



INDEPENDENT  
Evaluation Office

United Nations Development Programme

# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION YEMEN



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# Acknowledgements

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP would like to thank all those who have contributed to this evaluation.

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The IEO could not have completed the evaluation without the support of the following:

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agencies and bilateral and multilateral  
development partners



# Foreword

I am pleased to present this Independent Country Programme Evaluation of UNDP in Yemen. This is the second evaluation of UNDP activities in Yemen, reviewing activities since 2012. It has been prepared by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP as one in a series of country-level evaluations worldwide that constitute a vital component of UNDP's accountability and results-based management system.

The ongoing conflict in Yemen has caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in the country. Yemenis have suffered from forced displacement, commodity and cash shortages, food insecurity, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and collapse of basic services and institutions. The impact of the crisis is staggering. During the evaluation period, UNDP underwent major programmatic transitions mirroring the evolving country context.

The evaluation found that UNDP has made a swift adjustment in its programme to support Yemen's political transition following the Gulf Cooperation Council-brokered peace and transition agreement and achieved important results in the period 2012-2014. However, the programme in this period was too narrowly focused on the political transition and the country office was not prepared when the country descended into civil war and humanitarian crisis. Following the massive disruption brought

about by the conflict, and with SURGE corporate support, the Yemen Resilience Programme was prepared, and the country office was nevertheless able to foster an initial approach to humanitarian and development programming that subsequently took root. UNDP Yemen's presence in-country is critical for its comparative advantage and resource mobilization. A comprehensive and integrated medium-term vision and strategy for UNDP in Yemen has, however, yet to emerge.

The evaluation identified a number of areas for improvement and recommendations for UNDP to consider. UNDP management has indicated the actions it intends to take in response.

I trust that this report will be of use to readers seeking to achieve a better understanding of UNDP's work in a conflict context, and that it will prompt discussions on how UNDP may be best positioned to support Yemen in its future programmes.








**Indran A. Naidoo**  
**Director, Independent Evaluation Office**





# Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	vii
Evaluation Brief	1
 <b>CHAPTER 1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation	4
1.2 Overview of the national development context and challenges	4
1.3 Overview of the UNDP programme	6
1.4 Evaluation methodology, process and limitations	8
 <b>CHAPTER 2. FINDINGS</b>	<b>9</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1 Conclusions	36
3.2 Recommendations and Management Response	38
 <b>ANNEXES</b>	<b>41</b>
 <b>FIGURE</b>	
<b>Figure 1</b> Evolution of UNDP Programme Budget and Expenditure, 2012-2017	8



# Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AAR</b>	After Action Review
<b>AQAP</b>	Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
<b>BCP</b>	Business Continuity Plan
<b>BPPS</b>	Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
<b>CCA</b>	Common Country Assessment
<b>CO</b>	Country office
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CPD</b>	Country programme document
<b>CRU</b>	Crisis Response Unit
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>ERW</b>	Explosive Remnants of War
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>HC</b>	Humanitarian Coordinator
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>IDA</b>	International Development Association
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office
<b>IFI</b>	International financial institution
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>GMS</b>	General Management Support
<b>L3</b>	Level 3 – System-wide Emergency Response
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MFI</b>	Microfinance institution
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, small and medium enterprise
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government organization
<b>PMO</b>	Prime Minister's Office
<b>PWP</b>	Public Works Programme
<b>RBAS</b>	Regional Bureau for Arab States
<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>ROAR</b>	Results oriented annual report
<b>SETP</b>	Support to Elections during Transitional Period
<b>SFD</b>	Social Fund for Development
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium enterprise

<b>SURGE</b>	Supporting UNDP Resources on the Ground with Experts on mission
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluation Group
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteer
<b>UXO</b>	Unexploded ordnance
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>YEMAC</b>	Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre

# Evaluation Brief: ICPE Yemen

The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation in Yemen in 2018. The evaluation focused on reviewing the programme activities since 2012, guided by two primary questions: (i) How has the Yemen country office/country programme adapted to the changing country situation and needs? (ii) How effectively have programme links between UN humanitarian and development activities materialized in Yemen?

## Findings and conclusions

Overall, UNDP successfully adapted to a rapidly and continuously changing country situation, the central theme for Yemen since late 2011. Within two months of the Executive Board's approval of the CPD in September 2011, the GCC-brokered peace and transition agreement was signed on 23 November 2011, with an implementation mechanism for "the restoration of peace and security" in Yemen. UNDP subsequently achieved a swift and effective adjustment in the programme to support Yemen's political transition. The UNDP programme has achieved important results in the 2012-2014 period in support of the political transition, institutional strengthening, and national development planning. The 2012-2014 programme, however, focused too narrowly on the national-level political transition and lacked a parallel subnational programme to integrate local peacebuilding and development. The programme was 'top-heavy' and too dependent on a scenario of conflict-free political stability, with no real contingency to fall back on if the political transition faltered. Although elements of the programme were invested in biodiversity, youth employment and mine action, when the political process collapsed and the country descended into civil war and humanitarian crisis, UNDP had no major development programmes operating to fall back on. Consequently, the country office could

not respond quickly or effectively when the crisis occurred and the programme needed to be completely redesigned and kick-started from scratch. Due to the insufficient preparation for the conflict, the country office also missed the opportunity to pre-empt donors from disengaging.

The recrudescence of violence in Yemen from 2015 impacted the country office significantly. The country's financial environment was in disarray, financial planning and budgetary execution were almost impossible, procurement activities suffered massively, and the labour market became distorted. Access to project sites, local partners, communities and beneficiaries became much more limited, and indeed impossible in areas where fighting was most intense. UNDP headquarters was slow to strengthen the country office with leadership more adept to a crisis situation. Better internal communications would have helped the country office navigate the crisis.

Despite massive disruption to the country office, and with a strong injection of SURGE corporate support, UNDP prepared the Yemen Resilience Programme, which, although slow to emerge, provided the framework and entry point for comprehensive programming at the humanitarian-development nexus. With this, despite a difficult conflict-affected humanitarian environment, the country office has evolved an important role for itself by successfully linking humanitarian and development activities under a unified and coherent resilience programme. Results from the Yemen Resilience Programme have been considerable and widespread. Through an innovative and pragmatic partnership with the World Bank, UNDP has played a critical role in supporting the resilience of institutions and communities at the height of the emergency period for Yemen. Also decisive in contributing to the country office's accomplishments were the nucleus of an operational emergency employment, economic

resilience and recovery programme focusing on short-term livelihoods stabilization that could be built upon and expanded across a range of activities, a strong network of non-government implementing partners and respected third-party monitoring arrangements; participation in post-conflict needs assessments and the early willingness of the European Union to reprogramme some of its financing towards UNDP's rural resilience and emergency crisis response projects. Despite significant ongoing risks and increased operating costs, UNDP's retained presence in Sana'a and Aden has been key to enabling UNDP to implement a programme closely aligned to both humanitarian and development objectives.

The CPD for Yemen (2012-2015) was thrice submitted to the UNDP Executive Board, each time for extension, yet it remains irrelevant to the country context. The country office also still has to report against the CPD outcomes in the results oriented annual reports (ROAR). Meanwhile, the two-year Yemen Resilience Programme – a strategic framework which virtually superseded the CPD – has not been presented to the Executive Board for information, consultation or approval. The Executive Board thereby effectively lost its oversight, and arguably its accountability role of the Yemen programme. A comprehensive and integrated medium-term vision and strategy for UNDP in Yemen has yet to emerge.

## Recommendations

- **RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP should adopt a more flexible instrument and template in extreme or protracted crisis where the standard CPD has been temporarily suspended or is no longer relevant or appropriate.**

The CPD for Yemen (2012–2015) remained valid through the first adjustment of the CO programme, since it had anticipated UNDP engagement in a process of political and democratic transition. However, the CPD was not the correct strategic planning, resource mobilization, communications and results monitoring instrument when Yemen slid tragically into civil war and humanitarian crisis in 2015. Further consideration should be given to the following:

- What should replace CPDs when they are made irrelevant or redundant by circumstances within the country, and/or in instances where the CPD is recurrently 'extended' due to conflict or crisis, as in the case of Yemen.

- That interim (or revised) CO strategies or plans, such as the Yemen Resilience Programme, should be reported to the Executive Board "for information or consultation" so that the Board may continue to fulfil its oversight responsibilities for those countries' programmes and resources.

- Country offices affected by conflict or crisis should be permitted some flexibility in reporting to the ROAR. For example, where a CPD has effectively been superseded by an alternative temporary programme, (such as the Yemen Resilience Programme) whereby the country office is able to report against the interim strategy, rather than a CPD which is obsolete.

- UNDP should consider a designation for slow onset and protracted crises within the broader corporate crisis response system, to facilitate an elevated status for those countries requiring sustained

supplementary resources and fast-track administrative measures over an extended time period.

- **RECOMMENDATION 2. Building on the success of the Yemen Resilience Programme, the country office should develop a more comprehensive and integrated programme framework for the next two to three years through which to leverage UNDP's comparative advantages.**

This should entail a broad partnership extending into security and peacebuilding, which will also enable the better sharing of risks. Consultation with the United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, the UN Office of the Special Envoy, the Humanitarian Country Team and donors will be important. Core programming principles such as sustainability and gender need to feature more prominently alongside conflict prevention and strengthened UN joint programming.

A decorative graphic consisting of a dotted line that starts vertically on the left, turns 90 degrees to the right, and continues horizontally. It features five colored dots: a yellow dot on the vertical segment, a blue dot on the vertical segment, and three dots (yellow, blue, and green) on the horizontal segment.

# CHAPTER 1

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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This chapter presents the purpose of the evaluation. It also includes a brief overview of Yemen's development context, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s country programme as well as the evaluation methodology and process.

## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) for Yemen in 2018. The ICPE was carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the evaluation was to support the development of the next UNDP country programme document (CPD); strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders; and strengthen the accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board.

The ICPE focused on reviewing the programme activities since 2012, with the primary purpose of learning how UNDP Yemen adapted its programmes and operations in a changing context before and after the evacuation of international staff members in March 2015. The objective is to analyse the available information to help UNDP capture lessons from the Yemen country programme for future programming.

## 1.2 Overview of the national development context and challenges

The Republic of Yemen is a sovereign Arab state located at the southern end of the Arabian

Peninsula, bordered by Saudi Arabia, Oman, the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea. The country covers an area of 527,948 square kilometres and has a population of 27.5 million (2016).<sup>2</sup> It is a lower middle-income country<sup>3</sup> with low human development. Ranked 168 out of 188 countries and territories in the global Human Development Index 2016, Yemen is one of the least developed countries in the world and faces multiple development challenges.

Yemen has suffered from chronic poverty and inequality for decades. The country's population growth rate (3 percent) is one of the highest in the world and outpaces its economic growth rate. As the World Bank estimated, Yemen's population has increased from 12.06 million in 1990 to 27.58 million in 2016.<sup>4</sup> Nearly 40 percent of the population is under 15 years old<sup>5</sup>, with a high dependency ratio. Only 34.6 percent of the population live in urban areas<sup>6</sup>, and roughly 79 percent of the population live below the national poverty line<sup>7</sup>. According to the most recent Human Development Report, Yemen's Human Development Index is 0.482, which is below the average of 0.497 for countries in the low human development group and below the average of 0.687 for countries in the Arab States region.<sup>8</sup> When the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.320, a loss of 33.7 percent.<sup>9</sup> The GINI coefficient (the measure of the distribution of income)

<sup>1</sup> 'UNDP Evaluation Policy (2016)', DP/2016/23, United Nations. The ICPE was also conducted in adherence to the 'Norms and Standards for Evaluation', United Nations Evaluation Group.

<sup>2</sup> UN Data – Yemen Country Profile, available at: <<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?cname=Yemen>>.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank country classification by income, June 2017. As the World Bank noted, "for the current 2018 fiscal year, low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the World Bank Atlas method, of \$1,005 or less in 2016; lower middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$1,006 and \$3,955; upper middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$3,956 and \$12,235; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,236 or more." Income classifications set on 1 July 2017 remain in effect until 1 July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank Data – Population, total (Yemen), available at: <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=YE>>.

<sup>5</sup> The World Bank Data – Population ages 0-14 (% of total) (Yemen), available at: <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.0014.TO.ZS?locations=YE>>.

<sup>6</sup> UN Data – Yemen Country Profile, available at: <<http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?cname=Yemen>>.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank – Yemen Poverty Notes of June 2017 (based on 4th Household Budget Survey outcomes).

<sup>8</sup> Human Development Report 2016 – Yemen Country Explanatory Note, available at: <[http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/YEM.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/YEM.pdf)>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



for Yemen in 2013 was 0.377.<sup>10</sup> The labour force participation rate is as low as 36.3 percent, and women and youth have even lower rates – 6 percent and 25.8 percent respectively.<sup>11</sup>

From the political perspective, disagreement between the ruling party and the opposition has remained unsolved since the unification of Yemen in 1990. In addition, government corruption has been a serious problem. The country remains close to the bottom of Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perception Index.<sup>12</sup> Yemen has long been dominated by the tiny elite consisting of military, tribal, political, and business leaders. Elite patronage networks and a system of grand corruption have proliferated in the absence of strong state institutions. The political system operates to the benefit of the elite and at the expense of the poor majority. The gap between the elite and the public is huge.

Yemen has a long history of civil conflict. It has been described as a country of "mini-states at varying degrees of war with one another, beset by a complex range of internal politics and conflict".<sup>13</sup> While there are many over-simplified 'north versus south' narratives to the conflict which have festered restively for decades, the most recent manifestation of which is chiefly between the Houthi and Government forces. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) meanwhile has been operating in Yemen since the 1990s and more recently regional powers have once again been drawn back into the conflict in the country. The 'Arab Spring' added fuel to further upheavals in 2011 as young Yemenis took to the streets en masse demanding democracy, access to jobs, opportunities and an end to corruption. Protests throughout the country ended in November 2011 with the

signing of the joint UN/Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) initiative enabling the transition of power and implementation mechanism, including the forming of the transitional government and national dialogue. However, in 2015, incessant low-level conflict spiralled into a full-blown civil war principally between two factions: Houthi forces allied with supporters of the former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, based in Sana'a, and supporters of the government of Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi, based in Aden. From March 2015 Saudi Arabia has led a coalition, which aims to restore the Hadi government, and Yemen has been placed back into an environment in which regional powers are vying for influence.

The ongoing conflict has caused a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Yemen. Seventy percent of the population – around 22.2 million people – are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 11.3 million people in acute need.<sup>14</sup> Yemenis have suffered from forced displacement, commodity and cash shortages, and collapse of basic services and institutions. Nearly 18 million Yemenis are food insecure, out of which approximately 8.4 million people are severely food insecure and at risk of starvation. Some 1.8 million children and 1.1 million pregnant or lactating women are acutely malnourished, including 400,000 children under age five.<sup>15</sup> Essential basic services and the institutions that provide them are at the brink of total collapse. Approximately 16 million Yemenis are without access to safe drinking water and sanitation<sup>16</sup>, and an estimated 16.4 million people in Yemen lack access to basic healthcare<sup>17</sup>. The devastation of infrastructure, health, water and sanitation systems led to a cholera outbreak, with 1,047,829 reported cases by December 2017, including 2,367 related deaths.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, 'World Development Indicators 2013', Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Data retrieved by UNDP Human Development Report Office in October 2013, available at: <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/income-gini-coefficient>>.

