes, in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, there are high expectations for UNDP to help governments rapidly expand energy, solid waste, job creation and social protection services to cope with this huge influx of displaced persons.

While the 3RP country programmes have yet to be evaluated, UNDP has made an effort to document good practices, issues and challenges in resilience programming under the 3RP through the 'State of Resilience Programming' report. It provides analytical evidence of the effort to shift UNDP programmatic approaches from short-

56 See, for instance, a discussion on this topic in 'Bridging the humanitarian-development divide', a background paper for the World Humanitarian Summit, 2016. Source: Norwegian Refugee Council, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, et al.: <http://unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/WHS-background-paper.pdf>.

term emergency actions to those intended to yield longer term benefits, including through systemic changes, while still responding to the evolving emergency arising from the Syria refugee crisis.⁵⁷ The report indicates that strengthening municipal capacities is at the heart of the response. It notes for example that UNDP Jordan has worked closely with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, municipalities, joint service councils and governorates to develop a comprehensive and systemic emergency response to the solid waste management crisis affecting the country, which has been exacerbated by the refugee crisis.

Spending patterns over the past three years show a steady increase in crisis response funding, measured at the output level, with a major focus on the output related to economic recovery and livelihoods.

Outcome 6 of the Strategic Plan is only used at the outcome level for planning and reporting in 12 countries. The IRRFs for 2014 and 2015 show that overall reported progress on outcome 6 is at or above the target between the 2013 baseline year and 2015. This is borne out in the 2014–2015 Development Performance Report Card, as well as in the 2016 results-oriented annual reports (ROARs), in which 11 of the 12 outcome 6 reporting countries self-assessed as meeting or exceeding their outcome 6 annual objectives.

A list of the top 22 crises where UNDP has received humanitarian funding over 2014–2016 shows that four of the top seven countries by expenditure have been impacted by the Syrian displacement. Just 6 of the 22 stem from natural disasters (Philippines typhoon, Nepal earthquake, Bosnia and Herzegovina floods, Ecuador earthquake, Haiti earthquake and typhoon, and arguably the Ebola crisis). Only one natural disaster (Philippines) was significant in terms of UNDP crisis recovery spending over the Strategic Plan period. The clear majority of the humanitarian

funding received, and identified as expenditures under outcome 6, is for protracted conflict crises.

But the IRRFs and ROARs also reveal that many country offices are engaged in crisis-related support that is not linked to outcome 6. UNDP is often able to mobilize resources during the immediate crisis response period, and in some cases country offices implement these activities through existing projects linked to other outcomes and outputs rather than outcome 6. In the 2016 ROARs, 50 of 134 country offices stated that the “programme was affected by crisis”; 46 of 134 stated that UNDP was “involved in the response”; 45 of 134 were “reducing risks of conflict”; 35 of 134 were supporting “emergency jobs and livelihoods”; and 32 of 134 were involved in “recovery coordination in countries affected by conflict.”

In 2014–2015, outcome 6 spending relative to the 2014–2017 Strategic Plan budget was 20 percent of regular resources and 16 percent of other resources. The large gap between planned and actual expenditures of both core and non-core resources under outcome 6 suggests a need for improved planning and budgeting of UNDP’s work in this area.

The strong focus of UNDP support towards emergency livelihoods in countries affected by crisis is important to long-term recovery/development and poverty reduction. Yet it can distract from the opportunities for UNDP to help host governments plan for recovery, and in some cases duplicates the work of other crisis response actors.

UNDP emergency livelihoods support starts as part of immediate recovery and is expected to extend into medium and longer term strategies embedded into national plans. UNDP views its emergency jobs work to be essential for building the foundation for long-term recovery/development and poverty reduction. The evaluation

57 UNDP and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland, ‘The State of Resilience Programming: The Syria refugee and resilience plan (3RP)’, 2016. See: www.arabstates.undp.org/content/dam/rbas/doc/SyriaResponse/UNDP_Resilience-3RP_final-lowres.pdf.

found that most of UNDP's resilience expenditures go to short-term employment creation and other sustainable livelihoods opportunities. While some of this programming is no doubt effective and appropriate, it is overrepresented in UNDP's recovery portfolio, given UNDP's prominence in governance support.

The 2010 evaluation of crisis programming and the 2013 evaluation of the 2008–2013 Strategic Plan both observed that many UNDP programmes (including in recovery) tend to support many diverse and small-scale activities that are individually successful but do not add up to systemic change or have links to policy reform. While such activities make UNDP more relevant in an emergency, small-scale economic activities (including cash assistance) are not always the most strategic use of scarce resources. Furthermore, to the extent that they overlap with the work of other agencies, such activities can feed the sense from some observers (as confirmed in case studies and the UNDP partnership survey) that UNDP selects areas of work more for their likelihood of receiving funding than for their organizational comparative advantage.

UNDP continues to be valued in its coordinating role in crisis recovery efforts in countries affected by conflict, yet the Early Recovery Cluster, which it chairs, is underutilized as a tool for accomplishing strategic objectives, including fostering humanitarian-development links.

At its outset in 2005, the Early Recovery Cluster (originally named the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery and now the Global Cluster for Early Recovery [GCER]⁵⁸) was given responsibility for providing strategic advice to humanitarian coordinators, integrating early recovery across the humanitarian response, and shaping country-level activities to the recovery priorities of the situation. As the machinery of cluster coordination became heavier throughout the lat-

ter half of the 2000 decade, these cross-cutting and strategic objectives were often overtaken by operational aspects in the field. Over time, the cluster mandate drifted, becoming for some participants a delivery vehicle for 'gap filling' and economic programming.

To reset the Early Recovery Cluster, in late 2013 the IASC Principals made a series of recommendations to reinforce the cluster functions of policy guidance, support for recovery mainstreaming, advocacy for resource mobilization, capacity strengthening and fostering of humanitarian-development links. These recommendations importantly emphasized that cluster efforts should be adapted to the specific needs of the crisis, and led by the agency best equipped to do so. Through these changes, the GCER has been restored to its original intent. Yet evidence from the evaluation case studies revealed that many humanitarian actors and donors still do not fully understand or embrace its strategic role and continue to consider it primarily a mechanism for debris removal and cash-for-work projects. The evaluation findings suggest that failure to utilize the GCER as intended makes it difficult to establish coherence between humanitarian and development efforts in crisis settings and limits UN efforts to develop a system-wide approach to recovery.

Funding for early recovery is insufficient, as UNDP's new funding windows have not met expectations for crisis recovery support.

Only 40 percent of the funding received by UNDP during 2014–2016 for early recovery work was 'on appeal' — meaning through the Early Recovery Cluster. The amount of on-appeal funding globally was \$224 million over these three years, which is 21 percent of all of UNDP's recorded spending on outcome 6, and low compared to need.

UNDP's CPR-TTF was widely recognized by its donors and country offices as a responsive source

58 GCER is chaired by UNDP and advised by a strategic advisory group made up of ActionAid, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Organization for Migration, Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), OCHA, UNICEF and World Food Programme.

of funding for crisis prevention and response. The CPR-TTF was highly flexible and could be used to respond to conflicts and natural disasters of all types, for both prevention and recovery, and had an established brand with its major donors. It generated over \$1.2 billion between its inception in 2000 and the end of 2015. No new contributions were received after December 2015, although expenditures from the CPR-TTF have continued after that date, using prior contributions.

The decentralized management of thematic trust funds by different bureaux was found to be inefficient by the UNDP Structural and Cost Effectiveness Review, so a new centralized funding window system was established in March 2016. That year, the UNDP funding windows attracted \$36.6 million, of which \$3.4 million were allocated to emergency development response for crises and recovery (EDRCR). This is not sufficient to allow country offices to do more than the minimum of crisis response, and leaves little for recovery.

The EDRCR funding window is a component of the toolkit for crisis response outlined in UNDP's Crisis Response Strategy, adopted in 2015. The toolkit encompasses standard operating procedures for crisis response and 'crisis response packages' that allow UNDP country offices to rapidly design and deliver interventions in UNDP areas of expertise. The crisis response packages are focused on a) emergency livelihoods through community infrastructure and debris/solid waste management; b) emergency livelihoods through emergency employment, enterprise recovery and cash-based interventions; c) core government functions; and d) national recovery planning and coordination. A feature of the crisis response toolkit is the deployment of rapid response experts to support and build additional capacity within country teams during a crisis response.

Consolidating the trust funds in one management structure has not yet led to a commensurate increase in donor support for UNDP's work in emergency development response and crisis recovery. Several donors increased their fund-

ing (Germany, Luxembourg, Republic of Korea, Slovak Republic), and Denmark has indicated it will contribute to the EDRCR with a four-year contribution beginning in 2017. Yet four of the most important CPR-TTF donors decreased their support (Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom), and several CPR-TTF donors are missing entirely (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Netherlands, United States and the Islamic Development Bank).

Resources under the new funding window may be declining because the new funding window structure divides the programme support in a way that may not align with some donor financing machinery — which tends to put all crisis/stabilization/humanitarian/recovery assistance in one basket, an approach that fit well with the previous 'single basket' CPR-TTF. Also, some decrease in funding is likely due to the highly earmarked nature of their contributions to the CPR-TTF. For example, the United States used the CPR-TTF as a preferred mechanism for initiatives administered via the Global Rule of Law Programme. As the new funding windows architecture was meant to discourage hard earmarking, some donors provided such funds as donor cost-sharing instead.

UNDP partnerships with other UN agencies and international financing institutions in support of conflict-affected countries continues to evolve and expand.

Partnerships on early recovery are identified and tracked through the IRRF under output 6.3, 'Innovative partnerships are used to inform national planning and identification of solutions for early recovery'. Over the Strategic Plan period only 1.5 percent to 2.2 percent of outcome 6 activities were coded against output 6.3. However, individuals interviewed for the evaluation pointed out that the single-output coding requirements of the results architecture meant that this output statement was rarely selected. This is because it contains multiple conditions and definitional ambiguities, and when national planning was also involved, country

offices tended to identify this work under output 6.2, ‘National and local authorities/institutions enabled to lead the community engagement, planning, coordination, delivery and monitoring of early recovery efforts’.

Evidence suggests that UNDP has in fact established extensive partnerships with other institutions — and for various reasons, often due to synergies and skill sets — rather than to raise funds. UNDP also has a growing number of so-called ‘stand-by-partner’ arrangements for immediate crisis response, enabling UNDP to deploy experts who are often fully funded by its partners. A few of the notable partnerships in support of countries affected by conflict are briefly described below.

In 2008, UNDP signed the Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning with the World Bank and European Commission. Since then, at least 48 PDNAs have been jointly conducted, many of them co-financed by the World Bank’s Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, and to a lesser extent by UNDP. The initiative has recently expanded to include a programme of PDNA capacity-building and additional tools, such as the 2015 Guide to Developing Disaster Recovery Frameworks. PDNA guidelines include gender-responsive tools, which have been used in recent disasters such as the Nepal earthquake. In parallel, the same organizations have supported approximately 10 post-crisis needs assessments since 2008. These have recently been renamed recovery and peacebuilding assessments in recognition of the value of conducting such assessments before conflict has fully ended, and of the importance of seeking ways to use the analysis and ensuing initiatives to support peace.

UNDP embarked on a multi-stakeholder partnership during this period: the Solutions Alliance, which focused on solutions to displacement. Until it closed in June 2017, it was governed by a board consisting of UNDP, UNHCR, World Bank, a donor, an international non-governmental organization and a humanitarian host government.

The Alliance was unable to deliver on its potential. Reasons may include overlap with other initiatives with similar mandates, each sponsored by a different lead agency (for example the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the Global Programme on Forced Displacement, and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, as well as subregional entities like the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat for the Horn of Africa). Donor limitations on funding for displacement solutions might also have contributed. In addition, durable refugee solutions are genuinely difficult in this era of reduced resettlement opportunity and unresolved conflicts in countries of origin. At the same time, refugee hosting governments experience very strong pressures to protect development funding for national citizens and to discourage refugee integration.

In Yemen, UNDP has partnered with the World Bank to implement a \$300 million emergency project supporting 2 million Yemenis, including internally displaced persons, across 22 governorates. The support combines cash-for-work programmes with improvements to public service delivery and repairs of critical infrastructure across the country. The project works through the Social Fund for Development and Public Works Programme, contributing to the resilience of two major institutional arms of poverty reduction efforts in Yemen. Local systems, capacities and institutions are used to resume and scale up service delivery, involving community leaders, youth, women, displaced people, returnees and other stakeholders in the identification of priorities and subprojects.

UNDP had a successful partnership with UNCDF on the Ebola worker payments project. In Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, UNDP programme management skills were combined with UNCDF technical expertise and World Bank capital to provide a successful and innovative payment solution, in a situation where personal and fiduciary security were at risk. The project is widely recognized as having been instrumental in maintaining Ebola health worker services at a time when any interruption could have been catastrophic.

Indeed, the project was so successful that Liberia and Sierra Leone have joined the Better Than Cash Alliance, in which they are working with UNCDF to digitize a wider band of government salary payments. The Ebola experience suggests that maintaining essential government salary payments during a time of crisis might be a strategic niche for UNDP — more strategic than humanitarian cash distribution.

Experience from the Ebola epidemic and Nepal both confirm that international and especially national UNV deployments can be cost-effective, technically capable and very fast. In the Ebola response, UNVs turned out to be among the most effective persons deployed. Even though they were not part of the regular SURGE mechanism they filled vital positions, especially in provincial and local coordination units in Sierra Leone, and in the government coordination unit in Guinea. Similarly, in Nepal, a cohort of national UNV engineers was quickly mobilized to perform building damage assessments and supervise safe demolition, and they later followed up with support for debris management.

The UNDP crisis response system is not well calibrated for handling slow-onset crises, resulting in some slow-onset and protracted crises falling through the gaps.

UNDP's current structure and accompanying specialized response mechanisms (fast track processes, Crisis Board standard operating procedures and SURGE deployments) are premised upon a sudden-onset emergency with a defined start date that triggers a series of immediate actions. While there may be several crises of this type in any given year, most crises are slow-onset conflicts whose defining characteristic is the humanitarian consequences of mass displacement. The CRU responds to these crises whenever and however it can, but it is hamstrung by the 45-day limitation on special deployments, which in practice are often extended to 90 or occasionally 180 days.

However, even stretching to 180 days may not meet the exceptional need for expert support in a country facing a protracted crisis. Country offices experiencing slow-onset crises due to conflict and/or migratory movements must look to humanitarian donors for funding, and to BPPS and the regional hubs for technical support. This works in cases that are on the global geopolitical radar (such as the five 3RP country programmes dealing with Syrian displacement, as well as in Iraq, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen). But some crises fall through the gaps of UNDP's response system, notably those in recent years in Central and West Africa, including in Central African Republic, Mali, Nigeria and the Great Lakes region.

Chapter 4

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMMATIC ISSUES

This chapter analyses UNDP's efforts to further cross-cutting programming principles that improve development results. These include measures to further gender equality and women's empowerment and facilitate South-South and triangular cooperation. They also address UNDP's approach to partnerships.

4.1 ENHANCING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Gender equality and women's empowerment are cross-cutting aspects of all UNDP programming. The Strategic Plan acknowledges their pivotal significance and recognizes that sustainable human development cannot be fully achieved unless and until women and girls can contribute on an equal basis with men and boys in their societies. This section analyses UNDP's work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2015 the IEO carried out a global assessment of this work, which underpins the following analysis.⁵⁹

The corporate Gender Equality Strategy (GES) for 2014–2017, a companion document to the Strategic Plan, aims to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment is integrated into every aspect of UNDP's work. The GES includes accountability measures to track implementation of this work and mandatory financial and human resource requirements. The GES is approved by UNDP's Executive Board.

Approximately \$84 million was spent on activities related to gender equality and women's empowerment during the Strategic Plan period. In addition to a stand-alone outcome, gender mainstreaming is a strategy to ensure that gender

equality and women's empowerment is an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of UNDP's support. The stand-alone outcome addresses special interventions for creating fundamental structural changes in institutions, policies and legislation that reduce gender disparities. The GES includes accountability measures to ensure that implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment activities has improved, and that mandatory financial and human resource requirements are fulfilled. It is approved by the Executive Board of UNDP.

OPERATIONALIZING THE GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

There have been incremental improvements in UNDP's gender equality and women's empowerment policy, institutional measures and programming. The Strategic Plan provides opportunities to increase gender equality contributions, as well as greater flexibility in how to achieve them. Despite progressive frameworks such as the GES, challenges remain in consistently mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment across the organization and meeting UNDP's financial and results targets for it.

The corporate GES provided an enabling framework for positioning UNDP to contribute to development goals on gender equality and women's empowerment and for structuring UNDP's response. The two-pronged approach to gender equality and women's empowerment — with targeted initiatives in addition to mainstreaming it across programme areas — aligns with UN commitments on gender equality, such as the SDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action. The GES is

59 UNDP IEO, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment', August 2015.

also consistent with the international conventions and global frameworks, which include a commitment to moving towards allocating 15 percent of UN-managed funds to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Although gender equality and women's empowerment indicators are integrated across the IRRF, they are often not connected to gender equality results. UNDP could not ensure commitment to implementation of the GES and enable consistent programming that contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment as a principal or significant objective. UNDP's regional and country programmes had the option of not including a gender-related outcome if gender equality indicators were mainstreamed into other outcomes. Most often this resulted in indicators that provided disaggregated data, rather than efforts to respond to gender concerns. In 2015, for example, 60 out of 134 country offices (45 percent) reported having a gender equality strategy or gender equality action plan that was aligned to the corporate GES,⁶⁰ and in 2016, this number increased to 80 out of 133 country offices⁶¹ (60 percent). However, measures for implementation of country-level strategies are lacking, and there has been limited progress in mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment into UNDP programme support.

New management processes and mechanisms have not been effective in strengthening internal accountability to gender equality and women's empowerment. The Gender Steering and Implementation Committee, which reports on implementation of the GES, has become a forum for problem-solving and sharing of practices. It has been less effective in ensuring implementation of the GES. A variety of institutional mechanisms have been created in recent years — for example, the gender marker and the revised guidance note for it. Yet the institutional measures and guidance did not ensure implementation of the GES

and gender-integrated programming. Even large programmes at global and country level did not give sufficient attention to mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment. The gender seal programme has motivated several country offices to improve their internal and programmatic gender equality work, although this programme has yet to reach its full potential.

Also, resources allocated to gender-related activities have declined during the Strategic Plan period. Going by the existing programme expenditure data, overall spending on gender-specific programming and mainstreaming remains at about 4 percent. Although gender-integrated programming has increased in some areas, the corporate commitment to dedicate 15 percent of funds to programming on gender equality and women's empowerment is yet to be fully implemented. The gender marker has limitations as a tool for ensuring compliance on this resource allocation. Though UNDP created Strategic Plan outcome 4 for gender equality and women's empowerment, only 0.7 percent of the expenditure (for 2014–2016) was on this stand-alone outcome.

Despite the organization's commitment to gender mainstreaming, overall spending on gender-specific programming (Gen3) remains at 4 percent. The expenditure for gender mainstreaming increased from 30 percent in 2013 (during the previous Strategic Plan) to 40 percent in 2016. Of the 34 corresponding Strategic Plan outputs, only two met or exceeded the 15 percent target, one of which was the output linked to peacebuilding programmes.

The expenditure data on gender equality and women's empowerment do not comprise a planned spending pattern, but rather are estimated figures based on the assumption of benefit to this area through various thematic activities, and they are often overestimated. The high percentage of spending on gender mainstreaming

60 UNDP, Result Oriented Action Results, 'C.2 Gender Organisational Results,' 2015.

61 UNDP, Result Oriented Action Results, 'C.2 Gender Organisational Results,' 2016.

as reported cannot, therefore, be substantiated at either country or regional levels.

The improvements in the gender architecture, such as locating experts in regional hubs and forming multidisciplinary focal teams in country offices, have not translated into stronger results. In part, this is because the process is still ongoing, and the country offices and regional hubs lack sufficient gender expertise. The GES pledges approximately 70 gender advisers, to be located at headquarters and the regional bureaux and in all country offices with a budget of over \$25 million, and this has not been met. Organizational restructuring hampered gender capacities at global and regional levels, reducing the number of staff. Instead country offices typically use multidisciplinary gender focal teams headed by senior managers, with a terms of reference and action plan. The percentage of country offices with gender focal teams (instead of gender advisers) increased from 45 percent in 2014 to 67 percent in 2015.⁶² The expertise and time commitment of the gender focal teams remains low, making them a less effective mechanism.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

UNDP's work at global and regional levels has a strong research and analysis approach, which seeks to identify gaps and good practices to inform policy and advocacy on gender equality and women's empowerment. Lack of implementation of this aspect of UNDP's work undermined the organization's contribution to global and regional policy and advocacy processes.

UNDP has contributed to operationalizing global and regional intergovernmental agreements and conventions on gender equality. At the global

level, UNDP contributed to the 2015 Paris Climate Conference (COP21) and events leading up to it to ensure that gender equality and its links to climate change and environment were on the agenda.⁶³ This involved organizing high-level events, preparing publications and facilitating engagement by women's organizations. UNDP has successfully mobilized additional resources to support 10 countries on gender-responsive planning and implementation, as part of implementing the Nationally Determined Contribution. Initiatives such as the Global Gender Climate Change Alliance and the UNDP Canada Adaptation Facility have the potential to further global advocacy on integrating gender in climate change agenda. After COP21, the focus shifted to developing knowledge products and tools to implement the agreement.

