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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN



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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. This is the third country-level evaluation conducted in Afghanistan by the Independent Evaluation Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It examined UNDP Afghanistan's work during the programme period 2015–2019 to inform the process of preparing the new country programme document. It was conducted in close collaboration with the Government of Afghanistan, UNDP Afghanistan country office and UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP).

The country programme document for the period under review was prepared at the time when there was a shared prospect for long-term development for Afghanistan, following the withdrawal of international military forces and the 2014 presidential elections. UNDP's work has been deeply affected by the erosion of security since then. In the midst of uncertainty and operational challenges, UNDP Afghanistan carried forward with its programme portfolios, which covered Governance, Rule of Law and Security, Livelihoods and Resilience, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

The evaluation found that UNDP contributed to the objectives set under each of the programme areas with varying degrees of success. The Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) — which represented the single largest portfolio of UNDP Afghanistan, with nearly 85 percent of the office's programme budget — remained UNDP's flagship effort during the period. It contributed to systems development and improvement for efficient police payroll management functions and oversight mechanisms. However, this is a complex, significant undertaking, unlike any other development work of UNDP, and much work remains to be done. Institutional capacity development needs

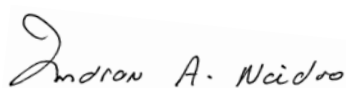
further attention, for example, and still to come is a full roll-out of the multi-partner trust fund, the next LOTFA phase.

UNDP Afghanistan went through a period of significant programmatic and operational transition during the review period, following a series of internal and external reviews in recent years. While positive adjustments have been made at the country office, there have also been signs of distress and volatility in programme operations.

Moving forward, the evaluation recommends recalibration of UNDP's approach to programming. It calls for more attention to the country's protracted conflict status, development of more evidence-based programmes and use of the Sustainable Development Goals to position UNDP in the country. It also calls for UNDP to ensure that its development work is informed by humanitarian and peace efforts being supported by other organizations in the country.

At the final internal debriefing of the evaluation, UNDP Afghanistan expressed its strong and clear commitment to addressing the various challenges identified in the evaluation in its management response.

I would like to thank the Government of Afghanistan, national development partners and stakeholders, and colleagues at UNDP Afghanistan and RBAP for their support during preparation of the evaluation. I hope the report is useful in the preparation of the next country programme for Afghanistan.



Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Evaluation Office

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACJC	Anti-Corruption Justice Centre
AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
AMD	Afghanistan Meteorological Department
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANPDF	Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
ASERD	Afghanistan Sustainable Energy for Rural Development
BERA	Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy (UNDP)
CBARD	Community-based Agriculture and Rural Development Project
CCAP	Climate Change Adaptation Project
CDC	Community Development Council
CDRRP	Climate-induced Disaster Risk Reduction Project
CSO	Civil society organization
CPD	Country programme document
ECC	Election Complaints Commission
EGEMA	Enhancing Gender Equality and Mainstreaming in Afghanistan
ELECT	Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow
EVAW	Elimination of Violence Against Women law
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GDPDC	General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Centres
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation
Global Fund	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GMS	General Management Support
HPC	High Peace Council
ICSPA	Institutional and Capacity Support to the Parliament of Afghanistan
ICT	Information and communication technology
IEC	Independent Election Commission
ILO	International Labour Organization
LITACA	Livelihoods Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross-border Areas
LoGo	Local Governance Programme
LOTFA	Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOIA	Ministry of Interior Affairs
MoLSAMD	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled
MOWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
MPD	MOIA and Police Development (LOTFA)
MPTF	Multi-partner trust fund
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development

MTE	Midterm evaluation
NABDP	National Area Based Development Programme
NAPWA	National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan
NPP	National priority programme
PHQ	Police headquarters
PIP	Project Initiation Plan
PSRU	Programme Strategy and Results Unit
RBAP	UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific
RECCA	Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
RR	Resident Representative
SALAM	Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDRR	Special Adviser and Deputy Resident Representative
SPM	Support to Payroll Management (LOTFA)
SPRU	Strategy, Planning and Results Unit
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Evaluation Brief: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

When UNDP Afghanistan's current country programme was conceived in 2014, there was significant optimism about the prospect for development in the country, following the withdrawal of international military forces and the presidential elections. However, the erosion of security since then has brought significant challenges to UNDP's programme operations. UNDP has also gone through a series of internal and external reviews, with the aim of becoming leaner and more centralized. It aims to increase its focus on adding value in supporting Afghanistan's self-reliance-based development priorities.

The evaluation examined UNDP's progress towards its objectives under the country programme 2015–2019 as well as its strategy for achieving programme effectiveness in the changing environment. The country programme had four components – accountable governance, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (the Global Fund), rule of law and human security, and livelihoods and resilience – with an average annual expenditure of \$513 million.

Findings and conclusions

Afghanistan entered a protracted crisis immediately after the launch of the country programme document (CPD), reducing its relevance and value as a planning and accountability tool. While insecurity was always recognized as a risk in the country, the CPD was not designed to reflect Afghanistan's fragility.

UNDP Afghanistan was in a full transitional phase at the time of the evaluation. Various programmatic and operational adjustments were under way, stemming from its recent change management and reviews. The adjustments brought about positive changes (e.g. improving programme management structure and increasing field presence), but signs of volatility/distress were also observed (e.g. varying programme delivery rates and staff workplace issues).

The Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) – accounting for about 85 percent of the total programme expenditure – remained UNDP's

flagship work. During the period under review, UNDP contributed to systems development and more efficient police payroll management functions. It also secured a steady national police workforce, including a crucial female force. UNDP's support to institutional development was limited, however, due to a midcourse design change. The timing of LOTFA's full transfer of the payroll management function to the Government remained a contentious issue during the evaluation, after the initially agreed timelines were missed. LOTFA entered a new phase in 2018 with an ambitious multi-partner trust fund scheme. It aims to cover Afghanistan's entire security and rule-of-law reforms, signalling the need for significant, well-coordinated efforts with all relevant partners.

In other programme areas, UNDP continued to bring credibility and legitimacy to Afghanistan's election process; managed Global Fund projects now in their second grant cycle; increased livelihood opportunities; and enhanced legal aid support. UNDP's ability to utilize its position for high-level government access, establish effective partnerships with relevant development players, and use of innovation were among the driving factors contributing to positive results.

At the same time, UNDP was hampered by a weak programme framework, limited results reporting (including challenges in remote monitoring), insufficient ability to bring livelihood-related efforts to scale by engaging with entities operating similar but larger programmes, and lack of an evidence-based approach. In Afghanistan's rule-of-law and justice sector, where stakeholder coordination is said to be highly complex, UNDP's visibility and technical engagement with partners need to increase, including in support to anti-corruption.

UNDP Afghanistan appointed a full-time gender focal point during the current programme cycle to accelerate its promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, in both its workplace and its programming. Given Afghanistan's deep-rooted cultural challenges, continued efforts are required

at the office level. Gender parity remained consistently low, and some programmes were not based on evidence and lacked effective collaboration with partners.

UNDP's leadership and coordination efforts during preparation of the One UN framework were highly appreciated by UN partners. However, while Afghanistan's self-reliance is the cornerstone of the government's national development strategy, UNDP's institutional capacity development efforts were generally limited, often lacking engagement with critical partners such as civil society organizations (CSOs).

UNDP has the opportunity to improve its strategic position by exploiting its comparative strengths (e.g. proximity to government partners); improving

its sector-level policy influence in collaboration with the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) and other large-scale players; and supporting government efforts to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing reliable funding and technical support.

UNDP's current partnership and resource mobilization strategies are outdated, limited in scope and inadequate for Afghanistan's context. They need greater engagement with CSOs, which often have better access in hard-to-reach areas, and UNAMA, which increasingly operates as a key development actor. They also need to reflect donors' underlying government support architecture, guided by a mutual accountability framework, and underscore the mandate and ongoing work of UN agencies under One UN, including humanitarian actors.

Recommendations

- Revisit the approach to operating in Afghanistan as a fragile and protracted-conflict country, focusing on strategic analysis when conceptualizing the country programme. Use the SDGs to position UNDP in the country, ensuring its development work is informed by the triple nexus approach bringing together development, humanitarian and peace-building, complementing the efforts of other partners. Key areas of concern from the evaluation should be addressed, including the need for (i) risk-informed, evidence-based programme design emphasizing capacity development to foster Afghanistan's self-reliance; (ii) improved regional operation capacity (using the sub-offices to inform programme design and engage in field oversight); (iii) inclusion of substantive policy-level dialogue in all programme areas; (iv) improved transparency in use of donor funds; and (v) continued strategic communication activities.
- Ensure that institutional capacity development in the Ministry for Interior Affairs (MOIA) remains an important objective under LOTFA. The new LOTFA multi-partner trust fund (MPTF) should establish strong linkages with the governance programme, especially in anti-corruption efforts; strengthen collaboration with existing and potential partners in the rule-of-law and security sectors; and fully roll out its monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy.
- Continue to explore avenues for solidifying its country programme portfolio. In addition to a continued focus on governance and rule of law, the livelihoods and resilience programme should be strengthened to ensure its contribution to national development priorities is relevant and at the proper scale. The emerging initiatives launched in the current cycle under the governance portfolio (e.g. Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan and the Global Fund) should be fully mapped under clear, dedicated CPD outcomes. The governance programme should ensure programmatic synergies and linkages with other programmes (e.g. the new LOTFA and livelihoods initiatives).
- Develop a robust partnership and resource mobilization strategy to strengthen UNDP's role in the country, ensuring the involvement of major players in this fragile State (e.g. international financial institutions such as the World Bank, as well as UNAMA and CSOs) and reflecting resource mobilization opportunities.
- In close consultation with RBAP, examine and address workplace matters at UNDP Afghanistan (e.g. office-wide communication, staff learning and development) arising from the fast-paced changes in its business model in the midst of an active conflict. Ensure that the gender strategy is fully implemented with sensitivity, and that the office addresses its low gender parity, particularly at the management level.



CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an independent country programme evaluation (ICPE) of UNDP Afghanistan for the period 2015–2019. This was the third country-level evaluation conducted by IEO in Afghanistan. It took place with the support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the UNDP Afghanistan country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP).

ICPEs are conducted within the provisions of the UNDP Evaluation Policy. They are typically carried out in the penultimate year of a country programme cycle to support the development of the new country programme document (CPD) and to strengthen accountability to national stakeholders and the Executive Board. The UNDP Afghanistan CPD 2015–2019 was expected to be extended by two years at the time of the evaluation.

UNDP Afghanistan has gone through several internal reviews during the current cycle to improve the office's programmatic and operational processes. The objective of the Afghanistan ICPE was to assess (i) the level of progress and achievements made in the programmes since the launch of the CPD; and (ii) the relevance of UNDP's strategies for achieving programme effectiveness during the time of transition, in time for preparation of the next country programme. The evaluation addressed two questions:

- To what extent has UNDP been able to achieve its initial and adjusted programme objectives in contribution to each outcome?

- To what extent has UNDP's strategy for achieving programme effectiveness in the context of a changing environment been applied and successful?

1.2 Country context

Two significant events took place in Afghanistan in 2014: the withdrawal of international military forces (i.e. the end of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force Mission) and a presidential election, the first democratic transfer of power in the country.

Under the National Unity Government that resulted, Afghanistan entered the Decade of Transformation (2015–2024). The newly elected President Ashraf Ghani expressed his commitment to achieving Afghanistan's self-reliance with a rigorous reform agenda.¹ The Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017–2021 established the country's strategic development priorities, with specific emphasis on achieving governance and an effective State; development of social capital and nation building; economic growth and job creation; and poverty reduction and social inclusion.² The National Priority Programmes (NPPs) have served as a tool for implementing the government's priorities through a set of interministerial thematic programmes.

Afghanistan's political context is fluid and fast-evolving, and its institutions remain fragile. Since the end of the international security mission, significant security challenges have remained. Afghanistan is now said to be in a protracted conflict,³ with an increasing level of violence since 2014.⁴ The Taliban

¹ Government of Afghanistan, 'Realizing Self-reliance: Commitments to reforms and renewed partnership', London Conference on Afghanistan, December 2014.

² Office of the Deputy Minister for Policy, Ministry of Finance, <http://policymof.gov.af/home/afghanistan-national-development-framework/>.

³ United Nations, 'Special report on the strategic review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Report of the Secretary-General' A/72/312–S/2017/696, 2017.

⁴ UNAMA, 'Quarterly report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict: 1 January to 30 September 2018', Kabul, 10 October 2018. It reported the highest number of civilian casualties (8,050) since 2014 during the first nine months of 2018.

remains a significant insurgent force, particularly in rural areas where government control is limited, and steadily declining.⁵

To address the insecurity, the country's rule-of-law, justice and security sectors are being revamped. The ANPDF sets forth clear focus areas in this regard, including justice and public sector reforms, anti-corruption, subnational governance and counter-narcotics efforts, under the guidance of high-level government bodies.⁶ Four NPPs are expected to address these focus areas: the Effective Governance Programme, Justice Sector Reform Programme, Subnational Governance National Priority Programme, and Citizen's Charter for work relating to service delivery. Corruption, however, remains a significant challenge,⁷ including in the police and judicial system.

Afghanistan is a low-income country, and its economy has fluctuated significantly over the years. There was a significant decline in economic growth in 2014–2015 (down to 1.3 percent in 2014 and 1 percent in 2015), compared to an average growth rate of 9 percent between 2003 and 2012.⁸ Growth slowly picked up again in 2016 (2.4 percent) and the projection for 2018 is similar (2.3 percent).⁹

Afghanistan ranks 168th out of 189 countries in human development, with high inequality.¹⁰ The national poverty rate was 55 percent in 2016–2017, a 17 percentage point increase in five years. The unemployment rate was recorded at 40 percent.¹¹ Afghanistan's population is one of the youngest in the world; 47.7 percent of its estimated 29.1 million people¹² are under age 15. The population growth rate is around 3 percent per year. With increasing unemployment and high rates of illiteracy, the country's economic growth could turn out to be insufficient to cover the needs of the population, particularly its large youth cohort.

The country has witnessed numerous waves of forced displacement and migration, associated with four decades of conflict. Escalating violence and insecurity have created a steady flow of internally displaced persons who flee to the cities, adding pressure to the absorptive capacities of the capital city, Kabul, and the provinces. The number of internally displaced persons increased from slightly over 1 million in 2015 to over 3.5 million at the end of 2018. Almost 1.7 million documented and undocumented Afghan refugees returned from Pakistan and Iran in 2016–2017. These vulnerable displaced people and returnee communities put pressure on tuberculosis control and health service delivery.¹³ Afghanistan is

⁵ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), 41st Quarterly Report to Congress, 30 October 2018, p. 66. It reports that government control or influence of its districts was about 56 percent in 2015.

⁶ For example, the High Council on Reforms, High Council on Service Delivery, High Council on Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption, and High Council on Poverty Reduction, Service Delivery and Citizen's Engagement.

⁷ Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, 2018, ranks Afghanistan 172 out of 180 countries.

⁸ World Bank, Afghanistan Economic Update, April 2015, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/21894>.

⁹ Asian Development Bank Data Library, GDP Growth Rate, Asian Development Outlook 2018 Update (CSV), accessed 4 December 2018.

¹⁰ UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update. The Human Development Index for Afghanistan was 0.498, with an overall loss due to inequality of 29.6 percent.

¹¹ Government of Afghanistan, Central Statistics Organization, 'Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey, 2016–2017'. Similarly, the UN Human Development Report 2019 indicates 56.1 percent of the country's population is in multidimensional poverty, and 98.2 percent of total employment is categorized as working poor at PPP (purchasing power parity) \$3.10 a day.

¹² Central Statistics Organization, Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey (ALCS) 2016–2017, pp. 20–21.