<sup>11</sup> Government of Yemen and ILO, 'Yemen Labour Force Survey 2013-14', 2015.

<sup>12</sup> <[https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2017#table](https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2017#table)>

<sup>13</sup> Peter Salisburly – Royal Institute of International Affairs, available at: <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publication/yemen-national-chaos-local-order>>.

<sup>14</sup> Humanitarian Response Plan (January-December 2018), p.4.

<sup>15</sup> Humanitarian Response Plan (January-December 2018), p.7.

<sup>16</sup> Humanitarian Response Plan (January-December 2018), p.5.

<sup>17</sup> Humanitarian Response Plan (January – December 2018), p.8.

<sup>18</sup> WHO, 'Cholera update for Yemen, December 2017', available at: <<http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/cholera-outbreak/situation-update.html>>.

In terms of gender equality, Yemen is ranked at the bottom of the 2017 Global Gender Gap Index, with a score of 0.516. On UNDP's gender inequality index in 2015, it is also at the very bottom (with a score of 0.767). Yemeni women suffer from disadvantage in every aspect of their lives. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, women's enrolment rates in primary and secondary education are much lower than those of their male counterparts. Yemeni women's labour force participation is only a third of that of Yemeni men. When it comes to political empowerment, there is no woman in the parliament, and only 5.4 percent of ministerial positions were held by women. Yemen's conflict is worsening conditions for women further and creating more female-headed households who in turn are struggling to support themselves. Violence against women was widespread even before the current conflict, but experts say abuses are becoming even more commonplace<sup>19</sup>, in particular, as protection systems break down.

### 1.3 Overview of the UNDP programme

The CPD for Yemen (2012–2015) (US\$77 million) was approved by the Executive Board in September 2011. However, due to significant changes in the political context, heightened conflict and humanitarian crisis, its implementation was disrupted. The CPD has been reported back to the Executive Board on three separate occasions, in 2014, 2015 and 2016 for extension.

During this period, the country office underwent two major programmatic transitions mirroring the two distinct phases in Yemen's evolving country context. The first programmatic transition covered the period between the commencement of the CPD (2012–2015) in January 2012 up until the Houthis' takeover of Sana'a on 21 September 2014.

Just before the *first transition*, the approved CPD for Yemen contained a set of goals under five results areas aligned to national priorities and

to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (2012–2015)<sup>20</sup> under the following outcomes:

1. "By 2015, coherent policies and strategies that are gender friendly and climate change resilient to diversify economy, increase employment, decent work and productivity in the rural areas; SME [small and medium enterprises] and non-oil (fisheries, agriculture, industry and tourism) sectors are developed and implemented" (\$20.1 million (indicative resources));
2. "Local authorities and communities effectively engaged in sustainable management of natural resources, biodiversity conservation, and adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction (DDR) by 2015" (\$26.5 million (indicative resources));
3. "Enabling environment for increased empowerment of women, participation and protection at family, community and higher level" (\$3 million (indicative resources));
4. "By 2015, government is accountable at national and local levels, and decentralization, equitable access to justice, protection and promotion of human rights is strengthened; capacity to promote international law is built" (\$24.4 million (indicative resources));
5. "National capacities for evidence-based planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes strengthened at all levels by 2015" (\$3.3 million (indicative resources)).

Within the framework of the approved CPD, the country office responded to the political transition under the GCC agreement of November 2011. The CO programme was subsequently "fully re-aligned to address the genuine needs and support for the transitional period". It mobilized resources for the presidential elections of February 2012 that brought in President Hadi's transitional government. UNDP also provided support to core government functions to implement transitional

<sup>19</sup> <<http://yemen.unfpa.org/en/news/violence-against-women-escalates-under-yemens-brutal-conflict>>

<sup>20</sup> <<http://ye.one.un.org/content/unct/yemen/en/home/publications/undaf-strategic-documents/undaf.html>>

priorities, implementation of the National Dialogue Conference arrangements, including constitutional drafting, transitional justice, human rights, as well as for pro-poor youth employment and mine action projects.

It was in this first phase (in 2013), that the innovative '3x6' approach to economic livelihoods<sup>21</sup> was piloted. At the local level, there was a stronger focus on the conflict-affected areas of Sa'adah (post-war with Houthis) and Abyan (post-war with AQAP). In this initial phase of operations, UNDP supported the signing in 2014 of a memorandum of understanding between Yemeni private sector and the Government of Yemen to facilitate the private sector's engagement in economic growth and youth employment. UNDP also led the joint initiative by the Government, UN system, World Bank, local authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs) for the technical coordination of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Acceleration Framework (MAF) for MDG 1. The end of this period was marked by the armed takeover by the Houthis (with support from ex-President Saleh), of the capital Sana'a on 21 September 2014, which escalated further in January 2015 with the resignation of the President and Cabinet of Ministers.

The *second transition* was signalled by the adoption of the Yemen Resilience Programme by the UNDP Crisis Board on 16 December 2015. The intervening period between September 2014 and December 2015 reflected a turbulent phase of downsized operations, an evacuation/relocation, consolidation, and a period of stakeholder consultations on how best to position UNDP within a deepening humanitarian crisis and civil war. The period witnessed UNDP responding to a country descending

into full-blown civil war with a de jure government in exile in Riyadh and a de facto authority in Sana'a. Following Saudi-led nationwide airstrikes in March 2015, UNDP activities ground to a halt.

Small-scale initiatives (mostly technical) continued to be implemented in this period to support emergency livelihoods, provide psycho-social support to victims of human rights violations and for the vetting of the capacity of a number of CSOs. After several iterations, the Yemen Resilience Programme emerged at the end of December 2015 which outlined a \$95.4 million 24-month programme aimed at strengthening people's resilience and reliance through local economic projects, supporting the capacity of priority public services and contributing to social cohesion.<sup>22</sup>

In terms of structure, upon commencement of CPD implementation, the country office was initially organized into three pillars: i) poverty reduction and sustainable development; ii) conflict prevention and early recovery, and; iii) governance. Following the crisis, the country office was reorganized to reflect the priorities of the Yemen Resilience Programme.

Regarding financing, the total yearly programme budget has grown six-fold since 2016, due largely to UNDP being able to successfully identify an effective function at the humanitarian-development nexus in response to the crisis (see Figure 1). Annex 3 (available online) provides a summary of the main country programme activities since 2012 as provided by UNDP Yemen.

At the time of the evaluation, the country office employed 95 staff members, 69 contractors and 6 United Nations Volunteers (UNVs).

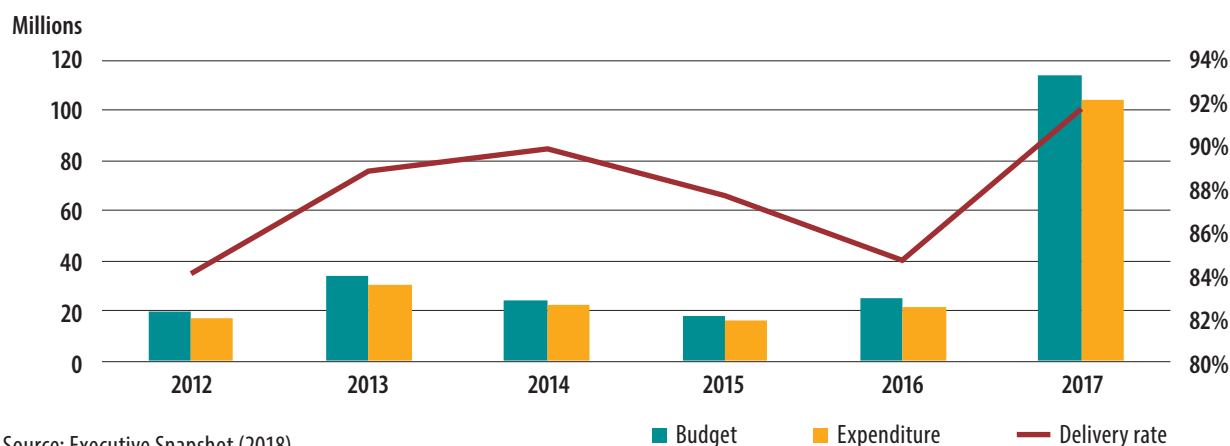
<sup>21</sup> The '3x6' approach promotes a three-phased intervention to ensure that beneficiaries that are enrolled in cash-for-work schemes set aside a small portion of their earnings into a savings fund, which, at the end of the scheme can be used to invest in assets for participants to start their own businesses. The scheme promotes the notion of savings and leads to more resilient and sustainable outcomes, as follows:

Inclusive	Ownership	Sustainability
Engagement	Savings	investment
Income (C4W)	Business	sustainability

For further information, see: <[http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Sustainable%20Development/Livelihoods/BROCHURE\\_3x6\\_Toolkit\\_Building\\_resilience\\_through\\_jobs\\_and\\_livelihoods.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Sustainable%20Development/Livelihoods/BROCHURE_3x6_Toolkit_Building_resilience_through_jobs_and_livelihoods.pdf)>.

<sup>22</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, p.3.

**FIGURE 1. Evolution of UNDP Programme Budget and Expenditure, 2012-2017**



## 1.4 Evaluation methodology, process and limitations

The evaluation relied on two main methods of data collection: document review and semi-structured interviews (conducted in person and by telephone). Included in the interviews are UNDP staff based in headquarters, regional hub in Amman and from the country office, key former staff members of the Yemen country office, representatives of UN agencies, and partners and stakeholders including donors, implementing organizations and government representatives identified by the country office. Interview data and information from document reviews were triangulated for analysis. The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards.<sup>23</sup> The evaluation faced one particularly important limitation. Due to the security restrictions and international staff ceiling, the evaluation team was not able to visit the project sites or reach the authorities, communities or beneficiaries directly.

The evaluation team had to compensate for that limitation by undertaking telephone interviews with the available implementation partners and donors. Information on performance and impact from secondary sources was extremely limited. Aside from interviews, information regarding the UNDP programme is primarily generated from programme

monitoring and reporting data kept by the country office or obtained through the corporate reporting mechanisms, as well as reports of third-party monitoring agencies. Ongoing UNDP programmes all have built-in quality assurance elements in the project design. However, the first of such planned outcome evaluations will only become available in the second half of 2018. A limited number of evaluation and audit reports dated before 2015 were available. These limitations restricted the evaluation from maximizing data validity.

Following an initial desk review and the preparation of the terms of reference, the evaluation team (the lead evaluator and associate lead evaluator from the IEO, as well as an international consultant) proceeded with the desk review and interviews. The team also undertook a one-week mission to the regional hub in Amman in May 2018. Post-mission, follow-up interviews continued to be conducted in May-June 2018, following which the draft report was prepared. The present evaluation was reviewed by a member of the IEO's Evaluation Advisory Panel and underwent internal IEO peer review prior to final internal clearance.

The report was subsequently shared with the Yemen country office and the Regional Bureau for Arab States for comment before finalization. The final stakeholder debriefing was held on 6 December 2018.

<sup>23</sup> <<http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>>





# CHAPTER 2

## FINDINGS

DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP  
sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT responsiveness  
COORDINATION HUMAN effectiveness COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability  
COORDINATION relevance sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness  
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COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT responsiveness NATIONAL OWNERSHIP sustainability PARTNERSHIP

This chapter analyses the information gathered in the course of the evaluation exercise to answer the following two questions:

- How has the Yemen country office/country programme adapted to the changed country situations and needs?
- How effectively have programme links between UN humanitarian and development activities materialized in Yemen?

**Finding 1.** The country office managed to achieve a swift and effective adjustment in the programme to support Yemen's political transition following the GCC-facilitated peace agreement.

The CPD was designed to commence implementation in January 2012 with UNDP expected to lead five outcome areas of the UNDAF 2012-2015, approved by the UN Country Team and the Government of Yemen. Yet within two months of its approval by the Executive Board in September 2011, the political situation of Yemen shifted through the GCC-brokered 'peace and transition agreement'<sup>24</sup> which was signed on 23 November 2011 with an accompanying implementation mechanism for the 'restoration of peace and security' in Yemen.

The country office subsequently undertook a review of its programme and found that "55 per cent of its project portfolio" was "not relevant to supporting the GCC implementation agreement". The CO portfolio from early 2012 was thereby realigned to "position UNDP as a strategic player during the transitional period in Yemen"<sup>25</sup>. The country office succeeded in utilizing the framework of the CPD as a flexible instrument, which had anticipated the need to "engage in transitional, transformational processes such as elections and constitutional reform"... "provide technical

support to democratic institutions"... "enhance transparency and accountability", and "contribute to coordinating broad development partner coalition..."<sup>26</sup>. These adjustments reoriented the country office in support of the Government Transitional Plan for Stabilization and Development (2012-2014) and were also consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2014 (2011)<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, the 'Joint United Nations Framework to Support the Transition in Yemen, 2012-2014 - A multi-dimensional framework to support a peaceful and inclusive transition'<sup>28</sup> was adopted by the UN Development Group in Amman on 30 March 2012, in which the UNDP CO had a key role to play in:

1. Providing national stakeholders in Yemen with the assistance required to successfully complete the political transition as stated in Part VI of the concluding provisions of the transition agreement;
2. Contributing to the creation of an environment which is conducive to a transition to greater democracy and development in Yemen<sup>29</sup>.

Despite the importance of the MDGs and human development for Yemen as a least developed country, UNDP's dedicated programme focus on the national transition from 2012 onwards was justified in the 2012 Results Oriented Annual

<sup>24</sup> 'The Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition in Yemen' (the GCC Initiative).

<sup>25</sup> <[http://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/transitional-program-for-stabilization-and-development--tpsd--20.html](http://www.ye.undp.org/content/yemen/en/home/library/democratic_governance/transitional-program-for-stabilization-and-development--tpsd--20.html)>

<sup>26</sup> Country Programme Document for Yemen (2012-2015), p.4.

<sup>27</sup> <<https://www.un.org/press/en/2011/sc10418.doc.htm>>

<sup>28</sup> <<http://www.ye.undp.org/content/dam/yemen/Leadership/Docs/Joint%20UN%20Framework%20Yemen.pdf>>

<sup>29</sup> Joint UN Framework Yemen – Final, 30 March 2013.

Report (ROAR) “to save the people of Yemen from falling off the civil strife cliff”<sup>30</sup>. Although an MDG acceleration plan was prepared in 2010, the MDGs were “not part of the key priorities during the transitional period”<sup>31</sup>. Hence, the primary focus of the UNDP portfolio became almost wholly directed to supporting the implementation of the internationally endorsed GCC transition plan.