Some initiatives at regional level catalysed attention on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Africa 2016 Regional Human Development Report, with a focus on accelerating gender equality, has contributed to policy debate and discussions on the steps needed to ensure that gender equality is more fully integrated into national agendas and policy dialogues across Africa. These steps include addressing the contradiction between legal provisions and practice in gender laws; breaking down harmful social norms; transforming discriminatory institutional settings; and securing women's economic, social and political participation.⁶⁴ In Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS), the 2016 Regional Human Development Report addressed women's political participation and economic development.⁶⁵

While UNDP supported initiatives that have the potential to inform regional policy and advocacy

62 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, 'UNDP Institutional Assessment Report', 2017.

63 UNDP, 'Annual report of the Administrator on the implementation of the UNDP gender equality strategy in 2015' (DP/2016/11), 28 April 2016.

64 UNDP, 'Africa Human Development Report 2016: Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa', 2016.

65 UNDP, 'Progress at Risk: Inequalities and Human Development in Eastern Europe, Turkey and Central Asia, Regional Human Development Report 2016', 2016.

and that are critical for furthering gender equality perspectives, consistent engagement was not possible. One of the reasons for this was that advocacy on gender equality and women's empowerment was not part of UNDP's thematic engagement, but instead a stand-alone activity. Another is that not all UNDP staff contributed adequately to this area in their work. Given limited resources that can be assigned to regional initiatives, a longer term engagement was not possible. There was also a lack of consistent messaging about the priority of gender equality and women's empowerment issues for the organization.

The democratic governance programme demonstrated strong gender-inclusive approaches.

UNDP strengthened the policy framework for gender equality in public service and contributed to data analysis to inform gender-inclusive public processes. An initiative on gender equality in public administration is gathering data to develop a baseline for gender equity in public service and in decision-making positions, where the data are now incomplete, inaccessible or missing. UNDP is developing indicators, to be followed by an index, to track progress and inform decision-making (in partnership with the Woodrow Wilson Centre). These data are expected to inform decision-makers on gender issues in public service at national levels. In ECIS, a methodology to assess the effect of transparency and corruption on gender equality in public administration, developed in partnership with OECD, has had wide usage.⁶⁶

Gender mainstreaming received comparatively better attention in some programme areas. At the country level, UNDP has been at the forefront of promoting women's participation and representa-

tion in parliament. UNDP's support to upstream issues across many countries provided an advantage over other actors in contributing to the development of gender-related laws, policies and constitutions. Gender-targeted interventions have focused on strengthening networks and capacity-building of organized groups of parliamentarians such as women's parliamentary caucuses and forums for members of parliament.

For instance, in the Arab States region, the support provided through the *Mosharaka* (participation) project to the regional network on constitution-making and legislative reform established a solid foundation to generate knowledge on constitution-making processes. Network members advocate at the national level for inclusive and equal participation in formulating constitutions and in legal reform. UNDP also aided women's participation in elections, with significant results in raising the number of female candidates and their election. Although the need to go beyond numbers of women in parliament and begin to move towards influencing policies was acknowledged, concrete efforts were not made, given the political sensitivities and lack of interest by the respective governments.⁶⁷

Many evaluations reviewed as part of this evaluation indicated explicitly or implicitly that the length of a typical project (about three years) was insufficient to bring about change because of the deeply rooted barriers to gender equality. A three-year period was often sufficient to pass legal, policy and institutional reforms and carry out training with many stakeholder groups. However, this was not enough time to ensure that reforms were consistently implemented or that training and capacity-building brought about real change in daily practice.

66 Lilit Melikyan and Olena Krylova, 'UNDP Regional Programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2014–2017): Midterm Outcome Evaluation', UNDP, 2016, p. 35.

67 See Olena Krylova, 'Mid-Term Review Report: Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia' Program, Swiss Cooperation Office, South Caucasus, September 2016; UNDP and UN-Women, 'Final Report: Terminal Evaluation of the Increased Political Participation of Women in Samoa (IPPWS)', September 2016; Aida Orgocka, 'Evaluation Report: External Evaluation of the Project "Enhancing Women's Political Representation through Improved Capacity and Enhanced Support in Moldova,"' UN-Women Moldova, December 2016; UNDP IEO, 'Evaluation of UNDP Contribution to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,' August 2015.

UNDP supported the improvement of economic opportunities for women, helping to usher in upstream policy reforms and downstream microcredit schemes and employment opportunities. Progress in mainstreaming gender aspects to environmental and energy programming has been limited.

UNDP had better success when it worked on women-specific initiatives. An analysis of country programmes shows a range of mechanisms UNDP is using in support of women's empowerment. In Bangladesh, Kenya and Nepal, for example, UNDP focused on the upstream policy enabling environment and institutional capacity-building, while downstream interventions created opportunities for specific groups to expand their businesses.⁶⁸ In Bangladesh, UNDP has worked to create synergies between its poverty programming and efforts to eliminate SGBV. Tangible progress is being made in expanding women-run businesses in several countries through microcredit schemes aimed at rural poor people, particularly women. Initiatives such as the Gender Equality Seal for Private and Public Enterprises are seen as a unique contribution.

There have been efforts to integrate gender aspects to environmental and energy programming, particularly in terms of policy advocacy at the global level. There were examples of integrating gender into biodiversity policy through the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan forum. However, progress has been slow on mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in UNDP's environment and energy programmes. Despite the adoption of social and environmental standards and

several forms of guidance, there were missed opportunities in using environment and energy projects as entry points to promote gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable development.

One of the main reasons for the weakness in gender responsiveness is that until recently the GEF had only minimal requirements to include gender indicators, targets and outputs. An evaluation of the GEF project to assist least-developed countries to advance their national climate change adaptation plans underlined the lack of gender analysis and absence of specific results indicators or targets on gender equality and women's empowerment.⁶⁹

The GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme required gender analysis, and the 2015 evaluation of the programme found that 52 percent of projects contributed significantly to gender equality and women's empowerment, up from 35 percent in the previous SGP evaluation.⁷⁰ Yet the SGP evaluation indicated that SGP's gender guideline (including gender analysis) is not strictly enforced, as the SGP adopts a flexible approach given the multitude of contexts in which it works. Even in cases where gender analysis was rigorous, evaluations of gender components of environmental projects found that UNDP's lack of a systematic approach led to outcomes with limited consideration of gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights.

In crisis response and disaster risk reduction, important steps have been taken to mainstream gender, but most efforts are focused on trainings, which did not result in the creation of a gender-responsive plan. Further strengthen-

68 Sen, Binayak et al., 'Independent Mid-term Outcome Evaluation Country Programme Document (CPD) for Bangladesh (2012-2016): Outcome 2.1', Final report, UNDP Bangladesh, 2016; Kacapor-Dzihic, Zehra and Aliyov Marodaseynov, 'Outcome Evaluation, Poverty Reduction and Achievement of MDGs, August 2015', UNDP Tajikistan; Talafre, Joana and Erum Hasan, 'Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/UNEP/GEF project "Assisting Least Developed Countries with Country-Driven Processes to Advance National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)"', UNEP Evaluation Office, April 2016.

69 Joana Talafre and Erum Hasan, 'Terminal Evaluation of the UNDP/UNEP/GEF project "Assisting Least Developed Countries with Country-Driven Processes to Advance National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)"', UNEP Evaluation Office, April 2016.

70 GEF IEO and UNDP IEO, 'Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation of the Small Grants Programme', July 2015.

ing is needed, especially in the preparation of national disaster response plans, along with a cross-sectoral approach to resilience.

UNDP is committed to addressing the recommendations arising from the 2015 evaluation of the GES and has been working closely with the CRU to ensure that women are empowered and fully engaged during crisis responses, and that gender equality is addressed systematically in crisis recovery planning and management. This has included revision of the standard operating procedures for crisis response and development of crisis response packages with gender equality as a fundamental principal. Moreover, a gender expert profile has been included in a new category of deployment called first responders, who are to be deployed within 24 hours of the crisis onset.⁷¹

UNDP also supported preparation of comprehensive risk management policies and programmes that are gender sensitive and address the major drivers of climate change and disaster risks. Regarding gender integration, however, the disaster risk reduction project evaluations reviewed demonstrated that outcomes achieved revolved mostly around training.⁷² There is also less attention to gender mainstreaming in national disaster response.

At one level UNDP is to be commended for having a bold gender equality policy for crisis situations, the 'Eight Point Agenda: Practical, Positive Outcomes for Girls and Women in Crisis'. Approved in 2008, it was updated in 2013 and is again being revised to align with the SDGs and Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. At the same time, there is a

major gap in awareness about the links between gender and disaster risk in all participating countries at all levels of engagement. Similar to other UNDP policies related to gender equality and women's empowerment, the Eight Point Agenda lacks implementation.

UNDP made contributions to building institutional processes to prevent SGBV. While such contributions are important, the level of support is not sufficient to reduce SGBV. As in disaster response, there is a lack of explicit use of the Eight-Point Agenda.

UNDP has made important contributions to prevention of SGBV through policy support, evidence generation and advocacy. At country level, its support to SGBV is notable in countries affected by conflict, most often as part of programmes on access to justice, the security sector and strengthening of legal systems. Peacebuilding efforts have contributed to preventing SGBV and improving access to justice, but the projects have been on such a small scale that they were not perceived as relevant for the scale of the problem.⁷³ In many countries, UNDP has played a vital role in addressing issues that received limited attention, such as technical expertise on developing SGBV prevalence surveys. Given the range of peacebuilding areas UNDP supported, there are opportunities for UNDP to systematically support efforts to address SGBV issues.

Challenges remain in addressing SGBV issues in general, with too much focus on women-centric approaches. UNDP programme support benefited women, whether through access to justice programmes or the increasing numbers of women in the police or other security-

71 UNDP, 'Global Programme, 2014–2017, Mid-term review', 2016, p. 28.

72 Nana Gibradze, 'CRMI Evaluation Report — Phase II. Final Evaluation Report', UNDP, n.d.; Zubair Murshed, 'Strengthening Disaster Risk Management Capacity in Lebanon. Outcome Evaluation report, 2009-2014,' February 2015; and UNDP IEO, 'Assessment of Development Results, United Republic of Tanzania', 2014.

73 See UNDP IEO, 'Assessment of Development Results, Somalia'; Dorra, Sayed Jasser, 'DEEP-Women Entrepreneur (DEEP-WE) External Mid-Term Evaluation,' UNDP, Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, 2015; Ojha, Gana Pati and Ahmad Zubair Fattahi, 'Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Project,' UNDP Afghanistan, 2015; Momoh, Hindowa B. and Angelance Browne, 'Mid-Term Review: Country Programme Document UNDP-Liberia,' 2015.

sector institutions.⁷⁴ However, sustained efforts are needed for long-term outcomes. On Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1880 and 1889, UNDP implemented relevant activities, such as those aimed at increasing the proportion of women with decision-making responsibility in governance institutions, improving women's access to justice and supporting institutions that provide state security, promote women's participation in peacebuilding and prevent SGBV. However, even in countries with greater government ownership of the initiative — for example, Liberia — resolutions and activities were not linked with other peacebuilding and State-building efforts.

While joint programming involving UNDP and UN-Women has shown good results, the two organizations have yet to develop agreements and operating procedures to clarify their respective roles and reduce competition.

A 2015 IEO evaluation of UNDP's contribution to gender equality concluded that UNDP lacks clarity about its comparative advantage on gender issues. This limits the organization's capacity to engage in strategic interventions and meaningful partnerships. The best potential strategic partnership is with UN-Women, with which UNDP has engaged in a historically close and collaborative relationship.

The mandates of UNDP and UN-Women overlap on a range of issues. This has led to coordinated programming and joint work in many countries as well as some confusion and even mistrust in others. While both organizations acknowledge their comparative advantages, there remains a lack of clarity regarding each organization's position in addressing gender issues, especially in thematic areas where UNDP has technical expertise and substantial programming in place. In an environment of declining funding

for gender equality programming, the competition for scarce resources between the two organizations is counterproductive. Revisiting each agency's relative strengths and needs could add significant value to targeted programming in this austere funding environment.

4.2 FACILITATING SOUTH-SOUTH AND TRIANGULAR COOPERATION

The Strategic Plan envisages a role for UNDP in working with governments and non-State entities to facilitate knowledge, enable capacities in South-South and triangular cooperation, and support nationally driven development exchanges. SSC-TrC is conceptualized as a core element of UNDP programming and operations at global, interregional, regional and country levels. This section analyses UNDP's three strategic roles in support of SSC-TrC, as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

In 2016 UNDP adopted a new corporate strategy on SSC and TrC.⁷⁵ UNDP also hosts and funds the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), a UN system-wide unit to promote SSC and TrC. Although establishing the strategy was an important aspect of UNDP's support to SSC, the evaluation recognizes that it is too early to make judgments on the strategy's performance in all areas. Also, the evaluation did not assess the functioning or contribution of the UNOSSC.

UNDP has clarified its corporate structure and more precisely defined its operational approaches to SSC-TrC. UNDP's recently adopted SSC-TrC strategy has filled a fundamental policy gap and has the potential to provide direction for managing and facilitating South-South knowledge exchange for enhanced development results at country level.

74 See, IOB, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Gender, Peace and Security, Evaluation of the Netherlands and UN Security Council resolution 1325', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands, 2015.

75 UNDP, 'Accelerating Sustainable Development: South-South and Triangular Cooperation to Achieve the SDGs, a UNDP strategy', January 2016.

Adoption of a corporate strategy to enhance SSC-TrC to achieve the SDGs was a major UNDP commitment during the current Strategic Plan. The strategy created mechanisms to enable South-South engagement at the country level. It is inclusive, collaborative and systematic in its approach. Implementation of the strategy is evolving as it begins to foster an enabling environment at country and regional levels. The Strategy created mechanisms to enable South-South engagement at the global, regional and country levels. A significant step forward is strengthening UNDP's SSC-TrC accountabilities and functions by restructuring incentives and reforming internal management and operational systems. The SSC function has been institutionalized through the creation of an SSC-TrC team at headquarters, complemented by staff in the regional hubs. This is a significant step forward and demonstrates the organization's commitment to SSC.

Linking expenditure to actual SSC-TrC facilitation can lead to erroneous conclusions, as spending on SSC at the country level is not always an accurate indicator of the support provided, results achieved and partnerships strengthened. SSC-TrC facilitation did not always require financial resources, and the expenditure pattern reflects this incongruence. For the period 2014–2016 the SCC and TrC budget comprised over \$75.9 million, of which over 90 percent is from country programme non-core financial resources.

UNDP has upheld its commitment of allocating 0.5 percent (\$6.2 million) of regular resources to SSC and TrC, which includes \$3.5 million provided to the UNOSSC. Although these are modest resources, there are initiatives such as the Africa Regional Programme (the only regional programme to allocate SSC-specific seed funds), which led to the development of the regional SSC project in Africa, with contributions from nine country offices. Other SSC-related expenditures not accounted for here include, for example, UNDP support to UNOSSC and contributions from South-South funds such as the India, Brazil, South Africa Fund (IBSA Fund).

Given the tied nature of country programme funding, it was not feasible for country offices to assign funds for SSC and TrC. The Latin America and Caribbean region accounts for a major proportion of spending, with an expenditure of \$53.2 million of the total \$75.9 million spent globally. A large portion of the funds are cost-shared by host governments.

The integration of SSC and TrC into country programmes and other initiatives strengthened attention to SSC. This evaluation examined 57 CPDs approved since 2015, all of which have integrated SSC-TrC initiatives. A limitation, however, was that the country programmes do not identify areas where there are unmet South-South needs or there is potential for exchange. While the reporting on SSC-TRC has improved, it does not fully capture UNDP's SSC role and contribution, especially its role as a knowledge broker. Initiatives such as the Africa SSC mapping exercise provided more specific information on the areas where there is need and potential for SSC.

Challenges remain in mainstreaming SSC into UNDP's programme implementation. UNDP is yet to prioritize areas where South-South exchange will be pursued more systematically. Demand for facilitation of global development exchanges between countries is growing in the South. While UNDP made efforts to respond to such demands, the scale and scope of such facilitation are not commensurate with UNDP's potential. Building national SSC capacities to harmonize policies, legal frameworks and regulations has received the least amount of attention.

The number of South-South initiatives carried out by country and regional programmes has declined, and support to South-South knowledge facilitation has remained reactive, a result of competing priorities in country offices. Difficulties with conceptual clarity on pursuing SSC-TrC were evident in UNDP programme units. Country case studies carried out for this evaluation show that partner governments wish to share their development lessons with other countries.

Yet such demands are unmet, and there remain limitations in responding to the demands of the aspiring countries to strengthen their SSC capacities. There is a clear unmet demand for customized South-South advisory support.

UNDP's SSC initiatives at country level indicated possible opportunities for filling this demand. At the same time, they also underscored the lack of a strategic approach to leverage the entry points provided by UNDP programmes. There were several missed opportunities due to the lack of a programmatic orientation to SSC.

A case in point is the local development and access to information area in Bangladesh, where UNDP has long been engaged in providing technical and implementation support. The government of Bangladesh believes that its local development models can be replicated in other countries with a similar development context. While UNDP has supported local development work in over 50 countries, there is no well-developed knowledge facilitation approach and practice that can respond to the demands of the partner countries. Programming took place in an ad hoc way, making it more difficult for the SSC units and staff to achieve the intended outcomes.

UNDP's more focused capacity development initiatives had tangible outcomes. An example of this is creation of the Uruguayan International Cooperation Agency and formulation and implementation of the country's South-South cooperation strategy.⁷⁶ Technical support from UNDP also enabled governments to fulfil their international obligations in a timely manner. Such support to Bangladesh enabled the government to fulfil its obligations, as Chair of the High-Level Committee on SSC, to organize the high-level meeting on 'Post-2015 Development Agenda: Financing for Development in the South and Technology Transfer', and to conceptualize and draft the outcome docu-

ment. Through the REDD+ project, Mexico has become an important participant, generating a virtual platform for dissemination and knowledge transfer related to forest monitoring, as well as documentation on case studies dealing with financing and monitoring REDD+ experiences in Mexico.⁷⁷ REDD+ was successful in enabling interregional SSC, particularly between countries in Latin American and Africa.

South-South facilitation of knowledge and support exchange during crises has been an important area of UNDP support. During the Ebola crisis, UNDP partnered with the government of South Africa to deploy autoclaves in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. This allowed for the timely and safe disposal of medical waste, critical support at the peak of the crisis. With Japan, UNDP supported a livelihood improvement initiative in Tajik-Afghanistan border areas to promote stability and security in adjacent provinces.

The opportunities for promoting knowledge facilitation between countries varied across regions, and considerable demand remains in each region. UNDP intends to use tools such as Global Development Solutions Exchange (also referred to as SSMart for SDGs) for an informed exchange between countries to share development knowledge and practices. Yet specific measures are needed to ensure sustainability. Although the recent launch of the platform makes it less useful for an evaluation, lessons from UNOSSC's South-South Global Assets and Technology Exchange platform, which faced many operational challenges and is being withdrawn, will be important in making meaningful use of the platform.

UNDP's mapping of SSC solutions in each region provided a robust database for scaling up and replication. While such content is critical, constant updating is necessary given the development dynamics and evolving needs of the

76 UNDP IEO, 'Assessment of Development Results, Uruguay', March 2015, p.35.

77 Mari Onestini, 'Terminal Evaluation of the Reinforcing REDD+ Readiness in Mexico and Enabling South-South Cooperation Project', UNDP, 2015, pp. 14-15.

countries. The creation of these opportunities for dialogue in exchange has positioned UNDP as a relevant actor in SSC. Yet lack of resources is already posing a challenge. If this continues, it is likely to hinder exchanges between the countries and the provision of adequate information to enable such exchanges. Other joint initiatives, such as the Global Coalition of Think Tank Networks for South-South Cooperation, while conceptually pertinent, have operational challenges. It would be hard to sustain their momentum unless strong partnerships are established. Constraints also remain in strengthening partnerships with governments to ensure more active participation.

It is critical to bring together development practitioners and institutions from the global South to explore the possibilities of knowledge exchange. Yet by itself, this effort is not sufficient to meet all facilitation needs. Knowledge expos organized by UNDP did not add value unless they were part of a larger programme effort, with the possibility of follow-up and further facilitation. Such initiatives were not sufficient to allow UNDP to stay relevant in a fast-evolving development cooperation environment with high demand for strategic facilitation.

Knowledge sharing and brokering activities that enabled exchange had a larger programmatic element — for example, the Climate Public Expenditure Review process from Asia and Africa to the Latin America and Caribbean region — or strengthened partnerships for further action.⁷⁸ The Caribbean Risk Management Initiative in Latin America designed a pilot project to replicate the Cuban model of risk reduction management centres through learning exchanges. Stakeholders from government institutions of Caribbean countries received training in the Cuban model and adapted it to their situation.

This worked because it was dynamic, not static, and could be adjusted to other country conditions.

UNDP did not prioritize systematic engagement in knowledge facilitation. Most country-level initiatives are stand-alone activities, such as exchange visits, study tours and workshops, and these did not result in the exchange of practices in all cases. Also, knowledge products in most cases did not inform knowledge exchange or country programme efforts.⁷⁹ There is unmet demand by country offices for a systematic analysis of SSC work areas, and for sharing of best practices.⁸⁰ Regional initiatives such as the Asia-Pacific Development Effectiveness Facility complement South-South dialogue and cooperation on issues related to development effectiveness and financing. There is considerable demand for facilitation in other programme areas of UNDP.

With exceptions, UNDP global policy centres are not designed to facilitate SSC and TrC objectives. These centres have carried out research and activities that promote South-South cooperation, although this is not their main activity. Despite UNDP promotion of new ideas and approaches, most initiatives are stand-alone activities with limited cross-country learning and replication. Of the six global policy centres, only the Rio centre explicitly named SSC as a priority, and its knowledge facilitation on social protection has contributed to policy and advocacy.