¹³ Insecurity has posed a threat to the health sector as well. During 2016, UNAMA documented 119 conflict-related incidents in which medical facilities and personnel were targeted or affected. Source: Global Fund Annual Report 2017.

one of the top three source countries of refugees,¹⁴ and many more are expected to return from Europe in the future.¹⁵

Agriculture has been a critical economic sector, providing jobs for at least 40 percent of the population.¹⁶ Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of illicit opium and heroin, and this has fuelled instability and insurgency.¹⁷ Diversification of farming practices and rural economic activities has remained a significant challenge for the many who depend on poppy cultivation for their livelihoods. The country is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change effects, which affect a greater share of the population (59 percent) than security-related shocks (15 percent), especially in the poorer regions.¹⁸ The 2018 drought left 4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, with many displaced and threatened by the effects of water shortages.¹⁹

Recent survey results on women's equality have been encouraging, showing support for women's opportunities for education and work outside the home.²⁰ However, while the Gender Inequality Index has declined each year since 2005, Afghanistan ranks 153 out of 160 countries on gender inequality.²¹ Women have less access to health services, education and political and economic opportunity. Gender

inequality is particularly entrenched in rural areas. Approximately 11.4 percent of women have some secondary education (compared to 26.9 percent of men) and 19.5 percent participate in the labour force (compared to 86.7 percent of men).²² More than half of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner, and a 2017 survey found that 46 percent of women had experienced violence in the past year.²³ However, only a minority of provinces enforce the 2009 Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW).

While a record number of women ran for Parliament in 2018, the elections were marred by acts of violence, including a bombing at a female candidate rally. Women hold 27 percent of seats in Parliament, equivalent to the national quota.²⁴

Afghanistan is the second largest recipient of official development assistance in the world (after Ethiopia), receiving \$3.8 billion in 2017. However, the net amount received has been declining, after peaking in 2011 at \$6.9 billion.²⁵ International donors have long supported Afghanistan's path to self-reliance at a series of high-level political conferences, at which they have not only pledged significant financial assistance but also established the grounds for policy dialogue and a clear mutual accountability

¹⁴ UN MDG Report 2015. The top three countries were Syria (3.9 million), Afghanistan (2.6 million) and Somalia (1.1 million).

¹⁵ These will be asylum seekers whose applications do not meet European Union rules based on Part VIII of the European Union-Afghanistan Joint Way Forward on Migration Issues, signed by the European Union and the Government on 2 October 2016. It states that "Cooperation will begin on the day this declaration is signed. The declaration provides the framework for cooperation for an initial period of two years. If neither the European Union nor Afghanistan announces their intention to discontinue the cooperation on the basis of this declaration thirty (30) days before the end of this period of two years, cooperation on its basis continues for another two years." https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/eu_afghanistan_joint_way_forward_on_migration_issues.pdf.

¹⁶ ANPDF 2017–2021, p. 16.

¹⁷ UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2015: Socioeconomic Analysis.

¹⁸ World Bank Group, 'Country Partnership Framework for Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the period fiscal year 2017 to fiscal year 2020', 2 October 2016.

¹⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 'Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan January 2018 – December 2021 (2019 update, December 2018)', p. 6.

²⁰ Asia Foundation, Survey of the Afghan People 2018. Most Afghans (70 percent) agreed that women should be allowed to work outside the home, and a great majority (84 percent) said women should have the same opportunities as men in education. Almost half of respondents (46 percent) cited illiteracy and lack of educational opportunities as the biggest problem facing Afghan women. Support for women in leadership positions, except for the presidency, increased marginally. <https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/>

²¹ UNDP, Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update.

²² UNDP, Human Development Report 2019, 'Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century: Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report', http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/AFG.pdf.

²³ Central Statistics Organization, Ministry of Public Health, and ICF, 2017, 'Afghanistan Demographic and Health Survey 2015'.

²⁴ UNDP, Human development indicators 2019, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/AFG>.

²⁵ World Bank Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DY.ODA.ODAT.CD?locations=AF>.

framework with the Government.²⁶ The Government wants at least 50 percent of assistance to be directly channelled through the Government ('on budget') to ensure that national institutions develop the capacities to deliver services.²⁷ The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) has been the largest single on-budget financing mechanism for the national budget and programmes on education, health, agriculture and rural development, infrastructure and governance. Begun in 2002, it is administered by the World Bank and supported by 34 donors.²⁸

The UN operational environment in Afghanistan is dynamic but complex. Humanitarian and development agencies, as well as UNAMA, have operated under their respective frameworks — the Humanitarian Response Plan, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Security Council Resolution 1401. The Government has increasingly advocated for efficiency and accountability in the work of the United Nations country team (UNCT), which includes 28 agencies. The Government has also called for capacity building of national partners to be the core work of the UN agencies.²⁹ This prompted a revision of the UNDAF 2015–2018 and led to the formulation of a new UN programme framework, 'One UN for Afghanistan 2018–2021,' as well as a portfolio review in January 2019 to ensure alignment of all agencies' work with the national development frameworks.

1.3 UNDP programme in Afghanistan 2015–2018

UNDP programme operations began in Afghanistan in 1966. The current country programme, as defined in the CPD 2015–2019, was guided by the UNDAF 2015–2019, which was developed by the UNCT in consultation with the Government and aligned with UNDP's corporate Strategic Plan 2014–2017 (see Annex 8). Under the CPD, UNDP was expected to contribute to all UNDAF outcome areas except one (basic social services). UNDP is involved in the outcome areas of accountable governance, justice and rule of law, equitable and inclusive development, and social equity. The UNDAF 2015–2018 was later replaced by the One UN 2018–2021 programme framework, with a new set of priority areas,³⁰ but the UNDP CPD remained unchanged.

At the time of the evaluation, UNDP Afghanistan had four thematic programme teams: Governance Unit, Rule of Law and Human Security Unit, Livelihoods and Resilience Unit, and Global Fund Unit (Figure 1). Each was expected to address one or two outcome areas. The Global Fund Unit was established in 2015, when UNDP became the principal recipient of grants from the Global Fund. Since the Global Fund Unit was established after the launch of the CPD, related projects were temporarily linked to the accountable governance outcome. UNDP's largest programme, the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), was placed under the Rule of Law and Human Security portfolio. LOTFA has managed the payroll functions for the Afghan National Police (ANP) and correction personnel as well as their institutional development.

²⁶ For example, at conferences in Bonn (2011), Tokyo (2012), London (2014), Brussels (2016) and the most recent Geneva Conference which adopted the Geneva Mutual Accountability Framework 2019–2020.

²⁷ Afghanistan Roadmap Business Operations Strategy, May 2015.

²⁸ ARTF website, <http://www.artf.af/>

²⁹ UNDP Afghanistan. The current Government has been largely critical of the UN system in the country, particularly UNDP, which has been perceived as diverting donor funds away from its on-budget funding.

³⁰ The six new pillars for One UN are: Normative; Education; Food Security, Nutrition, and Livelihoods; Health; Return and Reintegration; and Rule of Law.

FIGURE 1. Programme units 2015–2019

Governance Unit and Global Fund Unit	Rule of Law and Human Security Unit	Livelihoods and Resilience Unit
<p>Accountable Governance <i>UNDP outcome 7 / UNDAF pillar 5</i></p> <p>Improved legitimate, transparent and inclusive governance at all levels that enables progressive realization of human rights</p> <p>>CPD indicative resources: regular resources, \$390 million</p> <p>Social Equity <i>UNDP outcome 10 / UNDAF pillar 3</i></p> <p>Social equity of women, youth and minorities and vulnerable populations is increased through improved and consistent application by the Government of principles of inclusion in implementing existing and creating new policies and legislation</p> <p>>CPD indicative resources: regular resources, \$48 million</p>	<p>Justice and Rule of Law <i>UNDP outcome 8 / UNDAF pillar 4</i></p> <p>Trust in and access to fair, effective and accountable rule-of-law services is increased in accordance with applicable international human rights standards and the Government's legal obligation</p> <p>> CPD indicative resources:</p> <p>i) Regular resources, \$500 million for 3 years (\$1.5 billion total) for the LOTFA payroll</p> <p>ii) Other resources, \$350 million over 5 years</p>	<p>Equitable and Inclusive Development <i>UNDP outcome 9 / UNDAF pillar 1</i></p> <p>Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions.</p> <p>>CPD indicative resources: Regular resources, \$360 million</p>

Change management and internal reviews

The CPD 2015–2019 was prepared at a time when the international community was optimistic about Afghanistan's path towards post-conflict long-term development. However, a protracted crisis began soon after the CPD's launch, forcing UNDP to reposition itself to respond to the fast-changing environment. It was also necessary for the office to prepare for the eventual transfer of the LOTFA payroll management functions to the Government, which will have significant implications for UNDP's overall country programme strategy and operations.

A change management process launched by UNDP in November 2014³¹ resulted in the creation of a new programme structure and the office for financial management and oversight. It also led to a shift in the business model, from one characterized by a decentralized, large-scale, project-driven structure to a leaner, centralized model with smaller project teams.

Since the launch of the CPD, a number of internal review exercises have been carried out. An alignment mission led by RBAP staff in April 2015 sought to operationalize the CPD and identify ways to improve programme quality.³² It called for UNDP

³¹ The objectives included: (i) realignment of programme/project functions and design of functional/structural changes at project implementation level; (ii) review/realignment of the programme team according to the country programme and UNDP Strategic Plan; and (iii) organizational reviews of the security function and the operations units (human resources, procurement and general administration).

³² UNDP Afghanistan Alignment Mission, 5–12 April 2015, Back to Office Report.

Afghanistan to programmatically complement the government's self-reliance strategy, strengthen partnerships with key players (including UNAMA, the World Bank and academic entities), expand communication to better inform partners and the media about its activities, and improve staff capacity to conduct policy analysis. Two additional back-to-back reviews were conducted in the following year to provide specific guidance for programmatic and operational adjustments. These were the Strategic Programme Review for Afghanistan (February 2016),³³ which focused on re-assessing UNDP's fit-for-purpose and programme relevance; and the UNDP Afghanistan Transformational Plan (May 2016),³⁴ led by the Management Consulting Team, which focused on operational aspects of the country office and programme delivery.

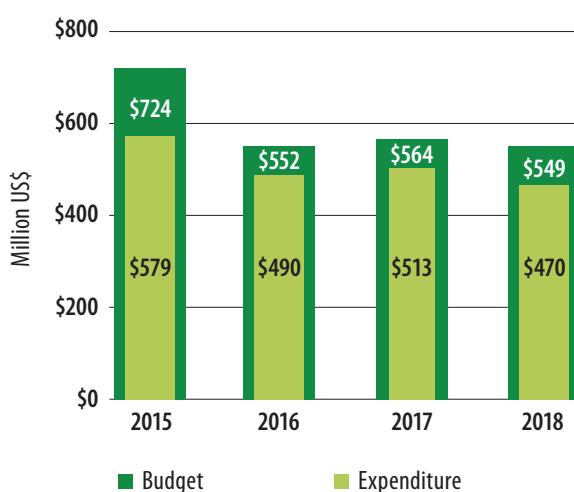
These reviews recommended diversification of the programme portfolio (from two mega-projects on election and LOTFA). In the Governance portfolio it also called for more focus on institution building; in the Livelihoods portfolio, more direct impact on the Afghan population, using UNDP's comparative advantage but also through collaboration with other players; and more emphasis on community-level engagement in both programmes. On the operational side, the reviews recommended downsizing the projects (including through staff reductions); introduction of an integrated results team; and creation of sub-offices to expand UNDP's field presence to improve UNDP's monitoring and troubleshooting capabilities, project coordination and community-level dialogue.

Programme budget and expenditure

In the previous cycle, UNDP Afghanistan's programme delivery was maintained at \$700 million per year (approximately \$760 million in 2013 and \$780 million in 2014) (Figure 2).³⁵ At the time of the evaluation, Afghanistan was UNDP's largest country

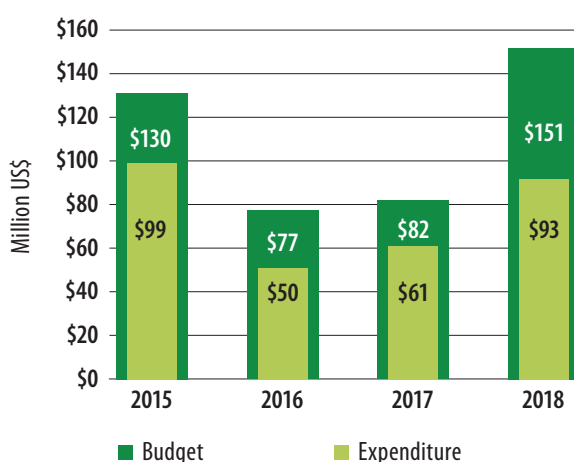
programme. However, the effects of the programme downsizing are becoming visible. Between 2015 and 2018, the average annual expenditure was \$513 million.³⁶ Without LOTFA, the expenditure ranged between \$50 million and \$99 million (Figure 3).

FIGURE 2. Evolution of UNDP programme budget and expenditure



Source: PowerBI/Atlas

FIGURE 3. Evolution of programme budget and expenditure excluding LOTFA



Source: PowerBI/Atlas

³³ UNDP, Afghanistan Strategic Programme Review, 7–18 February 2016.

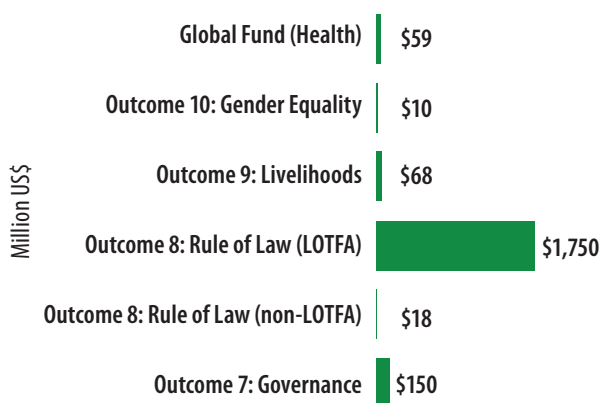
³⁴ Management Consulting Team, UNDP Afghanistan Transformation Plan, 22 May–2 June 2016.

³⁵ PowerBI/Atlas financial data, 17 May 2019.

³⁶ Based on the compilation of Atlas project budget and expenditure data for 2015–2018. Overall programme expenditure dropped in 2016, except for the Global Fund (see Annex 5, Country office at a glance). This was primarily due to a shift from the high spending in 2015 on election-related activities and the completion of large projects, e.g. NABDP.

The bulk of the spending (85 percent of the total programme) has been on a single programme, LOTFA (Table 1). The Governance programme was a distant second but the largest among the non-LOTFA portfolios (6.4 percent of the total), followed by Equitable Development (3.3 percent), Global Fund (2.8 percent), non-LOTFA Rule-of-Law components (e.g. anti-corruption and access to justice, 1.7 percent) and Social Equity (0.5 percent). At the time of the evaluation (moving into the fifth year), the programme expenditure was 86 percent, with varying levels of expenditure across the outcome areas (Figures 4 and 5).