**Finding 2. Important programme results were achieved in the 2012-2014 period in support of the political transition, institutional strengthening and national development planning.**

The 2012, 2013 and 2014 ROARs all record ‘significant progress’<sup>32</sup> in the outcome indicators that were being achieved for Yemen (under outcomes YEM 25<sup>33</sup>, YEM 26<sup>34</sup> and YEM 27<sup>35</sup>)<sup>36</sup>. The evaluation found that a number of projects yielded particularly positive results, summarized below.

The multi-donor basket fund project – Support to Elections during Transitional Period (SETP) – successfully supported early presidential elections to take place on 21 February 2012. The country office responded quickly to have the project document in place 45 days before the actual elections and took the lead in mobilizing a campaign of election awareness, which resulted in a 63 percent voter turnout. The presidential election itself facilitated the peaceful transfer of power that brought in President Hadi’s transitional government following ‘a year of violence’ linked to the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011. The Independent Evaluation of the SETP project indicated: “Early Presidential Elections

were called in an emergency situation and under exceptional circumstances. It could be interpreted as a peculiar election with only one candidate running, but also as an exit from a grave political crisis, with armed conflict, towards peace and reconciliation. The electoral exercise constituted a ‘most relevant political event’. Yemenis may have looked at the election as a peace-making instrument more than just the choice of a President”<sup>37</sup>. UNDP’s swift organization of the SETP project was “highly commended by the Government of Yemen, the United States, United Kingdom among other partners”<sup>38</sup>. This was further confirmed through the evaluation team’s interviews with senior government officials.

In line with the priorities of the Joint UN Framework, the country office also sought to strengthen core central government institutions through an additional multi-donor Emergency Capacity Development Facility (ECDF). The project was approved in mid-2012 to boost capacities at the Presidential and Prime Minister’s Offices (PMO) and enable these two key organs “oversee the political processes as per the requirements of the GCC implementation mechanism” and to “guide other key Government institutions and ensure delivery of services to the people of Yemen in a systematic manner”<sup>39</sup>. With UNDP assistance, a PMO strategic plan was drafted and a reform agenda developed. The project also provided capacity support to the Ministries of Planning and Finance for implementing the peace accord and for undertaking coordination during the transition, hosting international conferences for Yemen (including the Friends of Yemen), management of the development

<sup>30</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.2.

<sup>31</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.2.

<sup>32</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2013, p.30; Results Oriented Annual Report, 2013, p.6; Results Oriented Annual Report, 2014, p.3.

<sup>33</sup> Outcome YEM 25: By 2015 coherent policies and strategies that are gender-friendly and climate change resilient, to diversify the economy, increase employment, decent work and productivity in the rural area.

<sup>34</sup> Outcome YEM 26: Local authorities and communities engaged in sustainable management of natural resources, biodiversity conservation, climate change and disaster risk management.

<sup>35</sup> Outcome YEM 27: Government accountable at national and local levels, decentralization, equitable access to justice, protection and the promotion of human rights is strengthened, capacity to promote humanitarian laws is built.

<sup>36</sup> Except for YEM 27 which reported “There is not yet measurable change in the outcome indicator, but project outputs are proceeding as planned”, Results Oriented Annual Report, 2014, p.9.

<sup>37</sup> Independent Evaluation of the SETP project, cited in Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.1.

<sup>39</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.3.

assistance database, drafting of policy documents and administrating the mutual accountability framework with the international community.

To align fully with the implementation of the terms of the transitional agreement, the country office provided support for the establishment of an independent human rights body, for the National Dialogue Conference and process and in the pursuit of transitional justice in the 2012-2014 period. Under the transitional justice initiative, the country office was successful in supporting the Land and Dismissal Commission resolve 30,000 and 20,000 cases respectively, out of more than 145,000 and 140,000 registered. An anti-corruption initiative to eliminate double dippers and ghost workers through the biometric fingerprint system was implemented throughout the civil service and UNDP made multiple attempts to introduce a biometric voter registry system.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to positioning itself strategically in support of the transition, the country office also led activities related to economic diversification, youth employment, natural resource management and mine action. UNDP persevered with economic diversification throughout this period despite it proving to be an unsuccessful flagship project within the previous cycle (2008-2012).<sup>41</sup> In this vein, the country office supported the formulation and adoption of non-oil growth strategies such as agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing and tourism as well as the National Youth Employment Plan. The 5th National Report for the National Biodiversity and Action Plan was also produced with UNDP assistance. In the second half of 2014 the country office launched the MDG acceleration framework (super-seding the previous MDG 1 initiative of two years earlier) and facilitated a memorandum of under

standing between the Government of Yemen and the private sector as a catalyst for promoting economic growth.

In 2013 the innovative '3x6' employment and enterprise methodology was introduced into Yemen by the country office via South-South Cooperation with the Burundi CO. A mid-term review of the Youth Economic Employment Project report<sup>42</sup>, through which the '3x6' approach was implemented, found it to be "highly relevant and timely in meeting the needs of a growing body of vulnerable young people"<sup>43</sup>. As a result, the project was scaled up from 3 to 6 Governorates in 2014<sup>44</sup>, included 3,000 young Yemenis, 25 percent of whom were women, despite a deteriorating political and security situation<sup>45</sup>. The country office succeeded in adapting the programme to conflict-affected areas of Sa'adah (post-war with Houthis) and Abyan (post-war with AQAP). This particular initiative was to serve it well as the entry point for emergency employment programming under the humanitarian-resilience banner which followed in the subsequent Yemen Resilience Programme. It was in this period that the UNDP partnership with the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) as well as with the national Social Fund for Development (SFD) was established for economic empowerment and livelihoods. At the same time, the exit strategy for the long-standing partnership between UNDP and the Ministry of Local Administration was concluded. Finally, in the field of mine action, in the 2012-2013 period significant results were achieved. The country office provided capacity development assistance to the Yemen Executive Mine Action Centre (YEMAC) and technical support for the clearance of more than 25 million m<sup>2</sup> of land in Abjan Governorate to allow the return

<sup>40</sup> UNDP reported drafting numerous versions of the operational plans to carry out the biometric voter registry system for the Supreme Commission for Elections & Referendums, but which was never approved – political roadblock was stated as the main issue.

<sup>41</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.8.

<sup>42</sup> <<https://goodpracticessite.files.wordpress.com/2016/03/youth-economic-empowerment-programme.pdf>>

<sup>43</sup> UNDP, 'Mid-Term Review, Youth Economic Empowerment Programme', 2014, p.3.

<sup>44</sup> Sana'a, Taiz and Aden were included in the pilot phase (2012-2013).

<sup>45</sup> Expansion of the '3x6' programme also claimed 35,000 indirect beneficiaries in 2014 alone (Result Oriented Annual Report 2014, p.1), but this could not be triangulated by the IEO which lacked means to access beneficiary communities.



of 105,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2012.<sup>46</sup> A further 31 million m<sup>2</sup> of land was cleared in 2013 enabling a further 162,000 IDPs to return.<sup>47</sup>

As the CO programme proceeded through 2014, it began to run into strong political and security headwinds<sup>48</sup>, which were ultimately to lead to even more catastrophic consequences for Yemen than the worst-case scenario which the Joint UN Framework for Yemen 2012-2014 had predicted<sup>49</sup>. Mounting political and security challenges significantly impacted the UNDP programme with delays and operational impediments reported across all sectors and activities. The Peacebuilding Fund stalled, national ownership and issues of sustainability arose, and there was a general lack of sufficient capacity among the non-government organization (NGO) implementing partners – all of which required strong oversight and quality assurance from the country office. Challenges also appeared regarding the ‘resourcing and implementation’ of the national strategies that UNDP had helped design, foremost of which included the National Employment Strategy, the Agriculture Strategy and Fisheries Strategy<sup>50</sup>. National and local institutions became increasingly dysfunctional as the political and security situation began to unravel or were undermined altogether.

**Finding 3.** The second major CO programme adjustment followed Yemen’s descent into full-scale civil war and a deepening humanitarian crisis. Out of this context, UNDP prepared the Yemen Resilience Programme, which, although slow to emerge, provided the framework and entry point for comprehensive programming at the humanitarian-development nexus.

It was not until the UNDP Crisis Board approved the Yemen Resilience Programme in December 2015 that the country office had a strategic framework in Yemen to work within. In the intervening period between April 2015 and January 2016<sup>51</sup> the country programme was “realigned towards life-saving interventions to enhance resilience”<sup>52</sup>. Operating under an increasingly humanitarian prerogative “UNDP adapted youth employment activities to emergency livelihoods”, “human rights and transitional justice activities to protection”, and “mine action support to emergency UXO [unexploded ordnance] clearance”<sup>53</sup>. Under emergency livelihoods, UNDP worked with NGO partners to deliver cash for work in waste collection and community infrastructure repairs; asset provision to vulnerable populations (war widows, IDPs) for income generation; restoration of food production through solar water pumps, greenhouses and bakery kits; and,

<sup>46</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2012, p.6 and p.26.

<sup>47</sup> Result Oriented Annual Report 2013, p.17.

<sup>48</sup> The National Dialogue Conference process ended on 25 January 2014 with a Presidential Decree announcing six Federal Regions, which was generally welcomed by the public. But opposition came from southern politicians, including ex-President Saleh’s GPC party and the Houthi movement, who called for a federation of two regions. At this same time, there was growing public discontent and calls for the transitional Government to step down. A general decline in the security situation was experienced, through the kidnapping of expatriates, complex attacks undertaken by AQAP and military expansion by the Houthis’ through the course of 2014. In September 2014 the Houthis’ succeeded in taking the capital Sana’a, provoking the resignation of Prime Minister Hadi.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Indicative trajectories for Yemen under the different scenarios - Joint United Nations Framework to Support the Transition in Yemen, 2012-2014 - A multi-dimensional framework to support a peaceful and inclusive transition’ p.12.

<sup>50</sup> The CPD Results and Resources Framework makes reference in the ‘indicative country programme outputs column’ to (1) sector strategies developed, funded and implemented. While UNDP assisted in developing a number of non-oil sector strategies – nevertheless, they were never funded (resourced), or implemented.

<sup>51</sup> In its broader context, the period between 21 September 2014 and the adoption of the Yemen Resilience Programme on 16 December 2015 witnessed UNDP responding to a country descending into full-blown civil war with a de jure government in exile in Riyadh and a de facto authority in Sana’a. Exodus of the diplomatic corps and suspension of the World Bank and other donor programmes immediately followed the 6 February 2015 Houthi’s unilateral declaration of a new constitutional decree establishing the supreme revolutionary committee and the dissolution of parliament. This led to the early closure of many governance projects and an advocacy effort on the part of the country office with donors to reinvest funds under a humanitarian-oriented response. UNDP activities practically ground to a halt in March 2015 at the time of the nationwide Saudi-led airstrikes. As stated in the main body of the evaluation above, the country office evacuated and relocated its staff. With the rapid escalation of war in late March 2015, Yemen fell into an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, placing over 21 million people or 82 percent of the population in need of urgent humanitarian assistance as reported in the Humanitarian Needs Overview of 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2015, p.1.

youth social businesses such as private mid-wives' clinics, solar energy and water provision. UNDP also carried out assessments to inform programming which included: (i) a business survey; (ii) a solid waste assessment; and (iii) a rapid integrated needs assessment encompassing livelihoods, local services and mine contamination. UNDP also contributed to the UN Conflict and Development Analysis<sup>54</sup> and to organizing a number of Resident Coordinator (RC)-convened strategic multistakeholder consultations and retreats<sup>55</sup>, for example, in Sana'a in September and in Larnaca in October 2015<sup>56</sup>.

Once approved, the Yemen Resilience Programme outlined a \$95.4 million 24-month programme aimed at "strengthening resilience within three strategic objectives":<sup>57</sup>

- i. To increase people's self-reliance and revitalize the local economy (\$41.5 million (indicative resources)). This outcome intended investing in people's self-reliance by stabilizing people's livelihoods and implementing emergency employment through cash-for-work initiatives, especially for the most vulnerable. Income generation, access to finance and enterprise recovery were among the main activities. Capacity support for the SFD was also intended;
- ii. To restore capacities for delivery of priority public services (\$47.4 million (indicative resources)). This outcome intended to provide support to the service delivery mechanisms of vital front-line services. This entailed working directly with service providers and strengthening local NGO/CSO capacities to support

the delivery of priority social services to the most vulnerable. Allied to this, the project envisioned waste and debris management, including the mapping and decontamination from the explosive remnants of war (ERW) and mines;

- iii. To contribute to rebuilding trust and social cohesion (\$5.7 million (indicative resources)). The third outcome of the Resilience Programme was dedicated to building confidence, trust and peace at different levels, between various stakeholders, communities and interests, defusing tensions and promoting social cohesion. Components included engaging young people in dialogue, training for the media and working with communities and institutions in the six targeted Governorates.

The Yemen Resilience Programme signalled a strategic shift for UNDP in Yemen and marked the second major transition undertaken by the country office in the 2012-2016 period. It enabled UNDP to articulate its role, advocate for its space and justify its presence within an ongoing complex humanitarian/conflict environment. Whereas the previous programme (underpinned by the CPD) was essentially 'top-down' and oriented towards reinforcing national institutions, policies and capacities, especially for the political transition, the Resilience Programme applied a theory of change that was "built from the bottom up using local systems".<sup>58</sup> The Programme also sought to pursue a response to enable the international community to ensure coherence across humanitarian and development interventions.<sup>59</sup> It also set the stage for the

<sup>54</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2015, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> The purpose of these discussions and retreats was to take stock of the situation in Yemen and to brainstorm strategies for resilience building and preparations for recovery and restoration. They took place with assistance from the Crisis Response Unit and the regional hub and became the basis for the emergent Yemen Resilience Programme that followed, which was formulated to address the rapid erosion of Yemeni institutions and social cohesion in the public sector, private sector, civil society and communities.

<sup>56</sup> UNDP initiated three consultations in this period. The first was a joint UN/World Bank retreat that took place at the Dead Sea in August 2015 to reflect on lessons learned from Yemen's failed transition and on international assistance. The second took place in Sana'a in September 2015. The third was a broad-based consultation including a larger number of Yemeni stakeholders and diaspora which took place in Larnaca, Cyprus in October 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.3. These three strategic objectives are referred to as outcomes from p.7 of the Resilience Programme.

<sup>58</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.5.

emerging partnership with the World Bank, the European Union (EU) and other development partners. The results that were eventually achieved through implementation of the Yemen Resilience Programme at the interface of humanitarian and development interventions were considerable (see Finding 5). Within the Resilience Programme, the multidimensional concept of ‘resilience’ was discussed extensively, with the focus being on ‘human capabilities’ through ‘highly participatory’ and ‘integrated community-based’ approaches.<sup>60</sup> The focus of the Yemen Resilience Programme was to work initially in eight governorates in Abyan, Aden, Taizz, Hajjah, Sa’adah, Ibb, Hudeidah and Sana’a, covering between 20 and 40 districts, scaling up from two hubs (Sana’a and Aden) to three, and to new geographical areas when political and security conditions allowed.<sup>61</sup> And although only envisioned to serve for 24 months, the Yemen Resilience Programme became the backbone of UNDP’s operations for the next three years (2016, 2017 and 2018).