For example, the Rio Centre facilitated a partnership between the governments of Brazil and Senegal and the African Union. It provided an opportunity for high-level international deliberation on how to broaden the concept of social protection in Africa. The resulting recommendations were endorsed by the 70 ministers present at the First Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and

78 Javier Jahnsen, 'UNDP Regional Programme for Latin America and Caribbean, Midterm External Review', UNDP, February 2016, p. 39.

79 UNDP IEO, 'Assessment of Development Results, Viet Nam', June 2016, p. 7.

80 Lilit V. Melikyan et al., 'Regional Programme for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2014–17): Midterm Outcome Evaluation', UNDP, 2016, p. 48.

Employment of the African Union. They were then taken forward to the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union.⁸¹

The links between internal and external knowledge management and South-South facilitation are important for more effective support. While UNDP recognizes this, knowledge management remains a weak link in its support to SSC. Knowledge management, innovation and South-South facilitation links are evolving at a slow pace.

The value UNDP brings to SSC is the knowledge from its global programming in diverse development contexts. Knowledge management is at the heart of South-South cooperation, and it is therefore essential to integrate this dimension into action strategies. At a practical level not all knowledge has transfer potential, and not all knowledge is transferable to any context. There remains the challenge in systematizing knowledge to make it transferable. UNDP currently responds in an ad hoc manner to country requests for SSC. It has yet to define a structure for the systematic compilation of development lessons and solutions that can be widely applied and used. Strengthening UNDP's knowledge management system and approaches is fundamental to its effectiveness in South-South engagement.

Attention to knowledge management at the country level is not adequate, and the country offices are poorly equipped to draw and document programmatic lessons for wider use. As discussed in chapter 6 headquarters units and regional hubs are not sufficiently geared to support knowledge management. Partnerships for SSC lack a sufficiently strategic orientation and investment of time and resources. There was a limited investment in both knowledge management and a systematic approach to linking knowledge with South-South exchange. A coherent approach to related areas of

work such as innovation and impact investment also has yet to be harnessed within the broader framework of knowledge management.

UNDP provides financial and operational support to UNOSSC and has collaborated with the office on promising new initiatives.

UNDP contributes \$3.5 million annually to UNOSSC, providing its core administrative resources. The evaluation has not made a detailed assessment of UNOSSC's performance and contribution. However, it can be noted that the UNDP Office of Audit and Investigations audited the UNOSSC in 2016, identifying significant gaps in its programme performance and management. The audit follow-up report (February 2017) states that 15 of the 16 recommendations made have been implemented, and the remaining one is in progress. This indicates strong efforts to align with UNDP's management and reporting structures.

Joint initiatives between UNDP and UNOSSC, such as the Global Coalition of Think Tanks for South-South Cooperation and the Africa South-South platform, are useful for building momentum for South-South knowledge exchange.

4.3 PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This section assesses UNDP's approach to partnerships at corporate and country level, and some of the factors that facilitate and constrain partnerships. The analysis paid special attention to UNDP's partnership approach, its partnerships with other UN agencies and multilateral agencies, and non-funding collaborations with donor countries, civil society organizations and the private sector. The analysis does not go into the details of partnerships forged in each programme area as they are covered under the thematic sections of this report.

81 African Union, 'Social Protection for Inclusive Development', draft concept note, first session of the Specialised Technical Committee on Social Development, Labour and Employment, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2015. See: https://au.int/web/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/28072-wd-draft_concept_note-_1stc-2015-english.pdf.

Fulfilling the ambitious targets of the UNDP Strategic Plan requires robust partnerships, for both funding and programme purposes. At the corporate level, the UNDP partnerships strategy lacks the nuance needed for developing new long-term partnerships and non-traditional funding mechanisms.

Central to UNDP's approach relative to the post-2015 agenda is building and enabling partnerships for development. UNDP has a diverse array of funding and programme partnerships. They have helped UNDP strengthen its reach in the global policy arena and increase project delivery through mobilization of additional resources, expertise and networks.

UNDP's funding partnerships during the Strategic Plan period were not able to keep pace with ODA trends and the steep decline in core resources, or the high costs of restructuring. Earmarked funding stayed steady for the most part, with gains from the GEF and Global Fund vertical funds and government cost-sharing. But UNDP was slow to revise its fund mobilization strategies to compensate for the new funding paradigm. New thematic windows in areas such as governance, while important, have only recently come on line. They have yet to show significant achievement in mobilizing funds or forging programmatic partnerships.

Diversification of the funding base has been somewhat scattershot, lacking a clear portfolio approach. The push to develop new revenue opportunities has also made UNDP more susceptible to venturing into areas that at times are not core to its mandate, with evidence that some country offices are launching projects at the periphery of UNDP's strategic focus and competence. This is not typical of UNDP, as several UN agencies are venturing into areas beyond their own mandate. UNDP's main challenge is not a lack of fundraising efforts but effective coordination of them for maximum impact.

UNDP made efforts to strengthen development partnerships with emerging (Southern) donor countries, but progress in building mutually ben-

eficial cooperation has been slow. In the past four years, UNDP negotiated and signed partnership/collaboration framework agreements with key emerging donors such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Turkey. However, progress in building mutually beneficial cooperation has been slow. This is partly because emerging donors, similar to traditional donors from the North, have their own priorities and modalities. Emerging donors also have tended to orient their ODA towards bilateral funding and to partnership modalities outside the UN and other multilateral institutions, such as China's Silk Road initiative and South South Fund.

The Strategic Plan and accompanying budget have yet to be augmented with a delineated partnership strategy that articulates new and innovative funding ideas and budget targets. However, new ways of programming, for instance through impact investments and crowdsourcing, are being considered and initial pilots planned. UNDP will have to balance its appetite for new sources of funding against its reasonable reluctance to take on investment and reputational risk.

Institutionalizing government cost-sharing across country offices brings new dimensions to UNDP's country-level partnerships. While this is inevitable given current funding constraints and the need to ensure greater national ownership, UNDP should take risk mitigation measures to safeguard its neutrality.

Given the rapidly changing global development assistance environment, and reductions in core and country-level resources, UNDP is forced to explore alternative ways of raising funds to support its country-level operations. UNDP has long implemented government programmes in several countries, involving both international and government funding. It has been providing procurement-related support in middle- and upper-middle-income countries, as well as in countries affected by conflict and natural disasters.

In the Latin America and Caribbean region and to some extent in the Arab States UNDP country

offices have a history of providing direct services. These have included infrastructure project management and procurement, payroll management and other fiduciary support. However, UNDP has been cutting back on this type of engagement in some countries.⁸² In the current financial climate, a number of UNDP offices have sought similar opportunities to provide development services. In the Asia region, the reduction in bilateral support combined with declining core resources has prompted UNDP to explore various fundraising options to maintain country offices.

In the past five years, one country programme operation has closed per year on average, and there is a concern that more country offices may have to cease operations unless action is taken to mobilize funding. Measures such as centralizing extra-budgetary resources to redistribute funds to country offices that cannot mobilize resources did not address funding challenges entirely (for more detail see chapter 6, on institutional effectiveness). The Asia-Pacific regional bureau is positioning UNDP as a provider of global development services, and some country offices have included such services in their country programmes. For example, the UNDP India office website identifies a set of available development services, including conference management. In Europe and Central Asia country offices are also being encouraged to explore opportunities to provide services to sustain country office operations and make up for declining core resources.

It is too early to speculate on governments' enthusiasm for contracting with UNDP for ad hoc development services, and it will certainly vary across countries. Case studies indicate that some countries are interested in having UNDP play such a role, particularly where UNDP mobilizes part of the resources or provides technical expertise that is not locally available. In quite a few middle- and upper- middle-income countries with the financial capacity to contract for high-cost international expertise, there is

considerable scope for UNDP to provide development services.

As UNDP considers new service models of this kind, it needs to address potential conflicts of interest. As a 'tax free' UN agency, it operates in a different realm than contractors, and questions have already been raised in cases where UNDP has successfully bid against non-governmental entities for European Union contracts. On an operational level, UNDP country offices would need to consider new hiring strategies to build technical and procurement competencies for development services.

Promising efforts are under way to build partnerships with the private sector, especially for improved environmental management and job creation. UNDP has recently developed a due diligence policy to safeguard the integrity of its public-private partnerships.

Public-private partnerships are recognized as critical to sustainable development. The Strategic Plan made specific reference to expanding markets for sustainable products and improved adherence to national and international environmental and social standards. Private sector engagement is also significant to UNDP livelihood and job creation efforts, which by definition seek to expand the private sector. There has been limited evaluative work at global and regional levels on the results of UNDP's public-private partnerships.

UNDP partnership initiatives with the private sector underscore their potential to enhance development change. Aid-for-trade projects in ECIS and the Arab States region aim to foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth by promoting trade and enhancing competitiveness. Through a partnership with the GEF, UN-REDD, the Swiss Government, several multinational companies and host governments, UNDP launched a green commodities programme in 2009. Its aim is to establish national commodity platforms, sup-

82 For instance, UNDP's procurement-related work in Brazil during this period was significantly curtailed as a result of a decision by the national government to cease asking UNDP to carry out such services.

port national and legislative reforms, and improve national and subnational support systems.

Agriculture commodity platforms are now active in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Indonesia and Paraguay, helping address the sustainability of vital commodities such as palm oil, cocoa, coffee, pineapple, fisheries, soy and beef. The platforms bring together public and private sector stakeholders to consider changes to public policy, legislation and enforcement. They also stimulate financial and technical support for small farmers to improve production techniques and grow and sell their produce more sustainably.

Other notable collaborations are in the information technology (IT) sector. One involves the Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development and IBM on skills development in the Middle East and Africa. Another is UNDP's partnership with IBM in building the IT skills of the workforce in Africa.

While UNDP has been less active on public-private partnerships in its social protection and governance areas of work, a noteworthy initiative during the current Strategic Plan period is the Social Impact Fund, set up in 2015. This co-investment platform allows entrepreneurs, philanthropists and capital market investors to create both economic and social dividends while facilitating the transition from grant-only project-based development to the blended financing of market-based development. The Social Impact Fund and innovative methods such as impact investment are in the early stages of development, yet show promise for promoting development solutions. UNDP also hosts the Business Call to Action, which prompts companies to advance core business activities that involve poor communities and contribute to achieving the SDGs.

Overall, UNDP mobilizes a fairly low level of resources from private sector channels (approximately \$40 million annually). However this does not fully account for project co-financing and the financial responsibilities taken on by private sector interests as a result of UNDP program-

ming. While UNDP has developed a resource mobilization action plan, private sector resource mobilization toolkit, and a due diligence policy to safeguard the integrity of partnerships with the private sector, funding or risk management to significantly leverage the private sector as a development partner is evolving.

Partnerships with other UN agencies at the country level have evolved and been strengthened. The results from Delivering as One (DaO) pilot countries and through the UNDAF process suggest more work is needed to harmonize systems before joint programming can routinely be done effectively and efficiently.

UNDP has played an important convening role as a UN development group chair, supporting the resident coordinator system, facilitating management of UN pool funds and coordinating crisis response. As chair of the UN development group, UNDP has the dual responsibilities of coordinating UN development efforts and enabling the engagement of smaller UN agencies.

Within the DaO framework, UNDP demonstrated synergy with other UN agencies' programmes to enhance programme strategizing and contribution. The multidimensional characteristics of some areas, such as governance, gender and social inclusion, have offered a good entry point for joint programming among UN agencies. While UNDP benefited in some situations, it often conceded development and funding opportunities to other agencies within the DAO system.

UN coordination in general, and specifically at the country level, is constrained by the different rules and individual mandates of each agency. The UN system lacks the right coordination tools to facilitate close coordination of agencies' country-level activities, although the UNDAF has been a useful initial tool in fostering better coordination. UN agencies have been slow to move towards standardized UN reporting. UNDP is just beginning to work with several counterpart agencies to harmonize due diligence systems so they can

purchase goods and services from the same providers without duplicating due diligence procedures. The complications of non-harmonized procedures, different management approaches and incompatible financial systems impede the efficient delivery of results. This adds a considerable burden to joint programming efforts.

The DaO mechanism can be viewed as a planning mechanism, and to a lesser extent as an implementation or fund mobilization mechanism. UN agencies (including UNDP) have been opportunistic through the DaO piloting efforts, safeguarding their service lines in order to mobilize their own programme resources. There has been limited willingness to engage in joint initiatives other than for funding compliance.

Delivery in the DaO countries has been challenging at times, with slower delivery and in some cases lower quality contributions. The DaO modality has increased workloads, affecting UNDP operations. The time and resources needed to engage in cumbersome coordination structures involving multiple UN agencies and respective government partners can call into question the benefits, especially for small-scale, low-budget initiatives. For national development partners, the UNDAF, DaO and other UN coordination mechanisms are expected to improve coordination of support among UN agencies. They are not intended to further complicate national partnerships or to soak up funds needed for programmes.

Viewed case by case and agency by agency, there have been strong and successful partnerships set in place during the Strategic Plan period. Across countries where UNDP partnered with UNVs and UNCDF, contributions to national development outcomes have been enhanced. The UNV collaboration has been particularly important in crisis countries, supporting UNDP and UN efforts across programme areas and in remote areas of the country. Collaboration with UNCDF has been vital to efforts to establish financing models at national and local levels to reduce poverty and support economic development.

There are also examples of UNDP's successful cooperation with other UN agencies on specific measures. These include the Spanish MDG fund mechanism, which the IEO evaluated as part of its MDG evaluation in 2014, and the UN Partnership Programme on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was positively evaluated in the 2016 evaluation of UNDP contribution to disability-inclusive development. In both cases, participants indicated that the relatively small budget available for each country project, and pre-arranged planning and implementation mechanisms, reduced significantly the time and friction in project start-up and implementation.

The UNDP partnerships with the GEF, Global Fund and other vertical funds is crucial for both UNDP and the funds.

UNDP's Strategic Plan is compatible with the aims of the main environmental funds it partners with: the GEF and related environmental funds, including the new Green Climate Fund. UNDP has leveraged GEF finances to complement national environment and energy efforts, introducing new approaches and practices at the country level. As an implementing partner to the GEF since its inception, UNDP has been pivotal in its success.

In past evaluations the IEO has drawn attention to the UNDP/GEF unit as being a separate, silo entity, apart from the rest of UNDP programming. However, during this strategic planning period there has been significantly greater convergence. Also during the past decade, the GEF has placed greater emphasis on economic benefits and poverty reduction as important drivers of environmental protection.

UNDP support to the Global Fund is essentially operational and technical. UNDP acts as the primary recipient of its funds in countries with nascent capacities and difficult governance contexts. Yet this partnership has been important beyond this fiduciary role, in enabling health sector capacity development, which is synergistically contributing to development results in line with UNDP's Strategic Plan.

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

The Global Programme and the five regional programmes have a complementary mandate to facilitate UNDP's engagement in policy debates at global and regional levels. The programmes aim to position UNDP as a thought leader in enabling global public goods; provide technical support and policy advice to UNDP country offices to enable them to better respond to development challenges; and promote catalytic programme ideas. This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the contribution of the Fifth Global Programme (GP-V) and the five regional programmes (RPs) in Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the CIS, and Latin America and the Caribbean, as follows:

- Approach and financing of the GP-V and the RPs
- Findings that focus on areas common to both GP-V and the RPs, such as advisory and support services, innovation, knowledge management and promotion of gender equality
- Assessment of the specific contribution of the GP-V
- Assessment of the contributions of the five RPs

5.1 APPROACH AND FINANCING

The GP-V was established to respond to the complexity of development challenges. It aims to develop rigorously researched, practical solutions that draw on UNDP's global pool of knowledge, learning and expertise. Guided by the broad priority areas of the Strategic Plan, the GP-V is intended to provide a coherent architecture for

UNDP's global policy advice and programme support services.

The GP-V channels evidence, knowledge and expertise gained by UNDP through its country- and regional- level support in providing advisory and support services and in global policy engagement, including for furthering multilateral agreements and frameworks. The GP-V contributes to all seven outcomes of the Strategic Plan through a subset of outputs. It is intended to help UNDP programme units meet the organization's goals and follow its programming principles.⁸³ The functions of the GP-V are global research and analysis; advocacy and measurement for global thought leadership; cross-regional initiatives, innovation and knowledge management; development of standards; and quality assurance and coherence.⁸⁴ A significant component of the GP-V comprises policy and advisory staff to facilitate the policy function of the Strategic Plan.

BPPS manages the GP-V, and the bureau director has overall responsibility for its performance. Implementation of the programme is decentralized, and about half of the policy advisers funded through the global programme are based in the five regional hubs — in Addis Ababa, Amman, Bangkok, Istanbul and Panama — where they provide advisory services to UNDP country offices and implement GP-V and RP activities.

The RPs have objectives largely comparable to those of the Global Programme. They aim to promote regional public goods based on strengthened regional cooperation and integration. All the RPs promote innovative programming ideas on issues

83 UNDP, 'UNDP Global Programme 2014–2017', January 2014.

84 UNDP, 'Global Programme Guidance Note', BPPS, January 2013.

that are specific to their region. In addition to regional projects, the RPs provide advisory services and knowledge management functions, often in collaboration with GP-V efforts. The regional programmes are broadly aligned with the outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2014–2017, and with exceptions, the choice is similar across regions.

The RP strategy is based on five mutually reinforcing regionality principles, which define the added value of regional or subregional approaches to addressing development challenges. UNDP considers SSC-TrC as a cross-cutting principle of the RPs, to buttress intercountry initiatives that accelerate regional integration. The main regionality principles addressed by the RPs are promotion of regional public goods and services; management of cross-border externalities; advancement of multi-country dialogue on sensitive issues; advancement of innovation in development; and generation and sharing of development knowledge.

Two factors have affected the GP-V and RPs recently. Perhaps the most important factor was the 2014 corporate restructuring process following the launch of the new Strategic Plan. This significantly hampered retention and recruitment of advisory staff and thereby the functions of the GP-V and the RPs. The other factor was the continuing decline in UNDP core resources. Funding for the GP-V over the 2014–2017 period has been reduced by 51 percent compared to the previous Global Programme. The expenditure for 2014–2017 is \$73.6 million. In 2014, staff salaries comprised 71 percent of total GP expenditures, and special initiatives comprised 29 percent, comparable to the previous Global Programme.

The five RPs receive about 6 percent of total UNDP programming expenditures and around 2 percent of regular resources. While overall regular resources for the RPs declined, the regional hubs developed new funding and programme partnerships to fill the gaps. The overall expenditure of the five RPs was \$326 million. The regions of Asia and the Pacific, Arab States and ECIS were more successful than others in bridging the gap.

5.2 CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE COMMON COLLABORATIVE AREAS OF THE GLOBAL PROGRAMME AND REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

ADVISORY AND PROGRAMME SUPPORT SERVICES

Advisory and programme support services are integral to the GP-V and the regional hubs and critical to the functioning of thematic teams at headquarters and in the regional hubs. The advisory and programme support staff supported by the GP-V comprised 85 percent of the GP-V allocations. On average GP-V supported 74 staff positions during the Strategic Plan period (largely P4 and P3 positions for the years 2015 and 2016). This reflected a marginal reduction in the number of positions compared to the last Global Programme. Staff supported by the GP-V comprised approximately 15 percent of the total advisory and programme support staff at global and regional levels and in the global policy centres (about 500 staff positions). This was 20 to 30 percent of approximately 250 regional hub staff positions. The regional hubs have a complementary mandate to provide technical support and policy advice to the UNDP country offices to enable them to better to respond to development challenges.

The programme support requirements of the country offices are too diverse and specialized for the advisory services to respond. Funding constraints meant regional hubs had to make hard staffing choices that left advisory gaps. UNDP has been less selective about the areas where advisory services would be made available, leaving critical areas understaffed and lacking adequate technical expertise.

The activities and reporting lines of the advisers in policy and regional bureaux are harmonized at the regional hubs. This is a considerable improvement following the IEO evaluation of the previous Global Programme and RPs. UNDP has used the institutional review process to consolidate the management/country office support units in the regional hubs. Although these teams

are sometimes overburdened with responsibilities (for managing multiple business processes, coordinating projects and in some cases mobilizing resources), these teams were well structured and focused on their role and tasks. Separating the country office support unit from the other tasks of the regional hubs has made them more efficient.

The quality of advisory services available in the regional hubs is uneven across thematic areas and in terms of the type of support provided. The level of country office satisfaction was greater for support related to RBM and programme design. Specialized technical support was found to be less satisfactory, often not meeting the expectations of the country offices. While specialized technical support was rated high regarding responsiveness by the country offices, the support itself was found to be less satisfactory, often not meeting expectations. Another challenge is the expectation of high-level technical expertise, although not all advisory staff are at a level to provide such support.

For country offices, it was essential for regional advisers to have a solid understanding of the local context and be sensitive to the socio-cultural-political dimensions of development support (i.e. what works in one country may not work in another). There is an expectation that advisory services in the regional hubs will reflect the diversity in the regions and allow the flexibility to respond to emerging national and regional needs. There is also the expectation of a broad expertise base with sufficient depth in technical expertise at least in some areas of UNDP support.

In most thematic areas it was not possible to offer expertise on a wide range of issues. For example, a gender adviser in Asia provides advisory support and technical assistance in 16 different areas to 24 country offices covering 36 countries. Similar issues are evident in other areas covered by the GP-V and RPs. The exception was environment- and energy-related advisory services, which have a different service model.

While it is not realistic to have high expectations across all thematic areas, given the large invest-

ment that would be required, thematic advisory services were often not available due to vacancies resulting from lack of resources. Several positions are either frozen or monetized, resulting in staff shortfalls across thematic areas. This weakens the ability of the hubs to respond to regional policy discourse and support the needs of country offices. UNDP did not narrow its advisory support to fewer areas to ensure sufficient technical expertise in those areas, and to a certain extent this resulted in a generalist approach to advisory support.