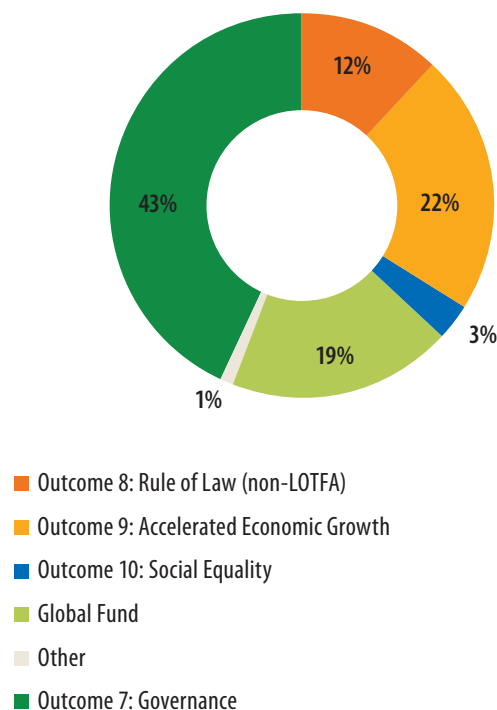
FIGURE 4. Expenditure by outcome area, 2015–2018
LOTFA



Source: PowerBI/Atlas

Between 2015 and 2018, the programmes were primarily funded by non-core resources (98.5 percent, or \$2.02 billion) with a marginal level of core funds (1.5 percent, \$30 million) (Figure 6). About 86 percent of the non-core resources were for LOTFA, funded

FIGURE 5. Expenditure by outcome area
excluding LOTFA



Source: PowerBI/Atlas

TABLE 1. Budget and expenditure by outcome

Programme outcomes	Total expenditure	Budget	Execution rate
Outcome 7: Governance	\$149,713,737	\$223,856,718	67%
Global Fund (Health)	\$58,596,251	\$79,741,796	73%
Outcome 8: Rule of Law (LOTFA)	\$1,749,776,985	\$1,950,812,994	90%
Rule of Law (non-LOTFA)	\$18,123,143	\$21,203,643	85%
Outcome 9: Livelihoods	\$67,903,030	\$98,034,823	69%
Outcome 10: Gender Equality	\$9,982,348	\$12,576,460	79%
Regional	\$163,023	\$142,966	114%
Other	\$2,245,245	\$3,928,610	57%
Total	\$ 2,056,503,762	\$ 2,390,298,009	86%

by major bilateral donors, including Australia, European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, United Kingdom and United States (see Annex 5). Among the non-LOTFA areas, the primary source of funding was bilateral non-core funds, but vertical funds (e.g. Global Fund) have become more visible, accounting for 44 percent of the total non-LOTFA expenditure in 2017.

1.4 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the methodology and process as described in the terms of reference (see Annex 1). The evaluation team comprised a lead evaluator and associate lead evaluator from the IEO and three international subject matter experts. Additionally, three local individuals were contracted for field data collection support. They helped to identify appropriate key informants, facilitated interviews and focus groups, and provided interpretation services.

Data were collected through the following: (i) desk reviews of reference material (Annex 3), including the past evaluation and audit reports, the country office's annual self-reports (Results-Oriented Annual Reports, or ROAR), and corporately available financial data; (ii) face-to-face and remote (Skype and

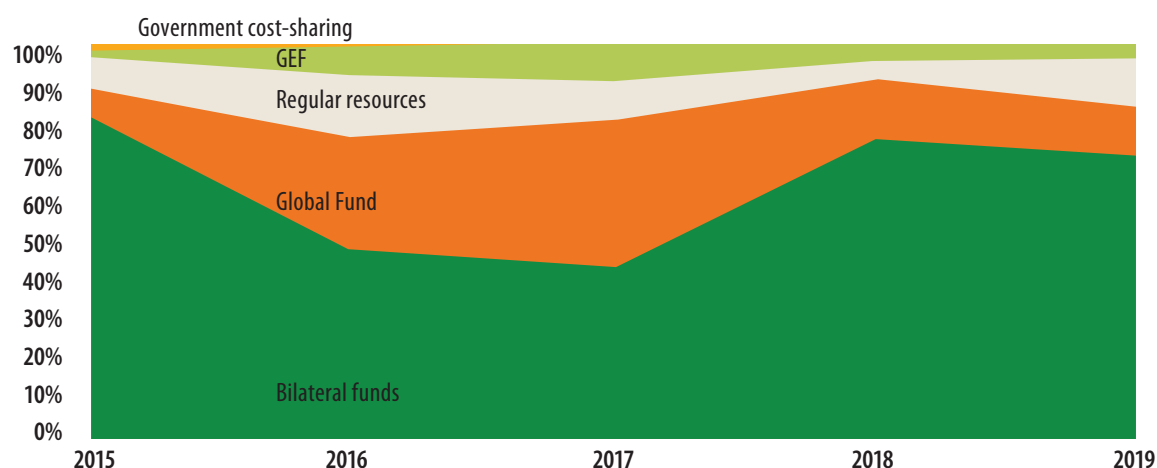
telephone) interviews with representatives of the relevant key stakeholders; and (iii) focus groups. The stakeholders interviewed included UNDP staff (from headquarters, the country office, the RBAP Bangkok Regional Centre), UNAMA, government officials, national implementing partners, donors, other UN agencies, international financial institutions, academics and representatives of beneficiary groups (see Annex 2).

At the start of the evaluation, a list of projects for in-depth review was developed by outcome (see Annex 7). Projects were selected based on the following criteria: a balanced representation of issue areas by outcome, geographical coverage, budget size, project maturity and inclusion of both successful and challenging interventions.

The evaluation included a three-week data collection mission in Afghanistan between 28 January and 15 February 2019, including visits to Kabul, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-e Sharif and Kandahar. An end-of-mission debriefing was conducted on the last day of the mission to share the team's preliminary observations and findings with the country office.

Data and information collected through various means and sources were constantly triangulated to enhance the validity of findings. As part of the

FIGURE 6. Programme expenditure by fund excluding LOTFA



Source: PowerBI/Atlas

analysis, the evaluation team developed a preliminary theory of change for each outcome to understand the overall construct and logic of the programme, which was used to identify any gaps in data collection. The status of progress made against the performance indicators, as defined by the CPD, was tabulated by year (see Annex 8).

The assessment of UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment was based on project expenditure data (using the Gender Marker³⁷) as well as the team's analysis using the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.³⁸

During the analysis, particular attention was paid to understanding Afghanistan's unique country context, which may have influenced the programme delivery and results. Factors included its dependence on international aid, deteriorating security, the political environment under the National Unity Government, the One UN framework and the presence of UNAMA (established in 2002).

The first draft report was shared for comments with the country office and RBAP on 27 June 2019. It was revised based on the comments received from them, and the second draft was shared with the Government and national stakeholders for comments on 19 August 2019. A final stakeholder debriefing was scheduled for 26 November but was cancelled due to a security incident that had a significant impact on the country office and its staff. An internal debriefing with country office and RBAP representatives was then organized through a videoconference on 29 January 2020, at which results of the evaluation were presented and UNDP's ways forward were discussed. A number of quality assurance steps were taken

before the report was finalized, including an internal peer review process and a review of the draft report by two members of the External Advisory Panel.

It should be noted that the focus of the ICPE was on understanding issues influencing the performance of UNDP, which has been in transition. It was not within the scope of the ICPE to conduct a detailed operational assessment of the efficacy of the ongoing change management process at UNDP Afghanistan or the large-scale LOTFA programme, which was done separately by the country office. Relevant assessment reports (e.g. internal review reports and recently completed LOTFA evaluations) were used to understand the country and programmatic context as well as to validate the ICPE team's analyses.

The ICPE had a number of study limitations. First, given the conflict setting, UNDP's programme/project monitoring practices were weak, limiting the availability of reliable monitoring data. The evaluation team addressed this by reviewing all available documents provided by the programme teams, followed up by interviews and focus groups. Second, while challenges in data collection activities in Afghanistan were anticipated during the preparatory phase and the mission plan was developed accordingly, there were significant delays in finalizing field visit plans and scheduling interview appointments, which took place upon the team's arrival in Kabul. This prevented the team from conducting interviews as initially planned. Third, challenges in domestic movements due to security and other restrictions significantly affected the team's ability to complete its tasks within the initially developed mission time frame. Post-mission follow-up interviews were conducted through Skype and telephone to augment the analysis to the extent possible.

³⁷ The Gender Marker is a corporate gender rating assigned to all UNDP projects during design phase. The rating is awarded as follows: 3 = outputs that have gender equality as the main objective; 2 = outputs that have gender equality as a significant objective; 1 = outputs that will contribute in some way to gender equality, but not significantly; and 0 = outputs that are not expected to contribute noticeably to gender equality. The Gender Marker is also used to track planned project expenditures related to gender efforts.

³⁸ The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale is used to classify gender results into five groups: (i) result had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced existing gender inequalities and norms (gender negative); (ii) result had no attention to gender and failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys and/or marginalized populations (gender blind); (iii) result focused on numerical equity (50/50) of women, men and marginalized populations that were targeted (gender targeted); (iv) result addressed differential needs of men and women and equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status and rights, but did not address root causes of inequalities (gender responsive); and (v) result contributed to changes in norms, cultural values, power structure and the roots of gender inequalities and discrimination (gender transformative). UNDP, IEO, 'ICPE How-to Note on Gender', March 2016.



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
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2.1 Programme implementation

Finding 1. In preparation for the current CPD (2015–2019) as well as during the readjustment of the UNDAF, UNDP made significant efforts to align its programme with Afghanistan's national priorities.

UNDP's programme is aligned with Afghanistan's national priorities. The formulation of the CPD was guided by the overarching UN programme (UNDAF), which was inspired by (i) the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) 2008–2013, serving as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper;³⁹ (ii) the NPPs that operationalized the ANDS;⁴⁰ and (iii) a new donor coordination principle that emphasized the government's shared responsibility for development.⁴¹ UNDP's four CPD outcomes are expected to contribute to the national development priorities identified in the NPPs.⁴²

After the ANPDF 2017–2021 was launched under the new Afghan administration, the UNCT redesigned the UNDAF into the One UN programme at the request of the President. During the ICPE interviews, development partners recognized the leadership demonstrated by UNDP and the Resident Coordinator in leading this process. The revision identified a set of new thematic pillars that would contribute to achieving the country's goals⁴³ and the SDGs.

Finding 2. Specific adjustments were made during the period under review based on the internal reviews, bringing about immediate changes to programme management practices. These included a strengthened results team, creation of regional sub-offices and a revamped communication

strategy. There were positive signs of improved programme management as well as emerging challenges.

The introduction of the integrated results team has brought more oversight and accountability functions to the country office, better informing the Executive Office's decision-making. The team, jointly led by the newly created Strategy, Planning and Results Unit (SPRU) and the chief financial officer, was designed to enhance the programme management and financial oversight roles of the four programme units. The SPRU is expected to ensure programme coherence, results-based management and partnerships, whereas the chief financial officer focuses on financial quality assurance, risk management and oversight. The head of the SPRU also leads the One UN's M&E working group. Each is responsible for providing direct supervision and guidance to the programme units and project teams to enhance rigour in UNDP's programme interventions. While not all positions have been filled, the close communication between the SPRU and chief financial officer teams has supported the effective functioning of the integrated results team.

There were signs that these measures have been effective. A recent audit reported considerable improvement in UNDP's country operations,⁴⁴ and feedback from external partners improved on the results-based management approach (from 25 percent awarding 'favourable' in 2015 to 55 percent in 2017). There was also improvement in the level of UNDP's engagement with partners (71 percent 'favourable' in 2017).⁴⁵ At the same time, collaboration between the programme/project staff and the

³⁹ Government of Afghanistan, 'ANDS 2008–2013, A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction'. ANDS was supported by the World Bank's ARTF.

⁴⁰ The 22 NPPs are grouped in six clusters: (i) Security (peace and reintegration); (ii) human resource development (skills development and labour, education for all, higher education, women's affairs, capacity building for health); (iii) infrastructure development (national regional resource corridor, extractive industries, national energy programme, urban development); (iv) private sector development (trade facilitation and small and medium size enterprises, E-Afghanistan); (v) agriculture and rural development (water and natural resource management, comprehensive agriculture, rural access, strengthening local institutions); and (vi) governance (economic and financial reform, transparency and accountability, efficient and effective government, local governance, justice for all, human rights).

⁴¹ Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework 2015–2024, a \$16 billion commitment in political, military and socioeconomic areas.

⁴² For example, Effective Governance, National Justice and Judicial Reform Plan, Citizens' Charter, Comprehensive Agriculture Development, Private Sector Development, Women's Economic Empowerment, and Human Capital Development.

⁴³ For example, the One UN's four pillars (education; food security, nutrition and livelihoods; health; and return and reintegration) are expected to address ANPDF's poverty reduction and social inclusion, economic growth and job creation goals. The rule of law pillar of One UN links with ANPDF's governance, social capital and nation-building goals.

⁴⁴ UNDP Office of Audit and Investigation, 'Country Audit Report', 28 December 2017.

⁴⁵ UNDP Partnership Surveys, 2015 and 2017.

integrated results team needs to be further strengthened, and there are continuing challenges in project management and oversight, such as inadequate project monitoring and low expenditure rates.⁴⁶

UNDP Afghanistan moved a step closer to achieving the goal of expanding its field presence by establishing four regional sub-offices in Herat (West), Jalalabad (East), Mazar-e Sharif (North) and Kandahar (South), each headed by a UN Volunteer. At the time of the ICPE, two of the sub-office heads were in place, Kandahar was under recruitment and Herat was pending a staff transition.⁴⁷

The evaluation found the sub-office concept has potential, though the offices were still in the early phase of establishment. Interviews indicated that much of their work has so far focused on providing logistical/administrative support to missions from the Kabul office, such as monitoring missions, rather than oversight activities, such as third-party monitoring.⁴⁸ Interviews also indicated that engagement with Kabul to provide substantive regional perspectives for programme/project design had not yet happened. There was also a general lack of knowledge among staff about UNDP's goals in the country (for example the SDGs) and how the sub-offices are expected to contribute to them. As UN Volunteers, some also felt challenged by the 'power dynamics' in working with other UN offices represented by Professional staff.

In response to the need for greater information sharing and transparency with partners, the country office's external communication practice has been revamped since 2015. A dedicated communication team was established with a specialist, development of strategic communication plans, and quality assurance of social media activities.

Many of UNDP Afghanistan's projects have a dedicated communication focal point, including LOTFA and the Governance Unit's gender and SDG projects. The communication team has worked closely with these focal points to improve project visibility, such as on the Local Governance Programme (LoGo) Communication and Visibility Plan (2018), to better inform the public of UNDP's activities and capture donors' needs.

Reported issues included challenges in identifying 'what to advocate' (UNDP's broad mandate) and addressing a growing demand to focus on UN-level interventions (vis-à-vis UNDP's). In this regard, the evaluation found that communication work needed further expansion and to be shifted from publicizing projects to communicating UNDP's critical principles and strategies, including through use of the media.⁴⁹

Finding 3. While the office maintained a favourable overall programme delivery rate, there was considerable variability between programmes during the period under review. This suggests there were different practices in project budgeting and/or challenges in implementation and resource mobilization.

The country office's overall programme delivery was 80 percent in the first year (2015), which improved in the second (89 percent) and third years (91 percent). In 2018 the rate remained at a high 86 percent. Detailed budget and expenditure data by year indicated, however, that the delivery rate varied across the programmes. While LOTFA has consistently maintained a higher rate, between 80 percent (2015) and 95 percent (2018), other programmes have fluctuated significantly (e.g. Governance dipped to 54 percent in 2016 from 79 percent in 2015, before recovering to 68 percent in 2017) or have been declining (e.g.

⁴⁶ The Office of Audit and Investigation report rated the country office as 'partially satisfactory', with weaknesses in project oversight and management (e.g. minimal monitoring activities despite the project's large presence and challenges in management of cash advances [i.e. LoGo]; no assurance of subnational operations (e.g. LOTFA/MOIA) due to poor security and suboptimal delivery rate (expenditures below the budget) (e.g. Rural Dev Energy, SALAM, HPC Support).

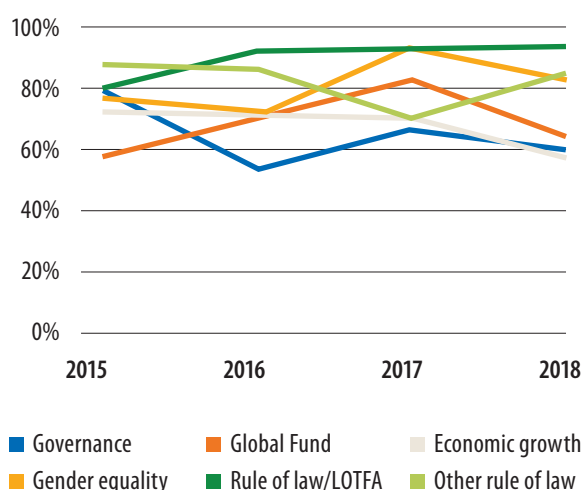
⁴⁷ Among the reported roles of the head of the Mazar-e Sharif sub-office were overseeing project implementation and providing updates to the country office; supporting field visits to project sites; UN and donor coordination; and day-to-day office management (e.g. ensuring security protocol compliance, staff training/mentoring, petty cash management and management of drivers).