Formulation of the Yemen Resilience Programme did not, however, proceed as smoothly as intended. The Programme itself emerged out of the work of the SURGE (Supporting UNDP Resources on the Ground with Experts on mission) team, which was triggered when the corporate response to Yemen’s crisis was upgraded from L2 to L3 in July 2015. SURGE by design is intended to reinforce a country office temporarily with essential support. In Yemen’s case, the SURGE did provide additional capacities across multiple areas as well as providing seed money to start pilot programming.

The SURGE planning team was initially deployed to Amman for one week to work on the development of the SURGE plan for the Yemen CO based on its needs and priorities. There had been no prior consultation with colleagues based at the Amman regional hub, who up until that time had been providing support to the country office. There was a lack of clarity concerning the role of the recently established regional hub in Amman related to crisis response. In addition, assembling the full

team of SURGE experts was not easily corralled from headquarters since the standard operating procedures for crisis response was still under development and difficulties were encountered in securing the placements. There were ongoing tensions once the full SURGE team reached Amman with Bureau of Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) colleagues already based at the regional hub who had been supporting the Yemen CO up until that point. Several respondents advised the evaluation: “A lot of energy was wasted in managing these internal tensions”. At the root of the problem was a lack of CO vision in Amman to properly direct the work of the SURGE deployment despite efforts made by UNDP’s Crisis Response Unit (CRU) to sensitize the country office to the SURGE mission and purpose. This was further exacerbated by CO staff working in Sana’a and Aden having their own vision of what could be achieved with the UNDP programme going forward based on their experience of the operating realities across the country.

The SURGE team was unable to visit Yemen due to security restrictions. This prevented them from gaining a direct insight into the challenges and opportunities across the multifaceted intertwined political, security, governance, development and humanitarian challenges. National colleagues based in Sana’a and Aden were largely cut out of the SURGE planning process and were duly sceptical of its purpose, being as it was, based in Amman and unable to access Yemen. So there were a number of disconnects. The most appreciated practical elements of the SURGE to the country office were the communications expert and resource mobilization expert.

The initial SURGE mission report was described during the evaluation by many as ‘theoretical’, ‘lengthy’ and ‘prescriptive’. The SURGE team reportedly contained ‘some excellent people’, but the country office did not fully utilize them. The SURGE team members themselves felt that the country office did not leverage them. When they debriefed in New York to UNDP Headquarters, they reported being “disillusioned with CO management”. The

<sup>60</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.3.

After-Action Review (AAR) on the UNDP Yemen Crisis Response recommended that a staggered or phased approach to the planning and deployment of SURGE to support the country office confront and respond to the Yemen crisis would have been more beneficial.<sup>62</sup>

The evaluation noted that it took significant time, effort and resources to develop the Yemen Resilience Programme. Indeed, nine months passed from the outbreak of the conflict to its finalization. This is too long within an emergency context. The evaluation learned that there were several rounds of brainstorming which helped to shape the emergent content of the Resilience Programme. However, in the intervening period UNDP's operations were predominantly idle, its staff were dispersed, and the country slipped deeper into conflict and humanitarian desperation.

As noted above, once approved by the Crisis Board on 16 December 2015, the Resilience Programme provided a succinct and temporary strategic framework which served to engage and coordinate donors, who, each with their own political imperatives, were otherwise pulling in different directions. Importantly, the Resilience Programme for Yemen enabled UNDP to table a corporate position for engaging in an ongoing humanitarian emergency within an environment of active conflict in which there was the absence of a unified legitimate Government in the country.

Within the parameters of a planning assumption which stated that "over the next 24 months Yemen will face protracted conflict"<sup>63</sup> the country office set out to make the programme implemented under the auspices of the Yemen Resilience Programme "flexible, responsive, conflict-sensitive and risk-based"<sup>64</sup>. A more comprehensive detailing and assessment of risks was introduced. Third party monitoring composed of NGOs and independent

experts were commissioned to "undertake quality assurance on behalf of UNDP". To minimize fiduciary risk, UNDP engaged qualified accounting firms to conduct spot checks.<sup>65</sup> Quarterly and annual review monitoring and reporting incorporated updated risk<sup>66</sup>, issue and lessons learned logs. In terms of financing, the total yearly programme budget grew six-fold between 2013 and 2016.<sup>67</sup>

The Yemen Resilience Programme provided a new framework for the development of UNDP's country programme of projects. Among the most prominent new initiatives the country office successfully formulated was an enhanced rural resilience project alongside phases I and II of the Yemen emergency crisis response. With a strong Resilience Programme in hand UNDP was able to vigorously pursue resource mobilization and rapidly struck up new partnerships with the World Bank, EU, USAID, Japan and GCC countries. As outlined above, the new CO programme contained projects with a mix of community livelihoods and community asset rehabilitation, short-term emergency income generation and job creation, capacity development to enhance service delivery in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and education, support for business development, social cohesion and mine action. Cash-for-work was the preferred cross-cutting modality adopted by many of the projects as the quick-fire way of injecting liquidity into the economy at the level of vulnerable households within cash-starved communities.

Following adoption of the Yemen Resilience Programme the CO structure was reorganized. An Economic Resilience and Recovery Unit was created by fusing the poverty reduction and sustainable development and the conflict prevention and early recovery teams. This internal restructuring better reflected the priorities of the Yemen Resilience Programme. Governance programming under a renamed Governance and Peacebuilding

<sup>62</sup> 'After Action Review – UNDP's Response to the Yemen Crisis', (August 2015-March 2016), p.3 and p.6.

<sup>63</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.6.

<sup>64</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.12.

<sup>65</sup> Yemen Resilience Programme, 17 December 2015, p.13.

<sup>66</sup> An extensive risk and mitigation measures schedule was attached as Annex 1 to the Yemen Resilience Programme 2016-17.

<sup>67</sup> Refer also to Annex 3 (available online) for a summary of the programme activities since 2012 as provided by UNDP Yemen.

Unit rekindled activities through a new rule of law programme which integrated access to justice (including training, facilities and processes), human rights, local conflict resolution and community security. Both units appointed new team leaders with the head of economic resilience and recovery on board in January 2017 and the head of governance and peacebuilding in May 2017. These two new appointments strengthened the team and indicated the country office's intent to re-engage in the governance and peacebuilding agenda in a more meaningful way.

**Finding 4.** Despite a difficult conflict-affected humanitarian environment the country office managed to foster an initial approach to humanitarian and development programming that took root.

Since the escalation of violence and hostility in 2015, international assistance to Yemen has been predominantly humanitarian. The Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the UN Humanitarian Country Team provided the pivot for all relief efforts in Yemen, supported by the cluster system. Competition for funding within this context was reported to the evaluation to have been “fierce within the UN system” and that “there was no space for UNDP in an active conflict environment”.<sup>68</sup> The evaluation also learned that UN Senior Management at that time reinforced the view that there was limited space for development actors.<sup>69</sup> Meanwhile, the UN Country Team devised the Strategic Framework 2017-2019, bringing together the non-humanitarian, political, security and development actors in an effort to clarify and articulate their value-added to the humanitarian crisis.

Despite the situation in Yemen being very fluid through 2015, with violence escalating and the humanitarian crisis deepening, the country office

was able to introduce a number of initiatives stemming from preliminary post-conflict mapping and needs assessments that it had conducted. This provided the foundation and represented the beginnings of CO engagement in humanitarian/resilience programming, from which it was able to learn and expand quickly. Projects entailed waste management, cash for work in non-agricultural areas and activities at the local level engaging communities and local NGOs. The country office began the job of reorienting the programme towards livelihoods stabilization and resilience building at the community level. This brought the programme much closer to local communities and into direct contact with humanitarian interventions. UNDP's collaboration with FAO, ILO and WFP was one of the first good examples of this which resulted in a long-standing joint programme.

UNDP's early forays into humanitarian/development activities were largely confined to the early recovery cluster.<sup>70</sup> Staff members reported that the concept of 'early recovery' was not 'suitable or appropriate' especially given there being no foreseeable prospect of a ceasefire or peace agreement.<sup>71</sup> Coordination across clusters in respect to early recovery was, at the time, also described as being 'ad-hoc and uncoordinated'.<sup>72</sup> Hence, UNDP's influence in seeking to bridge humanitarian and development assistance was at first extremely limited. The evaluation learned that the country office did not take up the CRU's offer of placing a Senior 'Nexus' Adviser in Yemen<sup>73</sup> to assist in the identification of “new ways and opportunities for humanitarian and development working” but did formulate a project in July 2017<sup>74</sup> to enhance early recovery coordination which aimed to build more effective humanitarian-development synergy. The country office invested further in the Inter-Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (ICWG-ER) to enable improved coordination at the operational

<sup>68</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Later renamed emergency employment and community rehabilitation cluster.

<sup>71</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman and New York, April and May 2018.

<sup>72</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>73</sup> The evaluation team understands that at the time of writing this position is still available to the country office.

<sup>74</sup> Project 00105002 Yemen Enhanced Early Recovery Coordination Project, 1 July 2017-30 June 2019.



level, both nationally and at the four subregional hubs<sup>75</sup>, which were also utilized for holistic data gathering and exchange. Although its functioning was at first limited in scope and effect, the country office financed an early recovery cluster coordinator which helped to transform its role.

Commencing in the second half of 2015 the tide gradually began to turn in favour of UNDP taking a more assertive position in the design and implementation of its humanitarian-development programme. The key contributing factors included:

- The country office adjusted its emergency livelihoods and employment initiatives. These quickly bore fruit in providing an effective resilience-based line of action that could be pursued in both conflict-affected and humanitarian settings. Resource mobilization and communications strategies were agreed by the country office and donor briefs were also compiled for re-engaging donors. These were supported by CO Senior Management embarking on a number of select missions to donor capitals.<sup>76</sup>
- Donors, and the World Bank in particular, were simultaneously looking for innovative and out-of-the-box ideas through which to channel 'non-humanitarian' funding to preserve the last remnants of institutions of social welfare and to support the economic and community assets across the country. They were looking to identify reliable partners to cooperate with, but as in the specific case of the World Bank, did not want to engage on purely humanitarian terms. Hence the resilience approach adopted by UNDP had particular appeal at just the right moment. When UNDP yielded strong results from its emergency employment, community asset rehabilitation and food security programme implemented through the first tranche of World Bank funds the partnership arrangement was cemented and expanded.

- In the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, which took place on 23-24 May 2016, there was a pioneering call to identify "new ways of working" that transcended the traditional humanitarian/development divide.
- By mid-2016, the senior management team of the country office was changed, bringing on board stronger leadership and strategic capabilities informed from prior experience in crisis response.
- From 2016 onwards, senior management attended Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) meetings, whereas previously they had not, and the desire of joint goal setting and programme planning, as envisaged in the "new way of working" at least had a better chance of taking root after that date.

An important breakthrough occurred when the country office switched to advocating for a 'resilience-based' approach over the more conventional 'early recovery' position, at a time when all the attention was on humanitarian issues. Through the Yemen Resilience Programme, the country office re-engineered itself to support communities and used a 'bottom-up' approach, which aspired more towards a community development model of development. This was also in response to the challenging political context of engaging at a national level. The following projects provided the corpus of the UNDP's new direction:

- i. Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen
- ii. Yemen Emergency Crisis Response (various phases)
- iii. Social Protection
- vi. Emergency Mine Action
- v. Yemen Crisis Response II

These projects and others like them adopted a highly participatory methodology, working with and through local institutions, communities NGOs,

<sup>75</sup> Aden, Hodeidah, Ibb and Sa'ada.

<sup>76</sup> Including to Brussels, Washington and Tokyo.

community-based organizations (CBOs) engaging youth and women, with the poor and vulnerable households increasingly better targeted. Over time, projects have increased their emphasis on social cohesion, community mediation and conflict prevention, although the country office accepts that further strengthening and mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity is required. As stated above, UNDP managed to secure a valuable foothold and then expand programmatic activities in solid waste management, rubble removal, emergency employment, cash for work and livelihoods support for community infrastructure rehabilitation, including support to prevent the collapse of local service delivery mechanisms.<sup>77 78</sup>

**Finding 5. Implementation of the Yemen Resilience Programme achieved significant results at the interface of humanitarian and development activities.**

Results achieved from the Yemen Resilience Programme have been considerable and widespread. Successive ROAR reports covering 2015, 2016 and 2017 outline the extent of its impact. Starting in 2015 the country office improved the employability and entrepreneurial potential of 784,723 individuals and their family members across the Governorates of Sa'ada, Hajjah, Sana'a, Taizz, Aden and Abyan with an estimated total impact of over 2 million people, including beneficiaries of community infrastructure rehabilitation.<sup>79</sup> It also entailed the establishment of a business support centre to provide coaching, training and mentoring activities. In addition, social

businesses provided direct employment benefits and revitalized the local economy of 60,500 residents in targeted districts.<sup>80</sup>

Despite ongoing military operations in many parts of Yemen, people's participation remained very strong with cash-for work-projects benefiting the entire populations of districts caught up in areas of active conflict in Taiz, Aden, Sa'ada, Hajjah, Abyan and Sana'a. Cash-for-work interventions were scaled up, virtually nationwide, in 2016 to include 25,700 households in support of: i) the renovation of community infrastructure (163 projects); ii) solid waste collection (9,622 tons), which was otherwise the main cause of 12,000 reported cases of dengue fever, and; iii) livelihoods assets provision, including solar water pumps (4) and greenhouses (60). Nearly 2,000 SMEs were supported.

The ROAR 2016 reported that in total over 8 million people<sup>81</sup>, of which 50 percent were women, benefited directly and indirectly from such community-based rehabilitation and livelihoods opportunities. Under the Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project, the number of emergency employment initiatives multiplied to 22 Governorates covering 137 out of 333 districts<sup>82</sup> and over 1.3 million people in targeted areas benefited from support provided for the delivery of basic social services<sup>83</sup>. Throughout 2015 and 2016 the country office supported human rights by providing psychosocial support to 641 victims in the southern governorates of Aden and Abyan as they

<sup>77</sup> A further major programme that is needed is a unified UN approach to 'incentive payments' to the local service delivery personnel in key sectors such as health, education and sanitation. These front-line workers have not been properly paid since the conflict broke out and fear losing their jobs if they do not turn up for work, despite being unpaid. There is a real need to consider a harmonized approach as the UN is providing a temporary workable and sustainable solution to the 'propping up' of local service delivery so that key capacities and functions are not completely lost.

<sup>78</sup> Through monitoring, it was found that about 80 percent of cash income of the household was spent on food. In the two years under review, UNDP has been able to make a significant contribution within a conflict and humanitarian context. Furthermore, UNDP may yet have an important role to play in helping to coordinate the discussions around 'incentive payments' for core local service delivery.

<sup>79</sup> The figures reported here have been extracted from the respective ROARs of 2015, 2016 and 2017. The Yemen Resilience Programme has not been thoroughly or independently evaluated and the IEO was not able to travel to Yemen to gauge the scale or scope of direct and indirect beneficiaries reported by the country office.