Costing advisory services through application of direct programme costs (DPC) has further reduced demand for regional advisory services in the regions where it is implemented. Country offices are less willing to pay for advisory services unless they are not available locally. Consultants are preferred as the cost is far less than for the regional hub advisers. Also, consultants are seen as providing dedicated services, which the regional hub advisers may not be able to provide given their other commitments and workload. As a result of these issues, demand for policy support has declined across all regions, though it is more pronounced in some areas.

A significant proportion of the requests are for support related to corporate compliance, particularly to RBM and corporate procedures, which also is a reflection of the quality of expertise in some areas. Each regional hub has a small number of advisers who are in high demand for policy advice and could inform country-level responses. The factors causing this pattern of demand in certain programme areas need to be further examined. There appears to be a concern that the falling demand for advisory policy services may make it difficult to justify continuation of some of the positions.

PROMOTING NEW DEVELOPMENT AREAS AND INTEGRATED APPROACHES

The GP-V and RP policy team support to innovation has been important in identifying, testing and scaling up innovative applications.

One of UNDP's significant efforts during the current Strategic Plan period is the emphasis on new approaches to development across thematic areas. UNDP's support to innovation has the potential to catalyse and expand multisector development solutions and provide a diverse base for partnerships. The strength of UNDP's innovation work is that the organization works broadly across the major development areas. Innovation work therefore can be better linked to broad-based UNDP initiatives than to stand-alone areas of support.

UNDP's advisory support enabled it to leverage its cross-sectoral expertise in global and regional policy discourse on development issues. UNDP used development solutions teams to bring together thematic technical expertise to address multidimensional development issues. A notable example is the team that responded to the Ebola crisis in Africa. The advisory services helped give UNDP the flexibility to respond to emerging national and regional needs.

In 2014, UNDP established a dedicated Innovation Facility to foster the design of a new generation of development services that support national governments in tackling complex development challenges.⁸⁵ This was informed by UNDP's innovation work at the regional level. Although the Facility is still in its early stages, the innovative approaches to development solutions it will nurture will be important for addressing complex development challenges that require multisector approaches. During 2014 and 2015 the Innovation Facility, with assistance from the GP-V and RP policy teams, provided advisory services and seed funding to 102 initiatives in 73 countries that showed potential for forging new partnerships, scaling up and catalysing new funding. A UNDP assessment showed an increase in uptake of the concepts by governments and private sector partners.

Of the 45 countries that received funding from the Innovation Facility in 2015, 24 invested

in additional initiatives that applied innovative approaches to development. UNDP's comparative advantage — its global reach, country presence, cooperative approach and trust of governments — provided incentives for some leading organizations to work with UNDP on the highly experimental innovation agenda. They include the MIT Poverty Action Lab and Climate CoLab, the United Kingdom's Behavioural Insights Team, Nesta, and the Danish Government's MindLab, as well as private sector partners such as MobiMedia, DJI, Vodafone, Glorious Labs, Baidu and Microsoft. Such partnerships provide opportunities for exploring new innovation areas and approaches.

The RPs supported new approaches to development solutions through activities related to innovation and impact investment. To achieve the SDGs, UNDP will need to continue to test multisectoral approaches that are easy to apply and to support governments and citizens in leveraging opportunities for participation. This includes capitalizing on new data sources and investing in statistical institutions to develop more effective tools to measure the progress towards achievement of the SDGs. The global experience of UNDP and its partners on scaling up what works for development transformation now needs to be reviewed in the context of this invigorated effort in innovation. That would allow measurement of the contributions of these innovations to enhance sustainability and reduce poverty, inequality and exclusion.

While UNDP is successfully supporting innovation with partners, its own internal culture is less innovative. UNDP's culture does not encourage risk-taking and 'safe failing', and this area would need further attention if the encouraging early results of innovation programming are to have broader development impacts. Successful innovation models will also need to be integrated into UNDP programme areas to widen their scope and use.

85 UNDP, 'Innovation for 2030: UNDP Innovation Facility 2015 Year in Review', 2016.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

UNDP has a comprehensive knowledge management strategy, and there is considerable emphasis on knowledge facilitation and learning in the Strategic Plan. Challenges remain, however, in the systematic application of knowledge and lessons for improved programming at the country level.

For the past decade, UNDP has identified knowledge management as critical for internal learning as well as facilitation of development solutions. Implementation efforts, however, do not match the intent. Compared to the previous Global Programme/RP period, implementation of knowledge management activities has decreased considerably, as have the resources assigned for this purpose. The corporate knowledge management strategy entailed an ambitious set of activities, many of which could not be implemented. Each of these activities requires considerable investment and strategizing. Given the cross-cutting dimension of knowledge in development, the attention UNDP paid to knowledge generation and facilitation remains low. The GP-V and the RPs did not play a significant role in enabling a robust knowledge culture at the country level, but their contributions should be understood within this broader context.

Over the years, the Human Development Reports have been the only consistent periodical ‘flagship’ publication of UNDP contributing to policy processes at global and national levels. While various programme publications have informed policy and advocacy in their respective areas, UNDP has not always been able to bring out widely regarded publications. UNDP publications could add value by documenting lessons drawn from UNDP programmes, an area that is yet to receive attention.

A weak link in the knowledge management chain is collecting information from UNDP programmes and processing it for wider use. UNDP has yet to systematically draw lessons from its programmes on what works and in which contexts. There is also a lack of documentation of well-conceptualized initiatives that did not work

and the factors that constrained results. This information is critical for programming as well as wider knowledge facilitation. Minimal attention has been given to strengthening knowledge management at the source of UNDP’s knowledge, the country offices. Given the scarcity of resources, the GP-V and RPs have had a limited role in enabling knowledge management of country offices.

A factor that cannot be overlooked is the resources needed for knowledge collection, synthesis and facilitation. These are currently very low, and overall declines in funding cannot be a justification. Documenting and sharing knowledge across the organization and among external stakeholders requires dedicated resources. UNDP is marginalizing cross-cutting areas and knowledge management for want of funds, which has negative implications for UNDP’s contribution.

At the country level, facilitation of South-South cooperation is closely linked to knowledge management. UNDP expectations for knowledge generation and facilitation are greater given its extensive country presence and programme portfolios. Lack of focus on knowledge management at the country level has reduced UNDP’s contribution on public goods and on better informed South-South facilitation.

Knowledge management did not receive adequate attention at the regional level.

Lessons are not shared systematically between country offices and regional hubs. The regional hubs have developed internal knowledge-sharing platforms, Knowledge Management Gateways, that serve as a repository of programme information and are designed to put forward good knowledge management practices. However, there is currently little evidence that interactive learning is happening in a regular, systematic way. Sharing of country-level programme experiences remains a challenge across regions. Blogging, which has the potential to share lessons with internal and external stakeholders, is recent in UNDP and slowly gaining momentum. The

information in the Gateways requires constant updating, which has been achieved to a certain extent in most regions.

There are other corporate tools to be used alongside regional level repositories such as the Gateways. For internal knowledge facilitation, UNDP launched a change management plan developed in collaboration with regional bureaux to transition from Teamworks to Microsoft Yammer. Not all networks on the Yammer social networking platform are robust yet, and it is too early to make judgments on whether it is an improved system and addresses the limitations of the earlier systems. More importantly, whether Yammer entices staff to use the platform remains to be seen. Frequent changes without addressing the aspirations of the users remain an issue.

The RPs contributed to the generation of various knowledge products and tools. The Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Human Development Report has contributed to the debates on multidimensional aspects of development. They have focused on progress needed beyond the economic dimension, emphasizing the importance of freedom, citizen security, environmental safety, human rights and access to opportunities. In the climate change area, knowledge products documented experiences and lessons from 15 countries regarding the implementation of REDD+. These included a manual for negotiators of climate change and systematization of experiences through implementation of the regional climate change programme.

Regional knowledge products were often developed in collaboration with regional institutions or other international agencies. Collaboration among UNDP's regional management knowledge and innovation teams was also important, such as between ECIS and the Arab States in furthering the use of big data to monitor the SDGs. The RPs have played an important facilitation role in creating inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues, especially on sensitive or

marginalized issues. In smaller subregions, for example the Pacific Island States, some UNDP publications are widely used to inform policy. In regions with many publications in the public domain, it is not easy to get sufficient visibility for UNDP knowledge products to have them inform public policy processes.

Though knowledge management is identified as critical to UNDP's thought leadership, knowledge management capacities were diminished in the restructuring, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Arab States, where no knowledge management post is resourced. During the Strategic Plan period, resources provided for knowledge management have declined in Latin America, and some innovative initiatives did not take off due to lack of resources. In other regions knowledge management staff capacities were reduced by 50 percent. More significant was the reduction in staff capacities at headquarters, where the knowledge management team was cut from 11 to 4 people.

As analysed further in chapter 6 (section 6.1), internal knowledge flows and use of knowledge within UNDP has not been very effective. Recently introduced knowledge exchange tools did not generate interest among the staff. Knowledge-sharing among country offices continues to be a weak link, despite efforts at the corporate level. The core knowledge management agenda has been somewhat sidetracked by new areas, such as innovation. RPs in some regions have emphasized learning from failure and viewed knowledge management, innovation and South-South cooperation as one area. Yet coherence has not been achieved, resulting in dilution of the knowledge management focus.

GLOBAL POLICY CENTRES

In supporting global policy centres working on themes that are central to UNDP's programme mandate, UNDP recognizes the importance of centres of excellence for knowledge facilitation and enabling of policy support. The potential of the global policy centres remains

to be tapped both for facilitating knowledge exchange and supporting UNDP's global policy and advocacy role.

The Global Programme supported the establishment of six global policy centres over the past decade.⁸⁶ Each centre has produced tools in their respective topic areas. The centres provided research support, organized technical workshops and enabled UNDP to leverage partnerships for global policy engagement. The development of the global policy centres has been slow, although there have been intermittent periods of contribution. They have not expanded or deepened their level of activities to respond to the growing need to strengthen knowledge facilitation. Some of the centres are more focused on activities related to the host government. Some are even considering providing services to the host government, which defeats the purpose for which the policy centres were set up.

While it is expected that the centres will contribute to global policy discourse on development challenges, the capacities and resources available are not sufficient to fulfil this role. The resources contributed through global programmes, global projects and other UNDP funding channels have not been sufficient to respond to the global mandate. The investment of the host countries is too limited for these poorly resourced centres to take up the range of activities expected of them.

Central to strengthening the policy centres is the need for clarity on their purpose and on the measures to achieve it. To be more effective the policy centres need a focus. Taking on multiple roles — for example, facilitating knowledge exchange, enabling South-South cooperation and supporting UNDP's policy engagement — requires sufficient resources and dedicated capacities. The broad range of topics addressed diluted the contribution of the centres. Robust collaboration with think tanks and research institutions is critical for the centres to engage with and facilitate the global

policy discourse. There have been efforts to forge partnerships with research institutions and think tanks, but these efforts continue to be insufficient.

5.3 REGIONAL PROGRAMME CONTRIBUTIONS

Regional-level initiatives are critical to positioning UNDP as a development thought leader and enhancing global and regional dialogue around Agenda 2030. Although the regional programme model is an effective modality, and UNDP is well positioned to play a convening role on development issues at the regional level, the organizational challenges faced by the RPs during the restructuring have impeded results.

In the present form, RPs are neither frameworks nor programmes. The evaluation team found it was not always possible to demarcate RP activities from other UNDP activities carried out at the regional level, including country advisory support and communications support. The outcomes and activities of RPs, whether positive or otherwise, entail inputs from several initiatives and resources at the regional level. Given the wide range of UNDP programme areas and the diversity of regional issues, RPs face challenges in meeting multiple expectations. The emphasis given to regional policy discourse and advocacy remains uneven, undermining UNDP's strong position at the regional level. While UNDP is considered to be well-positioned to play a convening role at the regional level on development issues, this advantage is underutilized. UNDP policy and advocacy activities at the regional level, while important, were limited given the rapidly evolving development context.

Engagement with regional intergovernmental bodies varied across regions and was determined by the dynamics of the bodies. Strong partnerships have been established in Africa,

86 Except for the Oslo centre, which suspended its activities for a brief period, all the centres have been operational since their establishment.

and there is also momentum in Asia and the Pacific and the Arab States.

The regional programme for Africa has had a clear regional orientation. It has been focused on strengthening the capacities of regional intergovernmental institutions, building regional normative frameworks and fostering knowledge management. Robust partnerships have been established with the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in supporting preparations for Agenda 2063⁸⁷ and its roll-out at the national level.

UNDP regional initiatives responded to processes such as elaboration and ratification of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the Public Service Charter; implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism; monitoring of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; UNECA's annual Africa Governance Report; and the Africa Development Forum series. UNDP worked with the African Union to develop strategies with concrete measures for improving and monitoring accountability. Despite such efforts, there continue to be gaps in the coordination of regional-level initiatives in some areas, particularly those that are not the central focus of UNECA and the African Union.⁸⁸

While the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation do not share all the priorities of UNDP, there has been engagement on the mutually reinforcing development agendas. UNDP had strong collaboration with ASEAN on the MDGs and contributed to the transition to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The UN's contribution to the Final ASEAN Regional MDG Assessment has been critical not only in providing a review of the status of MDG achievement, but also in identifying emerging

post-2015 development challenges and recommending areas of regional support. This assessment will help in identifying key policies and programmes for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in ASEAN.⁸⁹

UNDP is also consolidating its partnerships with regional institutions in other regions in areas where there is greater scope for meaningful partnerships. For instance, progress can be seen in the Arab States region following agreement in 2012 to cooperate with the League of Arab States on a series of development issues.

Cross-border initiatives are valuable additions to RPs, but such efforts need further consolidation.

RPs were intended to address development challenges specific to the regions that needed a regional approach and demanded multidimensional responses. UNDP was not able to achieve these objectives in several projects. Besides multi-country projects of different scope and scale, the regional initiatives comprised regional policy and advocacy initiatives, and publications and tools. The substance and scope of the regional initiatives varied considerably, as did the formulation of what comprised a regional project. The projects made little distinction between ad hoc staff activities and long-term initiatives.

Countries or regional institutions did not always pursue the initiatives after funding ended. While there has been ownership of the initiatives, sustainability of processes has not been consistently ensured across longer term regional projects. Regional-level initiatives were harder to sustain than country-level projects, as there was less willingness to share costs, and regional institutions themselves had limited resources for continuing the initiatives.

87 Agenda 2063 is the African Union's framework for socioeconomic transformation by 2063.

88 UNDP, 'Regional Programme for Africa, 2014–2017', December 2013.

89 Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia, 'Our People, Our Community, Our Vision', Chairman's Statement to the 7th ASEAN-United Nations Summit, Kuala Lumpur, 22 November 2015.

A challenge for building cross-border initiatives is the project basis for UNDP country-level support. Working through short-term projects helps to achieve immediate project-related outcomes, yet it has shortcomings when seeking long-term engagement to address regional public goods. A more consistent engagement on a set of key regional issues requires extended partnerships.

It was also evident that UNDP has not adequately leveraged the strengths of its engagement in areas such as environment and climate change, where it has a large vertical fund portfolio. Given UNDP's modest resources, further efforts are needed to move away from funding-related partnerships with regional institutions to more issues-based partnerships. The current regional programme focus on providing knowledge products as regional public goods and facilitating regional debates needs to be further linked to ongoing regional debates and long-term engagement on specific issues.

The value addition of regional projects was greater when they facilitated complex cross-border coordination challenges. Good examples of promoting engagement between countries on cross-border issues include facilitation of the Stakeholder Engagement for Uranium Legacy Remediation in Central Asia, the Arab Climate Resilience Initiative and the Citizen Security Initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean. These are also examples of engagement and collaboration with governments and regional institutions in the implementation of initiatives. Across the regions, the issue was not so much the scale of UNDP resources. What was critical was the facilitation role UNDP played, bringing together important actors and enabling governments to coordinate or empower regional institutions to lead intergovernmental processes.

Regional programmes enabled country offices to pursue issues that could be sensitive for them to initiate. However, the lack of a regional dimension limited these initiatives in many cases, and many activities that could have been

pursued at the country level were taken up at the regional level.

Regional programmes and projects provided the much-needed impetus to tackle issues that were difficult to initiate at the country level. Examples include facilitating regional debates on shrinking opportunities for citizen engagement in Asia or working with parliamentarians to introduce legislation to reduce corruption in the Arab states. In several cases, regional projects supported sharing of development practices among countries with tangible outcomes. In some cases, there were difficulties in avoiding overlaps between regional programme and country programme activities.

Advocacy-related initiatives had a comparatively better regionality approach. The RP efforts to promote SDG-related tools and approaches were relevant for country-level efforts to mainstream the Goals into national strategies. The RPs were an important tool for promoting a human development approach, which is critical for the SDGs. Regional and subregional human development reports contributed to policy discussions, both at regional and country levels.

Several regional-level initiatives lacked a regionality component or a chapeau framework. Although there were efforts to conform to regionality principles — such as to address cross-border externalities or promote new development solutions — the projects in different areas were essentially country-level initiatives. Integrating a regional dimension required more time and effort than multi-country initiatives that aligned with country programmes. Cross-country activities required a certain scale of implementation to contribute to the processes at country level. Multi-country programmes that were implemented for a longer period, providing new concepts and programme models, had a greater likelihood of providing strategic assistance to country offices and national partners of UNDP. On the other hand, regional projects of smaller scale that provided small grants to country offices were of limited value for the country programmes as well as for developing regional models.

The regional hubs are not adequately leveraging their comparative advantages to proactively engage in regional policy and advocacy.

It has been challenging for the regional hubs to establish strong regional partnerships. Several trade-offs have been made to sustain a regional presence and a broad regional portfolio of programmes and projects. One trade-off is the choices of activities or advisers. Given the small number of advisers present in each area, they were not able to engage in both regional- and country-level activities (despite overlaps in certain cases). As a result, there has been more emphasis on country-level support in areas such as inclusive growth and governance.

In the environment area, the vertical funds by their very focus are project support-oriented and therefore operate at the country level. In addition, regional policy and advocacy require sustained engagement and dedicated focus if regionality

is central to the Asia and the Pacific RP. There were indications that activities were not pursued enough to engage at the regional level. Areas such as governance and peacebuilding have the added additional complexity for cross country and regional work. The reduction in demand for country-level support creates the opportunity to refocus on regional-level activities; the downside is the risk to sustainability of over 25 percent of advisory positions at the regional hubs. There are also trade-offs in determining whether to pursue more visible outputs versus the more sustained but less visible efforts that regional engagement may require.

Lastly, UNDP is constrained by the lack of core funds. UNDP continues to face challenges in mobilizing resources for areas such as inclusive growth, holistic approaches to the SDGs and public administration, its core areas of work. Narrowing down programme areas remains equally challenging.

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Institutional effectiveness is a specific component of the UNDP Strategic Plan. It is conceived in three pillars, associated with three interrelated management results, and this evaluation has set out an evaluation question corresponding to each pillar:

- Pillar 1: Higher quality programmes through better project planning, design, monitoring and evaluation, underpinned by stronger RBM.

Evaluation question: Has UNDP improved planning, design, monitoring and evaluation through RBM and delivered higher quality programmes?

- Pillar 2: Greater organizational openness, agility and adaptability⁹⁰ to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise.

Evaluation question: Has UNDP improved organizational openness, agility and adaptability to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise towards greater institutional effectiveness?

- Pillar 3: Improved management of financial and human resources in pursuit of results in a way that is sustainable within projected resource flows.

Evaluation question: Has UNDP improved its management of financial and human resources?

In assessing these aspects, the team also evaluated whether, and to what extent, UNDP has become

more cost-conscious, efficient and results-oriented, in light of the significant structural changes it has undergone during this period. It is still too early in the structural change process to definitively assess significant results connected to recently introduced changes. Nevertheless, tendencies and trends were apparent, and are discussed.

This analysis draws partially on the Joint Assessment of Institutional Effectiveness conducted by the IEO and Office of Audit and Investigations (OAI) in 2016 and presented to the UNDP Executive Board in June 2017.⁹¹

6.1 PROGRESS TOWARDS HIGHER QUALITY PROGRAMMING THROUGH RBM

According to the Strategic Plan, with the slogan of ‘Higher quality programmes through RBM’, UNDP meant to implement an organization-wide investment for improved RBM. This includes improving project planning, design, monitoring and evaluation; leveraging knowledge of the similarities and differences between countries; and translating that knowledge into evidence-based insights for effective, adaptable development solutions.

Such an effort requires systems from the project level up to entrench evaluation, learning and knowledge management. It also calls for improving the quality of decentralized evaluations, with lessons learned feeding into adjustments in

90 Openness is defined as being transparent and accountable; agility as being flexible, dynamic and mobile; and adaptability as having the skills and expertise to respond to changes in the organization as well as in the speed and ease with which knowledge is passed in and out of the organization. Source: UNDP Strategic Plan 2014–2017.

91 The Joint Assessment mostly focused on this pillar from a process perspective, and this sub-report builds on the findings of that assessment. At the time of the Joint Assessment, UNDP was in the early stages of implementing institutional reform, and as such its effects could not be fully evidenced.

design, delivery and future investments. These measures would inform ongoing evidence-based policy development throughout the Strategic Plan period. They would also adjust implementation, help capture innovations that work, and sustain and scale up successful approaches.

This section examines the extent to which a) programme planning, design, monitoring and evaluation, underpinned by stronger RBM, have improved and delivered higher quality programmes; b) programme effectiveness improved results at all levels through quality criteria and quality assurance processes; and c) UNDP leadership fostered a working culture that supports learning and knowledge management to improve performance.

QUALITY OF PROGRAMMES THROUGH RBM

There are signs of improvement in the quality of programme design through RBM. However, it is not clear how much the measures introduced have improved the quality of programmes beyond design, since there is limited evidence of the use of RBM for enhanced learning to improve results and effectiveness.