⁴⁸ The Strategic Programme Review (February 2016) noted that the expected roles of the sub-offices included project monitoring, reporting and quality assurance; and provision of subnational perspectives in programme development and planning.

⁴⁹ For example, 'UNDP's Engagement with the Media for Governance, Sustainable Development and Peace (January 2019)' presents UNDP's experiences from various countries in promoting enabling environments, leveraging the potential of media outlets and developing the capacities of social actors.

Economic Growth/Livelihoods and Resilience were at 73 percent at the beginning of the cycle and continued to decline over time to 58 percent at the time of evaluation). Cases of sub-optimal delivery (projects recording expenditures well below the budget) were reported in some of those programmes, such as the Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM), Afghanistan Sustainable Energy for Rural Development (ASERD), and High Peace Council (HPC) projects.⁵⁰ Further assessments of project delivery for projects under review are presented in the outcome analysis for each programme.

FIGURE 7. Programme execution rate by year



Source: Atlas

Finding 4. With changes in its business model to accommodate leaner project teams, the office saw a steady decline in its workforce. Gender parity was consistently low, particularly among national staff. There are continuing challenges in attracting and retaining qualified staff, and investment in staff development is not adequate. The UN Volunteers have augmented UNDP's critical human resource

needs, providing administrative services, acting as technical advisers for programmes/projects and assuming managerial roles as the heads of newly created regional sub-offices.

The country office had 40 international staff, 57 national staff and 235 service contract holders as of September 2018 (Table 2). This represented a decline of 15 percent since 2016, which disproportionately affected national staff, the number of which declined by 27 percent.⁵¹

The proportion of international female staff increased steadily between 2016 and 2018, from 23 percent to 35 percent. However, gender parity in the country office has remained low, with women accounting for only 11 percent of the workforce in 2018. The head of the office (Resident Representative/Country Director) and the two Deputy Resident Representatives (Deputy Country Directors) have historically been men. At the time of the evaluation, the heads of the SPRU and two programme units (Global Fund and Livelihoods) were women. Attempts were made to increase the number of women in the office but were successful primarily at the intern level.⁵² Interviews during the evaluation indicated that gender parity can be a sensitive topic, with some staff even fearing physical retaliation if they raised it outside the office. While the ICPE was unable to substantiate this, it requires urgent attention by the office in consultation with the RBAP.

The centralization of procurement, human resource management and other operations functions in the office following the internal reviews was expected to streamline implementation. The process could take a long time and had not been fully implemented at the time of the evaluation. The interviews suggested that considerable overlap of operational activities remains, with staff responsible for similar operational functions in place across all programme and project units.

⁵⁰ UNDP OAI Report, 2017. Based on the interviews, the reasons for a significant gap between project budget and expenditure included: (i) inflated budget estimation at the time of project conception/design (e.g. ambitious targets to meet government or donor expectations); and (ii) challenges in implementation (e.g. reduction in donor contributions and insecurity).

⁵¹ Detailed statistics were provided by the country office. According to the Portfolio Review (February 2019), operations personnel in projects were reduced from 54 to 8 between 2015 and 2017. The restructuring process started in late 2014 and continued into 2016, by which time the total number of international and national staff was cut by 33 percent.

⁵² It was reported that there was a general perception, particularly among women, that "UNDP is difficult to get in for women".

TABLE 2. Number of staff members by gender, 2016–2018

Staff	2016			2017			2018		
	Total	Male	Female (percent)	Total	Male	Female (percent)	Total	Male	Female (percent)
	122	96	26 (21%)	103	85	18 (17%)	97	76	21 (22%)
International	43	33	10 (23%)	43	32	11 (26%)	40	26	14 (35%)
National	79	63	16 (20%)	60	53	7 (12%)	57	50	7 (12%)
Service contract	269	248	21 (8%)	263	249	14 (5%)	235	220	15 (6%)
Total	391	344	47 (12%)	366	334	32 (9%)	332	296	36 (11%)

Source: UNDP Afghanistan. Data taken at 4 December 2016, 14 November 2017 and September 2018. 'Staff' includes fixed-term appointments, temporary appointments and permanent appointments.

As the country office quickly moved along with drastic structural and operational changes, there appeared to be a growing need for the office to address workplace matters, including office culture and staff development. Interviews suggested that increased workload was an issue among many of the staff, despite their highly commendable professionalism. Among the notable issues were:

- Recent staff survey results indicated that staff would like to see more openness and trust between staff and management during decision-making processes.⁵³ They saw more room for senior leadership to actively champion a culture of innovation, collaboration and high performance as well as more effective communication on key issues.⁵⁴
- External partners' feedback has remained relatively low on the 'quality of professionals' (31 percent in 2015, down to 23 percent in 2017), reflecting a need for increased investment in staff development. However, the office's attention to staff development appeared ad-hoc and insufficient. A staff learning and development plan was developed in late 2018, and some activities were

in progress, including English business writing and project management. But interviews suggested that the learning committee, comprising voluntary staff, had been inactive; similar learning initiatives in the past had not been effective; and decisions on the use of the learning budget have primarily been made on an ad-hoc basis. This had resulted in uneven learning opportunities among staff and lack of linkages between the office's business strategy and staff development.

Given the country's increasing insecurity, attracting qualified international staff was reported as a significant challenge. Retaining high-performing international staff was described as even more difficult in Afghanistan, a non-family duty station. With staff being away from the office every six weeks for rest and recuperation, together with high staff turnover rates every few years, the office's work environment has been challenging. It has been particularly difficult for senior managers to jointly develop well-planned strategies and for staff to build a team environment. UNDP needs to explore ways to ensure effective programme delivery even in the midst of constant staff renewal.

⁵³ GSS Survey 2018. For example, more than one third of staff gave a rating of 'unfavourable' on the management team's transparency in decision-making; openness and honesty in communication; and consistent application of policies and process, with the results more pronounced among women.

⁵⁴ Op. cit. These items were rated lower compared to the UNDP-level results by 28 percentage points.

The UN Volunteers have augmented critical human resource needs in the office and have played key roles in supporting programme delivery and operations. They were deployed in all programme units, providing substantive support as technical advisers, project managers and administrative service providers, such as in procurement and finance. At the time of the evaluation, a total of 61 Volunteers worked in UNDP, including 31 nationals.⁵⁵ UNDP has relied on the Volunteers to head the four regional sub-offices. The demand to partner with the Volunteers was reported to be increasing in other organizations as well. As many as 68 UN Volunteers were working in UNAMA, 6 in other UN agencies and 1 at the World Bank. As UNDP's financial resources fluctuate, there is a significant opportunity to explore its human resource mobilization strategy through an effective use of the UN Volunteers.

2.2 Governance

Outcome 7: Improved legitimate, transparent and inclusive governance at all levels that enables progressive realization of human rights.

Outcome 10: Social equity of women, youth and minorities and vulnerable populations is increased through improved and consistent application by Government of principles of inclusion in implementing existing and creating new policies and legislation.

Outcome 7 aims to address governance and capacity deficits in the country, strengthen the accountability of institutions and promote civil service reform, with special attention to selected regions and provinces. UNDP was expected to address this through three outputs:

- (i) *Political processes are more inclusive and representative institutions are enabled to hold Government more accountable at all levels:* This output aims to assist national institutions in better managing electoral processes (presidential, parliamentary, provincial and district council elections). UNDP has supported the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) and Election Complaints Commission (ECC) to plan and conduct credible future elections with minimal external support through the Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT II) project.
- (ii) *Capacity of State and non-State institutions strengthened to advance peacebuilding:* This output includes promoting community-centred solutions to conflict. Under the Support to High Peace Council (HPC) project, UNDP has provided technical support and funding to: Ulema⁵⁶ and religious scholar mobilization; public outreach (to civil society, women and youth networks, and the private sector); and traditional outreach (to political and tribal leaders, tribal elders and victims' families).
- (iii) *Capacities of national and local institutions strengthened through improved assessment, planning and budgeting to respond to development priorities, especially of the most vulnerable and women:* This output includes strengthening transparency and accountability at the subnational level. Under the Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme, Phase 2, and the LoGo, UNDP has supported capacity building of the Independent Directorate of Local

⁵⁵ UN Volunteers Field Unit, Kabul, 4 February 2019. For example, the Governance programme had 2 international and 9 national Volunteers working on various projects, e.g. the SDGs (embedded in Ministry of Economy), EGEMA and LoGo. It also had 27 Volunteers (including 8 nationals) on election support in Kabul and on various field postings, contributing to outcomes 7 and 10. Similarly, the Rule of Law Unit deployed 7 UN Volunteers for M&E, LOTFA and anti-corruption and access to justice projects; the Livelihood Unit had 1 Volunteer dedicated to reports and communication; and the Global Fund had one for procurement.

⁵⁶ Arbiters of Sharia Law.

Governance to enable subnational authorities to deliver effective services and thereby enhance their legitimacy.

Outcome 10 responds to the political, economic and social inequalities between Afghan men and women, gender-based discrimination and violence. In cooperation with the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA), UNAMA and UN Women, UNDP was expected to focus on three areas, through financial support and capacity development: (i) Government capacity to implement national and international commitments impacting women; (ii) enhancement of government and civil society capacity to monitor and report on those commitments affecting women; and (iii) formal and informal systems and mechanisms for effective enforcement of laws and policies to eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence against women. To this end, UNDP works with selected ministries and advocates to implement Security Council resolutions 1325 and 2122.⁵⁷

The Global Fund has supported Afghanistan since 2004 to reduce the country's burden from malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Since becoming the principal recipient of Global Fund grants in 2015, UNDP has established projects to strengthen the country's health system in treating and controlling these diseases among the key affected populations. UNDP's Global Fund Unit is expected to work closely with the Ministry of Health, relevant UN partners (WHO, UNODC, UNFPA and UNAIDS) and CSOs. Key areas of support included policy advisory services, institutional capacity building, other technical support (e.g. infrastructure), administrative management and financial support.

Finding 5. UNDP has improved the capacity of national electoral institutions to plan and conduct elections, including the 2018 parliamentary elections. Progress was made in establishing a credible voter registration system and improving transparency. Efforts are needed to maintain momentum leading up to future elections, improve donor reporting and strengthen programme design.

Through two successive projects (ELECT II and UN Electoral Support Project⁵⁸), UNDP supported the IEC to build the basic legal, institutional and infrastructural frameworks needed to sustain the election process in Afghanistan and improve transparency. A concerted effort was made to establish a credible voter registration system. A gender unit was established in the IEC in recognition that gender was an important cross-cutting issue.

Parliamentary elections were held in October 2018, with results generally accepted as credible. However, the elections were not without problems, including lengthy delays and technical difficulties with the biometric voter registration system.⁵⁹ Voters' complaints were submitted to the ECC.⁶⁰ Of the 8.9 million registered voters, 35 percent were women,⁶¹ an increase of eight percentage points compared with the 2014 presidential election. The next presidential election, which has been pushed back twice, is now scheduled for September 2019. There is a need to maintain the momentum leading up to the elections and continue to provide support to the national institutions, such as a more reliable election registry and improvement in election logistics.

⁵⁷ Both resolutions address women, peace and security. Afghanistan's response under UNSCR 1325 includes the security pillar of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan and women's participation in the HPC.

⁵⁸ The UN Electoral Support Project was designed to follow from ELECT 1 (2006–2011) and ELECT II (2012–2015) and the July 2015–October 2017 PIP. Its two objectives were (i) to build the capacity of IEC and ECC to implement elections in line with the national electoral legal framework and Afghanistan's international commitments; and (ii) to allow a programming mechanism for the international community to partially finance the elections per the request of the Government. Source: project document.

⁵⁹ Parliamentary elections were held in all provinces except Kandahar and Ghazni. Confusion over the use of biometric voter verification devices and errors in the newly introduced voter lists caused lengthy delays in many areas, leading some voters to leave polling centres without casting their ballots. In addition, there were accusations of fraudulent voter lists and inconsistent opening times at polling stations (associated with technical problems and security issues).

⁶⁰ The ECC reported it had received around 5,000 complaints of electoral irregularities from voters and candidates, and the Interior Ministry said 44 people had been charged with "illegal interference in the election and fraud." Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Radio Free Afghanistan, 21 October 2018.

⁶¹ The final voter registration list had 8,899,941 registered voters, including 3,089,414 females (34.71 percent) and 5,810,527 males. United Nations Electoral Support Project 2018, third quarterly progress report.

Development partners generally acknowledged UNDP's contribution to Afghanistan's implementation of its elections.⁶² Election support is politically sensitive, involving large-scale funding from many donors. UNDP effectively collaborated with other UN agencies, particularly UNAMA, providing technical expertise and bringing legitimacy and credibility to the process. Shortcomings were reported in UNDP's performance, however, including (i) insufficient/unclear reporting on the use of funds;⁶³ (ii) lack of analysis in its projects (e.g. a study assessing the reasons for varying levels of women voters across provinces); and (iii) the need to further enhance women's deployment in the male-dominated public institutions working on elections.

Finding 6. There was some success in building national consensus on a peace process and enhancing the capacity of civil society, including women, to engage in decision-making and advocacy. However, UNDP support to peacebuilding has had a limited impact because of the lack of a clear strategy and weak partner engagement.

UNDP support to peacebuilding has focused on facilitating the transition from the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme⁶⁴ to support the HPC⁶⁵ and helping to build national consensus and public mobilization for Afghan-led solutions to the conflict. Women's participation in the peace process has been enhanced through specific events aimed at

building capacity of civil society in decision-making and peace advocacy.⁶⁶ With technical and operational support from UNDP, the HPC has played an important role in mobilizing civil society to build consensus for peace. It has also supported capacity development and coordination of national and local peacebuilders and centres of peace in 34 provinces.⁶⁷ The HPC/ESPRP (Executive Secretariat for Peace and Reconciliation Process) turned the 2017 commemoration of International Day of Peace into an occasion for national mobilization and peace messaging throughout Afghanistan.⁶⁸

UNDP supported the HPC to develop the Peace and Reconciliation in Afghanistan (PRA), which adopts a 'whole of government' approach and incorporates economic, social and political objectives to achieve long-term peace and security.⁶⁹ Some members of non-State armed groups have been reluctant to join the process because of lack of clarity on what reintegration has to offer them and on the potential post-conflict scenario. Several planned regional activities were not implemented because of insecurity, accessibility, and logistical and weather problems. Going forward, UNDP needs to develop a coherent strategy to attain clearly identified outputs. A project document for a full-fledged project to follow up the Project Initiation Plan (PIP) has been developed but not approved, so the project has not yet been implemented.⁷⁰

⁶² A common statement made during the interviews was "Without UNDP, there would be no elections in the country."

⁶³ Some key donors asked for more clarity in how their funds have been used by UNDP ("Why is it so costly to run the elections?").

⁶⁴ The programme was initially designed for a five-year period (August 2010–July 2015). It was further extended until 31 March 2016, when donors, the Government and UNDP agreed to close it and prepare a transitional plan for support to the HPC for a four-month transitional period. Source: 'Afghanistan – Transitional Support for the High Peace Council' PIP. This initiative closed in February 2017 and a new PIP was developed for the period September–December 2017.

⁶⁵ This took place through the projects Transitional Plan for Support to the High Peace Council and Support for the High Peace Council PRA (Peace and Reconciliation Afghanistan) Strategy (PIP).

⁶⁶ In the reporting period, the HPC Women's Committee organized three events, in Kabul, Balkh and Paktia provinces, to discuss how to strengthen women's engagement in the peace process and to seek mechanisms to hear women's voices in peace-related activities. A total of 230 prominent women participated and provided their inputs and feedback on the role of women in the peace process. Source: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan High Peace Council Executive Secretariat for Peace and Reconciliation Process, Bimonthly Report, 20 September through 30 November 2017.