<sup>80</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2015, (section B.1.1. CPD Reporting), p.7.

<sup>81</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2016, p.2.

<sup>82</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2016, p.2.

<sup>83</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2015, p.21.

emerged from severe conflict.<sup>84</sup> In sum, these resilience-oriented interventions enabled vulnerable communities to buy food and health services as part of the overall UN famine and cholera response – providing multiple examples of good practice at the interface between humanitarian relief and development activity.

In 2016 the country office intensified its approach to social cohesion within local communities in high-conflict areas. Community capacities in the fields of mediation skills, dialogue facilitation and conflict analysis were provided to a selection of community mediators in Abyan and Taizz Governorates, which together had a high population concentration of over 5 million people. Their purpose was to resolve locally based conflicts in view of the general lack of governance apparatus. This resulted in the training of 66 local NGOs and CBOs on conflict-sensitive approaches of which 12 were awarded small grants for implementation activities.<sup>85</sup>

The mine action portfolio was reinvigorated in 2016, commencing with a new branch of YEMAC opening in Sa'ada in the April of that year. Mine risk education reached 335,031 people (of whom 14,153 were IDPs); 4,000 victims of landmines/ERW were screened, of which 190 were supported with various aids. The clearance programme prioritized highly contaminated areas (including UXOs) most recently affected by the conflict. Forty-seven districts in nine governorates were targeted with mine/UXO activities which resulted in 1,852,041 m2 of land cleared, including the recovery of 93,117 items of ERW of which 70,443 were destroyed. All of this was undertaken to the estimated benefit of 7 million direct and indirect beneficiaries, half of them being women.<sup>86</sup>

The Women Economic Empowerment project engaged vulnerable women for the diversification of their income sources through value chain promotion in the dairy sector and social business opportunities in women-only professions

(midwifery services). The project also targeted 50 percent of women under its emergency employment component providing cash-for-work to 800 households, including IDPs. The effort towards gender equality across UNDP's economic programme subsequently rose from a target of 20 percent to 30 percent in the period 2015-2016.

As 2016 drew to a close, the ROAR for the year recorded important lessons learned by the country office towards improving efficiency and effectiveness:

- i. That the resilience and livelihoods needs to support the Yemeni people are enormous. Hence better targeting to address the acutely needy is required. This necessitates sharpened two-way communication with communities and local leaders for the optimal utilization of resources.
- ii. That strengthened partnerships with international financial institutions (IFIs), the EU and internally within the UN in the areas of resilience, restoration and sustainability are needed, including with the Office of the Special Envoy, for potential transition-related activities such as community policing, community dialogue and social cohesion.
- iii. That UNDP Yemen continues to strengthen the coordination function of the Early Recovery Cluster as part of the UN HCT. Enhanced coordination will be instrumental for fostering partnership, resources mobilization and for innovating integrated local delivery solutions and improved targeting.<sup>87</sup>

In terms of acting on these lessons learned, the evaluation was not able to determine whether the country office has managed to fully implement these in the succeeding 18 months. What does appear is 'work in progress'. For example, concerning "better targeting on the acutely needy", the evaluation was unable to access communities

<sup>84</sup> 2016 results only.

<sup>85</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2016, p.2.

<sup>86</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2016, p.2 and p.14.

<sup>87</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2016, p.9.



and local leaders to confirm if this refinement was being achieved. The country office stated to the evaluation that the targeting methodology used by projects at the community level, especially related to livelihoods/asset rehabilitation support, involves an extensive consultation and engagement of the local communities and leaders in the identification of the location of the support, as well as the beneficiaries, per the targeting criteria agreed and to avoid overlap. However, consultations with donors did indicate that there was still room for improvement based on the comment that “UN agencies need to work to improve their level of coordination at the district level”.<sup>88</sup> Regarding “strengthened partnerships with the IFIs, EU and Office of the Special Envoy”, the evaluation was satisfied that robust institutional relationships are in place and that the issues of “resilience, restoration and sustainability” and “community policing, community dialogue and social cohesion” are being pursued systematically in the course of regular structured discussions.<sup>89</sup> In the third case, while the country office has dedicated additional resources to the functioning of the early recovery cluster, the evaluation did not probe whether this had yet resulted in the cluster becoming a better instrument for “fostering partnership, resource mobilization, integrated service delivery or targeting”.

Against the backdrop of this learning, 2017 witnessed further expansion of the programme with impressive results. An abbreviated summary of the key results of the 2017 programme entailed nearly half a million Yemeni households (with an average of seven persons per household) affected by the crisis benefiting from 1,620,664 workdays of emergency employment in all 22 governorates, out of which 36 percent were female, 45 percent IDPs and 52 percent youth. This coping mechanism enabled household members to purchase food and satisfy other basic needs, i.e. health, education, shelter and paying loans. A further 240 small community

infrastructure projects were completed that created 421,053 working days, of which 40 percent were IDPs. Some 1.1 million community members benefited from access to key services (water harvesting reservoirs, agricultural land, rehabilitated classrooms, improved local sanitation and water supply systems). Six out of the targeted nine micro-finance Institutions (MFIs) were revived, resulting in the disbursement of micro loans and 4,940 SMEs revamped. Throughout 2017, UNDP supported mine survey and clearance operations in 55 districts of the targeted 14 governorates in which 1.6 million people benefited (6.3 million indirect beneficiaries) resulting in improved humanitarian support and communities’ livelihood assets. Three hundred thirty-eight survivors were screened and over 260,000 ERW were cleared, of which 39,000 were destroyed, alongside 38,000 UXOs in Aden alone. With UNDP support the Amran Cement Plant was reopened after two years of suspension due to airstrikes (within which 20 unexploded cluster munitions were removed). The subsequent resumption of cement production resulted in wages for 3,215 employees and resulting in 28,000 tons of cement being delivered to the market in 2017.<sup>90</sup>

**Finding 6.** The 2012-2014 programme was too narrowly focused on the national-level political transition and lacked a parallel subnational programme through which to integrate local peace building and development.

The CPD for Yemen (2012-2015) outlined a modest four-year programme of investment totaling \$77 million (or around \$19 million per year). At the same time, Yemen, a least developed country, was facing severe socio-economic challenges – being ‘off-track’ on five of the seven MDGs, and with nearly three-quarters of the population living in rural areas without access to decent services.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, the ROAR of 2013 reported that “Yemen will not achieve any of the MDGs”.<sup>92</sup> The annual

<sup>88</sup> Evaluation team telephone interviews with donors, May 2018.

<sup>89</sup> Stakeholder consultations hosted in Amman, Jordan, May 2018 and telephone interviews with development partners, also May 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2017, p.2.

<sup>91</sup> Republic of Yemen and UNDP, ‘MDG Report 2010’.

<sup>92</sup> Results Oriented Annual Report, 2013, p.1.

population growth rate was 3 percent<sup>93</sup> and in many respects, the country was struggling to make meaningful progress.

Against this backdrop, the programme developed to implement the CPD<sup>94</sup>, unsupported by a theory of change, was centred largely on advancing government reforms and assisting the transition at the national level. This approach was reported to have been influenced in two regards. Firstly, by the Joint United Nations Framework to Support the Transition in Yemen (2012-2014) adopted by the United Nations Development Group in Amman on 30 March 2012 which aimed to “support a peaceful and inclusive transition”. Secondly, and more broadly, there was a strong preference exercised by the international community to supporting the implementation of the political transition. This resulted in the country office experiencing great difficulty in raising funds for area-based programmes that may also have impacted local peacebuilding, service delivery and community self-reliance. Hence, programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, inclusive development, the MDGs and local conflict resolution were not given the same priority as those which directly supported the political transition at the national level.

Government stakeholders did, however, confirm that in terms of UNDP’s national level institutional support measures, “a lot of good work was accomplished” in this period, as recorded in Finding 2. However, in other quarters the UNDP programme was reported as being ‘piecemeal’ and “lacking a coherent strategy”.<sup>95</sup> It also lacked a rural livelihoods component, which would have been important in a country whose population is three-quarters rural.

While a programme in support of youth economic empowerment was advanced, which did generate some notable benefits<sup>96</sup>, the pro-poor MDG-oriented area-based interventions envisioned in the CPD did not gain traction. It was observed that “contingencies were not contemplated” and “there was no plan B”.<sup>97</sup> CO staff reported to the evaluation team that even in the last quarter of 2014 when they “saw the civil war coming”<sup>98</sup>, the Yemen CO continued to plan its programme activities largely on the assumption and within a scenario of enduring peace and political stability.

To place this discussion in its rightful context, in the period 2012-2013 there was a general feeling of optimism and confidence about the immediate future of Yemen<sup>99</sup> despite its deeply conflict-affected landscape. Indicative of the permissive environment that existed in Yemen at that time, the country office received an increased number of headquarters missions as the GCC/UN-brokered agreement presented a strategic opportunity for Yemen’s political and institutional development.<sup>100</sup> Indeed, the CPD, formulated six months before the GCC-facilitated peace agreement, anticipated the country office engaging in “transitional, transformative processes such as elections and constitutional reform”.<sup>101</sup>

Overall, the 2012-2015 UNDP programme that was assembled and pursued was top-heavy in its orientation towards supporting national-level political transition, the development of institutional capacities, policies and reforms. It was too dependent on a scenario of conflict-free political stability within which “all the eggs had been put in one basket”. There was no real programme contingency to fall back on if the national context were to alter. As a result, when circumstances were upturned, UNDP

<sup>93</sup> Republic of Yemen and UNDP, ‘MDG Report’, 2010.

<sup>94</sup> UNDP, ‘Country Programme Document for Yemen (2012-2015)’, p.4.

<sup>95</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>96</sup> The initial \$4.4 million Pro-Poor Youth Economic Empowerment Project (2012-2014) was succeeded by a further \$4.4 million Youth Economic Empowerment II Project (2014-2017) and a parallel \$2.7 million Women’s Economic Empowerment Project (2015-2017).

<sup>97</sup> Stakeholder interviews.

<sup>98</sup> The evaluation had no access to the minutes of the Yemen UN Security Management Team.

<sup>99</sup> P.17 AAR on advice from SE to UNDP, footnote 3.

<sup>100</sup> Principally from UNDP’s former Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Country Programme Document for Yemen (2012-2015)’, p.4.

had no counterbalanced subnational or area-based programme as recommended in the prior UNDAF review<sup>102</sup>, through which to work directly with communities to improve the livelihoods and tackle social conflict among the vast majority of the Yemeni population who reside in rural areas. It was also unfortunate that UNDP's longstanding decentralization programme prior to 2011 was not continued into the 2012-2015 period and that instead the partnership with the Ministry of Local Administration was ended. That programme was reported to have strengthened the resilience of local government services to withstand some of the challenges that were soon to engulf the country.<sup>103</sup>

For nine months between the end of March 2015 and early 2016 UNDP was bereft of a coherent programme direction and was unable to deliver any meaningful results at scale during a critical period in which Yemen slid deeper into conflict and humanitarian catastrophe.

By 2015 the ROAR records the verdict on the status of the programme: "the outcome is not on track within the planned timeframe" across all of the outcomes. The UN RC report at the end of 2015 ultimately declared that "the whole transitional programme is no longer relevant". From UNDP's perspective, given how much of the country programme had invested in the transition itself, very little of value can be salvaged from the period 2012-2014. Only a few projects (chiefly youth employment and mine action) had been successfully implemented, the former, at the time, still with relatively limited scope at the local level. These initiatives were however to form the foundations for the subsequent Resilience Programme and provided UNDP with a toehold within a highly competitive humanitarian setting.

During the 2012-2014 period, there were limited evaluations within the programme conducted in Yemen. There were no independent outcome evaluations conducted by the country office through the duration of the CPD. Neither was there a mid-term

review, although one was proposed in the CPD. Nonetheless, the evaluation team took note of, and reiterated the importance of, the three lessons captured in the ROAR 2015 reflecting on the 2012-2014 period:

- a. "Insufficient focus on informal and local institutions and local communities: International development support focused on supporting formal and central government institutions and not enough on informal and local institutions and local communities;
- b. "Under-investment in development and in building resilience at community level: A key lesson of GCC-brokered transition agreement was the excessive focus on the political process and humanitarian needs rather than investment in development by the international community;
- c. "Investing in community level security to protect citizens, in justice, social cohesion and peace building and prevention of human rights violations is essential, including the documentation of such violations".

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● **Lesson Learned 1:** Despite being quickly aligned to support Yemen's political transition, as noted in Finding 1, the country office was left exposed with a programme that was 'top-heavy' in its design and too narrowly focused. The evaluation recognizes that there were other elements of the programme that were invested in biodiversity, youth employment and mine action. Nevertheless, in a least developed country as poverty stricken as Yemen, having the main United Nations development agency suggest that the MDGs were not a priority, (as recorded in the 2012 ROAR) during this transition, appears to have been a misjudgement. When the political process collapsed just over two years later and the country descended into civil war and humanitarian crisis, UNDP

<sup>102</sup> The UNDAF 2007-2012 midterm review reported that in the previous cycle "no interventions were targeted to mitigate protracted social conflicts". It recommended "the inclusion of initiatives for social conflict prevention and youth empowerment" (p. ix. Mid Term Review – Yemen UNDAF 2007-2011).

<sup>103</sup> Excerpts from stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

had no major development programmes operating on which to fall back on and the programme needed to be completely redesigned and kick-started from scratch. The country office was unable to respond quickly or effectively to the crisis when it occurred. Balanced programmes are needed to seize opportunities at both national and subnational levels so that the country office remains agile to the operating context. UNDP must also be able to advocate strongly and resist both Government and donor demands to shape its programme in ways that may compromise flexibility.

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**Finding 7.** The country office was insufficiently prepared for the conflict and missed the opportunity to pre-empt donors from disengaging.

The country office was unprepared for the crisis when it erupted in the form of the Saudi-led coalition airstrikes at the end of March 2015 despite the three worrisome events which had preceded it.<sup>104</sup> In terms of planning, the country office had a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in place respectively for the years 2014 to 2017. The *likelihood* of civil conflict was listed as ‘moderate’, with 3 out of a scale of 5 allocated to it in the August 2014 BCP risk assessment.<sup>105</sup> This was later upgraded to 4.5 out of 5 in the September 2015 BCP (after the evacuations had taken place).<sup>106</sup> The *impact* of civil conflict under these assessments was deemed to be 4 out of 5. Both assessments under-valued both the *likelihood* and *impact* that the crisis ultimately had. Notwithstanding the risks as assessed, there was no contingency in place to consult donors as to what to do with their financing if and when the political transition faltered and should a complete revamping of programme activities be called for. Hence when Houthi forces overran Sana’a on

21 September 2014 UNDP’s programme activities practically ground to a halt. As a UNDP Yemen CO staff member explained, “Whilst we knew that the war would come, we were not prepared when the Houthis took over Sana’a”.<sup>107</sup>

The UNDP CO was also unprepared for the worst-case scenario set out in the Joint UN Framework for Yemen 2012-2014. There appears to have been no conflict analysis undertaken through which to inform UNDP’s national strategic planning process (during formulation of the CPD) as recommended by the UN Common Country Assessment (CCA) undertaken for Yemen in August 2011. A section of that CCA dedicated to ‘internal conflicts’ makes reference to the frequency of ‘protracted violent conflict’ in Yemen and observes “there is an urgent need for an impartial and proper assessment of conflict in the country that can suggest strategic responses to the requirements of conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict reconstruction”.<sup>108</sup> UNDP Yemen lacked a sufficiently detailed conflict analysis and related programming in a country with such a strong legacy of violence and conflict. As a result, when the conflict escalated as it did from September 2011 onwards, the country office, being unable to adjust its programme quickly, became sidelined and faced significant difficulties.