A desk review of the 29 most recently approved CPDs revealed signs of improvement in the design of programmes. Country programmes are more aligned with the Strategic Plan priorities and the SDGs. They have fewer and more time-bound outcomes, underpinned by explicit theories of change designed through the lens of sustainable human development and aligned to more rigorously defined, sex-disaggregated and measurable results frameworks that draws on a standardized bank of indicators. However, these CPDs did not always clearly document UNDP's comparative advantage and value added. Factors still affecting the quality of CPDs include insufficient financial and human capacity, insufficient knowledge of RBM concepts and practices, and insufficient training.

The quality assurance system and programming quality standards introduced are perceived to be excessive and too demanding. Consultations⁹² with country offices indicate that the timing, sequencing and content of the measures, and the way they were introduced, generated significant push-back in all regions. Country offices indicated a lack of resources, time constraints and challenges in understanding terminologies and in getting partners up to date with the standards.

Although the requirements of the enhanced RBM and quality assurance systems are increasingly understood, country offices and regional bureaux face multiple capacity and financial challenges to effectively implement them. Guidance and training on the quality standards were not considered adequate, and not everyone was sufficiently reached. Less than half of UNDP staff consulted considered themselves fully up to date with UNDP corporate requirements and directives on how to interpret and apply RBM concepts.

The 2016 UNDP Annual Business Plan notes: "UNDP still has some way to go in changing attitudes, behaviours, processes, practices and skills. There are signs that a majority of the staff may still see efforts as a passing phenomenon as well as compliance- and [headquarters]-driven. The task is made more difficult by what is still substantial under-investment by the organization in RBM capacity, which is hampering country offices, in particular, from securing a step change in the use of data and in the overall quality of programme and project design, management and M&E."⁹³ This is further supported by the UNDP products and services survey, which revealed satisfaction with policy and programming products and tools by 54 percent of staff of regional bureaux and hubs (35 percent had neutral opinions and 11 percent unfavourable opinions) and 65 percent of UNDP staff (29 percent neutral and 5 percent unfavourable). This indicates vast room for improvement.⁹⁴

92 Survey, focus group and interviews with 50 country offices.

93 UNDP, 'Annual Business Plan 2016, Final,' December 2015, p. 7.

94 Source: 2016 UNDP products and services survey, which covers policy and programming tools and products.

UNDP has not yet calculated the time and cost of implementing effective quality assurance.⁹⁵ To comply with the quality standards requires extensive stakeholder consultation, studies and preparatory work. This would only be possible with sufficient time, security, political support and budget. The rigorous data collection and verification requirements are particularly resource-intensive because they require travel and human resources.

UNDP investments in RBM training have mostly focused on RBM and M&E focal points and have consisted primarily of webinars and online courses, which have proven to be of limited effectiveness. Capacity development for RBM needs to be delivered through a broad range of approaches and to include all staff, from leaders and senior managers to programme managers and associates. Capacity development also needs to include implementing partners. Their engagement is essential if national datasets are to improve and contribute to UNDP reporting requirements.

RBM continues to be associated with compliance-driven practices to satisfy reporting requirements. There is less focus on learning from evidence to enhance knowledge management for decision-making and to improve performance with targeted financial allocations. Inadequate understanding of the practice and value of RBM for learning and improved results has meant that country offices have not been able to adequately apply knowledge management to improve the quality of programmes and projects.

M&E REPORTING AND QUALITY OF EVIDENCE

Insufficient resources, staffing and competence to support M&E undermine UNDP's ability to move beyond just proving results

to focus on improving results. The use of credible evidence to demonstrate progress has improved in UNDP reporting, but there is limited evidence of reporting being used for improved learning, course corrections and knowledge management to enhance results and effectiveness.

In terms of monitoring and reporting, a review of UNDP reports and monitoring frameworks indicates that challenges persist in reporting beyond the activity and product level, to show what was most effective in contributing to outcomes and supporting transformational change. Consultation with staff from country offices and regional hubs⁹⁶ showed that, despite continuous improvements in the format of the ROAR, UNDP's main descriptive/analytical reporting tool at country level, it is still widely perceived as a headquarters-driven exercise and is underused by country offices. According to the survey, only 46 percent of UNDP staff were satisfied with the ROAR. Survey results varied, from a high of 56 percent of staff in the Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) and RBAP, to only 36 percent in the Regional Bureau for the Arab States. In-country interviews with donors and partners also brought up issues around the utility of UNDP results reporting.

The IRRF, another tool for reporting on indicators, has not been fully effective in measuring progress through the relationship between results and resources. An analysis of the IRRF indicators against the five SMART indicators⁹⁷ highlights that many are of limited utility for analysing the relationship between development and management, or results and resources for decision-making.⁹⁸

The extent of positive progress reported at the aggregate level every year is so high that it raises

95 The resources for quality assurance need to be recovered through DPC. As it is new, this change has yet to take root in the organization and it is not clear if country offices are aware of it.

96 Survey, focus group and interviews with 50 country offices.

97 SMART stands for specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.

98 See examples of problematic indicators in the Joint Assessment.

concerns. For example, the 2015 Annual Report of the Administrator and midterm review of the Strategic Plan indicated that on average 90 percent of all milestones in the areas covered in this assessment were considered achieved. For certain indicators, the organization presents results by aggregating data from country offices, including outliers that skew averages.⁹⁹ This masks diverse levels of achievement or non-achievement that may require attention. Compounded by the problematic nature of self-reported data, the additional risk of bias when using aggregates that include outliers raises concerns about a possible inherent bias within the dataset.

Audits and evaluations have consistently recommended improving monitoring and evaluation functions to strengthen the RBM approach. Monitoring systems and practices are not designed to allow managers to follow project and programme performance.¹⁰⁰ The prescriptive content provided by the Programme and Operations Policies and Procedures is not adequate for this purpose. It results in different interpretations and inconsistent application of the monitoring tools, affecting corporate reporting. Resources are insufficient to meet all monitoring requirements. Staff do not have the right knowledge and skills to properly monitor the progress of projects and programmes at a strategic level. Different monitoring tools are not fully integrated, and users need to compile information from different sources to provide a complete picture of their programmes and projects. There is no mandatory training to provide users with comprehensive M&E knowledge.

In trying to address some of these weaknesses, the organization launched a review and update of its monitoring practices and a monitoring policy in 2015. Among the initiatives is the Coun-

try Office Support Initiative, which sets specific benchmarks for monitoring human capacity for M&E. In 2016, there were 137 full-time equivalent M&E specialists in country offices, compared to 122 in 2015. The survey, however, showed that around 45 percent of all country offices completed an assessment of the number of staff needed for the monitoring function, and only 25 percent indicated that the budget for monitoring was sufficient. It should be noted that adequate staffing of the M&E function requires more than meeting a quantitative benchmark; the quality of M&E staff is also crucial. Almost half of country offices surveyed (45 percent) stated that they meet M&E quality requirements, though structural constraints make it difficult to assure the reliability of data provided by partners.

Comparatively, the organization is better equipped to collect data on M&E through ROAR. However the level of detail (e.g. tracking spending at country office level) and accuracy need further improvements. The actual cost of monitoring activities at country office level cannot be properly captured, and therefore cannot be adequately costed or consolidated. UNDP reported in 2015 that “64 percent of country offices had met the internal standard of spending 1-3 percent of their programme budget on M&E”.¹⁰¹ In 2016, UNDP reported spending a total of \$42.2 million on M&E,¹⁰² constituting around 1 percent of total UNDP expenditure. However, it is not yet possible to properly track spending on monitoring and decentralized evaluation through specific account codes in Atlas, and financial reporting of M&E expenditure in ROAR has not been fully accurate and includes discrepancies.

In terms of decentralized evaluations, the organization launched a strategy in late 2015 to improve the quality of decentralized evaluations and

99 For example, the use of outliers in output indicator 1.1.1 in the updated IRRF (annex II to the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014–2017), p. 13.

100 UNDP OAI, ‘Performance Audit of Monitoring Practices’, Report 1397, issue A, pp. 3–4, February 2015.

101 UNDP, ‘Midterm review of the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, including the Annual Report of the Administrator for 2015’ (DP/2016/9), 2016.

102 Source: ROAR 2016.

approved a new evaluation policy in 2016.¹⁰³ It established that, at organizational level, UNDP will “aim at allocating 1 percent of combined programmatic (regular and other) resources to the evaluation function, with 0.8 percent reserved for the work of decentralized evaluations, representing a clear mandate and opportunity for UNDP to allocate additional resources to decentralized evaluations and to strengthen the capacities to ensure the quality and utility of the inputs provided by these evaluations”.

It is still not clear how much regional bureaux and country offices should invest in evaluation. The monitoring policy also indicates that “a minimum of 1 percent of annual development expenditures by region must be spent on monitoring and evaluation.”¹⁰⁴ However, it is not clear how much should go to monitoring and how much to evaluation, and whether the resources should come from the regions or the country offices. Consultation with country offices found resource constraints to further investment in evaluation.¹⁰⁵

Country offices are not able to internalize evaluation inputs on ‘what works’ and how they are ‘effective’. Hubs struggle to move from demonstrating accountability and compliance, as with an audit, to utilizing evaluation evidence of effectiveness and recommendations for improved results. Independent evaluations, especially the ADRs, are moderately used in formulating CPDs. The challenge remains to systematically and consistently use recommendations, conclusions and lessons learned from other evaluations, and to expand their use beyond the CPD. For example, they could be used for learning, budget allocation, decision-making, adapting or adjusting scaling up/down strategies, projects and programmes, annual reporting, and resource mobilization.

The recommendations of decentralized evaluations are not adequately used, in part because

of their low quality. In 2015 and 2016, ROAR included a question on the usefulness of decentralized evaluation recommendations. Country offices indicated that recommendations were perceived to be insufficiently relevant, specific and/or action-oriented for subsequent follow-up (35 percent) or not credible enough to be used in decision-making (32 percent).

Country offices would welcome systematic and succinct publications from IEO and OAI indicating the most frequently recurring or significant problems and challenges. Country offices expressed interest in annual learning on the 10 to 20 most common issues identified in audits and evaluations that country offices should avoid. Such learning would require adequate time and budget to implement, but also a functional structure, methodology and incentive system to ensure that the lessons learned are fully captured. Interest in learning comes from the individual, but it also requires leadership.

Recognizing these limitations, UNDP is seeking to incentivize and promote more systematic learning from evaluations and critical reviews. Examples include the effort (not yet materialized) to develop a database of lessons learned, and the questions introduced to the ROAR to promote reflection on failure. However, this has yet to go beyond reporting on knowledge-sharing towards a knowledge management approach allowing UNDP to document evidence of how lessons from success and failure have influenced change and improvement.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT FOR LEARNING

There is a clear and unmet demand for knowledge management to play a bigger role in helping UNDP learn from evidence to improve results and ensure effectiveness.

103 UNDP, ‘Evaluation Policy’ (DP/2016/23), July 2016.

104 UNDP, ‘PPM Programming Standards and Principles Monitoring Policy’, p. 4.

105 A survey was distributed to a sample of country office operations managers between 15 January and 10 February 2017.

UNDP leadership has yet to effectively encourage a ‘results culture’ that welcomes critical reflection. This means going beyond reporting for compliance to support continuous organizational learning from both successes and failures. The evidence suggests that knowledge management in UNDP is mostly focused on capturing best practices, rather than learning from successes and failures to improve results. Of note was an effort of the knowledge management and innovation team to support and incentivize colleagues to share failures and what didn’t work. However there was pushback due to people not feeling comfortable or secure about sharing ‘failures’ openly within the UNDP culture.

UNDP is slow to welcome and disseminate learning, particularly from failure. Unwillingness to talk openly about failure stymies innovation and prevents staff from taking full advantage of opportunities to use learning to improve effectiveness and efficiency. Consultations¹⁰⁶ with country offices revealed staff fears that highlighting failure could result in loss of resources and damage future chances as well as the reputation of UNDP.

In the long term, an open culture can help the organization become more reflective, and thus more relevant. UNDP’s interests should transcend concerns with short-term reputational risk, given the adverse effect of negative results in the long term and the beneficial impact of learning on credibility, long-term effectiveness and sustainability. Around 40 percent of respondents to a survey sent to all country offices agreed that capturing lessons learned from failure is happening only to a moderate extent, while another 40 percent believed it was happening very little or not at all.

UNDP’s overall investment in knowledge management has decreased during the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This has contributed to low staff awareness of the organization’s knowl-

edge management priorities and activities, limiting the potential for transformation. Despite a promising start, UNDP’s social networking platform initiative (Yammer) is struggling to maintain relevance and usefulness to staff. Fifty seven percent of the staff is satisfied with Yammer,¹⁰⁷ according to the 2016 UNDP products and services survey. It also indicated that only half of UNDP staff gives a satisfactory rating to support for knowledge management, innovation and South-South cooperation.

Limited implementation of the knowledge management strategy means that staff do not fully understand UNDP positioning as a knowledge organization. Some country offices consulted raised the concern that UNDP is perceived as a project implementation organization that is “increasingly becoming like UNOPS” and focusing on procurement. Procurement represents over 70 percent of UNDP delivery, and in 2016 UNDP had 18,591 independent contracts. There is a growing perception that in UNDP, knowledge comes from outside consultants. The capacity for UNDP to be a knowledge organization is questionable without core funding and with few policy advisers.

Two knowledge management models have coexisted in UNDP, and neither has been prioritized. On one side is a call for more systematic knowledge management, allowing knowledge to be found, retrieved and linked to business processes. On the other is an emphasis on developing social networking platforms to enable self-selected groups of staff to form and collaborate. Neither of these models adequately addresses the application of learning to improve results and effectiveness. The knowledge management strategy designed at the start of the Strategic Plan period was not revised sufficiently to account for the transformation arising from the restructuring, including cost recovery, project cost-sharing, decentralization and downsizing.

106 Survey, focus group and interviews with 50 country offices.

107 www.yammer.com/undp.org.

6.2 PROGRESS TOWARDS GREATER ORGANIZATIONAL OPENNESS, AGILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

According to the Strategic Plan, making UNDP more open, agile and adaptable as a means to harness knowledge, solutions and expertise involves increasing transparency and accountability and improving the speed and ease with which knowledge and expertise can pass in and out of the organization. The Strategic Plan noted that UNDP would need to become more dynamic and flexible, and talent more mobile. The expertise would need to change in response to new development challenges. Greater collaboration, both inside the organization and with partners and stakeholders, would be necessary. To more effectively help countries respond to increasingly complex and interconnected development challenges, UNDP would need to focus its advisory capacity on delivering integrated and programme-focused policy advice. Policy services would need to be organized in a more flexible, multidisciplinary and issues-based approach. A smaller workforce would be needed, with the appropriate mix of high-quality talent, aligned to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

This section considers the extent to which a) UNDP has become a more open, agile and adaptable organization; b) measures aimed at strengthening regional presence, including consolidation of policy functions, have contributed to openness, agility, adaptability and quality programmes; and c) UNDP is harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise through its measures to become more open, agile and adaptable.

HARNESSING KNOWLEDGE, SOLUTIONS AND EXPERTISE

There are signs of improvement in UNDP's openness, agility and adaptability, though they are yet to be translated into improved harnessing of knowledge, solutions and expertise. A lack of focus on organizational learning, particularly on learning from failure, is constraining UNDP from becoming more open and adaptable. An excessive focus on data compliance, quality assurance and reporting is affecting the agility of the organization to respond to partners and deliver results in a timely manner.

Factors helping to make UNDP a more open, agile and adaptable organization include improved access to information, monitoring, reporting and disclosure; the new BMS integrated management services delivery model; the launch of the delivery acceleration package; clustering of functions, particularly through the shared services unit and centres;¹⁰⁸ streamlining of some policies and procedures; consolidation of policy functions; empowering of regional bureaux; and strengthening of the regional presence.

Factors hindering UNDP's openness, agility and adaptability are a) an excessive focus on compliance, quality assurance and reporting without adequate focus on learning for improvement; b) the need for reengineering of processes and procedures to further cut down on bureaucracy and repetition; c) the lack of trust in leadership; and d) poor integration of IT systems.

The vision and strategies behind measures for openness, agility and adaptability lack adequate focus on harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise. UNDP leadership does not sufficiently

¹⁰⁸ Corporate clustering is promoted mainly through UNDP, combining the GSSCs in Copenhagen and Kuala Lumpur. GSSC Copenhagen was established in 2003 and provides customized packages of HR services (benefits and entitlements, global payroll). The GSSC in Kuala Lumpur was created in 2012, initially to cover IPSAS services for all country offices. A second phase was initiated during the current Strategic Plan, after the restructuring of BMS and outsourcing of several services of the Office of Financial Services Management. The third phase is in progress and involves transferring parts of country operations to Kuala Lumpur. As part of this phase, clustering of additional country office financial and administrative processes has been piloted for six countries in 2016: Bhutan, Cambodia, Malaysia, Maldives, Republic of Korea and Samoa. A full-scale rollout is planned for 2017 for other RBAP country offices and for 15 country offices from RBLAC.

emphasize, encourage or prioritize the strategic management of knowledge to learn from experience, or foster an environment that supports critical reflection for improved results and effectiveness. Although the value of learning, particularly from failures, is recognized, it is not easy in an organization with financial constraints, where staff fear that reporting failures may lead to further cuts.

At a time of job insecurity and limited funding, staff feel under pressure to hide problems rather than to discuss, learn from and use them. This fear of failure discourages many staff from innovating and taking risks. The majority of staff consulted recognized that deeper cultural change allowing failures to be shared alongside best practices and innovations would be a long-term process. There are pockets of enlightened leadership supporting innovation and risk-taking, but it is more common to find people avoiding risk and following instructions.

Lessons learned are not systematically documented and shared by headquarters or the hubs. A reduction in staff numbers has decreased the time spent on documenting and sharing knowledge. UNDP has yet to systematize learning from audits and evaluations and follow the example of the RBA, which sends out pre-audit teams to build on lessons already captured.

In terms of openness, improvements in monitoring, reporting and information disclosure have contributed to greater transparency. UNDP has been rated the most transparent development partner by the International Aid and Transparency Initiative for the past three years, recognizing sustained progress on compliance with internal and external standards for transparency and information disclosure. The percentage of country offices and headquarters units that comply with internal standards and the information disclosure policy grew from 52 percent in 2013 to 82 percent in

2015. Adoption of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) in 2012 has provided UNDP with a more solid framework for financial management and information transparency. Between 2013 and 2016, the percentage of UNDP operating units meeting IPSAS indicators rose from 30 percent to 87 percent.¹⁰⁹ These efforts contributed to UNDP's ranking as the only agency with an aid transparency index surpassing 90 percent.

Improved transparency has generated a proliferation of overly demanding, even counter-productive, compliance monitoring and reporting tools and requirements. These measures are not sufficiently focused on course correction, learning or knowledge management. Country offices pointed to a perverse process in which more energy and time are put into dashboards and poorly integrated reporting systems than into delivering development results.

Lack of communication and engagement from management and senior leadership also affects openness in UNDP. Country office consultations revealed poor communication and lack of clarity and transparency, particularly in relation to the restructuring process at headquarters, change management processes in country offices and the methodology behind the allocation of extra-budgetary resources to country offices. There were concerns about management's insufficient engagement with the rest of staff. Many respondents gave the example of senior UNDP leaders visiting a region, such as for the cluster meeting held by RBA, and not taking the opportunity to interact with staff. It was felt that more proactive communication and engagement from leadership, with regular direct messaging and the opportunity to ask questions in a non-threatening environment, were required to make evident the added value of the restructuring process.

109 Source: BMS dashboard on IPSAS indicators, March 2017.

Staff engagement as measured by the global staff survey¹¹⁰ increased from 69 percent in 2014 to 79 percent in 2016. But it has been challenging to maintain levels of engagement from staff during a period of ongoing change, resource constraints, job insecurity and deteriorating work/life balance. Engagement is a challenge particularly at regional and headquarters levels, where staff are increasingly expected to do more with fewer resources. There are concerns about the organization's lack of vision and ability to keep staff motivated to deliver results under constant change processes and decreasing levels of core resources.¹¹¹

Staff engagement levels at headquarters and regional offices have dropped due to restructuring, resulting in loss of colleagues, posts, institutional knowledge and job security. Similar evidence was found in country offices that had implemented change management processes. Most acknowledged that restructuring or change management was inevitable, but that it was implemented with limited consultation. In the case of the headquarters restructuring, information from leadership was found insufficient and often contradictory, and the process seemed arbitrary and too drawn out. The process was found to have damaged employee engagement, as it broke their social contract with the employer and led to unhealthy internal competition. Staff fear rumoured future rounds of restructuring. The global staff survey also showed lower levels of openness and trust, and less favourable results regarding workplace innovation, performance management and work-life balance.

Openness has been hindered by a culture of fear, accentuated in times of austerity and restructur-

ing. There was evidence that senior leadership is feared, to the extent that one director would not meet with the evaluation team without first consulting his managers. In some cases, senior managers refused to provide interviews or answers to questions for evaluations or timely contacts of consultants that had previously assessed the organization. This suggests the organization is not as open as it should be.

Contributions to improving agility and adaptability include the launch of a delivery acceleration package; consolidation of policy functions; clustering of operational functions; streamlining of some policies and procedures; the new BMS integrated management services delivery model; empowering of regional bureaux; and strengthening of the regional presence.