⁶⁷ Op. cit. HPC/ESPRP high-ranking delegations led by the HPC deputies traveled to 12 provinces during October and November 2017 to mobilize people and re-establish consensus at the regional and provincial levels. Meetings and consultations with four important targeted groups were conducted in each province. A total of 36 events were convened with participation by 220 Ulema; 240 representatives from civil society organizations, women and youth networks and the private sector; 265 political, Jihadi and tribal leaders and representatives of the victims of war; and 126 cadres from universities and educational institutions.

⁶⁸ HPC Executive Secretariat for Peace and Reconciliation Process, Bimonthly Report, 20 September–30 November 2017, reports that 3,845 persons participated in 25 peace-related events at national and subnational levels, and many Afghans indirectly received peace messages through the media.

⁶⁹ A challenge going forward is that the HPC is a PIP and therefore short term. At the time of the evaluation, only two out of five objectives of the PRA strategy were funded, and donors had not expressed interest in future funding of the HPC, perhaps not surprisingly. According to figures provided by the Governance Unit, the project only spent \$136 million of its \$238 million budget.

⁷⁰ The project document has not been approved due to lack of clarity about the future of the ongoing peace process and the slow pace of HPC reforms, which are a prerequisite to implementation of the new project.

Finding 7. UNDP has increased awareness among civil society and subnational governments on transparency and budget oversight. However, continuing instability and insecurity dominated the operational environment and hampered programme delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

Under the Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme and the LoGo projects, UNDP has provided technical and capacity-building support to municipal and district levels to enhance public oversight of budgeting (revenue generation) and local development planning.⁷¹ To increase accountability, it has helped them to construct citizen service centres and improve citizens' awareness of their right to know how their taxes are being spent, as well as transparency and oversight of local service delivery.⁷² During the interviews in Herat, women were reported to be fully engaged in local governance, including participation in advisory boards and decision-making. However, the insecurity has limited the LoGo project team's monitoring activities.⁷³ The limited interaction between the team and CSOs implementing the activities has resulted in unrealistic project targets, limited course correction and low delivery (under-spending of project budget).

Finding 8. UNDP's support to the SDGs helped establish a preliminary structural framework under the key coordinating ministry. Translation of the SDGs into meaningful and substantive policy development is limited by a lack of funding.

UNDP has supported the Ministry of Economy in aligning national development strategies, planning and budgeting with the SDGs. In 2016, UNDP

helped establish an SDG Secretariat in the Ministry to engage in data collection and coordinate high-level and technical meetings. Public awareness campaigns were organized targeting youth, academia, CSOs and government officials. In 2017, four technical working groups were established to mainstream the coordination process within the Executive Committee on the SDGs.⁷⁴ The aim was to ensure attention to the reform actions required to address each of the cross-cutting issues identified in the SDGs. All four thematic working groups have been able to finalize their Afghanistan-SDG alignment. In 2018, a rapid integrated assessment report was prepared as the basis for identifying next steps in nationalizing the SDGs, and an Afghanistan-SDG communications strategy was developed. A national SDG document⁷⁵ and an Afghanistan-SDG Alignment Framework were presented to the Council of Ministers, but these are yet to be endorsed.⁷⁶

UNDP has collaborated with the Ministry of Economy in the past related to the MDGs.⁷⁷ Continuing, high-level support from UNDP was appreciated by the Government, as it has now embedded a dedicated SDG staff in the Ministry. At the same time, several challenges were identified moving forward, including a lack of funding (UNDP funding was limited to \$40,000); lack of technical capacity at the Ministry of Economy (e.g. expertise in econometric analysis and systems thinking); difficulty in reaching local populations; and limited policy-level discussions. In addition to project management skills, UNDP was expected to provide more advisory services that would enable government staff to navigate within the challenging political environment.

⁷¹ LoGo Project Team, UNDP Afghanistan. Numerous activities were supported, including drafting and development of provincial development plans for individual provinces and their implementation reviews.

⁷² UNDP Governance Unit, UNDP Annual Report 2016.

⁷³ UNDP once flew the entire LoGo team from Herat to Kabul for a one-day workshop instead of bringing the trainer to Herat.

⁷⁴ This committee, co-chaired by the Office of the Chief Executive, Ministry of Economy and UNDP on behalf of the UNCT, issues guidance to the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers to ensure that implementation of the SDGs moves forward and that reporting against the national indicators and targets takes place consistently.

⁷⁵ To nationalize the SDGs, the Government conducted a comprehensive consultation process to develop targets and indicators. The outcome of this process was Afghanistan's adoption of 16 of the 17 SDGs, 112 of the 169 targets, and 178 of the 232 indicators. In addition, the working group divided all goals, targets and indicators into eight budgetary sectors. Afghanistan's national SDG document and the ANPDF and other national and sectoral strategic documents are based on these eight sectors.

⁷⁶ UNDP Afghanistan, SDG Team PowerPoint presentation, Kabul, 29 January 2019.

⁷⁷ Government of Afghanistan, 'AFG MDG – 10 Years Report (2005–2015): A Decade of Opportunity'.

Finding 9. A new initiative to support a growing regional economic cooperation framework provides an opportunity to diversify UNDP's programme portfolio.

UNDP has offered ad hoc support since 2017 to the Secretariat of the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA). Established in 2005, RECCA promotes cross-border economic cooperation through a series of projects focused on growth, job creation, income generation and confidence building in the Central, South and Southwest Asia regions. In the period 2019–2021 UNDP wants to support RECCA's three new initiatives: establishment of a Chamber of Commerce and Industries, a Centre for Research and Evaluation, and a Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative.

UNDP is expected to work closely with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Industry and Commerce, Finance, Economy, and Women's Affairs, through a Regional Integration and Sustainable Economy project. It would leverage its experience in supporting growth, women's economic empowerment, and governance and stability by developing regional economic cooperation.⁷⁸ The new project is a suitable intervention for further development in the next programme cycle, providing an important opportunity for UNDP to diversify its portfolio in Afghanistan.⁷⁹ UNDP should ensure internal cross-programme synergies, including its livelihoods and gender-related efforts.

Finding 10. UNDP efforts to enhance the political, social, legal, economic and civil rights of Afghan women have progressed despite deep-rooted cultural challenges.

Notwithstanding constitutional guarantees of equal citizenship rights, Afghan women face socio-economic exclusion and discrimination, especially in rural areas. UNDP has worked with MOWA and other ministries to enhance gender sensitivity at all levels through its dedicated gender project, Enhancing Gender Equality and Mainstreaming in Afghanistan (EGEMA). Under this project, UNDP has supported the Government to address women's rights and enforce legislation against discrimination,⁸⁰ and also helped develop and introduce a gender-responsive budgeting strategy with the Ministry of Finance. With UNDP support, MOWA developed a gender policy review kit to ensure that gender priorities are integrated into national policies, resulting in the revision of six policies/strategies.⁸¹ UNDP also supported a master's programme in gender and women's studies at Kabul University to produce a pool of gender experts to ultimately fill positions in various ministries.⁸² UNDP has also supported youth-mullah volunteer caravans (in Kabul, Herat and Balkh) in cooperation with UN Volunteers to mobilize youth volunteers and religious leaders to advocate for change at the local level.⁸³ Nevertheless, interviews indicated that there is reluctance to take gender issues seriously even among government officials. Conversely, many mullahs accept the importance of gender and women's rights.

⁷⁸ UNDP project concept note, 'Support to Regional Economic Cooperation – Regional Integration and Sustainable Economy (RISE)', undated.

⁷⁹ At the time of the evaluation, several regional economic integration initiatives were flagged as having made considerable progress. These included two large cross-border infrastructure projects, the TAPI natural gas pipeline and the CASA 1000 electricity transmission line. Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Afghanistan-Centred Regional Cooperation – From Planning to Implementation', 2018.

⁸⁰ Seven of 39 recommendations on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have been implemented.

⁸¹ They include recommendations on improving internal working conditions to enable women to grow professionally, as well as to expand women's opportunities and access to basic services, such as health and education. UNDP also trained 250 female police and established an EVAW court in Kabul. In 2016, the court heard 107 cases and issued verdicts on 66. Source: ROAR 2016.

⁸² The first class of 22 students graduated in 2016 and all have found employment in relevant fields, including one who is working in the office of the First Lady. Interest in the programme has grown as resistance to gender issues has faded. There were 70 applicants for the first year of the programme and more than 400 applied for the next class.

⁸³ Youth and religious leaders have teamed up with UN Volunteers and formed national volunteer caravans to spread messages of gender equality and women's rights to rural communities. With the support of UNDP, the caravans conducted 20 campaigns on women's education and economic, marriage and employment rights, reaching 16,000 community members in Herat and Balkh provinces. Source: Annual Project Progress Report, 2017.

The ELECT II project also supported the IEC to implement policies and actions that would broaden the scope of opportunities available to women, remove impediments to their access and encourage support of women's participation by both women and men. These included gender-inclusive policies, targeted outreach and information, community advocacy and the availability of facilities such as all-female staff serving only women.⁸⁴

Finding 11. As the principal recipient of the Global Fund, UNDP has demonstrated its ability to manage relevant projects as it enters the second grant cycle. Various implementation challenges were identified during the period under review, including inefficient administrative processes, overly ambitious targets, weaknesses in grant proposals and poor communication between implementing partners at central and field level. Although substantial progress has been made, many elements of health service delivery remain fragile and require continued support. UNDP also needs to clearly link its efforts with the outcome-level country programme strategy.

UNDP completed the first grant cycle (2015–2017) of the Global Fund and has just entered its second cycle (2018–2020). It manages three components: HIV/AIDS; malaria and tuberculosis; and the resilient and sustainable health system. In the absence of government capacity in the health sector, UNDP's role in coordinating various partners' efforts under the Global Fund has been critical.

The Global Fund projects have pursued innovative approaches to delivering health services in remote and hard-to-reach areas. For example, community health workers and midwives have been trained and deployed to serve rural communities through the family health house system, a concept initially

conceived by UNFPA. The projects have provided outreach programmes and capacity building for local health workers.⁸⁵ Access to quality diagnostic services for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria has improved through renovation of provincial hospital labs and the central public health laboratory.⁸⁶ Over 4 million people in malaria-endemic zones, primarily on the Pakistan border and in northern regions, received insecticide-treated mosquito nets; 30,000 health providers were trained; and 15,000 health facilities received test kits/drugs.⁸⁷

The availability of basic health services has been limited in Afghanistan, particularly in remote areas. Among the key challenges are inadequate numbers of skilled workers and female health staff to respond to cultural sensitivities; lack of managerial and organizational structures that provide incentives and accountability for results; challenges regarding human rights issues with respect to female staff; inadequate physical infrastructure; poor quality of pharmaceuticals and medical commodities; weak linkages between public and private health sectors; and low levels of education, particularly for females.⁸⁸ While there has been significant success in meeting (and even exceeding) targets in malaria prevention, HIV treatment and support, and tuberculosis care and prevention, interview results suggested that many of those challenges are still relevant. And overriding these issues are the continuing security threats. Field-based implementing partners also reported that lack of funding for capacity-building/training hampers project delivery and sustainability. Salary reductions have also led to the loss of experienced local partner staff.

In a 2017 status report, UNDP noted that its capacity development efforts with the Global Fund "have led to improved procurement systems and supply chain

⁸⁴ UNDP Afghanistan, ELECT-II Final Project Report, p. 31.

⁸⁵ For example, in 2017, 56 percent of the 201 female community nursing graduates were deployed by the Ministry of Public Health to their communities in Herat and Mazar.

⁸⁶ For example, 12 provincial hospital labs and the Central Public Health Laboratory were renovated in 2016 to serve over 2 million people in Kabul. The efforts continued in 2017, supporting 5 regional and 13 provincial hospital laboratories with equipment and consumables for more than 5 million people. Source: ROARs.

⁸⁷ Source: 2016 ROAR.

⁸⁸ Afghanistan Country Coordinating Mechanism, 'Global Fund: Funding Request Application Form: Tuberculosis and Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health', draft, 16 May 2017.

management, which have made service delivery quicker and more consistent, and prevented drug stock-outs.”⁸⁹ However, challenges were reported in the field, particularly regarding UNDP’s centralized procurement process, which often resulted in difficulties in getting supplies when needed. In addition, some medications were sometimes past their expiry date by the time they arrived.⁹⁰ Moreover, a centralized financial payment system, whereby funds are disbursed through banks, has proved challenging, as most recipients come from remote areas without access to financial institutions.⁹¹ Procurement processes and financial payment systems involving UNDP and field-based partners have not yet been harmonized, creating inefficiencies.

These issues reflect insufficient communication between UNDP Kabul and the field,⁹² which has had a profound impact on project design and performance. Unrealistic targets were set without full consultations with the field, resulting in the programme falling short of achieving some of its objectives.⁹³ The grant proposals were reported as weak in some cases, not fully reflecting available research data on the at-risk populations.⁹⁴ The Ministry of Public Health needs to be further strengthened so it can manage the Global Fund, but many interviewees felt that there is limited capacity in the Government. A further concern among national partners was weak accountability,

as services are increasingly provided through contracted parties with limited direct supervision by UNDP due to security constraints.⁹⁵

Overall, UNDP’s Global Fund programme focuses on implementation support and capacity development, but there is room for improvement in both areas. There is insufficient coordination between UNDP and stakeholders in the field, and reliance on contracted parties is increasing.⁹⁶ The loss of some key partner staff and travel restrictions on UNDP staff have posed major challenges for programme delivery and oversight, and limited opportunities for training and capacity building to boost the weak capability of field-based partners and the Ministry of Public Health. UNDP’s role vis-à-vis the Global Fund should thus be reviewed for the upcoming programme cycle. There is clearly a need for a new health-related outcome in a new CPD, which should be considered in the context of the One UN programme.⁹⁷

Finding 12. UNDP has helped parliamentary institutions inculcate a culture of legitimate, accountable and inclusive governance by supporting the gender directorates to increase women’s political participation; and by establishing conflict-of-interest guidelines for Afghanistan National Assembly staff and enhancing accountability through increased public access to information. UNDP also helped improve the physical security of the Parliament.

⁸⁹ UNDP and the Global Fund, ‘Fast Facts’.

⁹⁰ Source: Field interviews (e.g. Herat, Kandahar and Mazar-e Sharif). Local procurement of pharmaceuticals and equipment is not authorized.

⁹¹ UNDP disburses the funds through the banking system, which requires recipients to have bank accounts and/or access to banks. This is an inefficient way to get money to those who do not have access to a financial institution. It would be better if the funds were sent to the regional health centres for disbursement directly to patients, but this would raise accountability issues.

⁹² One partner interviewee noted, “No one listens to us.”

⁹³ The 2017 Annual Report of Global Fund Programme for Afghanistan reports that Afghanistan did not meet the targets set for estimated tuberculosis mortality and incidence reduction. Based on interviews, the target was unrealistic for the voluntary counselling and testing, and the partner was unable to meet it. One interviewee said, “The target for TB was very unrealistic and high, the targets need to be in accordance with WHO guidelines.”

⁹⁴ Source: Field interviews with UN partner agencies. A survey conducted by the implementation partners suggested that women, especially sex workers, had engaged in high-risk drug use behaviours. However, such research-based information has not been effectively reflected in the preparation of the grant proposals.

⁹⁵ Some technical staff with project expertise have left the Ministry of Public Health and joined UNDP and now fall under UNDP security rules. As a result, they have lost their ability to visit the field and thus to verify results.

⁹⁶ Some donors flagged the need for a donor coordination architecture to give clarity as to which agency is in charge of the UN system in Afghanistan and to enhance UNDP’s authority.

⁹⁷ When UNDP launched its Global Fund projects in the second half of 2015, the portfolio was incorporated under the Governance outcome and the team was reporting to the deputy country director since there was no CPD outcome covering health. This led to a complex arrangement whereby three challenging and different diseases are being addressed in a situation where insecurity, weak human resources and budget shortfalls present significant problems, and where the portfolio doesn’t have a dedicated home base, being ‘parked’ under Governance outcome 7, as also noted in the CPD midterm review (2017).