The evaluation learned that in February 2015, discussions were held between Yemen CO leadership, the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) and the CRU on the margins of the regional cluster meeting. The country office was advised to recast the programme and engage with donors in a proactive discussion or risk losing donor financing within an environment in which the peaceful transition of power was being rapidly overtaken by events on the ground. The moment presented a critical opportunity to reorient the programme towards

<sup>104</sup> The Houthi takeover of the capital Sana’a in September 2014, the resignation of the Council of Ministers in January 2015 and the Houthis’ dissolution of parliament in February 2015.

<sup>105</sup> Annex 1 of the 2014 Business Continuity Plan for UNDP Yemen.

<sup>106</sup> Annex 1 of the 2015 Business Continuity Plan for UNDP Yemen.

<sup>107</sup> Excerpts from stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>108</sup> ‘United Nations Common Country Assessment, (CCA) Republic of Yemen’, 2011, Section 1.8 ‘Internal Conflicts’, p.12. Annex 2 of the CCA also contained an important preliminary description of ‘background to violent conflict in Yemen’.

the community level interventions in less conflict-affected districts and to beef up the '3x6' youth and women's employment programmes that had been operating successfully. That window of opportunity was missed as of the end of March 2015 when Saudi coalition forces began a campaign of airstrikes on Sana'a and other locations across the country. The country office had to immediately evacuate its international staff and relocate its national staff.

The evacuation marked a turning point. While the CO presence in-country was retained, its operations and financial status quickly became unsustainable. National staff, all except for a couple of essential positions, were released with a three-month advance of salary for relocation within Yemen at their own discretion. Other than processing outstanding payments, all operations were halted with virtually no activities for three to four months. Most donors, except a couple<sup>109</sup>, did not agree to re-profile or realign their financing as there were no viable alternative programmes and/or new concrete programme proposals being brought forward. Even as the evacuation of international staff was in motion, UNDP staff recounted "receiving emails from donors seeking the suspension and return of their unspent funds".<sup>110</sup> Financially the country office experienced a very difficult time. It incurred expenses related to staff evacuation and relocation, shrinking income, ongoing staff-related expenditures and no immediate back-up/contingency funding reinforcement from headquarters.

In addition, once the legitimacy of the established Government began to erode, UNDP was too slow to seek to renegotiate its programmes. A window of opportunity between September 2014 and the end of March 2015 did exist, and the country office was advised along these lines, but ultimately it was missed.

<sup>109</sup> EU and Japan.

<sup>110</sup> Excerpts from stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>111</sup> As of June 2018.

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● **Lesson Learned 2:** The Yemen CPD was not informed by an adequate conflict analysis despite a clear CCA recommendation for one. Hence, in countries characterized by political, social and economic fragility, and beset by sporadic bouts of violent conflict, UNDP country offices should pay greater attention to conflict analysis, including its structural causes and triggers to ensure risk and conflict-informed strategic planning and programming. It is important to be cognizant that circumstances can quickly change and a country office and its programme must have flexibility and contingency built-in as an intrinsic feature of their design. In Yemen's case, the resultant evacuation and relocation of international and national staff in Yemen, though essential, was massively disruptive and caused considerable dislocation to the CO team. Even though evacuation is a rare occurrence, UNDP country offices operating in similar contexts to that of Yemen should be provided with training which simulates the wide range of challenges a country office has to confront 'in extremis'. This will help enhance the preparedness of country offices in both programmatic and operational contingencies and assist in the timeliness, means and clarity of communications under conditions of tension and difficulty.

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**Finding 8.** The conflict severely impacted UNDP operations.

The current cycle of conflict escalated with the Houthi takeover of Sana'a on 21 September 2014, then heightened at the end of March 2015 when Saudi-led coalition forces commenced bombing campaigns and operations against the Houthis.<sup>111</sup> The capital Sana'a, the southern sea port of Aden and the western coastal areas have experienced



the greatest intensity of armed confrontation. This latest recrudescence of violence in Yemen massively impacted the country office.

The immediate challenge presented by the conflict concerned the evacuation of all international staff and the relocation of national staff, as mentioned above. National staff were released from office for internal relocation with a three-month advance of salary.<sup>112</sup>

The country's financial environment was in disarray: the central bank collapsed, the liquidity crisis deepened and exchange rates became volatile. Within such a context, financial planning and budgetary execution were almost impossible for the country office. Anticipated instalments of funds from donors were ceased and there was no reserve for the country office, or headquarters to tap into. The country office went through a very difficult period when it incurred additional unexpected expenses related to the evacuation and in maintaining its staff on contract.<sup>113</sup>

The air and sea blockade, imposed in 2016, delayed, and in some instances prevented, the procurement and importing of commodities and from obtaining customs clearances of essential equipment, such as ambulances, armoured vehicles and radios.<sup>114</sup> Procurement activities witnessed international companies refraining from bidding for work, and/or were subcontracting to local companies inside the country. Companies in the south could not easily work in the north, and vice versa. UNDP began to procure from north and south separately, but to noticeably higher tender prices.

The labour market was also distorted by the conflict, making recruitment difficult. A number of UN agencies immediately set about expanding their programmes and recruiting more staff and contractors after Yemen was designated a system-wide L3 crisis. The CO human resources team took up the task of leading new recruitment processes on behalf of these other UN agencies and managed a caseload increase in recruitments from 11 in 2015 to 26 in 2016 to 65 positions in 2017.<sup>115</sup>

In June 2015 the UNDP Aden sub-office was bombed and ransacked. Before the end of the year, the team lived on a boat anchored off the coast of Aden, which came and went from Djibouti. Upon the return of some of its international staff in the country, UNDP had to fortify its facilities. Maintaining Minimum Operating Security Standards-compliant UNDP facilities required much more funding. The main UNDP CO in Sana'a was expanded to include accommodation within the compound – entailing further outlay on security equipment and staff training – all of which added significantly to the CO capital investments and recurrent costs.<sup>116</sup> In Aden, UNDP moved to the UNHCR guesthouse before taking over the former German consulate for office space and accommodation.

CO operations were thereby completely different since 2016. The volume of work for both the operations and programme staff has expanded with the size of the new programme. The country office learned to work with both sides to the conflict, e.g. from Sana'a and Aden and needs to

<sup>112</sup> Due to liquidity issues in Yemen, the Bank was not able to provide the full amount of cash for all staff.

<sup>113</sup> As for the international staff members, the ceiling set for their numbers in-country limited their presence. They frequently faced administrative challenges in securing seats on the United Nations Humanitarian Air Services flights. Costs associated with retaining international staff also increased since they were subject to a four-week R&R cycle, and being compensated further with hazard pay, including additional cost of living adjustments. In other words, to maintain the same level of staffing the operating costs of the country office were significantly higher than they were in the pre-conflict period.

<sup>114</sup> One case involved the import of 20 trained dogs that had been sought for mine action work resulted in only 11 having survived to arrive in-country, with those having survived being badly treated in the process.

<sup>115</sup> From this perspective, it was possible for UNDP to see that other agencies offered additional staff benefits for comparable level posts. These included some non-cash incentives such as provision of a solar panels for power, air-conditioning and for ensuring secure and dependable internet/wifi connectivity. This compounded UNDP's own challenge of retaining experienced national personnel as well as attracting much needed replacements for a number who had left during the crisis.

<sup>116</sup> Related to the heightened security phase and related costs in Yemen, staff movement, both international and national, became highly restricted. UNDP Yemen, similar to all other UN agencies, has a larger fleet of armoured vehicles to ensure that staff can move between work, residence and project sites. UNDP also contributed financially to cover the cost of the UN health clinic and buses, operated by the UNCT, to provide national staff members with proper health care and the means of transportation to work.

balance the requirements for equal coverage in the South, as well as in the North and West of Yemen where the Houthis' exercise control.<sup>117</sup>

Access to project sites, local development partners, communities and beneficiaries became much more limited, and indeed impossible in areas where fighting was most intense. The authorities put a squeeze on access, with permission to visit project locations and communities frequently revoked at the last minute. Both authorities exercised more control over UN activities. Third-party monitoring mechanisms were put in place to ensure oversight and reporting. Fast-track procedures granted by headquarters' business management services in 2016 were extremely helpful and eased the burden for the period they remained in place.

Last and most importantly, UNDP has had to confront magnified reputational, political, fiduciary, and security risks from its expanded programme in Yemen. The country office has so far been successful in identifying and articulating measures to mitigate every category of risk. All project documents reviewed under the evaluation provide detailed measures to address a full range of risks. Donors have acknowledged that UNDP is doing its best to manage risks systematically and sensibly as it endeavours to keep the programmatic door to Yemen open.

**Finding 9:** Headquarters was slow to strengthen the country office with leadership more adept at a crisis situation and better internal communications would have helped the country office navigate the crisis.

The conflict and the L3 designation accorded by the UNDP Crisis Board provided an important juncture and opportunity for UNDP to strengthen CO leadership commensurate to the intensified challenge.<sup>118</sup>

Yet the decision to appoint a Country Director with a more conflict-appropriate profile took over a year to materialize. Once that decision had been made it was described as a 'turning point' by staff. The new Country Director formalized structures, empowered national staff, increased the Delegation of Authority, adjusted the Internal Control Framework and engaged national colleagues in consultations and decision-making. Trust and confidence within the country office were restored.

During the evaluation, it was remarked that "throughout the crisis in Yemen, the RBAS had been in largely 'reactive mode' to what had been a difficult and unpredictable situation". The RBAS was described as "appearing to be in favour of devolving decision-making as much as possible to the level of the CO".<sup>119</sup> At the same time, the RBAS was a key member of the UNDP Crisis Board which endorsed the \$1.3 million plan for Yemen in the summer of 2015 which oversaw the two successive SURGE deployments. Similarly, the RBAS was present at the debriefing at headquarters provided by the initial SURGE team which expressed 'strong reservations' about the strength of the CO leadership at the time of the crisis.

Given the gravity of the situation, it was conjectured that the RBAS did not step up quickly enough to face the decision concerning whether the country office had the right type of leadership in place to successfully manage a complex crisis/high-risk operation. Clear and unequivocal signals were sent from the returning SURGE mission that the country office did not have the requisite capabilities in place to cope with a challenging emergency situation. In addition, the standard operating procedures make provision for a complete change in CO management should the conditions require.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>117</sup> All projects used DEX and signed off by UNDP CO only.

<sup>118</sup> Stakeholder interviews in Amman and New York of May 2018 informed the evaluation that the functioning of the country office before the time of the crisis was facing difficulties, even prior to the emergency situation.

<sup>119</sup> Stakeholder interviews in Amman and New York, May 2018.

<sup>120</sup> The evaluation learned that the UNICEF model of rotating in a completely new team of senior managers when the need to retool the country programme becomes clear. Such decision is most effective when it is delinked from performance discussions of concerned staff members, considering the extremely challenging circumstances.

Regarding communications, the country office came under increasing pressure with the escalation of the conflict, which reached a climax in late March 2015 with the commencement of the Saudi-led airstrikes. The evaluation was able to build a picture, during this period and its immediate aftermath, of how communications between staff became strained, particularly between the CO leadership, which had been relocated to Amman, and the cohort of national staff, who, for those that had not fled the country, remained largely in Sana'a and Aden. In respect of the evacuation and relocation in March 2015, the evaluation learned that there was a lack of clarity over entitlements that were due to national staff, especially with respect to their relocation. This was set against a backdrop within which international staff were airlifted to safety. At the height of the intensity of the airstrikes, which came without warning, national staff were more deeply concerned about their own safety and security, as well as that of their families. National staff reported being 'traumatized' by the conflict and then 'bewildered' when they were issued with letters from UNDP management calling them to 'return to work' by a certain date, or they would lose their jobs.<sup>121</sup> This presented a difficulty since some national staff had fled internally while others had left for countries in the region. Some took unused or additional leave, and a number of others did not return at all.

The Country Director, in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, was based predominantly in Amman, although a space existed through the criticality assessment for the post to be situated in Sana'a. This strained communications and coordination between Amman, Sana'a and Aden. When the SURGE team was deployed to Amman in August 2015, it was not visible in Yemen and their subsequent report did not percolate out to the country office in Yemen (see also Finding 3). There was a degree of alienation and resentment felt by national colleagues over UNDP's handling of the crisis. The country office as a whole had been affected by

events that were external, but which appear to have been compounded by internal coordination and communication deficiencies at the time of the crisis.

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**● Lessons Learned 3:** Experienced management is needed in conflict situations, which are rarely 'business as usual' scenarios. UNDP must be more assertive under conditions in which there is a significant 'sea-change' in the operating environment. A competency-based Country Director/Deputy Country Director pool should be retained to enable the deployment of experienced Senior Managers in emergency/crisis and conflict situations without prejudice to the performance or prospects of staff in-situ caught in the crisis.  
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**Finding 10.** The CPD was submitted on three separate occasions to the UNDP Executive Board, each time for 'extension', yet it remained irrelevant to the country context.

Political and social conditions shifted swiftly in Yemen in 2011. As soon as the CPD was approved by the Executive Board in September 2011, the evaluation learned "it was already out of date".<sup>122</sup> The 2011 youth uprising (inspired at the time of the 'Arab Spring') led protests against the high cost of living, unemployment, authoritarian rule and corruption. Since that moment the CPD "has yet to be synched"<sup>123</sup> with the actual operating realities or programme on the ground, including the GCC peace agreement and transition plan, even though it was thrice perfunctorily reported to the Executive Board for 'extension' without any change being proposed to it despite radically different conditions on the ground.<sup>124</sup> Meanwhile, the two-year Yemen Resilience Programme – a strategic framework – which for all intents and purposes superseded the CPD and remains current (and even exceeds the dollar value of the CPD), has not been presented to the Executive Board.

<sup>121</sup> Reported to be 1 July 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>123</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>124</sup> In June 2015, in June 2016 and in September 2017, respectively.



As reported to the evaluation, “the CPD was largely obsolete”<sup>125</sup> by the time the interim successor framework – the two-year Yemen Resilience Programme – was put in place. Notwithstanding this, the country office was required to continue self-reporting against the goals of the original CPD through the ROAR – an exercise that was considered by many to be ‘largely meaningless’<sup>126</sup> as the goalposts had completely moved. As suggested above, the \$95.4 million Yemen Resilience Programme was not presented to the Executive Board for its information or endorsement, despite successive ‘extensions’ to the redundant CPD having been so.