The delivery acceleration package has brought operational flexibility and speed. However, regional bureaux argued that it was more of a reactive than a proactive measure. In a risk-averse environment, staff often felt insecure about adhering to more flexible practices, predicting problems with later audits. The delivery acceleration package set policy exceptions in procurement and recruitment, including a waiver for certain competitive recruitments allowing desk review as an alternative to interview processes; shorter minimum vacancy publication times; and telephone reference checks documented in a note to file. Faster procurement was encouraged by a waiver for certain competitive procurements delegated to the head of the office, including increased delegation of procurement authority to the country office; increased threshold for low-value-shopping; the higher threshold for

110 OHR defines engagement as “personal connection with and emotional commitment to work, which results in an increased discretionary effort and better performance.” The global staff survey measures comprising engagement are: “I am proud to work for UNDP”, “I am confident in the success of UNDP”, “Working for UNDP inspires me to do my best”, “I am excited by what I do in my job” and “Rate UNDP as an organization to work for compared to other organizations”.

111 There is a gap of 6% between the engagement of men and women. OHR analysis points to causes including the overall culture of the organization as not supportive of a true balance between work and family life, despite all the policies in place. Managers often do not demonstrate gender-inclusive behaviours. There are weaknesses related to conflict resolution and to openness and trust in offices more generally. There is a gender bias in recruitment, especially for positions in hardship duty stations. Gender-inclusiveness considerations are not built into business processes such as, for example, recruitment and nominations for learning opportunities, which often leave out qualified or high-potential women. Gender was removed as a consideration in job fairs during restructuring.

a request for quotes; and placing some Contract, Assets and Procurement Committee requirements at the discretion of the head of office.

Clustering of operational functions can further contribute to agility and adaptability, but there are significant constraints preventing effective functioning and expansion. Some clustered services are working well and contributing to agility, others less so. Bank reconciliation reviews are working well and contributing to agility, while voucher creations and approvals are not; they are making the process slower, more cumbersome and insecure as documents are scanned and sent around with signatures. Multiple processes arrive with mistakes: 40 percent arrive with incomplete supporting documents and 20 percent with system errors, with high fall-out statistics, indicating there is no learning or improvement.

A challenge is that the GSSC is often correcting and cleaning, instead of tackling the source of the problem, which is linked to poor systems and staff capacity (lack of training and high turnover) or insufficient understanding of the local context. The performance indicators for the GSSC are self-reported in the range of 90 to 95 percent achievement, but this does not capture multiple problems noted by country offices, nor the savings or return on investments. Factors contributing to inefficiency include a lack of user-friendly automated and integrated systems aligned to Atlas, and of simple forms and policies in clear language. The GSSC also faces challenges in getting policy owners in BMS to clarify standard operating procedures and secure resources and support. GSSC staff are stretched. A request for funds to hire 120 people to support the regional bureaux in Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean resulted in approval of 60 new posts.

There is great competition for staff among shared service centres for other organizations in Kuala Lumpur, which provide more attractive financial packages, an incentive in the context of the

country's low unemployment rate of 2.6 percent. The six pilot countries of phase three are somewhat dissatisfied with the services provided. Conversely, the evaluation survey revealed that, for other clustered services, around 80 percent of respondents across country offices were highly (30 percent) or somewhat (50 percent) satisfied with the Kuala Lumpur GSSC, and 20 percent were not at all satisfied; while 63 percent were highly satisfied and 24 percent somewhat satisfied with the Copenhagen GSSC.

The unrealistic projects quality assurance system and reporting requirements have worked against the agility of UNDP. This has affected the capacity of the organization to respond to partners and deliver results in a timely manner.

Other factors hindering agility include the need to re-engineer processes and procedures to further cut down on bureaucracy and repetition; a lack of trust in leadership and the management model of consensus decision-making; and poor IT systems integration.

The new integrated delivery model for management services has improved service orientation. One notable improvement is the establishment of a single entry point (one-stop shop) in the BMS directorate for solutions requiring cross-functional consultation and coordination, such as legal, finance, human resources, IT, security and procurement. Interviews with UNDP staff at headquarters, regional hubs and country offices indicate that BMS has been able to serve them better since the restructure. The survey of operations managers¹¹² indicates that 19.1 percent of country offices are satisfied to a great extent with the new integrated management services delivery model of BMS, and 51.1 percent are satisfied to some extent. Similarly, the relocation of some BMS staff to regional bureaux and hubs has led to closer, faster and more efficient support, although regional bureaux are disappointed that insufficient staff from BMS have been posted to the regions.

112 The survey was distributed to a sample of country office operations managers between 15 January and 10 February 2017.

To empower regional bureaux, the oversight function of management activities was adapted, redefined and delegated to them. Regional bureaux have become cost centres, managing their resources and taking more responsibility for oversight, risk management and decision-making. The transfer of responsibility and risk has not been smooth. Regional bureaux were not provided with adequate resources, capacities and skills for the delegated tasks and still depend greatly on BMS, which is responsible for corporate risk management.

The creation of BPPS in 2014, out of the merger of the Bureau for Development of Policy and the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, has brought the expertise of both teams closer together, while clarifying the division of roles and reducing the overall headcount. Simultaneously, regional bureaux have led to streamlining of headquarters staff and strengthened the regional presence. Functions previously handled in New York, such as that of desk officers, were brought to regional hubs to increase proximity to country offices, working in the same time zones and at more convenient and cheaper distances for travel. With these changes, policy development is now concentrated at headquarters, and policy and programme implementation and support to country offices is addressed mainly by out-posted policy and programme advisers in the regional hubs. Interviews revealed that country offices have welcomed the closer proximity of hub staff and see the move as facilitating better communication.

Adaptation in policy functions has been constrained by a reduction in staff numbers due to declining resources. Resources declined more than expected, and subsequent budget limitations have meant that not all positions envisaged by the restructuring have been filled. This staff shortage affects the organization's ability to advance into some of the new policy advisory areas set out in the Strategic Plan. Posts in emerging areas identified as strategically important to UNDP, such as

extractive industries or innovation, have remained vacant. This has made it difficult to achieve some intended results in these areas.

Country offices have had to adapt the most to increasingly scarce funding, fewer staff and new cost recovery rates and applications. Programmes have narrowed their focus in pursuit of the Strategic Plan outcomes, and are adapting their CPDs accordingly. Realignment has required downsizing of operations, and some country offices have had to move more transactions to the GSSC or, in the case of Africa, to node countries. These transformations are at different levels of maturity in different regions, yet still there needs to be deeper adaptation to the financial constraints that challenge the sustainability of UNDP country offices and regional hubs.

The implementation of DPC has been particularly challenging for country offices. The daily rates charged by bureaux for advisory services, ranging from \$600 to \$2,100, are not competitive, and most programmes and budgets did not have funds to cover these costs. Even country offices that are financially well-positioned are likely to seek less expensive alternatives. Middle-income countries with strong national capacities are often able to contract national or even international consultants for lower rates than those charged by UNDP. This, in turn, threatens the ongoing financial sustainability of the hub model, and the UNDP cost-recovery strategy may have the unintended consequence of pricing hub staff out of the market. Furthermore, RBA and RBEC are still not charging DPC, which creates an imbalance. In 2017, a DPC fund is providing the basis for a revolving fund to sustain advisers in regions, but additional adaptation will be required to ensure the financial sustainability of policy advisers.

Another adaptation measure being implemented is consolidation of extra-budgetary resources,¹¹³ the 'pooling of the XB'. This strategy aims to

113 Income accrued from cost recovery. Source: Programme and Operation Policies and Procedures, March 2017.

allow the organization to leverage its resources in a more effective and cost-efficient way. It also helps to ensure the continuation of UNDP's universal presence and the continued financial sustainability of country offices, including those that are not self-sustainable. XB pooling has helped regional hubs to better assess funding gaps and strengthen country offices where necessary.

However, regional hubs have differing capacities to manage and guide XB pooling. Thus budget allocations from regional bureaux to country offices can seem inconsistent and not transparent. All 50 country offices consulted expressed concern about losing direct control of this reserve and the freedom to maneuver and invest funds they had generated. Concerns raised by the country offices include risks to their independence, neutrality, positioning and partnerships; lower staff engagement and motivation for resource mobilization; less agility and adaptability to respond competitively to national demands; less ability to maintain commitments to government and long-term capacity-building; and subsidization of weaker country offices with no proper recognition for these back-office transfers and value for money.

UNDP has not fully embraced adaptations to its mandate and business model to remain relevant and continue to add value in middle-income countries.

The added value of a UNDP presence is perceived to be eroding in middle-income countries. Country offices with limited resources and delivery are struggling to maintain enough staff and make relevant contributions to development. They are experiencing increased competition from organizations with stronger knowledge capacities, including private sector consultancies such as PWC and KPMG. Competition with other UN agencies is also strong, including on cost efficiency (e.g. UNOPS). Country office staff question UNDP's commitment to becoming a stronger knowledge organization as opposed to a project organization.

In middle-income countries like Chile where UNDP has found a way to maintain its relevance, country offices have focused on becoming partners in policy. More upstream initiatives at the national level are producing neutral and quality knowledge products. This is positioning the organization as a key partner for its thought leadership, convening power and ability to introduce issues and sensitive themes into a policy debate, and to work as a broker between government and civil society to stimulate debate, build consensus and push for change. To counter balance, downstream initiatives are more directed towards the subnational level where capacity development is still needed.

The most significant constraint to UNDP adaptability is the lack of focus on organizational learning and knowledge management. There is very little horizontal learning, for example between regions. Yet to adapt to the new context of the SDGs, UNDP needs to work in a more integrated way rather than in silos and to learn from what has worked (or not) in different contexts.

6.3 PROGRESS TOWARDS IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Strategic Plan set out several measures for UNDP to improve the management of human and financial resources. The aim was to make it a leaner and more cost-effective organization and more efficient in providing policy and management services in line with projected funding streams, while delivering quality programmes and ensuring legal and governance compliance.

The assumptions behind these measures were that people management capabilities would be improved through speedier recruitment and orientation programmes. These would support staff to become effective more quickly, ensure diversity, improve management of talent and deliver better succession planning for important posts. Staff security would be strengthened by continuing to prioritize measures to decrease staff vulnerability and promote business continuity. Better use of ICTs would enhance business analytics, increase

productivity and reduce transaction costs. A business intelligence function would be established to provide workforce analytics, identify organization-wide capacity needs and gaps, and plan for an optimal workforce. Country office leaders would be trained and equipped with tools to manage a diverse pool of talent and create inclusive, engaged and high-performing work units. UNDP would also harmonize cost classifications and implement new cost recovery rates, with the aim of improving the transparency and consistency of development project costing.

This section examines the extent to which UNDP is better managing its human and financial resources; is capable of attracting and retaining a talented and diverse workforce; is becoming a leaner and more cost-effective organization; and is successfully implementing new cost recovery rates.

MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

There have been improvements in the management of human resources in UNDP. However these improvements were constrained because the Office of Human Resources (OHR) is not part of formal, high-level decision-making structures and therefore does not have sufficient input into strategic and budgetary decisions. In addition, the ability of the organization to attract and retain a talented and diverse workforce at different levels is challenged by a series of constraints, and UNDP has not yet achieved an appropriate focus on diversity and inclusiveness, especially in the areas of gender, disability, sexual diversity and South/North representation.

OHR is not part of UNDP's Executive Office and is not integrated into its decision-making structures. In large organizations, the human resources function is often a full member of the executive team and a strategic partner in decision-making at the highest levels. Given the implications of institutional decisions on the organization's people and culture, OHR needs to have direct, visible input. During the restructuring, OHR was consulted more as an afterthought, rather than guiding the process.

Consultations with all five regional bureaux and hubs revealed that headquarters and regional teams have lost high-quality, experienced staff. In some cases they have been replaced by people who are perceived to have less relevant experience, risking the quality and speed of delivery of advisory services.

The new service delivery model for OHR better differentiates between the needs of the various client groups in UNDP. It aims to include client perspectives; change the approach from prevention of wrong-doing to enabling and supporting; streamline programmes, solutions and tools; and improve the quality and efficiency of HR processes and services.

The new model was found to have improved the capacity of HR practitioners in the field by moving some headquarters staff to the regions, speeding up response times and increasing OHR understanding of the client context. Country offices appreciate the proximity of HR advisers who are more aware of their needs and drivers, and who can therefore quickly understand what is happening and why. Under the new model bureau directors and deputies have a more critical role. They report satisfaction with advisory services provided by HR business partners, but require greater levels of hands-on support, especially in areas such as recruitment in country offices, where the quality of HR resources varies greatly.

OHR does not have the capacity to provide this support. Efforts are being made to improve skills by using detail assignments, webinars and annual regional conferences, and offering HR certification. Conversely, OHR senior leaders point out that encouraging closer links between HR staff and the bureaux raises the risk of blurring lines of responsibility. This could result in conflicts of interest that could compromise the integrity of UNDP employment principles. Staff in OHR, country offices and hubs acknowledged the potential benefits of new e-recruiting and e-hiring systems, but they are frustrated by limitations in their functionality and available support. The old system is still used for interns and

consultants, and consultancies are becoming an ever-higher proportion of the recruitment load, growing from 17,000 independent contracts in 2015 to 18,591 in 2016.

Employment instability is affecting the ability to attract and retain talented and diverse staff. Among UNDP staff responding to the surveys for this evaluation, 44 percent expressed medium satisfaction with the ability of country offices to attract a diverse workforce. Many of the candidates are aware of the financial challenges faced by UNDP, and they know that in some places only short-term contracts are being offered. UNDP's reputation as an employer has weakened, particularly in country offices, which often struggle to attract high-quality, experienced talent with expertise in finance, procurement and human resources as well as certain thematic areas.

The gender parity target for overall female staff (50 percent) was achieved during the Strategic Plan period, though the majority of female staff are at junior levels, where women are overrepresented. Women are still underrepresented at the P4-P6 levels, and the percentage of women at Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) level decreased from 36 percent in 2014 to 27 percent in 2016. There was, however, improvement indicated in the snapshot of resident representative/resident coordinator at the end of 2016: 45 percent of all resident representatives/resident coordinators were women, compared to 36 percent in 2012. Of the 54 female resident coordinators in the UN system, 37 (69 percent) were from UNDP.

There has been no corporate drive to employ people with disabilities, and few people with disabilities work for the organization. In April 2014, the UNDP Executive Group approved a diversity and inclusiveness strategy that recognized the need to "create a work environment welcoming to all". There is very low awareness of this strategy in country offices, however, and there has been no annual reporting on it.

Workforce planning is ad hoc and reactive. In 2015, OHR agreed with the Organizational Per-

formance Group recommendation to be more proactive in sourcing country office leaders from candidate pools through the talent review exercise. This decision was overturned by leadership, who preferred to be responsive to changes in-country. Efforts to address workforce planning, through strategies to ensure an appropriate mix of high-quality talent in critical technical areas, have resulted so far in talent mapping for female management roles and competency mapping for specific posts, but no system has yet been rolled out consistently or widely. Talent databases are being developed and mapping exercises are taking place in some regional hubs. But the lack of prioritization of investment in robust HR information systems limits the ability of OHR to address strategic workforce planning.

UNDP has not yet fully overhauled the way its staff are evaluated and rewarded, or how talent is developed. Managers have limited authority to reward good performance and deal with poor performance and behaviour. There are limited incentives in the performance management and development (PMD) process, with no recognition for good performance or consequences for poor performance. Managers have no mechanism to redeploy staff who underperform, and this results in most work teams carrying underperformers. This puts strain on other staff and makes it more difficult to achieve goals.

Among the 50 country offices consulted, the PMD process was perceived as a bureaucratic compliance exercise, rather than an opportunity for genuine feedback and improvement. It was also found that PMD results do not effectively feed into UNDP's learning cycle, and it is not harmonized with the service contract performance review. PMD processes are seen by some sceptical managers as a systematic way of raising expectations that cannot be fulfilled, and inflating the ratings of underperformers in the hope they will find posts elsewhere and cease to be a problem for their team. Respondents pointed to a fear of honestly rating poor performance, and a belief that if such judgments were used against them in court, UNDP would not support them. However,

as far as compliance is concerned, PMD completion rates have risen significantly, from 31 percent in 2013, to 45.3 percent in 2014, to 80.9 percent in 2015 and 87.1 percent in 2016.

The budget for talent development has been reduced since 2014, reducing the number of programmes on offer. There is almost no funding to send staff, particularly from country offices, to classroom training. With declining staff numbers and resulting increased workloads, few respondents felt they could make time to complete any but the mandatory online courses.

Some methods have been used to develop talent in a more limited and less systematic way. These include detail assignments, limited scale leadership, mentoring programmes and online learning and certifications. However, the purpose of mandatory online learning is to ensure knowledge is shared in a consistent way with all staff; it is not a talent development initiative per se. Those who participated in online certification trainings generally thought them worthwhile, but it is too early to determine the outcomes of these programmes. Participants in the Leadership Development Pathway also found the course useful, though not always aligned to development realities. A more user-friendly learning management system has also been introduced.

MANAGEMENT OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES

UNDP has become a leaner and more cost-conscious organization. It has been able to reduce the number of staff and the duplication of functions and to lower administrative and transaction costs. Additional specialization and clustering of operational functions could have further lowered transaction costs in UNDP and generated more economies of scale and efficiencies, but buy-in has been a challenge. A range of issues and constraints limits the leverage of clustering processes.

UNDP has become a leaner organization by reducing the number of staff, the staff ratio and the span of control, although the number of con-

sultants has increased. The number of full-time employees at headquarters fell from 980 to 668 over the Strategic Plan period. Cost reductions have also been pursued in the field. RBAP, for example, reduced its staff by 522 people, and country office costs were reduced by 30 percent in the region after 17 management consultant team missions. However, the work of many of the staff who left has had to be done by consultants. The number of independent contracts increased from 17,000 in 2015 to 18,591 in 2016.

The management efficiency ratio (total UNDP expenditure relative to management activities) has also improved, falling from 8.44 percent in 2013 to 7.86 percent in 2016. This is in part because some staff management costs previously charged to core resources are now being charged to projects through DPC. This has been approved by the Executive Board “to better address the long-standing concern that core resources may have been unduly subsidizing non-core activities”. However, country offices consulted indicated that many partners, including governments, are resisting paying DPC on top of general management support.

A deeper analysis would be needed to support the gains and losses of the clustering approach. At the time of data collection for this evaluation, clustering had not yet been properly thought through and was yet to deliver greater efficiencies, savings and economies of scale. Country offices are concerned about losing staff and autonomy and have yet to be convinced of the added value of clustering. Currently, UNDP’s clustering approaches lack a solid business case and clear mandate. They are not supported by adequate capacity and IT automation with integrated and user-friendly systems, or an aligned internal control framework. The role and responsibility of the GSSC is not consistently understood. Some see it not as a monitoring and control unit but as a service provider, while others believe its oversight function adds value and customer service orientation. Another challenge with the clustering process is the effect of time differences on services. The current structure is not ideal to cater to different

time zones, and there is significant pushback from most regions and country offices.

RBA has its own clustering model, with similar and additional challenges. The model is based on creating a support network among countries, with multiple countries serving as ‘support nodes’ to help other countries and regional offices. It operates on an informal and ad hoc basis, with limited monitoring and no concrete, costed or sustainable strategy or business case. This regional approach seems to have more problems than the corporate approach, though both models should be further studied and compared.

There may be an argument for keeping both, given the greater potential for contextualized understanding of services needed in different regions. However, if every region does things differently, UNDP could have a problem reporting to centralized donors, and this may also have an impact on opportunities for further efficiencies and economies of scale. UNDP lacks a more holistic, systems-thinking approach in which the advantages of clustering, centralization and decentralization are understood and capitalized to improve institutional effectiveness.

Potential efficiency gains in procurement remain untapped, and this is an area worth exploring for further centralization and clustering. The business model designed by the headquarters procurement team is challenged by a lack of resources and insufficient buy-in from the regional bureaux and country offices. The business model, drafted in a procurement strategy in 2014, envisions migrating high-risk/ high-volume procurement to the GSSC; establishing nodes in the regional structures to handle moderate-risk/moderate-volume procurement (i.e. above \$50,000); and keeping procurement under \$50,000 in country offices. This accounts for the fact that procurement is interactive and sensitive to urgency, requires local control of suppliers and quality checks, and may involve sustainability and maintenance of goods.

Pushback has come from country offices and regional bureaux, who collect most of their office overheads from procurement and want to keep posts and control over processes. Procurement represents over 70 percent of UNDP delivery, or \$1.7 billion a year.¹¹⁴ This is distributed across 137 business units and handled by 968 procurement staff, not all of them specialists or full-time procurement officers. The 200 largest UNDP suppliers account for 63 percent of the spending, but there are 29,000 suppliers for procurement below \$50,000. In 2016, UNDP procured 18,591 independent contracts and a portfolio of 1,017 product categories. Centralizing or clustering some of this procurement, like vehicles and IT equipment for example, could clearly bring economies of scale.

To reduce the duplication of functions and administrative and transaction costs, UNDP is establishing common support services and joint initiatives with UN partners. By the end of 2015, UNDP had implemented common services for 122 country offices and common long-term agreements for 102 country offices. Approaches to procurement were harmonized across 51 country offices, common human resources management was introduced in 38 country offices, common ICT services in 68 country offices, and common financial management services in 28 country offices. To reduce operational costs and enhance the quality of common support services, in 2016, 21 business operations strategies were completed, 22 were in progress, and 46 additional countries had received technical guidance.

The cost of travel management services at headquarters has been reduced by 20 percent and the ticket surcharge by a third. A contract was signed with a new travel agency and discount agreements were negotiated with airlines, which apply to travel agencies used by country offices. Where used, the online booking tool with integrated travel and expenses has increased transparency, reducing the steps required to manage travel by 30 percent. Travel invoices are now decentralized

114 While direct costs are now covered through charges to projects, overheads are now addressed through the pooling mechanism of XB resources.

and can be managed by the five regional hubs. It is anecdotal, but there continue to be examples of cost-inefficiencies, such as staff flying business class to give a presentation lasting an hour or less.