Under the Institutional and Capacity Support to the Parliament of Afghanistan (ICSPA) project, UNDP has embedded staff in the two Houses of the National Assembly (Wolesi Jirga and Meshrano Jirga) to help strengthen the effectiveness of parliamentary institutions. The project provided technical assistance to National Assembly secretariats and directorates to implement International Parliamentary Union standards. This included support for a reform action plan to increase efficiency, accountability and transparency.⁹⁸ To date, however, there has not been a focus on training parliamentarians; rather, the secretariats have been targeted.⁹⁹ The project also increased public access to information by publishing the status of bills and laws through the legislative tracking system, debates, proposed legislation, policy reviews, and plenary, committee and Hansard¹⁰⁰ reports on the parliamentary website.

ICSPA supported the gender directorates to increase women's participation in the political process and developed and introduced conflict of interest guidelines to National Assembly staff.¹⁰¹ It also supported Parliament to successfully conduct four televised oversight hearings of National Assembly commissions on important topics such as the anti-harassment law, involvement of women in the peace process, implementation of the National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan, and Afghanistan's education and higher education system. Following the Taliban attack on the National Assembly in July 2015, UNDP assisted in instituting critical security-related improvements in the Parliament.¹⁰² Despite such gains, the Parliamentary Service Act has yet to be finalized, reflecting internal political tensions.¹⁰³

ICSPA also supported transparency and citizen access to the work of Parliament through the establishment of a media and pool system for providing

online digital feeds of parliamentary procedures to journalists and media outlets in Afghanistan. As a result, Afghan citizens have access to and awareness of the work of Parliament (Upper House).

2.3 Rule of law and human security

Outcome 8: Trust in and access to fair, effective and accountable rule-of-law services is increased in accordance with applicable international human rights standards and the Government's legal obligations.

Outcome 8 has two UNDP-specific outputs:

- i. *National institutions enabled for strengthened justice and police governance:* This output includes policy harmonization among justice institutions (e.g. Ministry of Interior Affairs [MOIA], Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's Office and MOWA) and between formal and informal justice service providers; reforms in finance, budget execution and human resource management at MOIA and Ministry of Justice; and promotion of human rights and police capacity to allow the Government to take responsibility for the police payroll.
- ii. *Capacity of justice and rule of law institutions strengthened for improved access to justice and police service delivery:* This output addresses scaling up the civil, criminal and administrative justice services, including professionalization of the police and coordination of the justice chain.

⁹⁸ Changes supported included publishing Members of Parliament's attendance records, fining or suspending Members for non-attendance, and reducing the number of committees to increase efficiency.

⁹⁹ Training has been provided to female staff of Parliament on corruption/office management; new staff have been trained on procedures; and ICT training has been provided. Source: meeting with embedded staff.

¹⁰⁰ Verbatim reports of proceedings.

¹⁰¹ Source: Interviews with UNDP staff. The project also trained 136 female journalists to facilitate their work on parliamentary affairs and developed a code of conduct for dealing with harassment in the workplace.

¹⁰² Given the Taliban's opposition to elections, further attacks on the Parliament and the parliamentary process can probably be expected. This has resulted in difficulties recruiting parliamentary staff. The ICSPA project helps address these concerns.

¹⁰³ The Lower and Upper Houses' attempts to finalize and table the Parliamentary Service Act have stalled as it is seen to undermine the President's control over the National Assembly secretariat staffing structures and his parliamentary oversight of Government.

During the period under review, UNDP continued to support the LOTFA and the government's broader rule-of-law reform efforts through the Justice and Human Rights, Afghanistan Access to Justice and Anti-Corruption projects. These project efforts were envisaged to collectively address the two outputs and the outcome. UNDP's strategies included provision of guidance on policy and legislative reforms; technical advisory services to relevant State institutions to promote transparency and accountability; institutional capacity building; infrastructure support (e.g. rehabilitation of police stations); technical support to MOIA's administrative and financial management capacity through staff deployment; financial support;¹⁰⁴ and scaling up of partnerships with entities such as provincial universities and the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association to promote legal aid and legal education and awareness, particularly among women.¹⁰⁵

Finding 13. UNDP's LOTFA remained a significant source of support to the Government for strengthening its national police force. UNDP support architecture evolved during the period under review, meeting the Government's emerging needs.

LOTFA was established in 2002 to facilitate the payment of all salaries of the ANP and the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Centres (GDPDC). It has remained UNDP's flagship intervention in Afghanistan for the period 2015–2019, accounting for over 85 percent of programme

expenditure.¹⁰⁶ At the time of the evaluation, LOTFA funded payrolls for 149,000 police officers and 5,924 officers at the GDPDC in all 34 provinces.¹⁰⁷ It represented one of the few funding streams in Afghanistan allowing the international community to channel its funds to the country's security forces and institutions.¹⁰⁸

LOTFA has evolved over the years to carry the responsibility of building institutional capacity of MOIA and the ANP to facilitate the country's rule-of-law reforms. At the request of the newly elected president to accelerate the transfer of the payroll functions to the Government, LOTFA was split into two distinct components in 2015, at the beginning of the current cycle. These are (i) Support to Payroll Management (LOTFA-SPM), which is dedicated to building MOIA's capacity to independently manage the payroll functions by December 2016;¹⁰⁹ and (ii) MOIA and Police Development (LOTFA-MPD), aiming to develop national capacity for self-sustained reform and improvement of MOIA as an institution (institutional development) and of the police services as instruments for citizen safety and maintenance of the rule of law (police professionalization).¹¹⁰

The two projects under LOTFA were envisaged to operate under a phased approach over a short (18-month) period, which was later extended.¹¹¹ They had specific benchmarks and indicators to monitor their progress. They also had a strengthened

¹⁰⁴ For example through support to the new PIP for the LOTFA Transitional Support to MOIA Project.

¹⁰⁵ The Asia Foundation Survey (2016) indicated a majority (73 percent) of Afghans are not aware of the role of State institutions in providing legal support to women.

¹⁰⁶ Source: Section 1.3, Programme Budget and Expenditure, in the current report.

¹⁰⁷ Source: UNDP Afghanistan.

¹⁰⁸ The other key streams include the NATO-led Afghan National Army Trust Fund and United States Afghan Security Forces Fund. Source: NATO-Afghan Relations www.nato.int/factsheets, February 2019.

¹⁰⁹ SPM has six outputs: (i) updated legislative, policy and regulatory framework and business processes in place, implemented and functional; (ii) MOIA personnel (including human resources, finance and budget) are able to undertake all payroll inputs, processing and validation; (iii) MOIA payroll systems linked with human resources systems; (iv) infrastructure; (v) timely and regular transfer of funds to MOF for police pay; and (vi) project management.

¹¹⁰ Source: LOTFA project document, 29 June 2015. The goal of the SPM was defined as, 'The Government independently manages all non-fiduciary aspects of its pay budget for the ANP and GDPDC, including reports for donors. The MOIA independently manages the HR, finance and ICT functions related to payroll operations. The MPD project's objective was, 'Capacities for reform and accountable and efficient MOIA management and oversight are improved with integrated civilian and uniformed leadership and management' (for institutional development) and 'MOIA consolidated approach to professionalization of Afghan Uniformed Police to provide effective police services in accordance with human rights and professional policing standards' (for police professionalization).

¹¹¹ The two projects were approved by the Government in September 2016 to continue after the 18-months period. The SPM was extended by one year, until December 2017, and MPT until December 2018.

governance structure¹¹² to address the expectations from a series of international aid effectiveness conferences, including one held in Busan in 2011 (the ‘New Deal’ for Engagement with Fragile States¹¹³). Under the SPM, the steps required for the transfer of payroll functions (e.g. the Payroll Unit Plan and the Payroll Capacity Building Plan) and donors’ conditions were set to facilitate the process.¹¹⁴

In late 2018, LOTFA was redesigned into a UNDP-administered multi-partner trust fund (MPTF) operation,¹¹⁵ with a broader mandate to encompass Afghanistan’s entire rule of law and justice sector reforms with an increased focus on anti-corruption (Table 3).

Finding 14. UNDP addressed and improved the technical aspect of the police payroll management during the period under review, including by developing standard operating procedures and governance and oversight mechanisms. The timing of the full transfer of the payroll functions to the Government was delayed, however, and remains a contentious issue.

One of the key challenges in the LOTFA SPM operation at the beginning of the country programme cycle was the different software systems in use at UNDP, MOIA and MOF, which were not linked.¹¹⁶ UNDP has made a significant effort to address this, particularly reconciling the UNDP/MOIA systems.¹¹⁷ UNDP helped develop MOIA’s payroll unit plan and an accompanying payroll capacity building plan;

TABLE 3. LOTFA transition 2002–2018

Year	LOTFA key activities
2002	LOTFA established, focusing on salary payments for ANP and GDPDC
2012	Capacity component added for MOIA institutional development and police professionalization
2015	LOTFA transition plan developed; project split into two sub-projects (SPM and MPD) after functional reviews (in anticipation of hand-over of all non-fiduciary payroll management work to MOIA by 2016)
2016	Payroll unit plan and payroll capacity building plan prepared under SPM and approved by MOIA (May)
2018	LOTFA converted into a MPTF (November), allowing other UN agencies to participate in line with One UN and to cover all rule-of-law and security reform issues including anti-corruption

Source: UNDP Afghanistan

¹¹² A two-tier structure with the project board (including donors, MOIA, MOF, UNDP, national/international project managers) supported by the UNDP Rule of Law Unit and the Technical Working Group.

¹¹³ Afghanistan is one of the pilot countries for the ‘New Deal’. It was agreed at the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Busan, 29 November–1 December 2011) and endorsed five peacebuilding and State-building goals. It involves a country-led and country-owned transition that includes collaboration with all stakeholders/societal representatives, including non-ruling regimes, and commitment to provision of external aid and effective national resource management with results.

¹¹⁴ Source: LOTFA-SPM Midterm Evaluation Report, March 2018. “The Payroll Unit Plan articulates the key payroll functions, legal requirements, processes and staffing of the MOIA payroll process. The Payroll Capacity Building Plan sets forth the steps required to build the MOIA Payroll Unit capacity to be able to accept a transfer of the LOTFA’s payroll functions pursuant to President Ghani’s letter (2014) and in compliance with donor conditions.”

¹¹⁵ This was recommendation 3 in the IEO’s previous evaluation (2013), to ensure improved supervision of the funds.

¹¹⁶ For example, an electronic payroll system developed and managed by UNDP since 2002 with an enhanced web-based system (web-based electronic payroll system); MOF’s Afghanistan Financial Management Information System (AFMIS); and MOIA’s Afghanistan Human Resources Information Management System (AHRIMS), supported by the NATO Combined Security Transition Command in Afghanistan, an entity responsible for training and development of Afghanistan’s security systems.

¹¹⁷ This included the launch of an innovative system to identify data irregularities using a bar code (‘Digital M16’), which was recognized by the stakeholders as a significant contribution to “greatly improving the payroll process and closed the gap for corruption”. Source: LOTFA/SPM, Midterm Evaluation Report, p. 35. The reconciliation of the MOIA and MOF systems was not addressed by UNDP.

helped to strengthen the oversight and governance mechanisms (e.g. by introducing monitoring agents in all 34 provinces for expenditure verification and physical verification of police presence); and supported the development of an integrated human resources payroll system and assisted in reconciling the ANP identification data and removing unverified police names from the system.¹¹⁸ The recent project evaluation reported that, through more physical verifications in the field and MOIA's withholding of pay from unverified officers, "the windows of opportunities for 'ghost officers' and other forms of corruption surrounding the ANP payroll process appeared to be slowly closing."¹¹⁹

At the time of the evaluation, UNDP in collaboration with its partners was addressing the urgent and remaining challenges. The full integration of the payroll and human resource systems for MOIA needs to be completed.¹²⁰ The issuance of IDs to the ANP policemen continued to pose a challenge, which could only be resolved after individual biometric identification verifications. UNDP has engaged 27 information technology specialists to be embedded in MOIA to help manage the Internet-based electronic payroll system. While it was agreed with the Government that the specialists would be absorbed into the civil service system (Tashkeel) to facilitate the handover, this has not yet materialized.¹²¹

Despite much progress in systems improvement, the transfer of LOTFA's non-fiduciary payroll management responsibilities to MOIA by the target dates (initially the end of 2016, postponed to 2017) was not achieved. During interviews, government officials expressed disappointment, asking UNDP to

facilitate the urgent transfer of the functions and the LOTFA funds. At the same time, donors expressed continuing, strong uncertainty about MOIA's and MOF's capacity to effectively manage the functions and the funds, indicating that it was premature to discuss the full transfer.¹²²

Many development partners reported in interviews that LOTFA was a highly political, sensitive and significant undertaking for UNDP, unlike any other UNDP development projects. This was due to the nature of ANP's work in a country undergoing active war¹²³ and the large financial investments by donors. Still, some of the LOTFA donors were critical of UNDP's performance, calling for UNDP to significantly strengthen its financial data reporting (e.g. timely and full provision of donor-requested data about the use of their funds) and for closer consultation and communication on UNDP's LOTFA strategy and approaches.¹²⁴

Finding 15. The institutional capacity-building component of LOTFA has not progressed as initially planned, with the key project ending prematurely. A new LOTFA framework (MPTF) is promising, but significant consultation and partnerships will be needed to fulfil its ambitious objectives.

While the systems improvement has been progressing at MOIA, results have been mixed in institutional development and police professionalization. For example, training of female MOIA officers (ANP and GDPDC) to perform payroll management functions has not been conducted as initially planned, as women have not yet been assigned to the relevant positions handling the payroll management function at MOIA.¹²⁵

¹¹⁸ The proportion of personnel records with valid identification numbers improved from 69 to 81 percent in 2016/2017.

¹¹⁹ Source: LOTFA/SPM MTE, p. 12. The so-called 'ghost police' refers to ANP police officers who collect pay but whose identity cannot be verified.

¹²⁰ The full roll-out of the NATO Afghanistan Personnel and Pay System led by the Combined Security Transition Command in Afghanistan, linking UNDP's web-based electronic pay system.

¹²¹ 'Financial constraints' were raised as the main reason by government officials, while 'lack of actions' was raised by development partners.

¹²² This was echoed by the final evaluation of the SPM project, which recommended delaying the transfer "until such time as all 'donor conditions' are fully met, the MOIA Payroll Unit is fully staffed and trained, and the Afghanistan Personnel and Pay System database is fully functional and deployed in all 34 provinces".

¹²³ One interviewee said, "... Because the ANP is routinely utilized for front-line counter insurgency special operations with high casualty rates, some may argue that UNDP's intervention crosses the line between the merely developmental into the political-military sphere to an extent that begins to conflict with UNDP's development mandate." Source: LOTFA/SPM MTE, p. 25.

¹²⁴ The partnership with UNDP was described by some as "not by choice" but rather "out of necessity" as UNDP is the "only entity available in the country."

¹²⁵ Source: LOTFA/SPM midterm review, March 2018.

Capacity development was the primary focus of the MPD project. UNDP was expected to support the change management process to improve functional performance, M&E, performance management and aid coordination.¹²⁶ Various outputs were made under the MPD.¹²⁷ UNDP has contributed to improved police professionalization through (i) creation of family response units embedded in the police stations in 18 provinces; (ii) police and community engagement (Police e Mardumis, PoEMs) and (iii) establishment of community partnership committees to improve communication between the police and the public, in 10 provinces. Emergency call centres were established under the Access to Justice project to improve police service delivery (119 in Kabul) but they have not been fully operational due to poor maintenance of the offices and lack of equipment repairs.

The MPD project was closed prematurely at the end of June 2018, following a critical review that found significant challenges in its design and implementation strategies.¹²⁸ During the interviews, some donors said that UNDP had not given a clear explanation about why the project was suddenly terminated. In the second half of 2018, UNDP redesigned its support to MOIA, incorporating two objectives: (i) complete MPD's remaining deliverables, i.e. those

associated with support requested by MOIA; and (ii) engage in new initiatives providing 'quick wins' for MOIA, demonstrating ANP's direct impact and visibility to the Afghan population at the community level.¹²⁹ At the time of the evaluation, half of the project activities were reported completed.