The Executive Board thereby effectively lost its oversight and accountability role of the Yemen programme (the Yemen CPD 2012-2015). The programme that succeeded the CPD, the 24-month Yemen Resilience Programme, (as approved by the Crisis Board on 16 December 2015) is entirely different in focus and magnitude than the approved CPD. In situations such as Yemen, there is no Executive Board-endorsed interim template or instrument that UNDP can default to in crisis situations, such as the Yemen Resilience Programme.

With some similarity UNDP does not have a formal mechanism for sustaining SURGE support in protracted conflicts. The L1-3 system is effective for categorizing and coordinating immediate corporate UNDP responses to high-level emergency situations. But there is no system or scale for maintaining corporate level support in a protracted crisis, other than for the Crisis Board to keep reviewing and extending the L3 status from meeting to meeting, as in the case of Yemen.

- .....
- **Lessons Learned 4:** UNDP does not have a standard programming instrument for crisis situations like Yemen in which the country programme document becomes irrelevant. The Executive Board should be advised when the

CPD for a country has effectively been replaced or superseded by an alternative strategic document, for example, as in this case, the Yemen Resilience Programme.

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**Finding 11.** Despite significant ongoing risks and increased operating costs, UNDP’s retained presence in Sana’a and Aden has been a key asset in enabling UNDP to implement a programme closely aligned to both humanitarian and development objectives.

Despite significantly increased security risks associated with maintaining UNDP’s country office in Sana’a and the sub-office in Aden, there was a general consensus among the interviewees that each has proved extremely valuable. From these bases, the country office has been able to preserve a vital foothold in-country from which it has been able to retain an active programme and engaged posture in both the Humanitarian Country Team and UN Country Team.

With all of the diplomatic missions having left Yemen in February 2015, and the World Bank programme suspended, the resolve of UNDP to remain in-country has been particularly appreciated by donors, Government agencies, local institutions and communities. UNDP presence in Sana’a and Aden enabled good collaboration with humanitarian and development partners<sup>127</sup>, with the Social Fund for Development and Public Works Programme, as well as with local authorities. In-country presence has also been the pivot for the UNDP partnership with the World Bank, EU and other donors in the design, financing and implementation of major programmes of emergency cash for work, support for essential service delivery, enterprise investment, community infrastructure rehabilitation and a host of related social cohesion and violence prevention measures operating at the interface of the humanitarian and development work.

<sup>125</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>126</sup> Stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>127</sup> Based on the interviews with a range of stakeholders, including the Yemen authorities, implementing partners such as the SFD and the PWP as well as UN agencies such as the FAO, ILO, UN Women and with staff from the Office of the UN Special Envoy to Yemen.

The reputation of UNDP among Yemenis was also reported by national staff to have been enhanced through UNDP's retained presence in Sana'a and Aden with outreach to many other districts and communities. By maintaining its presence and leveraging its '3x6' cash for work programme UNDP has been able to demonstrate its commitment to helping the people of Yemen at scale at the local level. The organization has been responsive to Yemen's many challenges as expressed on social media. For example, amid the sea of humanitarian assistance flowing to Yemen, the evaluation learned how UNDP has been able to respond to the Twitter feed launched by young Yemenis to 'bring back development' who are only too aware of the limitations of 'humanitarian only' aid.<sup>128</sup>

With its operating presence in Yemen, and having successfully re-engineered its programme, over the past two and a half years UNDP has emerged as an attractive and viable mechanism that has strengthened donor coordination and programme implementation.<sup>129</sup> Some donors expressed that UNDP is essentially taking on and managing their risks, and that they might be less likely use UNDP if they themselves had direct access to Yemen.

In addition to the CO presence in-country, UNDP has retained a back office in Amman, with a dedicated focal point who has helped in maintaining good relations with the international community based there.<sup>130</sup> The Amman Office for Yemen has also served to cultivate much-needed stronger links to the Office of the Special Envoy and ensured a good exchange of information on Yemen, for communications, resource mobilization and for reporting and accountability. In addition, as the programme moves forward, and with the recent appointment of the new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to Yemen and the new UN Resident Coordinator (RC)/Humanitarian Coordinator (HC), a coherent

vision, backed up by comprehensive programming across the UN is essential for UNDP. The back office in Amman can be expected to be instrumental in helping to bring a more integrated approach to the next cycle of UN and UNDP programming.

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**● Lessons Learned 5:** In a complex active conflict and emergency L3 humanitarian crisis and having due regard to the safety and security of its staff and contractors, UNDP should do its utmost to retain its independent presence in-country. Emergency livelihood and resilience programmes are often needed immediately after, or even within the midst of crisis. Retaining the country office in Yemen has helped UNDP operate a broad resilience-based programme of activities at the interface of humanitarian and development work.  
 .....

**Finding 12.** Through an innovative and pragmatic partnership with the World Bank, UNDP has played a critical role in supporting the resilience of institutions and communities at the height of the emergency period for Yemen.

When donors and the World Bank hastily withdrew from Yemen in early 2015, the general expectation was that the escalation of conflict would be short-lived and that a ceasefire would be brokered within a short period of time. As the crisis became more protracted, humanitarian needs grew daily and quickly reached a devastating level. As the economy began to collapse, there were particular concerns that quasi-government organizations, such as the Social Welfare Fund, the SFD and the Public Works Programme (PWP), which had worked for decades to address social protection gaps in Yemen, would disintegrate without external funding and support. The interventions of these three institutions were focused on protecting household and community

<sup>128</sup> Information and insights gleaned from stakeholder interviews, Amman, May 2018.

<sup>129</sup> Mobility and access present recurrent challenges which have severely constrained UNDP project personnel and management from directly monitoring project activities. To augment its fragile monitoring and reporting capabilities the country office has made good use of third-party monitoring agencies. This practice has been imported to Yemen by the country office through an internal South-South arrangement in learning adapted from the Syria CO experience. This has enabled UNDP to host meaningful Technical Review Meetings each quarter in Amman with all relevant stakeholders.

<sup>130</sup> This was endorsed by UNDP's senior leadership, by members of the BPPS regional hub, as well as by UNCT members interviewed.

assets, investing in human capital and providing opportunities and incomes by targeting the poor and ensuring unconditional cash transfers to the chronically poor.<sup>131</sup>

The UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP led a series of consultations with the World Bank at the country level. The eventual World Bank-UNDP partnership, focusing on building community-level resilience, was then given a major boost by the World Bank Executive Board decision<sup>132</sup> granting consent to channel International Development Association (IDA) funding through UN agencies<sup>133</sup>. A partnership of this nature was the first of its kind between the two organizations.

The World Bank overcame the issue of not working directly with a Government – its normal *modus operandi*.<sup>134</sup> A number of legal hurdles were overcome, and internal policies were waived while others required Executive Board approval.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, UNDP reduced its General Management Support (GMS). The first grant for UNDP Yemen was for \$50 million, which the evaluation learned was used to test the system.<sup>136</sup> For the World Bank, the intervention was also highly innovative.<sup>137</sup> Both the World Bank and UNDP “moved fast and flexibly” to enable the partnership to come into being. Evidence generated in the first quarter monitoring report at the end of 2016 presented promising results in the areas of cash for work through community-based

livelihoods and community infrastructure rehabilitation from the initial tranche of the first \$50 million. Based on this, the World Bank Executive Board approved the further \$250 million of IDA allocation for Yemen to UNDP.<sup>138</sup>

The UNDP-World Bank partnership programme paved the way for an expanded emergency employment programme that provided labour-intensive and cash-for-work community-oriented projects, plus support for basic services, all of which sought to support Yemen’s fragile economy and preserve its social fabric. In overall terms, the programme demonstrated pragmatism and flexibility at a time of protracted crisis. UNDP was able to help build the capacity of the SFD and the PWP through updating their guidelines, for example, to enhance the mainstreaming of gender, while safeguarding the essential institutions responsible for providing the social safety net for millions of Yemenis on the poverty line, essential in the effort to “leave no one behind”. UNDP met the criteria as the World Bank’s preferred partner as it would not pose competition to the SFD and the PWP in the future. Additionally, UNDP was able to demonstrate quick impact at the community and household levels at scale through injecting cash into the local economy. From both sides of the partnership, the evaluation was informed of positive feedback in terms of the scale and scope of impact achieved by

<sup>131</sup> Stakeholder interviews conducted in New York in May 2018.

<sup>132</sup> Stakeholder interviews conducted in May and June 2018.

<sup>133</sup> To facilitate UNDP’s implementation of the WB/UNDP project, it was proposed to utilize the Fiduciary Principles Accord (FPA) mechanism. This permitted UNDP’s operational policies and procedures to apply instead of the usual Financing Agreement and the Bank’s operational policies and procedures that attend to the Investment Project Financing (IPF) instrument. For that purpose, a Board waiver is proposed to allow the FPA to apply to an IDA-financed project on an exceptional basis.

<sup>134</sup> Prior to Yemen, the World Bank had worked successfully with UNHRC as the implementing agency for the Horn of Africa Emergency Health and Nutrition Project and used an IDA funding. But that was a regional issue – whereas Yemen was a single country.

<sup>135</sup> On 7 October 2008, the Bank’s Board of Executive Directors endorsed the ‘World Bank and UN Fiduciary Principles Accord (FPA) for Crisis and Emergency Situations’ (SecM2008-0404) as a result of which the UN FPA was entered into among certain agencies of the UN and the Bank, which included UNDP. To enable the World Bank/UNDP project to proceed two main World Bank waivers concerned: i) the fiduciary policy; ii) safeguarding policy (environmental and social principles). The FPA was used as the basis for the UN taking on fiduciary responsibility for the funds. The only other occasion that bank had used this instrument was during the major Ebola and in the Horn of Africa – both regional in nature. The World Bank’s Fragile, Conflict and Violence (FCV) Affected States team played a prominent role throughout the negotiations.

<sup>136</sup> The normal 8 percent UNDP GMS was reduced to 5 percent.

<sup>137</sup> In October/November 2016 a debt stress assessment of Yemen was carried out by the IMF which unlocked a further \$250 million of IDA credits for Yemen. The World Bank set about restructuring the programme, which under normal circumstances would normally be done in consultation with the Government, but on this occasion the bank took the decision in the interests of the people of Yemen.

<sup>138</sup> UNDP reduced its GMS to 3 percent, which still represented a challenge as UNICEF had reduced its GMS to 2 percent, so the opportunity for the UN to work as one through harmonization of GMS did not occur.

the project. UNDP was also recognized for being collaborative, dynamic, and proactive in its interactions with partners.

Amid the beneficial aspects of the UNDP-World Bank partnership, there were also concerns voiced about the arrangement by participants to the evaluation. For example, a recurrent question arose regarding the extent to which UNDP has truly entered the partnership with the World Bank as an equal partner, or rather as a contractor. In other quarters it was expressed that UNDP is merely acting as “a pass-through mechanism”. From these discussions, the evaluation team concluded that UNDP has indeed taken on a large portion of World Bank’s risks through implementing the partnership arrangement. UNDP has to uphold the fiduciary risks and mitigate against reputational risks born from the programmes’ implementation. The risks are considerable and various, as they are for all implementing agencies operating in Yemen. Cash could fall into the wrong hands, or not be sufficiently ‘conflict-sensitive’ in its disbursement. Or, that despite the most robust security measures in place, staff members fall prey to acts of violence – which would be devastating to the programme and to the organization.<sup>139</sup> The country office has taken extensive measures to ensure that all its projects are fully risk assessed and informed with close attention paid to targeting, transparency, neutrality and violence mitigation.

One shortfall in the process of negotiations is that separate UN agency consultations with the World Bank took place bilaterally, especially by UNDP and UNICEF. UNDP CO participants in the evaluation<sup>140</sup> acknowledged that greater coordination should have taken place with the World Bank at the country level through the UNCT to arrive at a unified

‘One UN’ position. Instead, headquarters teams at both the World Bank and UNDP/UNICEF took over negotiations bilaterally, which effectively sidelined the UNCT and led to separate rates of GMS being agreed between the World Bank and UNICEF, and the World Bank and UNDP.

In the next iteration of the World Bank and UNDP partnership, the country office should continue to strive to advance “the new way of working”, as described in the outcome document of the World Humanitarian Summit.<sup>141</sup> At present, only some aspects of “the new way of working”<sup>142</sup> have been captured in the current partnership in Yemen between UNDP and the World Bank, which seeks to transcend the traditional humanitarian-development divide. Further work and learning are required to demonstrate and better understand the inter-linkages between humanitarian and development efforts in Yemen and how the programme could be measured in this regard. This might include, for example, how both development and humanitarian financing through the partnership is being utilized to contribute to the five core responsibilities<sup>143</sup> agreed to at the World Humanitarian Summit as well as to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. This entails not just meeting present-day priority needs – important though they are – but also necessitates action to reduce longer terms risks and vulnerabilities. Investing deeper in resilience and sustainability, and ensuring women and girls are empowered as leaders and agents of change require greater attention in the design and delivery of the next iteration of programmes. Finally, both UNDP and the World Bank have a mutual interest in appropriately sharing and managing the operational risks and in the deepening the equality of their partnership in order to contribute further to the achievement of their collective goals.

<sup>139</sup> The issue of UNDP taking on the risk was much repeated. Had these development partners had a presence in-country, they would have all relied much less on UNDP. Hence, retaining presence in-country, as suggested by Finding 11, is critical, to enable the role played by UNDP. At the same time, the risks shouldered by UNDP are magnified, since clearly, UNDP is the major risk-taker here.

<sup>140</sup> Stakeholder interviews conducted in May and June 2018.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit, Report of the Secretary General’, 23 August 2018, p.10, available at: <<https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/A-71-353%20-%20SG%20Report%20on%20the%20Outcome%20of%20the%20WHHS.pdf>>.

<sup>142</sup> “New way of working” via means that meets people’s immediate humanitarian needs while at the same time reducing risk and vulnerability over multiple years through the achievement of collective outcomes.

<sup>143</sup> The five core responsibilities agreed at the World Humanitarian Summit are: 1. Prevent and end conflict. 2. Respect rules of war. 3. Leave no one behind. 4. Working differently to end need. 5. Invest in humanity.



**Finding 13.** A comprehensive and integrated medium-term vision and strategy for UNDP in Yemen has yet to emerge.

The two-year Yemen Resilience Programme approved by the Crisis Board on 16 December 2015 is the most up-to-date strategic framework being applied in Yemen, over three years into the crisis. While the Yemen Resilience Programme “lays the foundation for future recovery and state-building efforts”<sup>144</sup>, a more comprehensive strategy to UNDP’s work in Yemen has yet to emerge.