Two thirds of UNDP staff are satisfied with operations services, products and tools. However, bureau satisfaction varies. In a 2016 survey the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) reported only 46 percent of the staff satisfied, while in Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) it was up to 77 percent. According to the same survey, 53 percent are satisfied with the specialized procurement in Copenhagen and Kuala Lumpur. More than two thirds of the staff are satisfied with the security advisory services, benefits and entitlements services provided by the Global Shared Services Unit and financial management advice.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The financial sustainability of UNDP is challenged by diminishing regular resources, inadequate funding models and exchange rate losses. Insufficient progress has been made on results-based budgeting.

Regular (core) resources have been decreasing over the last five years, and in 2016 stood at less than 13 percent of UNDP funding. Interviews with donors and senior managers indicated a shift in funding from regular resources to other resources, especially individualized programmes and non-core project funding, except for humanitarian assistance. Funding cuts in regional bureaux range from 47 percent in RBEC to 63 percent in RBAP. These have been offset by increases in non-core resource mobilization, especially from government cost-sharing, which has increased in almost all regions. The largest sources of funding for UNDP programmes are now third-party cost-sharing (31 percent) and local cost-sharing (22 percent).

Efforts to increase financial sustainability by diversifying funding sources have driven staff to focus on funding and delivery, sometimes at the

expense of integrated cross-thematic and multi-dimensional approaches. Consultation with over 50 country offices suggested that greater reliance on government cost-sharing or shifting resource dependency towards bilateral donor funding could bring some reputational risk with a shift in UNDP priorities.

Resourcing challenges can undermine efforts to break down silos and align projects to Strategic Plan priorities, as staff resort to more opportunistic approaches. This carries the risk that staff spread their efforts thinly across too many activities, as highlighted in several ADRs conducted by IEO. Efforts have been made to diversify funding sources by increasing partnerships and collaboration. Government cost-sharing is one modality that has been particularly strengthened, but more modest progress has been made with the private sector, foundations and individual philanthropists. A new policy to work with the private sector was adopted, but despite having decentralized authority to decide on these partnerships, country offices still seek reassurance on due diligence from headquarters.

The 2016 UNDP product and services survey indicated that two thirds of staff are satisfied with partnerships and communication services. The variation between bureaux is striking (from 39 percent in RBAP to 77 percent in RBEC). The most-praised efforts in this category relate to partnership assessments and the least-praised to fundraising and finalization of partnerships.

In 2016, UNDP rolled out a corporate pipeline management module to forecast the sustainability of country offices and devise timely corrective or supportive measures. Pipeline management could help to improve plan funding, visibility and transparency and inform exchange rate risk management, an area where UNDP has faced weaknesses. UNDP suffered \$95 million in exchange rate losses in 2015. Other UN agencies are reportedly relying on banks to bid for dollar exchange rates to try to mitigate risks, a practice that UNDP has started in a few countries through their business operations strategies.

In response to the reduction in core financing, the UNDP Executive Board requested country offices to accelerate DPC, but this faces resistance from some partners, regional bureaux and country offices. Consultation with country offices revealed that, even though DPC has been approved by Member States in the Executive Board, governments often resist paying DPC on top of general management support charges.

Country offices, partners and some regional bureaux have also challenged the rationale of relying on costly internal regional advisers compared to cheaper external consultants. The application of DPC for regional advisory services is still very inconsistent, as some bureaux are charging while others are yet to introduce charges. Furthermore, regional policy advisers working on vertical funds and global programmes such as UN-REDD, GEF and the Montreal Protocol are covered by fees provided by the relevant vertical funds, which cannot be charged again as they are already paid for. This creates inconsistency between advisers, with country offices perceiving that GEF advisers are 'free'. For 2017, UNDP has decided to create a DPC fund (similar to a revolving fund) that will advance resources and collect project funds for project support. This should allow some time for UNDP to promote DPC better, but the sustainability of the current funding models requires additional thinking.

To manage financial risk, leverage resources and ensure the continued universal presence and

financial sustainability of country offices, UNDP has consolidated extra-budgetary resources. According to the management of at least one bureau consulted, RBAP, the redistribution of XB is expected to encourage countries to be more agile, innovative and proactive in seeking opportunities. However, country offices complain that removing their control over these resources is a disincentive, and they question the transparency in the new allocations. Some bureaux claim that the specific criteria and analysis used to assess XB and decide on budget allocations from the regional bureau to each country office were not disclosed in order to preserve some level of discretion and flexibility.

The organization has yet to transition from political budgeting to more risk-and-results-based budgeting. UNDP is getting better at costing and allocating resources, as declining resources force the organization to become leaner and more cost-conscious. Nevertheless, the 2015 partners' survey indicated that 56 percent of partners found that UNDP does not ensure above average value for money and cost effectiveness. UNDP is still not sufficiently effective at linking budgets to results, and does not know how to effectively cost solutions or assess programmatic value for money. Ensuring this would help to better mobilize and attract appropriate investments. UNDP needs an improved results-based budget approach to convince and comply with the investment needs and opportunities of partners, donors and the private sector.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strategic Plan period has been challenging for UNDP on multiple fronts. The period entailed restructuring of the organization and significant cuts in funding for international cooperation in general and UNDP in particular. In key areas of UNDP's programmes, funding has been reduced at both corporate and country levels. The institutional reorganization also impacted programme delivery, given the significant scaling down in staff positions. The evaluation took these factors into consideration while assessing UNDP's role and contribution.

The evaluation covered the three UNDP programme pillars: sustainable development and poverty eradication; governance for peaceful and inclusive societies; and resilience building. An assessment of institutional effectiveness covering all the components was carried out. An assessment was also performed of the key programming principles, gender equality and women's empowerment, South-South and triangular cooperation and partnerships for development. And lastly, the evaluation assessed the Fifth Global Programme and the regional programmes in the five regions.

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter focus on strategic issues and do not cover the specificities of UNDP's contribution. The recommendations also take into consideration the draft Strategic Plan priorities and related discussions at the Executive Board sessions.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusion 1: The current Strategic Plan builds on previous plans to narrow the UNDP development mandate while maintaining flexibility to adjust to local needs. The integrated approach taken is well suited to the overarching objectives

of UNDP and consistent with United Nations priorities. It enables the organization to provide a multifaceted response to development support requests from national partners.

Conclusion 2: The presence of UNDP in middle-income countries remains relevant but is increasingly challenged by diminishing regular resources. This financial reality stretches the sometimes tenuous connection between the long-term strategic aims of UNDP and its programme expectations, calling into question the relevance of the Strategic Plan in some contexts.

Conclusion 3: UNDP played a positive supporting role to Governments in fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals, with particular value during the later stages, helping countries accelerate their efforts as the 2015 deadline loomed. UNDP is now broadening this assistance to integrate and prioritize the Sustainable Development Goals into national development planning.

Conclusion 4: UNDP has made a difference by embedding a multidimensional perspective of poverty in national and global debates; creating enabling environments to help Governments develop pro-poor policies; and expanding local capacities for pro-poor policymaking. UNDP has in some cases settled too easily for small-scale livelihood interventions that do not scale up and may be more suitable for other actors.

Conclusion 5: UNDP has continued to enhance its standing as a country-level implementer of a range of environmental programmes, including on climate change, biodiversity loss, water pollution, land degradation and the control of persistent organic pollutants. UNDP has a long-standing climate programme and is considered a global leader in the provision of adaptation services, as

recognized by the considerable financial resources it has secured through the GEF, Green Climate Fund and other sources.

Conclusion 6: UNDP contributed to strengthening institutions and reform processes, including by filling critical gaps in countries facing significant systemic challenges in public administration, service delivery and democratic governance. Banking on incremental approaches and cumulative impacts did not always enable a sustained increase in governance capacities.

Conclusion 7: UNDP has successfully established its niche as a trusted and reliable intermediary and neutral convener on democratic governance issues. UNDP appears reluctant at times to take advantage of its trusted position and push for more inclusive and accountable government processes. By taking an overly cautious approach, UNDP risks missing opportunities to trigger significant governance reforms. In delivering governance assistance and capacity-building, the issue of norms and the UNDP role in upholding them needs to be addressed.

Conclusion 8: In countries affected by conflict, UNDP specialist technical expertise and human resource support has enabled core governance institutions to function, which is critical for consolidating stability and peace and transitioning to development. More sustained efforts are needed to support sector-specific capacity-development strategies and a systematic approach to strengthening core institutional capacities.

Conclusion 9: UNDP has made a concerted effort to work more collaboratively with peace-keeping missions mandated by the Security Council. This brings a more developmental approach to joint peacebuilding and State-building efforts, helping to smooth post-mission transitions.

Conclusion 10: In the early stages of crisis recovery, UNDP capacity-building support has helped to stabilize national institutions by working successfully with government partners to address immediate needs. Yet funding and operational

constraints often limit progress during the longer transitional phase back to peaceful development, impeding national efforts to address the structural causes of conflict.

Conclusion 11: Structural changes involving establishment of a single global policy bureau for policy and programme support and a small, free-standing crisis response unit have weakened the programme coherence of UNDP and its service offering on crisis risk reduction and recovery.

Conclusion 12: UNDP is providing valuable services to national partners on disaster risk reduction strategies, and is especially well positioned to develop contextual analyses at the country level. Funding support for risk reduction remains weak.

Conclusion 13: UNDP is considered an especially valued partner in the aftermath of conflicts and disasters, as countries look to recover and rebuild. It has increased the pace and quality of its early recovery and transitional development services. Yet the organization remains ad hoc in its response to crises and focuses too much effort on short-term employment creation and cash assistance programming. This diverts attention from the more complex but critical planning and governance-related aspects of recovery where UNDP support is especially needed.

Conclusion 14: UNDP has more effectively organized and promoted its work on gender equality and women's empowerment, but faces continuing challenges in mainstreaming this work across the organization and meeting relevant corporate financial and results targets.

Conclusion 15: UNDP has strengthened its commitment to South-South cooperation through the development of a corporate strategy and continued administrative support to the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. There remains a lack of prioritization and systematic use of South-South and triangular cooperation, and limited sharing of knowledge.

Conclusion 16: The global programme fulfils an important policy support function and has enabled UNDP to maintain intellectual engagement in the global development arena by participating in major international events and channeling country-level lessons to global agreements. The programme's results framework and indicators are excessive in their expectations, which cover the breadth of UNDP work under the Strategic Plan, including country-level results. The global programme is more a funding line to support staff positions for achieving corporate-wide results than a distinct global programme.

Conclusion 17: Progress has been made in developing a coherent regional response across the five regional programmes. To differing degrees, each of the regional programmes has expanded support for new approaches and innovative solutions and promoted subregional programming. The potential of the regional programmes to facilitate a holistic response to regional engagement and country office support is not fully realized. Although the regional programme model is an effective modality to support regional initiatives, it is constrained by its large scope. In some regions there remain too many country-related activities that overlap with country office programming. Further attention is needed for regional public goods and services and management of cross-border externalities.

Conclusion 18: There are signs that UNDP is improving both the quality of its programming and its openness, agility and adaptability. But these have had limited impact on harnessing knowledge, solutions and expertise due to insufficient investment in results-based management and knowledge management and an excessive focus on compliance rather than organizational learning.

Conclusion 19: The Office of Human Resources is limited in its ability to contribute effectively to institutional effectiveness, as it is not part of formal high-level decision-making structures and as such cannot make sufficient and timely input into corporate-level strategic and budgetary decisions that may affect country office results.

Conclusion 20: The financial sustainability of UNDP is challenged by declining resources that are mostly tied to specific funder objectives, inadequate funding models and exchange rate losses. This situation makes it increasingly difficult for UNDP to work in an integrated fashion, break down silos and align projects to the priorities of the Strategic Plan. Although UNDP is now a leaner and more cost-conscious organization, additional and more effective clustering of operational functions could have further lowered UNDP transaction costs and generated further efficiencies and economies of scale. UNDP has made insufficient progress on results-based budgeting, and does not effectively cost solutions or assess programmatic value for money.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Support for fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals should be a cross-cutting issue for all UNDP country offices. Integrated approaches to development are essential for fulfilment of the Goals and should be pursued where possible, taking national contexts and implementation efficiency into consideration.

Recommendation 2: The overarching strategic objective of UNDP — supporting the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized members of society — remains valid. Future resources and programming should aim to help countries accelerate the achievement of development results especially for those left behind, based on fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should retain its global reach. Programming in middle-income countries should align with the Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks, placing vulnerable populations at the forefront while seizing opportunities to expand assistance at subnational levels.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should strongly emphasize its climate change adaptation capabilities and services in the next strategic plan.

The UNDP national and subnational scope of service; capabilities for urban and rural development planning, governance and risk assessment; experience managing multi-partner trust funds; and decades of environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to ably assist national and subnational governments to meet this global development challenge. Specific attention should be paid to the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction linkages.

Recommendation 5: Recognizing that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP should be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and more persuasive in promoting democratic governance reforms.

Recommendation 6: Analysis of institutional capacities at the national level should guide UNDP governance programming in countries affected by conflict. Governance support needs to be targeted to critical government functions that are essential to stability. UNDP should more strategically support Sustainable Development Goal 16 and related intergovernmental agreements on peacebuilding and State-building.

Recommendation 7: UNDP should retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the next strategic plan so that stakeholders see this remaining a core area of the UNDP service offering. To strengthen the coherence of its crisis risk-reduction and recovery support, UNDP should continue to refine the roles and scope of service of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and the Crisis Response Unit.

Recommendation 8: UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, taking measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas. Work on gender equality and women's empowerment should not be confined to a gender team alone but should ensure that all large programmes have dedicated gender expertise. Specific attention needs to be paid to such areas as

environment, energy and crisis response, where gender mainstreaming remains weak.

Recommendation 9: UNDP should take a more systematic approach to South-South cooperation, selecting specific areas and partners for expanded cooperation.

Recommendation 10: UNDP should change the global programme to a service line for supporting staff positions at global and regional levels, as its shared deliverables and blurred boundaries make it unsuitable as a specific programme.

Recommendation 11: UNDP should determine specialties within its sustainable development, governance and resilience areas of work. This will help it to build world-class technical expertise and focus its resources on building capacities in those areas.

Recommendation 12: UNDP should reassess the roles and financial sustainability of the regional hubs, striving to make them centres of excellence for innovation and learning while expanding cooperation and partnerships with regional institutions. It should reduce overlap between regional and country-level programming.

Recommendation 13: Regional programming, if better defined, has the potential to be a valuable tool to prioritize and organize UNDP regional engagement and support to country offices. UNDP should develop its regional programmes as frameworks, outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed. To maximize its activities at the regional level and position UNDP to make a meaningful contribution, there should be more focus on a select number of areas at the regional level. For regional programmes to be effective, the activities that are considered should be realistic and pay sufficient attention to regionality principles.

Recommendation 14: UNDP should promote a results culture that encourages critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness.

Recommendation 15: UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership, relationship management and management across complex systems should be prioritized.

Recommendation 16: UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and

results-based budgeting process, to more effectively link results to resources. This will help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. UNDP should work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on integrated multidimensional approaches to support fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.

Annex 1

FINANCIAL FLOWS

Table A. 2014–2016 programme expenditure vs. 2014–2017 planned resources (US\$ millions)				
Strategic Plan resource plan (4 years)				
Strategic Plan outcome	Source*	Provisional	Actual (2014–2016)	Achieved
Outcome 1	RR	621	321	52%
	OR	3,468	2,942	85%
Outcome 2	RR	311	218	70%
	OR	2,601	1,346	52%
Outcome 3	RR	373	175	47%
	OR	3,121	4,145	133%
Outcome 4	RR	62	27	44%
	OR	520	57	11%
Outcome 5	RR	104	117	114%
	OR	867	607	70%
Outcome 6	RR	207	65	31%
	OR	3,468	947	27%
Outcome 7	RR	186	149	80%
	OR	1,561	408	26%

* RR = regular resources, OR = other resources

Source: 2016 Strategic Plan midterm review and 2017 BPPS provisional financial data

Table B. Total programme expenditure by sources of funds, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)					
Source of funds	2014	2015	2016	Total	Percent of total
Bilateral/multilateral	2,109	2,112	1,951	6,171	49%
Programme government	907	907	844	2,658	21%
Regular resources	466	417	382	1,265	10%
Vertical funds	826	818	771	2,415	19%
Total	4,308	4,254	3,948	12,509	100%

Table C. Vertical funds: Expenditures by region, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

Region	2014	2015	2016	Total	Percent of total
Africa	378	369	332	1,079	45%
Arab States	84	68	86	238	10%
Asia and the Pacific	116	142	147	406	17%
Europe and the CIS	85	88	77	250	10%
Latin America and the Caribbean	94	93	86	272	11%
Headquarters / other	70	59	43	172	7%
Total	756	760	728	2,415	100%

Table D. Sustainable development pathways: Key programme areas expenditure, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

Output area	Number of countries linked to the output	Expenditures	Percent of total, sustainable development pathways
Structural transformation of productive capacities	137	1,192	31%
Inclusive and sustainable social protection	74	496	13%
Sustainable management of natural resources, ecosystem services, chemicals and waste	124	739	19%
Climate change adaptation and mitigation	130	566	15%
Increased energy efficiency and universal modern energy access	105	269	7%
Total outcome 1		3,263	85%
Global consensus on MDGs and post-2015 agenda	29	34	1%
Monitor progress on MDGs and post-2015 agenda	47	52	1%
National development plans on poverty and inequality	64	86	2%
Global development financing	36	99	3%
South-South and triangular cooperation	30	76	2%
Innovation	33	74	2%
Knowledge about development solutions	77	90	2%
MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals	34	46	1%
Total outcome 7		557	15%
Total sustainable development pathways expenditure		3,820	100%

Table E. Governance for inclusive and peaceful societies: Key programme areas expenditure, 2014–2016 (US\$ millions)

Output area	Number of countries linked to the output	Expenditures	Percent of total, governance
Parliaments, electoral institutions, participation and representation	109	760	13%
Anti-corruption	82	139	2%
Human rights institutions	80	134	2%
Civil society engagement, youth engagement	92	212	4%
Frameworks, policies and institutions to ensure conservation, sustainable use and benefit-sharing of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystems	97	271	5%
Rule of law - legal reform on emerging issues	34	49	1%
Total outcome 2		1,564	27%
Service delivery / National	41	131	2%
Service delivery / Subnational	92	931	16%
HIV/AIDS and related services	82	1,349	23%
Rule of law and access to justice	71	316	5%
Citizen security	60	1,580	27%
Not reported	28	12	0%
Total outcome 3		4,320	73%
Total governance		5,884	100%

Table F. Governance for inclusive and peaceful societies: Key programme area expenditures and number of countries where they were implemented, 2014–2016 (in US\$ millions)

Key thematic area (Strategic Plan output)	Development countries		Conflict and post-conflict countries		Total		
	2014–2016 Expenditure 1	No. of countries	2014–2016 expenditure	No. of countries	2014–2016 Total expenditure	No. of countries	Percent of total, governance
Parliaments, electoral institutions, participation and representation (2.1)	288 (39%)	83	443 (61%)	20	731	103	13%
Anti-corruption (2.2)	93 (80%)	62	23 (20%)	13	116	75	2%
Human rights (2.3)	99 (75%)	62	33 (25%)	14	132	76	2%
Civil society engagement, youth engagement (2.4)	128 (65%)	71	69 (35%)	17	198	88	4%
Rule of law - legal reform (2.6)	26 (55%)	26	22 (45%)	5	48	31	1%

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Key thematic area (Strategic Plan output)	Development countries		Conflict and post- conflict countries		Total		
	2014–2016 Expenditure 1	No. of coun- tries	2014–2016 expenditure	No. of coun- tries	2014–2016 Total expenditure	No. of coun- tries	Percent of total, governance
Core government functions for development (3.1)	35 (27%)	20	94 (73%)	18	129	38	2%
Service delivery/ Subnational (3.2)	721 (77%)	75	210 (23%)	14	930	89	16%
HIV/AIDS (3.3)	869 (69%)	59	386 (31%)	16	1,255	75	23%
Rule of law and access to justice (3.4)	189 (62%)	54	114 (38%)	14	303	68	5%
Citizen security (3.5)	85 (5%)	45	1480 (95%)	12	1,565	57	27%
SGBV (4.2)	14 (52%)	27	13 (48%)	4	28	31	1%
Peacebuilding – peaceful manage- ment of conflicts and tensions (5.5)	77 (84%)	42	15 (16%)	8	91	50	2%
Peacebuilding – consensus-building around contested priorities (5.6)	55 (35%)	32	103 (65%)	11	159	43	3%
Total expenditures	2,679 (47%)		3,006 (53%)		5,684		100%

Output area	Number of countries linked to the output	Expenditures	Percent of total, resilience
Mechanisms in place to assess natural and man-made risks	62	145	8%
Disaster and climate risk management	85	133	8%
Gender-responsive disaster and climate risk management	30	37	2%
Natural hazard preparedness	68	121	7%
Peacebuilding - peaceful management of conflicts and tensions	55	119	7%
Peacebuilding - consensus-building around contested priorities	49	169	10%
Total outcome 5		724	42%
Early economic revitalization	44	640	37%
Capacities for early recovery efforts	38	175	10%
Innovative partnerships in early recovery	8	21	1%
Social cohesion and trust	31	175	10%
Total outcome 6		1,012	58%
Total resilience and recovery		1,735	100%

Annex 2

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

Recommendation 1

Support for fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals should be a cross-cutting issue for all UNDP country offices. Integrated approaches to development are essential for fulfilment of the Goals and should be pursued where possible, taking national contexts and implementation efficiency into consideration.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP will continue and further expand its support to national partners in integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans, through the MAPS missions and other forms of support together with other United Nations development system partners. UNDP will provide policy support to countries through the application of tools and quantitative methodologies that can help Governments to make informed decisions on prioritization and implementation of the Goals in line with national priorities and context.