At the time of the evaluation, the LOTFA MPTF (2018–2024) had just been launched. It was to serve as a platform integrating all security and justice reform efforts in Afghanistan, including capacity development, reflecting evidence-based, sector-wide programming. It was to bring together the Government, the UN and donors and allow the Government greater flexibility to steer its partners' interventions.¹³⁰ The MPTF has four thematic windows: security, justice, anti-corruption and MOIA payroll.¹³¹ Under the new modality, LOTFA funds are channelled through the UNDP's MPTF office in New York, and programmatic and financial accountability is passed on to the recipient UN organizations ('pass-through').

The new LOTFA has established a clear theory of change¹³² with the goal of 'increased public trust in State and local rule-of-law institutions.' It has a robust M&E plan to provide fund-level analysis (rather than project level), which incorporates

¹²⁶ In addition, the cross-cutting services areas were identified and agreed between MOIA and donors: Comprehensive review and development of human resource policies; scoping for enterprise resource planning; MOIA gender strategy implementation support; programme budgeting and use; improvement of internal audit functions; and complaints follow-up, especially those related to women police personnel and gender issues in policing. Source: MPD project document, December 2016.

¹²⁷ For example: (i) business process re-engineering was implemented in seven departments, including the development of a unified M&E framework and reporting systems that were later adopted into the MOIA Strategic Planning Directive; (ii) the assistance database was developed to track progress; (iii) an aid effectiveness strategy was developed to ensure optimal use of donor funds for MOIA; (iv) a human rights due diligence assessment was conducted, examining the police legal framework against human rights and gender standards; (v) a gender component was added to recruitment and training of women police; (vi) the IT enterprise resource planning completed some modules including the procurement plan approval system and the case management system at the MOIA Office of Inspector General; and (vii) the Government's civilianization efforts advocated by the President addressed recruitment of mid-level civilians for technical posts at MOIA (so far filling 150 of 191 civilian positions) although this was reported unlikely to be sustained without funds.

¹²⁸ Source: Kai Vittrup, Tarik Chung and Dr. Debra Willoughby, Independent Project Review of the LOTFA MPD (2018). The issues identified included: (i) operational environment, such as frequent changes at the top of MOIA (five ministers during the project lifetime); (ii) lack of coordination, cooperation, information sharing and planning among national and international partners; (iii) weak project design, planning and implementation processes, including poor conceptualization, inefficient management structure, lack of exit plans (e.g. retention of trained officers); (iii) potential violation of the principle of 'do no harm' (the Sivas training for female officers and civilianization); and (iv) flawed selection process for policing consultants.

¹²⁹ Source: LOTFA Transitional Support to MOIA, PIP. Outputs included: (i) evidence-base strengthened for planning, programming and impact measurement of MOIA priorities; (ii) women police officers strengthened (e.g. in partnership with the SIVAS training academy in Turkey); (iii) deputy minister support building constructed; (iv) commitments from the past project completed; (v) hospital management information established; (vi) police emergency response services established (e.g. reform of 119 ECCs); and (vii) 'Safe and secure parks' initiative piloted in police district 16 in partnership with MOIA, Police-e-Mardume, and UN Habitat.

¹³⁰ Source: UNDP Afghanistan, 'Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan: Terms of Reference', 22 November 2018.

¹³¹ Source: UNDP MPTF office website for LOTFA Afghanistan.

¹³² The LOTFA terms of reference, 22 November 2018, contain the new LOTFA theory of change, explaining how the various activities under the justice, security (including payroll) and anti-corruption thematic windows are expected to achieve the goals, including descriptions of assumptions and risks.

innovative tools reflecting the complex challenges in security sector reform in a fragile and conflict-affected State.¹³³ Some of the partners expressed a 'wait and see' attitude to UNDP's new initiative, while others requested UNDP to closely engage with them so as not to duplicate their bilateral work in rule of law and justice (e.g. anti-corruption). Consultation with other UN agencies operating in similar areas should also be strengthened.

Finding 16. UNDP continued to support the recruitment, training and deployment of female police. Its initial trainee training provided a steady source of trained women for ANP's female police force. As in the past, challenges remained for female officers, including lack of fairness in internal workplace and human resource practices (e.g. allocation of assignments, promotion decisions) and access to training.

UNDP has supported MOIA to design and implement a gender integration policy at the Ministry and the ANP. In an effort to respond to gender-based violence and family disputes, UNDP has contributed to the increased visibility of female officers at the community level by deploying them at the family response units embedded in the police stations. As of March 2019, there were 18 such units in Kabul.

In Afghanistan less than 3 percent of police are women.¹³⁴ In response to MOIA's objective to increase the female police force, UNDP has continued its collaboration with the Police Training Academy in Sivas, Turkey, which began in 2011. The Academy has a state-of-the-art facility and an extensive curriculum including law enforcement, dispute resolution and community policing. A steady stream of women have been trained since female officer training began in 2013. Between 2016 and 2019, 250 female graduates of the Academy annually joined the ANP. During focus group discussions, many female officers acknowledged the value of the training, which

has become an important source of female police in Afghanistan. They expressed a strong preference for organizing such training inside the country, given the high costs of travel and its challenges for women, who must be escorted by their male kin.

Female police officers face challenges. Interviewed officers expressed their reluctance to be deployed to the provinces and districts for fear of sexual harassment and physical violence. Some cited favouritism and patronage in the recruitment and promotion of personnel based on ethnicity or age,¹³⁵ and found their assignments limited (e.g. to administrative desk work), even though they go through a similar training as their male counterparts.

At the time of the evaluation, MOWA had invited UNDP to conduct a joint exploration of how best to utilize female police officers' skills and potential, including through deployment. UNDP should engage other UN agencies active in the rule-of-law sector, especially UN Women, to develop a range of options reflecting the skills and potential of highly trained female police officers.

Finding 17. UNDP has supported the Government to promote human rights and gender equality and make justice more accessible to the population. Working closely with its partners, UNDP conducted advocacy activities, trained government and civil society actors, and facilitated legal aid services. Access to legal aid services has improved, particularly for women. However, UNDP had limited substantive collaboration with the relevant key actors, missing an opportunity to design robust, evidence-based programmes, at scale, particularly in countering gender-based violence.

Through its two successive projects — Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan, and Afghanistan Access to Justice – UNDP aimed to develop a framework for delivering legal aid services; building

¹³³ For example, including the use of Cynefine and SenseMaker to develop an evidence-based, locally adaptive, rule-of-law focused M&E system. Source: Helge Rieper, UNDP, 'Inception Report: Development of an M&E Strategy for the LOTFA', May 2018.

¹³⁴ As of 2017, 2,640 of the 150,000 positions at the ANP (1.8 percent) were reported as being held by women (ROAR 2017). The proportion reported by the country office at the time of the evaluation was 2.8 percent.

¹³⁵ Source: Interviews and ROAR 2016.

the capacity of justice institutions (e.g. the courts, Attorney General's Office and Ministry of Justice) to fulfil their mandate and reflect human rights; and improving people's awareness of their rights.

Numerous project-level outputs were reported by UNDP, including (i) support to the Legal Aid Grant Facility run jointly by the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association, Ministry of Justice and UNDP¹³⁶ and reviews of draft legislation for human rights compliance by the Ministry's Human Rights Support Unit;¹³⁷ (ii) establishment of the National Legal Training Centre (Herat) and law clinics (Nangarhar, Herat, Balkh, Helmand and Bamyan) in collaboration with the Provincial Bar Associations and universities; (iii) at MOWA, review of all government policies for gender compliance,¹³⁸ development of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA) database to monitor government commitments, and compilation of laws promoting women's rights on inheritance; (iv) sensitization of religious leaders through Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs; (v) advocacy campaigns for the ERAW Law and establishment of ERAW courts in 22 provinces; (vi) gender/gender-based violence training for 13 provincial governors' offices through the Independent Directorate of Local Governance;¹³⁹ and (vii) women's assistance centres/legal help centres in five provinces.¹⁴⁰

By supporting infrastructure such as the legal aid grant facility and legal clinics, UNDP has contributed to the Government's efforts to improve public trust

in the formal justice system.¹⁴¹ It has helped more women receive legal aid.¹⁴² At the time of the evaluation, it was reported that the Afghanistan Central Legal Education Board had just decided to adapt the law clinics located in the universities into the curriculum, promising the sustainability of the clinics.¹⁴³ UNDP's support for including gender-based crimes in the Penal Code (2016), which was adopted by the Cabinet in 2018, was also reported as having set a legal framework that would help the Government meet international standards.

The evaluation, however, found concerns about UNDP's approach. So far, legal aid has been limited to provincial coverage and not scaled country-wide. Another, more important concern is that many of the gender-based violence cases reported in UNDP's assessment were said to have been resolved through local/traditional mediation, though project partners have questioned the efficacy of such mediation because of its potential to cause additional harm to the victims.¹⁴⁴ This was also pointed out in a recent report by UNAMA, which cautioned against the wide use of mediation because of its potential to promote impunity and recurrence of violence.¹⁴⁵ UNAMA has issued a number of reports on women's rights since 2009, including extensive assessments of Afghanistan's implementation of the ERAW law, based on direct monitoring of reported cases of violence against women.

¹³⁶ The facility provided legal aid to 6,684 beneficiaries, including 1,403 women, between April 2019 and June 2019. Source: UNDP Afghanistan.

¹³⁷ Five draft laws were reviewed by the Human Rights Support Unit. The Government granted its status for sustained operations.

¹³⁸ Eleven policies were reviewed in 2017, including those related to national security, gender and human rights strategies at various ministries (e.g. Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, MAIL, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Power and Water, MRRD strategic plan.

¹³⁹ ROAR 2016.

¹⁴⁰ ROAR 2015.

¹⁴¹ Interviews indicated that women defense lawyers in Herat and Jalalabad were able to provide victims of violence with access to the formal court system.

¹⁴² Source: Interviews. Also, it was reported in the third quarter of 2017 that in eight provinces, 211 of 1,118 legal aid recipients who were assisted with court representation, or 19 percent, were women. This reflects a steady increase from the percentage of women recipients in quarter 1 (2.7 percent) and quarter 2 (14 percent).

¹⁴³ Source: Interviews.

¹⁴⁴ For example, UNDP reported that 62 percent of 920 cases reported in 2015 were "resolved through local mediations whilst 38 percent have been referred to the judiciary and police or other relevant departments". Source: ROAR (Gender Equality Project Quarterly Report). The 2009 ERAW does not specifically prohibit mediation in gender-based violence cases. During the evaluation it emerged that UNDP plans to review this issue with MOWA and the ERAW High Commission in the second phase of its justice project, starting October 2019, to support the amendment of the ERAW law and a guidance note on the practice of mediation surrounding ERAW cases.

¹⁴⁵ Source: UNAMA, 'Injustice and Impunity: Mediation of Criminal Offences of Violence against Women', May 2019.

UNDP, however, has not yet technically engaged UNAMA to design its projects. Another critical missing link is UNDP's collaboration with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). The Commission has a critical role in the national Universal Periodic Review process and has provided training on human rights to law enforcement and judicial officials.¹⁴⁶ UNDP's programming could have significantly benefited from the lessons learned by those entities at the technical level.

Finding 18. Though started later in the country programme cycle, UNDP's anti-corruption efforts through its Project Initiation Plan paved the way for developing a new anti-corruption project. Through close collaboration with partners, various important foundational activities were completed, such as baseline studies, enhancement of the Anti-Corruption Justice Centre (ACJC) operational environment, and outreach. Together, these have shaped UNDP's approach to addressing corruption. UNDP's anti-corruption efforts have so far been limited to the justice and security sectors.

A series of events marked Afghanistan's commitment to fight against corruption during the period under review. These included establishment of the ACJC in 2016 to address high-level crimes and adoption of Afghanistan's Anti-Corruption Strategy by the High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption in 2017. At the time of the evaluation, a PIP with three specific outputs was UNDP's sole anti-corruption project for the period 2015–2019.¹⁴⁷ The expectation was that UNDP would eventually produce a strategy for a broader, multi-year, nationwide anti-corruption project, intended to be part of the newly developed LOTFA MPTF.¹⁴⁸

Despite initial delays in completing the first output due to slow recruitment of project staff and consultants, UNDP had completed (or was in the process of finalizing) various activities at the time of the evaluation. With an extension of the PIP for six months, UNDP completed a series of important foundational activities, including the baseline studies (e.g., mapping of anti-corruption initiatives by other implementing partners to identify gaps); a knowledge, attitudes and practices study of public officials regarding corruption in the security and justice sector; enhancement of ACJC's operational capacity through procurement of information and communication technology (ICT), equipment and vehicles; initiation of the International Anti-Corruption Day (2018) in collaboration with the Secretariat of the National High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption, UNAMA and UNODC; promotion of the use of technology in combating corruption through a 'hackathon' engaging youth (2019); and delivery of over \$500,000 in small grants to CSOs.¹⁴⁹

Long-term results of the individual activities were not available during the evaluation. However, the efforts led to the preparation of a new, comprehensive anti-corruption project in 2019.¹⁵⁰ UNDP established strong partnerships with UNODC and UNAMA, which provided technical leadership but had limited funds. Interviews with national partners indicated UNDP's visible contribution to the field.

The CPD 2015–2019 envisaged UNDP's anti-corruption work as part of its Governance portfolio (outcome 7, Accountable Governance) to 'address governance deficits and respond to the need to strengthen accountability of institutions.' However, its actual efforts have so far only focused on the

¹⁴⁶ Source: A/HRC/WG.6/32/AFG/1, UN Human Rights Council, Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, UN General Assembly, 13 November 2018, p. 4. The AIHRC was described as a national human rights institute that plays a "vital role in awareness raising and holding training on human rights issues for all walk of society in all provinces in Afghanistan." <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/WG.6/32/AFG/1>

¹⁴⁷ Source: Development Plan for a Nation-Wide Anti-Corruption Project, signed 12 December 2017. During its January–December 2018 implementation period, UNDP was expected to achieve: (i) establishment of an evidence base to inform UNDP's anti-corruption programming; (ii) development of implementation strategies for prioritized anti-corruption measures, with a focus on supporting implementation of the anti-corruption strategy in consultation with relevant partners (including media, civil society, religious leaders) and supporting the ACJC; and (iii) advocacy, public outreach and awareness-raising campaigns in targeted areas, including through a small grant facility for community outreach initiatives.

¹⁴⁸ Source: Programme team, UNDP Afghanistan.

¹⁴⁹ Source: Programme team, UNDP Afghanistan.

¹⁵⁰ Anti-Corruption Transparency, Integrity and Openness (ACTION) project, in support of the ACJC and CSOs.

security and justice sectors, placed under the Rule of Law and Justice portfolio (outcome 8).¹⁵¹ A plan under One UN also appeared limited in its scope and partners.¹⁵² Given the cross-sectoral nature of corruption in the country, UNDP will need to implement a holistic, issue-based programming approach that can address anti-corruption in all sectors, across its programme areas (e.g. local governance and development).

Finding 19. Coordination of stakeholders is complex in Afghanistan's rule-of-law and justice sector. UNDP has so far lacked visibility, leadership to facilitate substantive discussions and a consultative approach at the technical level, despite high expectations from its development partners.

The multiplicity of actors in the rule-of-law and justice sector makes effective coordination and information sharing critical, yet the challenges are well known¹⁵³ and the coordination requirements are heavy. There are several UN thematic groups under One UN, including gender, rule of law and justice, anti-corruption and humanitarian affairs. However, these have been mostly led by UNAMA and UNODC, and UNDP's substantive contribution has not always been visible.

UNDP's coordination should take place both formally and informally, and at various levels, including with the Government, the UNCT under One UN, donors and international NGOs, CSOs, and academic and research entities. However, UNDP was reported as

being generally weak in this regard, often lacking a collaborative and consultative approach in its work. Apart from the UNAMA-chaired rule of law and justice coordination and information-sharing mechanism — engaging the President's Office and the Second Vice President — there have been limited formal coordination or thematic groups involving UNDP and other actors at the project level. This has resulted in, for example, the establishment of three separate judicial training centres (one each at Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's Office and the Supreme Court) with varying curriculums.