The evaluation concurs with a number of interviewees who suggested that now, after exceeding its two-year time horizon, there is a need for reviewing Yemen Resilience Programme implementation within the context of a broader strategic assessment of opportunities. There was a desire expressed to achieve better linkage between the political, security, governance and community-oriented economic and social resilience activities in the field. This opportunity coincides with the arrival of the new UN RC/HC and the recent appointment of the new UN Special Envoy to Yemen, both of whom bring new vision and perspective to the role of the wider UN in Yemen. UNDP should maintain and strengthen its liaison with the Office of the UN Special Envoy so that it is ready with costed programmes that have indicative support from the donor community if and when a durable peace deal is reached. Time may be ripe for a more forward-looking comprehensive and integrated programme to emerge for UNDP in Yemen.<sup>145</sup>

The design of a future-oriented UNDP strategy depends greatly on the political and security conditions and upon the aspirations and will of Yemeni leaders and stakeholders at all levels. A more permissive political and security environment would enable UNDP to become more engaged in security

(military and civilian) sector reform, stabilization, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), alongside a raft of political, institutional, community-level peacebuilding and capacity-building measures, underpinned by social cohesion and conflict prevention principles.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, greater attention is needed on conflict prevention. Going forward, UNDP should also be able to maximize the use of global focal point system in order to draw on the larger pool of expertise available through the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions and its Special Police Capacity. Such an initiative would work well if paralleled by rule of law and access to justice projects. Application of the framework could be implemented nationwide and adjusted in areas of high, medium, or low conflict, as well as to areas that have been de-conflicted. Similar to an area-based approach, maximum gain occurs when these initiatives are dovetailed with livelihoods and economic empowerment projects, such as emergency employment including cash for work, entrepreneurship development and support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) alongside community rehabilitation works.

Building on the prospect of a broadened role for UNDP, some interviewees revealed that a large portion of the country is not consumed by conflict. In these areas, there is space for development programmes, for example, in the Central, Southern and Eastern sides of the country where government representatives were especially keen for UNDP to continue to support the private sector to prevent the complete collapse of the economy. After three years of conflict and humanitarian assistance, the percentage of Yemen’s population being food-insecure and needing assistance continues to grow, indicative of a population that has depleted its household, community and economic

<sup>144</sup> Section 5 ‘Theory of Change’, Yemen Resilience Programme, p.7.

<sup>145</sup> The issue of sustainability was raised at two levels. The first was in relation to the partnership with the World Bank, and the second in relation to the need for ensuring sustainability in programme design. The cash for work and similar emergency employment initiatives exists for the short term, but the existing design has not clearly included measures/indicators to assess their longer term benefits and impacts.

<sup>146</sup> Greater attention is needed on conflict prevention. Not only was this an observation of the UNDAF (2007-2011) Mid-Term Review, as cited in the main body of the evaluation, but a number of interviewees to this evaluation were unconvinced that UNDP’s programming in Yemen was sufficiently conflict preventive in design.

assets to cope. Unless economic activities resume, dependence on humanitarian interventions will continue to grow. Hence the need for more, not less, resilience and development programming.

The recent appointment of the new head of the UNDP governance cluster within the country office is a step in the right direction. Despite the absence of a fully functioning unified Government, there are still community-based stabilization, policing and local rule of law/access to justice programmes that can be pursued. A further major programme that is needed is a unified UN approach to 'incentive payments' to the local service delivery personnel in key sectors such as in the health, education and sanitation sectors. These front-line workers have not been properly paid since the conflict broke out and fear losing their jobs if they do not turn up for work, despite remaining unpaid. There is a real need to consider a harmonized approach to finding a temporary and workable solution to the 'propping up' of the delivery of local services so that key capacities and functions are not completely eroded.

Within the envelope of forward-looking strategic planning, women's equality issues should feature more prominently. The evaluation noted that separate targets to reach women and children beneficiaries are common practice in all project documents with monitoring reporting on results

disaggregated by gender. Furthermore, a strong partnership existed between UNDP and UN Women, although the recently appointed UN Women representative had encountered difficulties gaining access to Yemen. A renewed effort to place gender more prominently on the agenda was signalled through the joint UN assessment led by UNDP on the impact of the conflict in Yemen on women and girls. On the other hand, UNDP's gender adviser, a UNV, appeared sidelined from discussions. The gender strategy for 2017-2019 did not appear to be forcefully implemented, and the UN gender focal point group was reportedly not actively meeting.

Concerning UN joint programming, the evaluation learned that joint programming had been in place between UNDP, FAO, WFP and ILO. This had resulted in a joint programme document, annual work plan and annual report. The incentive for more joint programmes may have been reduced due to the abundance of financing currently flowing to Yemen. More generally, several interviewees, including a number of donors, made mention of the 'intense internal competition' among UN agencies that had prevailed during the crisis. This they wished could be resolved, including by the UN being more coordinated in the manner in which they delivered humanitarian and resilience projects on a district-by-district basis.





# CHAPTER 3

## CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP  
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## 3.1 Conclusions

**The ICPE for Yemen sought to answer the dual questions** as to how the Yemen country office and country programme adapted to the changed country situations and needs, and, how effectively programme links between UN humanitarian and development activities have materialized.

The evaluation team's conclusions are set out as follows:

- **Conclusion 1. The country office succeeded in adapting to a rapidly and continuously changing country situation, which has been the central theme for Yemen since late 2011.** During the period 2011-2017, the country office underwent two major programmatic transitions mirroring the recent distinct phases in Yemen's evolving country context. In the course of the first programme transition, covering the period between the GCC-brokered peace agreement of November 2011 up until the Houthis' take-over of Sana'a on 21 September 2014, Finding 1 of this evaluation confirms that the country office moved swiftly to align fully to support the implementation of the political transition. Despite the failure of the peace process, the country office achieved some notable results in this period, acknowledged in Finding 2. The second transition morphed out of the signal failure of the peace process as the country plunged headlong into civil war and humanitarian catastrophe. Despite massive disruption to the country office, and with a strong injection of SURGE corporate support, a successor country framework to the redundant CPD emerged through the adoption of the Yemen Resilience Programme by the UNDP Crisis Board on 16 December 2015. Finding 3 of this report underscores the important and significant transition undertaken by the country office in this regard. Under both situations, the country office was able to adjust and implement a programme of interventions that met the priority needs of the country. Notwithstanding these two successful

adjustments in country programming, the evaluation also points to shortcomings outlined in Findings 7 and 9 concerning the lack of preparedness of the country office to the crisis, the lack of conflict-sensitive planning within the CPD, and an inability to reach out to donors at an earlier juncture to realign priorities and financing prior to the impending crisis. Important issues concerning communications and coordination are also raised. Not least, is what appears to be a delayed decision at the corporate level to deploy a more conflict-experienced UNDP Senior Manager to help direct and facilitate the transition.

- **Conclusion 2. The country office has managed to evolve an important role for itself through successfully linking humanitarian and development activities under a unified and coherent 'resilience programme'.** A number of factors enabled UNDP to build a compelling programme at the interface between humanitarian and development activities. The two outstanding components of which were the formulation and successful implementation of the Yemen Resilience Programme (discussed in Findings 3, 4 and 5) and the innovative and pragmatic partnership between UNDP and the World Bank (elaborated in Finding 12). Also decisive in contributing to the country office's accomplishments in this regard were: the timely SURGE missions that generated the knowledge and policy content for the Yemen Resilience Programme; the nucleus of an operational emergency employment, economic resilience and recovery programme focusing on short-term livelihoods stabilization that could be built upon and expanded across a

range of activities<sup>147</sup>; a robust joint programme with FAO, WFP and ILO enabling the country office to reach out effectively to rural populations; the strengthening of the early recovery cluster; a strong network of NGO implementing partners and respected third-party monitoring arrangements; participation in the various post-conflict needs assessments, and; the early willingness of the EU to reprogramme some of its financing towards UNDP's rural resilience and emergency crisis response projects. The country office, having retained its operating bases in Sana'a and Aden, was also able to strike up strategic partnerships with the Social Fund for Development and the Public Works Programme. These two organizations were essential for preserving national institutional capacity for addressing social protection and vulnerabilities and in attempting to "leave no one behind". The outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit, which aimed to find "a new way of working" among development and humanitarian actors, has also lent normative support to UNDP's resilience programme in Yemen.

- **Conclusion 3. The obsolete CPD for Yemen (2012-2015) was thrice 'extended' by the Executive Board, yet the two-year Yemen Resilience Programme, which effectively superseded the CPD as the guiding UNDP framework for Yemen, has remained unreported to the Board.** The Yemen Resilience Programme was approved by the Crisis Board in December 2015, nine months after the crisis had erupted and once the previous country programme had been abandoned. For all intents and purposes, the Yemen Resilience Programme superseded the CPD for Yemen (2012-2015), which had been reported to and extended by the Executive Board on three separate occasions. Despite the CPD having become irrelevant to its operations, the country office still had to report against its outcomes in the ROAR. To date, the Yemen Resilience Programme, which guides all CO programming and has a financial envelope far in excess of the prior CPD, has yet to be reported to the Executive Board for information, consultation or approval.

<sup>147</sup> Activities which included: i) enhancing the purchasing power and injecting cash into the communities; ii) enhancing access to key community assets for service provision such as clean water, sanitation, education and health facilities, and creating employment opportunities (i.e. via cash for work, and through the local private sector); and (iii) supporting the development of new MSMEs. There are also activities aiming at enhancing longer term service delivery and productive/entrepreneurial capacities, which included: i) supporting the MFIs; ii) enhancing the capacities of service providers through trainings, skills enhancement for education and health, as well as provision of alternative energy (solar); iii) strengthening the local productive capacities of the SMEs (focusing on food security, to contribute to the prevention of famine as well as sectors for service delivery on WASH/solar/health); iv) enhancing the capacities of key national institutions such as the SFD and the PWP; v) building/enhancing the capacities for bottom-up participatory decision-making and planning at community and district level.

## 3.2 Recommendations and Management Response

### Evaluation Recommendation 1.



**UNDP should adopt a more flexible instrument and template in extreme or protracted crises where the standard CPD has been temporarily suspended or is no longer relevant or appropriate.** The CPD for Yemen (2012-2015) remained valid through the first adjustment of the CO programme, since it had anticipated UNDP engagement in a process of political and democratic transition. However, the CPD was not the correct strategic planning, resource mobilization, communications and results monitoring instrument when Yemen slid tragically into civil war and humanitarian crisis in 2015. Further consideration should be given to the following:

- What should replace CPDs when they are made irrelevant or redundant by circumstances within the country, and/or in instances where the CPD is recurrently 'extended' due to conflict or crisis, as in the case of Yemen.
- That interim (or revised) CO strategies or plans, such as the Yemen Resilience Programme, should be reported to the Executive Board "for information or consultation" so that the Board may continue to fulfil its oversight responsibilities for those countries' programmes and resources.
- Country offices affected by conflict or crisis should be permitted some flexibility in reporting to the ROAR. For example, where a CPD has effectively been superseded by an alternative temporary programme, (such as the Yemen Resilience Programme) whereby the country office is able to report against the interim strategy, rather than a CPD which is obsolete.
- UNDP should consider a designation for slow onset and protracted crises within the broader corporate crisis response system, to facilitate an elevated status for those countries requiring sustained supplementary resources and fast-track administrative measures over an extended time period.



**Management Response: The recommendation is accepted.**

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
<b>1.1</b> Updated guidance in the POPP on managing change outlines the process for making changes to country programmes, including updating the RRF, revision/suspension of programme in crisis situations and subsequent Executive Board notification requirements	In effect as of June 2018	BPPS		Completed
<b>1.2</b> Updated guidance in the POPP on managing change outlines the process for revising existing programme/developing bridging programme and subsequent Executive Board notification requirements	In effect as of June 2018	BPPS		Completed
<b>1.3</b> Updated guidance in the POPP on managing change outlines the process for revising existing programme/developing bridging programme, including RRFs to allow for flexible ROAR reporting	In effect as of June 2018	BPPS		Completed
<b>1.4</b> UNDP will further address slow onset and protracted crises in its corporate crisis response systems, taking into consideration the IASC discussions on that designation of a sustained response	2019	Crisis Bureau		Ongoing

## Evaluation Recommendation 2.



Building on the success of the Yemen Resilience Programme the country office should develop a more comprehensive and integrated programme framework for the next two to three years through which to leverage UNDP's comparative advantages. This should entail a broad partnership extending into security and peacebuilding, which will also enable the better sharing of risks. Consultation with the UN RC/HC, the UN Office of the Special Envoy, the HCT and donors will be important. Core programming principles such as sustainability and gender need to feature more prominently alongside conflict prevention and strengthened UN joint programming.



**Management Response:** The recommendation is accepted.

Key Action(s)	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 The country office has initiated a process for the articulation of short-term Country Programme Framework (2019-2020) within the conflict-sensitive lenses. The new framework will build on the progress of work under the Resilience Strategy Programme and expand the work towards capacitating the local administration to start building blocks for rehabilitation and restoration of essential basic services	In process as of November 2018 and to be completed by end March 2019	UNDP Yemen		Ongoing

\* The implementation status is tracked in the UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre



# Annexes

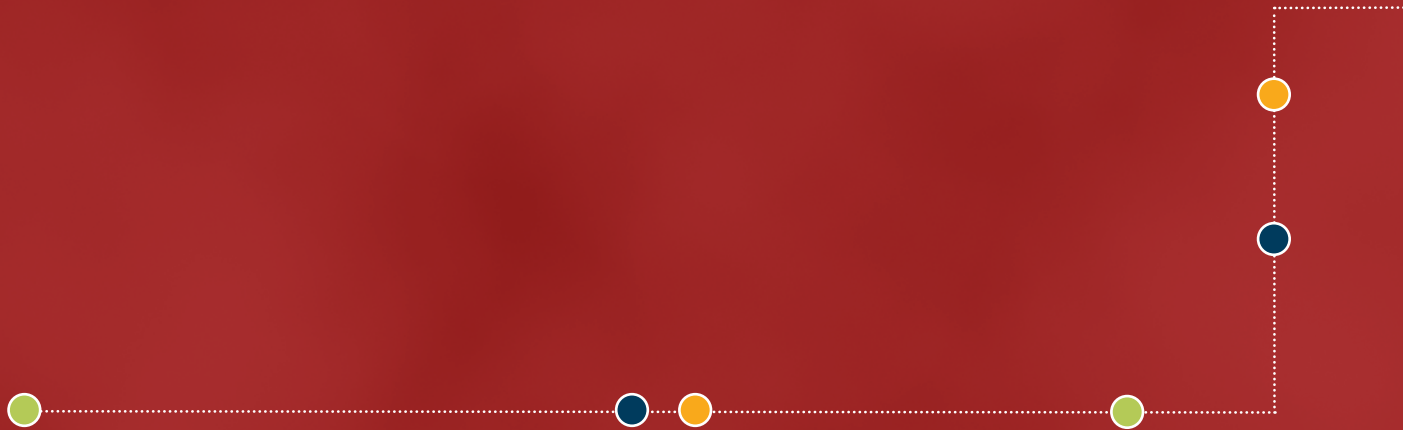


Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9407>

- Annex 1.** Terms of Reference
- Annex 2.** Country Overview
- Annex 3.** Country Office Overview
- Annex 4.** Summary of Programme Activities
- Annex 5.** Persons Consulted
- Annex 6.** Documents Consulted







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