Upon request from Governments, UNDP is committed to supporting countries in the follow-up and review of progress towards Sustainable Development Goal fulfilment through the voluntary national reviews as part of the formal process that culminates at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Following the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) guidelines for preparation of country-led national Sustainable Development Goal reports and on the request of Governments, UNDP is supporting the production of the first cohort of reports, which include in-depth national and subnational reviews of the countries' processes of monitoring and reviewing national implementation of the Goals.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Roll out and support the UNDG MAPS approach in response to national requests, together with UNDG and other development partners	Ongoing (since August 2016; on demand)	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS); regional bureaux; resident coordinators/ resident representatives		
Upon requests from Governments, support countries in efforts to follow up and review progress towards Goal fulfilment through voluntary national reviews and support for Sustainable Development Goal country reports.	Ongoing	BPPS and regional bureaux, in support of resident coordinators/ resident representatives		

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Recommendation 2

The overarching strategic objective of UNDP — supporting the poorest of the poor and the most marginalized members of society — remains valid. Future resources and programming should aim to help countries accelerate the achievement of development results especially for those left behind, based on fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation, and the 2030 Agenda’s ambition of “leaving no one behind” will be proposed as an important element of the 2018-2021 Strategic Plan, including in the integrated results and resources framework (IRRF). UNDP intends to implement this recommendation through its support to national and local partners on the Sustainable Development Goals, and including through tools and promoting development solutions identified through South-South and triangular cooperation, and fostering partnerships that have a strong potential to harness transformational change and support achievement of the 2030 Agenda on the ground.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Drawing on practices and lessons learned through programmes and projects, continue the development and support of the conceptual framework and associated tools for a more integrated and effective approach to multidimensional poverty.	Ongoing	Conceptual framework: BPPS; Delivery organization-wide Tools development: BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		
A corporate “leave no one behind” methodology for tracking excluded groups, targeting and access support to development benefits will be integrated in all results and resources frameworks for programmes and projects.	January 2018	BPPS in consultations with regional bureaux and country offices		

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Recommendation 3

UNDP should retain its global reach. Programming in middle-income countries should align with the Sustainable Development Goals and other global frameworks, placing vulnerable populations at the forefront while seizing opportunities to expand assistance at subnational levels.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in conjunction with the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action, to ensure that countries make effective use of all available resources and means to advance their development goals. Through dedicated methodologies for development finance assessments and integrated financing solutions, UNDP assists Member States in the development of their integrated national financing frameworks linking planning, budgeting, partnerships and resource mobilization as requested by the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. Recognizing the specific challenges facing middle-income countries (MICs) in continuing development processes in a fundamentally different financing environment, UNDP will consider continuing to undertake development finance assessments in MICs.

The new UNDAF guidance, issued in February 2017, informs UNDP programming in MICs and focuses on alignment with global frameworks, in particular the 2030 Agenda and Addis Ababa Agenda for Action. The guidance prioritizes leaving no one behind and financing strategies that ensure continuity in pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP will continue supporting localization of the 2030 Agenda as a central focus of support through the MAPS approach.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Continue to support formulation and implementation of UNDAFs addressing context specific challenges and leaving no-one behind	Ongoing	Country offices; tools development: BPPS and Articulation of Territorial Networks Initiative Regional bureaux: country programme development tailored to national contexts and aligned to the Strategic Plan		
Conduct development finance assessments and support development of Integrated National Financing Frameworks in line with the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action	Ongoing	BPPS, regional bureaux, country offices		

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Recommendation 4

UNDP should strongly emphasize its climate change adaptation capabilities and services in the next strategic plan. The UNDP national and subnational scope of service; capabilities for urban and rural development planning, governance and risk assessment; experience managing multi-partner trust funds; and decades of environmental protection and disaster risk reduction and recovery work provide a platform from which to ably assist national and subnational governments to meet this global development challenge. Specific attention should be paid to the climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction linkages.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with the recommendation and intends to expand its work in the area of adaptation, in close coordination and synergy with disaster risk reduction (DRR) efforts. As the evaluation acknowledged, there has been good progress in linking the DRR and adaptation portfolios at country and regional levels, which could be further systematized and institutionalized throughout all of UNDP.

In response to the growing demands to support climate action and DRR, UNDP has already scaled up and expanded assistance to countries to integrate climate change adaptation and DRR into their subnational/national policies, plans, and strategies. Efforts towards integrated approaches to climate change adaptation and DRR are being pursued in various regional and country programmes and projects. As the co-facilitator of the United Nations System Strategic Approach on Climate Change Action, member of the Climate Principals Group and member of the Climate Core Group, UNDP will further systematize and institutionalize this integrated approach throughout all policies, programmes and projects and its work with partner agencies and stakeholders.

UNDP is playing an increasingly significant role in supporting countries to mobilize climate finance, including through the GCF, to undertake adaptation actions for climate-resilient development. UNDP is uniquely positioned to accelerate adaptation services, building on its decade-long portfolio, and has been expanding its technical capacity. For instance, GCF project development is being undertaken through expanded task teams that include experts from different technical areas (social and environmental safeguards, gender and economic analysis) to support the scale and scope of adaptation investments to which countries aspire. UNDP will continue to expand its roster of experts to deliver adaptation services at global, regional and national levels.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Develop long-term agreements for roster of experts including climate scientists, safeguard specialists, gender experts, economists, proposal development and various thematic experts.	July 2018	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		
Finalize and disseminate the draft integrated strategy note on climate change, DRR and SE to articulate the UNDP corporate approach and offer on delivering integrated services at global, regional and country levels.	Early 2018	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		
Finalize draft tool for practitioners on integrating DRR/climate change adaptation into development planning and budgeting and strengthen the community of practice and relevant knowledge networks	Early 2018	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux		

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Recommendation 5

Recognizing that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP should be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and more persuasive in promoting democratic governance reforms.

Management response:

UNDP management takes note of the recommendation and concurs that governance is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP strives to be proactive in supporting sectoral governance approaches and to be persuasive in promoting democratic governance reform, while fully recognizing that its support for reforms is based on requests from national Governments in line with national contexts and priorities. UNDP governance work builds on long-standing broad and innovative partnerships with international, national and local actors to create an enabling environment for sustainable peace and development to take root. For example, the Global Focal Point for Police, Justice and Corrections is one of the flagship mechanisms that UNDP employs to deliver coordinated rule of law assistance. Co-led by UNDP and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the mechanism brings together the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other United Nations entities to facilitate joint planning and programming and resource mobilization in service of the whole system. UNDP also works with the Department of Political Affairs on conflict prevention and electoral assistance.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Through engagement in MAPS missions and support to the SDG agenda, identify entry points for innovative sectoral governance approaches and new opportunities to realign programmatic support in democratic governance and conflict prevention as a key enabler of the Sustainable Development Goals	Ongoing	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux, resident coordinators/ resident representatives and country offices		The Inter-Parliamentary Union /UNDP self-assessment toolkit, <i>Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals</i> and the UNDP/ Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption/ Islamic Development Bank handbook, <i>Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals</i> , were launched in 2017. Implementation is planned via parliamentary programming to promote climate action ¹¹⁵ , prevent HIV/AIDS and advance other thematic development priorities
Through the UNDP partnership with OHCHR and the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions, scale up joint support to national human rights institutions as key independent bodies to promote and protect human rights and ensure that no one gets left behind.	Ongoing	BPPS in consultation with regional bureaux, resident coordinators/ resident representatives and country offices	On track	A letter of intent between the partners to scale up joint support to national human rights institutions was signed in 2017 and a draft programming approach has been formulated

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115 See <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/8847>, Evaluation of the EC Contribution to the Parliamentary Action for Renewable Energy (PARE) Project, which found that the project played a key role in the enactment of a sustainability clause in the new Constitution of Tunisia, in doubling the renewable energy budget in India in 2013/2014; and in bringing into effect the Sustainable Energy Development Authority in Bangladesh.

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Recommendation 6

Analysis of institutional capacities at the national level should guide UNDP governance programming in countries affected by conflict. Governance support needs to be targeted to critical government functions that are essential to stability. UNDP should more strategically support Sustainable Development Goal 16 and related intergovernmental agreements on peacebuilding and State-building.

Management response:

UNDP gives specific consideration to this recommendation in its strategic plan, 2018-2021 which is currently under formulation. Given the strategic importance of Goal 16 for the entire 2030 Agenda, UNDP has been instrumental in launching the Global Alliance for Reporting Progress on Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, which brings together Member States, civil society and the private sector, supported by a group of United Nations partner entities. UNDP is also closely engaged in the piloting of Goal 16 monitoring in cooperation with the Open Government Partnership and the Community of Democracies.

Recognizing the interconnectedness of the peace and development agendas, UNDP will continue to engage in international networks such as the International Network on Conflict and Fragility, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and State-building and its strategic relationship with the g7+ group of countries, having signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016. As part of that engagement, UNDP in 2016 developed “SDG-Ready”, the UNDP offer on Sustainable Development Goal implementation in fragile situations. UNDP will continue to advocate for the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States internationally as well as at country level, promoting the principles of the New Deal in aid coordination, use of country systems, Sustainable Development Goal implementation, the Sustaining Peace Agenda and peacebuilding and State-building efforts.

In June 2017 the United Nations and the World Bank completed and officially released the first joint diagnostic framework on core government functions in fragile and conflict-affected settings, for which UNDP has played a leading role within the United Nations system. The framework includes a set of joint principles for assessing critical government functions that are essential to stability, peacebuilding and State-building processes. Its objective is to provide an initial assessment of key issues, priorities and entry points around the six core government functions of executive coordination at the centre of government, local governance, public financial management, civil service, security sector and aid management. UNDP is already providing support in a number of countries based on the diagnostic, including the Central African Republic, Libya and South Sudan, and initial discussions are underway to apply some aspects in Cameroon and Yemen. UNDP is working through the Inter-Agency Platform on Core Government Functions (co-chaired by UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs) to embed this framework in existing assessment and planning processes such as recovery and peacebuilding assessments and conflict-related development analyses.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Continue to engage in international forums on peacebuilding and State-building.	Ongoing	BPPS (Strategic Positioning Unit (SPU), Governance and Peacebuilding Unit		
Apply core government function diagnostic framework in fragile and conflict-affected countries	Ongoing	BPPS/Governance and Peacebuilding in collaboration with regional bureaux, resident coordinators/ resident representatives and country offices		

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Recommendation 7

UNDP should retain resilience as a distinct area of work under the next strategic plan so that stakeholders see this remaining a core area of the UNDP service offering. To strengthen the coherence of its crisis risk-reduction and recovery support, UNDP should continue to refine the roles and scope of service of BPPS and the Crisis Response Unit.

Management response:

UNDP agrees with the recommendation and will consider its approach to resilience building in the next strategic plan, 2018-2021, drawing on findings and recommendations of an external evaluation of the lessons learned from its role in early recovery coordination. The UNDP approach to early recovery coordination will be revisited in light of the QCPR and the New Way of Working.

UNDP takes note of the recommendation about strengthening the coherence of its crisis prevention and recovery support, while recognizing that details regarding potential reforms of the United Nations peace and security architecture and wider development system will also guide UNDP work in these areas.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Review any financial, organizational and structural implications stemming from the new strategic plan, the SG priorities and wider United Nations reforms, to ensure a strong, coherent/integrated and well-resourced UNDP approach on crisis prevention, response and recovery.	Q1 2018	Executive Office/BPPS/CRU/RBx		

Recommendation 8

UNDP should strengthen implementation of its gender policies, taking measures to ensure adequate funding to mainstream gender across all programming areas. Work on gender equality and women's empowerment should not be confined to a gender team alone but should ensure that all large programmes have dedicated gender expertise. Specific attention needs to be paid to such areas as environment, energy and crisis response, where gender mainstreaming remains weak.

Management response:

UNDP agrees with the recommendation and aims to address it in the forthcoming gender equality strategy which will include a more robust gender architecture, stronger accountability mechanisms and budgetary commitments as well as reporting targets. Progress will be reported through a strengthened Gender Steering and Implementation Committee and the annual report to the Executive Board. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening partnerships with UN-Women and other technical partners to deliver gender results across all programming areas.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Formulate the new gender equality strategy to incorporate recommended actions and mainstream gender across thematic areas and present it to the Executive Board at the first regular session 2018 in line with the new strategic plan, 2018-2021	January 2018	BPPS/Gender Team		

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Recommendation 9

UNDP should take a more systematic approach to South-South cooperation, selecting specific areas and partners for expanded cooperation.

Management response:

UNDP agrees with the recommendation and commits to strengthening its systematic approach to South-South and triangular cooperation through leveraging opportunities offered by the implementation of the South-South cooperation corporate strategy. Through its strategic roles (knowledge broker, capacity builder and partnership facilitator), UNDP will contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by continuously taking stock of the challenges facing developing countries, systematically fostering exchanges and partnerships, supporting policy frameworks and institutional capacities, stimulating targeted research to inform global policy dialogues and relying more heavily on country programming as an efficient way to leverage South-South cooperation at the national level. In addition, UNDP continues to support the UN Development System through hosting the UN Office for South-South cooperation.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Strengthen country programming to ensure systematic mainstreaming of South-South cooperation in all programme frameworks as an enabler of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.	Mid-2018 for training and guidance for regional bureaux and country offices, then each country programme document cycle until end-2021	BPPS Development Impact Group (DIG) and Headquarters Project Appraisal Committee secretariat with support of regional bureaux		
Develop and roll out a support package to strengthen national capacities to access and expand South-South cooperation based on country typologies	December 2019	BPPS DIG in consultation with regional bureaux		

Recommendation 10

UNDP should change the global programme into a service line for supporting staff positions at global and regional levels, as its shared deliverables and blurred boundaries make it unsuitable as a specific programme.

Management response:

UNDP management takes note of the recommendation. The relevance and role of programmatic instruments including the global and regional programmes will be further reviewed in the coming year(s). UNDP will explore the idea of converting the current global programme into a service line as one of the options going forward.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Explore and select viable option and submit required documentation to the Executive Board	By January 2018	BPPS, BMS and the Executive Office		

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Recommendation 11

UNDP should determine specialties within its sustainable development, governance and resilience areas of work. This will help it build world-class technical expertise and focus its resources on building capacities in those areas.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP is committed to having world-class technical expertise in the areas of sustainable development, governance and resilience. Once the new strategic plan is endorsed by the Executive Board later this year, UNDP will identify the specialized capacities needed to best implement these stated priorities and support country offices to respond to the priorities of national partners. The UNDP knowledge management strategy, which the evaluation recognizes as “comprehensive” and providing “considerable emphasis recognized as on knowledge facilitation and learning”, asks UNDP to leverage knowledge management for identification, development, mobilization and management of talent and expertise in ways that allow the organization to draw from a pool of qualified practitioners and experts at any time, mobilize staff members to be available for ad-hoc initiatives and virtual projects. To realize this vision, UNDP is investing in the development of an improved, cost-effective mechanism to map and track staff expertise across the organization. Through improved personnel profiles and searches, this offering aims to assist staff and managers to identify expertise rapidly and systematically. This will also allow tracking of expertise to assess strengths and weaknesses in order to build and bolster capacities where needed. Regional bureaux will continue developing and implementing Sustainable Development Goal toolkits, and investing in the capacity of UNDP staff and other partners through trainings, community of practice meetings, and others.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Review UNDP technical expertise against the priorities identified in the new strategic plan and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and develop an action plan for training and learning to address any gaps in capacity arising.	Mid-2018	BPPS/Governance and Peacebuilding Unit BPPS/Sustainable Development Unit BPPS/Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction Unit in consultation with Executive Office and regional bureaux		
Continue development of a staff expertise mapping and search system (“PeopleSearch”) to enable offices to easily locate subject matter experts and for UNDP to assess expertise globally against priority areas.	Q1 2018	BPPS/DIG Bureau of Management Services/Office of Information Management Services, Office of Human Resources		

Recommendation 12

UNDP should reassess the roles and financial sustainability of the regional hubs, striving to make them centres of excellence for innovation and learning while expanding cooperation and partnerships with regional institutions. It should reduce overlap between regional and country-level programming.

Management response:

UNDP management takes note of this recommendation and will review the financial sustainability and roles of the regional hubs over the next Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Review financial sustainability of regional hubs	2018 -21	Executive Office/regional bureaux/BPPS		

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Recommendation 13

Regional programming, if better defined, has the potential to be a valuable tool to prioritize and organize UNDP regional engagement and support to country offices. UNDP should develop its regional programmes as frameworks, outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed. To maximize its activities at the regional level and position UNDP to make a meaningful contribution, there should be more focus on a select number of areas at the regional level. For regional programmes to be effective, the activities that are considered should be realistic and pay sufficient attention to regionality principles.

Management response:

Management agrees with the recommendation that regional programmes should be developed as frameworks outlining the regional issues to be addressed and approaches to be followed within a select number of areas in support of the 2030 Agenda.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Formulation of the regional programmes, 2018-2022, guided by the 2030 Agenda will support distinct and specific regional public goods	January 2018	Regional bureaux		

Recommendation 14

UNDP should promote a results culture that encourages critical reflection and continuous organizational learning for improved results and institutional effectiveness.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. As the Executive Board noted in several decisions, UNDP has made significant progress in strengthening its analytical capacities. To build a strong results culture across the organization, UNDP will streamline its results architecture, reporting and performance analysis systems to allow all parts of the organization to use results and evidence for learning and strategic decisions. During the current Strategic Plan cycle, UNDP developed an integrated corporate planning system to manage the programme and inform development and institutional performance analyses. The strength of the UNDP programme management was well recognized in the results-based management audit conducted by OAI in 2016, which rated the system satisfactory, the highest rate possible and the first to have been received for results-based management. To inform the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017, UNDP also conducted analyses of lessons learned from results-oriented annual reports and decentralized evaluations. A complete roll-out of an upgraded knowledge sharing infrastructure; and the relaunch of the UNDP public library of knowledge products along with new mechanisms to measure their quality, reach and impact also took place within this strategic plan timeframe.

To ensure programme management and evaluation support learning, UNDP works on: (a) designing a tool for capturing quality lessons learned in the corporate system and the Evaluation Resource Centre; (b) fostering exchange and learning through recently relaunched knowledge networks and an improved corporate social networking platform, in addition to a newly established One United Nations network for inter-agency collaboration, exchange and learning (as per a recommendation of the QCPR); and (c) offering dedicated training and outreach to empower staff to use these mechanisms effectively for learning and knowledge exchange. UNDP has taken practical steps to operationalize self-learning from experiments, from what works and what does not, through the establishment of the Innovation Facility in 2014. A key component of the mandate of this facility is the provision of risk capital and advisory services to country offices to test new approaches to solve development problems. The Innovation Facility documents successes, learning and lessons in its annual reviews and through regular blogging by offices supported by the facility.

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Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Streamline results monitoring, reporting and analysis systems allowing all units to view and analyse UNDP-wide results and resources data (by strategic plan outcomes/ outputs, countries, country typologies, etc.) for learning and decision-making	Q3 2018	BPPS/DIG and Executive Office		
Strengthen UNDP analytical tools and capacities in order to ensure evidence-based decision-making at corporate, regional and country office levels	Q4 2019	BPPS/DIG and Executive Office		

Recommendation 15

UNDP should increase the involvement of the Office of Human Resources (OHR) in strategic decision-making, especially in future institutional restructuring. Given the increasing complexity of programme delivery, inter-agency work and collaboration with a range of partners including civil society, investment in developing skills in leadership, relationship management and management across complex systems should be prioritized.

Management response:

UNDP management agrees with this recommendation. UNDP is committed to ensuring pivotal importance of human resources matters, including OHR representation at early stages of decision-making.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
In 2017, a training programme for newly appointed resident representatives focused on leadership development in complex environments and collaboration with partners.	2017	OHR	Completed	
Leadership development programmes (LDP) invest in developing skills in complex problem solving, relationship and partnership development for managers and supervisors. Supervisors and managers to develop skills including in complex problem solving, in relationship building and in partnership building.	Ongoing			LDP I / II (ongoing) LDP III (2018)

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Recommendation 16

UNDP should transition from political budgeting to a more risk- and results-based budgeting process, to more effectively link results to resources. This will help mobilize funds and better highlight investment gaps to donors. UNDP is being held accountable to a corporate strategic plan without predictable and adequate resources. UNDP should work with funders and influence groups to raise understanding of the unintended effects of reductions in core funding. Focus should be on bringing the donor community together to work more effectively on integrated multidimensional approaches to support fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, while contributing to partner country priorities.

Management response:

The UNDP management concurs with this recommendation. To build solid results to resources linkages, UNDP will strengthen its results based budgeting process through the analysis of demand (from country programme documents) and supply (from pipelines and donor intelligence). To better analyze resources invested and results achieved, UNDP will establish a close link between the IRRF indicator targets and the resource plan in the Integrated Budget, which will enable the organization to analyze investment gaps and facilitate dialogue with stakeholders.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Status	Comments
Set baselines, milestones and targets for IRRF indicators by linking BMTs with the corporate resource plan	Q1 2018	BPPS/DIG, BMS/Office of Finance and Resource Management (OFRM), Executive Office		
Analyse resources invested and results achieved to identify investment gaps during the midterm review of the strategic plan	Q1 2019	BPPS/DIG, BMS/OFRM, Executive Office		
In line with corporate RM strategy for the new SP, introduce a partnership, pipeline and resource mobilization strategy as part of programme development to identify resource gaps that are critical to deliver the results of the programme, and to advocate with funding partners based on the investment gap.	Q1 2018	BPPS/DIG and Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy		

ANNEX 3 and 4 (available online)

Annexes 3 and 4 of the report are available on IEO's website at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/7850>

Annex 3. PERSONS CONSULTED

Annex 4. DOCUMENTS CONSULTED



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