UNDP contributed to improved civil, criminal and administrative justice services and provided sector-wide coordination for the establishment of the EAW Court. Through it, coordination has improved among the police family resource units, Attorney General Office's EAW units, legal aid service providers and the court system. But UNDP's coordination with other UN agencies operating in similar areas was reported as weak. UNDP's support to gender-based violence victims has also been inadequate, lacking a clear framework of joint work with key actors to facilitate the development of relevant policies and guidelines. UNDP would be in the best position to spearhead these processes, engaging such diverse entities as the police, prosecutors, gender and human rights actors, the Government, UN agencies and CSOs. Under LOTFA/MPTF, coordination is expected to improve between UNDP, donors and the Government, pending the appointment of chairs and co-chairs.

¹⁵¹ Source: The PIP explained its rationale for focusing on security and justice as 'two areas severely affected by corruption'. UNDP's consultations on anti-corruption issues have so far involved national entities, e.g. the Attorney General's Office, Second Vice President's Office, Afghanistan Independent Bar Association, Open Government Partnership and the Secretariat of the National High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption, in addition to UNAMA, UNODC, donors (e.g. USAID, European Union, UK Department for International Development, GIZ) and CSOs.

¹⁵² Under One UN for Afghanistan 2018–2021, corruption is addressed under the rule-of-law pillar, led by UNDP and UNAMA. UN support is situated within the context of the government's justice and judicial reform with the operationalization of the ACJC as a key focus area. UNDP reported that a joint programme has now been pursued with UNAMA and UNODC under the One UN framework, which would be in alignment with the Afghanistan national anti-corruption strategy.

¹⁵³ Past reviews such as the UNDAF common country assessment 2015–2019 and the independent midterm evaluation of the Justice and Human Rights Project Phase II (December 2014) suggest that limited stakeholder engagement and incentives are some of the key issues in Afghanistan's rule of law and justice sector. Other issues are corruption and competition between traditional and formal justice systems, underscoring the need for sustained coordination and information sharing among the stakeholders.

2.4 Livelihoods and resilience

Outcome 9: Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions.

The Livelihoods and Resilience portfolio has three UNDP-specific outputs:

- i. *Improved economic livelihoods, especially for vulnerable populations and women:* This output included initiatives to facilitate local economic development in an inclusive manner by helping to create better economic opportunities for vulnerable populations, especially women and unemployed youth, through area-based approaches linked to provincial and district development plans. UNDP's key projects included: (a) Livelihoods Improvement in Tajik-Afghan Cross-border Areas (LITACA I and II); (b) Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM); and (c) Community-based Agriculture and Rural Development (CBARD-West and CBARD-East).
- ii. *Vulnerable and marginalized populations, especially women, have increased and equitable access to natural resources and affordable energy, including through improved environmental governance:* This output attempted to strengthen environmental governance at governmental and community levels through policies, plans and legal instruments, and by promoting off-grid clean and renewable energy services, community-managed and owned. The first two outputs work at both household and institutional levels by enabling provincial/local authorities to develop appropriate plans that address the needs of vulnerable people. UNDP's projects included: (a) Establishing Integrated Models for Protected Areas and their

co-management in Afghanistan (Biodiversity project); and (b) Afghanistan Sustainable Energy for Rural Development (ASERD).

- iii. *Increased community resilience to climate change and disasters, thereby reducing vulnerability and sustaining economic gains:* This output worked at institutional level by developing risk management and early warning systems and climate change adaptation measures at provincial and local level through (a) Strengthening the resilience of rural livelihood options in Panjshir, Balkh, Uruzgan and Herat provinces to manage climate change-induced disaster risks (Climate Change Adaptation Project [CCAP]); and (b) Adapting Afghan Communities to Climate-induced Risk (CDRRP).¹⁵⁴

Based on the CPD, four cross-cutting principles were expected to guide UNDP's programme implementation: (i) area-based approaches for better targeting of beneficiaries; (ii) scalability of results and use of multidisciplinary approaches; (iii) partnership building; and (iv) use of national systems and 'Serving as One'.¹⁵⁵ For the livelihoods portfolio, UNDP's support has been in financial and management support for project implementation, mostly through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL).¹⁵⁶ at central and provincial levels. UNDP has also provided limited capacity-building through policy advice.

Key stakeholders included: (i) Implementing organizations: MRRD, MAIL, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD); (ii) implementing partners: UNHCR, ILO, National Environment Protection Agency, Wildlife Conservation Society; (iii) key donors: United States Government (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs), European Commission, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Government of Republic of Korea, United Kingdom Department for International Development, Government of Finland; and (iv) other entities implementing similar

¹⁵⁴ The NABDP ended in 2016. Together, these projects accounted for a budget of \$63.7 million over the period 2015–2018.

¹⁵⁵ Source: United Nations DP/DCP/AFG/3, Country programme document for Afghanistan (2015–2019), 2014.

¹⁵⁶ During 2017, it started working with a new government partner, MoLSAMD, through the SALAM project.

activities in the country: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Mercy Corps, GiZ (German cooperation), Aga Khan Foundation, FAO, World Bank, UNODC, Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), Afghanistan Meteorological Department (AMD) and Ministry of Energy and Water.

Finding 20. Resource mobilization for the outcome during the period under review has been substantially less than expected, forcing major reductions in the scope of planned activities.

Changes were made to the programming approach after the launch of the CPD. A key challenge to UNDP's implementation of planned activities has been the decline in donor assistance and confidence due to the low capacity of government institutions. Resource mobilization has fallen far short of what was envisaged in the project documents, rendering their targets unrealistic.

Table 4 shows the fund amounts for eight of the most-current projects reviewed in the evaluation. Except for the two CBARD projects (West and East) and LITACA I, funds mobilization has been consistently only about 10 percent to 25 percent of the initially budgeted amount, indicating that the initial project design was either over-ambitious or unrealistic. The evaluation team was informed that the country office revised (mostly downsized) the project budget over the years as funding fell below planned levels.¹⁵⁷ The livelihoods projects were also explained to be 'modular,' i.e. they could be scaled up or down, depending on the availability of resources. However, a project planned for a scale of over \$100 million, for example, could not simply be shrunk to fit a \$5 million to 10 million budget without drastic changes in its outcomes or approaches. In addition to declining donor engagement in Afghanistan, funds mobilization may have also been affected by the relatively low levels of utilization in some projects (Table 5).

TABLE 4. Fund mobilization against project document projections, outcome 9

Project (start–end date)	Project document budget (US\$)	Amount mobilized as of December 2018 (percent of project document budget) ¹⁵⁸
CCAP (Apr 2014–Mar 2019)	\$112,000,000 (later revised to \$11,400,000)	11,105,168 (9.9%) ¹⁵⁹
LITACA II (Jan 2018–Dec 2020)	\$10,559,227 (later revised to \$5,500,000)	909,686 (25.8%)
ASERD (Jan 2016–Dec 2019)	\$50,000,000 (later revised to \$7,800,000)	7,839,837 (20.9%)
SALAM (Jan 2017–Dec 2019)	\$120,000,000 (later revised to \$5,300,000)	4,707,857 (5.6%)
CBARD-W (Nov 2016–End Apr 2020)	\$14,666,138 (later revised to \$24,000,000)	12,612,145 (86.0%)
CBARD-E (Jan 2018–Dec 2020)	\$22,128,683	6,025,097 (82.6%)
Biodiversity (Jan 2014–Dec 2018)	\$61,741,819 (later revised to \$7,400,000)	8,525,738 (13.8%)
LITACA I (Mar 2014–Feb 2017)	\$10,751,059 (later revised to \$3,200,000)	4,592,493 (42.7%)

Source: Signed project documents and Atlas budget/expenditure data, May 2019

¹⁵⁷ The revised budget data in Table 4 were provided by the country office at the time of the evaluation.

¹⁵⁸ Assuming the budgeted amount is the same as funds mobilized through donor commitments.

¹⁵⁹ Percentage of funds mobilized is averaged using pro-rata budget up to the end of 2018. For illustration, the budget for LITACA II for three years is \$10.6 million. The prorated budget for year 1 (January–December 2018) is \$3.5 million. For ASERD, the pro-rata budget from January 2016 to December 2018 is \$37.5 million (three years), and so on.

TABLE 5. Fund utilization in projects, outcome 9

Project	Percent utilization (through 2018)
CCAP	88.8
LITACA II	89.1
ASERD	67.4
SALAM	41.4
CBARD-W	59.4
CBARD-E	36.8
Biodiversity	82.1
LITACA I	71.1

Source: Atlas financial data, May 2019

Other key changes made included the following: The CCAP was initially envisaged as an area-based approach under component 1, which aimed to develop provincial level plans for climate change scenarios in agriculture in only four provinces. However, as noted in the midterm review, this was later expanded to include all 34 provinces¹⁶⁰ due to pressure on the executing ministry (MAIL). As the actual resource mobilization fell far short of the planned estimate, resources had to be spread even more thinly. Though livelihoods activities remained focused on four provinces, climate change scenario planning was extended to other provinces. The midterm review noted that this expansion from an area-based approach to a whole-country approach appears to have been pushed by the Government, which wants to be seen as working throughout the country.

Under the UNDP-GEF biodiversity project, the key outcome of the component to establish the Afghanistan Parks and Wildlife Authority became impossible to achieve as the Government decided not to establish any new government agencies. Disagreement

between the National Environment Protection Agency and MAIL on the mandate and responsibilities of the Authority was another factor.¹⁶¹

Finding 21. UNDP adapted to changes in the context that emerged after the CPD formulation, especially with regard to the increasing rate of forced displacement and return from other countries. Though it was not envisaged in the original CPD, UNDP began to respond to the needs of internally displaced people and those returning from neighbouring countries.

Since 2015–2016, the escalating violence and increasing Taliban control of territories wrested from the Government has caused large-scale displacement in the country. At the same time, the pace of return of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries (Pakistan and Iran) intensified, with a large number of returnees and refugees stretching the capacity of towns and local authorities. When the CPD was developed, UNDP had not foreseen this sudden influx of displaced people and refugees. The SALAM project was launched in early 2017 precisely to address these needs. UNDP began partnering with UNHCR and ILO through the project to address migration issues, support the Government in providing livelihoods for those people and explore durable solutions.

Finding 22. In economic livelihoods, UNDP provided employment opportunities and improved access to markets for farmers and producers in targeted areas. But some projects are still in a formative state, with insufficient outputs so far to make a difference in peoples' livelihoods. The limited scale of the projects also means that the effects are highly localized, extending to a handful of communities in a few villages of a few districts. UNDP's interventions could have offered larger scale benefits had they combined delivery of activities with systematic evidence-based research and advocacy, which were missing in the programme.

¹⁶⁰ Tanvir Hussain and Mohammad Wasim, 'Final Report, Mid-Term Review of UNDP GEF-LDCF2 Project Afghanistan, Strengthening the resilience of rural livelihood options for Afghan communities in Panjshir, Balkh, Uruzgan and Herat Provinces to manage climate change-induced disaster risks', November 2017.

¹⁶¹ Source: Kris B. Prasada Rao and Abdul Rauf Meraj, 'Midterm Review of the UNDP-GEF project 'Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan (Biodiversity Project), 2014-2018', final report, December 2017.

The LITACA project has demonstrated its potential to create jobs and income opportunities for vulnerable people by providing markets and networking opportunities for farmers, entrepreneurs and producers in remote rural and peri-urban communities in cross-border areas of Afghanistan and Tajikistan.¹⁶² Livelihood activities were generating reasonable income¹⁶³ for communities, and irrigation infrastructure was at various stages of completion. Key informant interviews indicated that the various interventions within this project, by themselves, are producing development outcomes for targeted beneficiaries. However, due to the limited scale of projects, the effects are highly localized, extending to a handful of communities in a few villages of a few districts. There is no realistic mechanism through which benefits can be sustained following completion of the project.

Projects implemented as pilots on a small scale would still have been meaningful had UNDP demonstrated capacity to draw evidence and lessons from them and bring the results to national and donor policy tables. This hasn't been the case generally. UNDP distributed 600 improved cook stoves in villages in Herat, for example, but has yet to draw systematic data about their impact (fuelwood savings, health benefits, cost savings for households, etc.), which could help to influence policies.¹⁶⁴ Without this data, the overall impact of this one-off intervention is not clear in a province that has about 61,000¹⁶⁵ households.

Finding 23. Modest results have been achieved in supporting access to natural resources and affordable energy and improved environmental governance.

UNDP supported the Government to finalize a rural renewable energy strategy¹⁶⁶ and provided training to government officials and the private sector on renewable energy through the ASERD project.¹⁶⁷ Due to implementation delays in rural electrification projects, the benefits have not yet started flowing, except for a limited distribution of cook stoves UNDP organized in several districts. Through the GEF-funded small grant programme, UNDP has improved access to clean energy for 255 households in the Bamyan protected area and Panjab district through the provision of solar cookers and heaters. UNDP has also helped 2,800 households in Bamyan district to convert biodegradable waste into compost and to pilot organic farming.¹⁶⁸

The biodiversity project supported by UNDP increased protected area coverage.¹⁶⁹ It has also developed an approach to integrating people's livelihoods needs with sustainable land use and protected areas by planting fruit trees, which generate income and fuel wood for local people. This helped generate short-term local employment (2,088 working days) while also providing a long-term source of fuel and fencing material and establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management.¹⁷⁰

Finding 24. UNDP has developed models for community-level approaches to climate change adaptation and assisted relevant government agencies in developing appropriate policies in this regard. However, its work related to strengthening early warning system needs to be informed by better analysis of existing systems in the country.

¹⁶² Source: A. Bhattacharjee and J. Juarez, 'Final Evaluation of Livelihoods Improvement in Cross-border Areas of Tajikistan and Afghanistan (LITACA)', 2017. Through the LITACA, MRRD established a centralized market facility, increasing income for 1,204 producers (504 female) and providing 50,000 consumers (25 percent women) with better access to markets than before. The project provided markets and networking opportunities through its women's economic empowerment project and one-village-one-product.

¹⁶³ Source: ROAR 2016 and the final evaluation of the LITACA project (2017).

¹⁶⁴ The stoves were distributed six to eight months prior to the evaluation.

¹⁶⁵ Source: MRRD interviews.

¹⁶⁶ Source: UNDP IEO, ROAR compilation Afghanistan 2015–2018 and 2018.

¹⁶⁷ A total of 220 civil servants (5 percent female), private sector and research institute representatives were trained on the latest development of renewable energy technologies (ROAR 2016).

¹⁶⁸ Source: ROAR 2015.

¹⁶⁹ The project increased protected area coverage to 118,000 hectares (Source: Dr. Wolfgang Haas, 'UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme 2015–2019 Midterm Review', December 2017).

¹⁷⁰ Source: UNDP Annual Project Progress Report 2017.

The CCAP project has rehabilitated rangelands in project areas, introduced drought-resistant crops, created flood protections and irrigation structures, and supported livelihoods by providing materials such as greenhouses and raisin houses.¹⁷¹ All these are strengthening communities' resilience in the areas where they are implemented. The CCAP is a key source of support for an NPP irrigation development, Afghanistan's core platform for agriculture recovery.¹⁷² The CCAP has prepared climate change scenarios for the entire country and provided quality climate change adaptation training to government officials, NGOs and communities.¹⁷³

UNDP supported the National Environmental Protection Agency to prepare Afghanistan's climate change strategy and action plan and national adaptation plan, which identified emerging climate change challenges and priority interventions for adaptation.¹⁷⁴ UNDP supported ANDMA and MRRD to prepare an early recovery needs assessment and a recovery and rehabilitation plan. UNDP has helped these two institutions to identify and manage disaster-associated risks in Jowzjan and Badakhshan provinces.¹⁷⁵

The choice of partners in some instances shows a lack of understanding of institutional processes within the Government. AMD and the Ministry of Energy and Water are officially designated agencies for early warning. AMD is responsible for flash flood forecasting and Ministry of Energy and Water is responsible for all other water-related services and studies. Additionally, ANDMA is working with AMD in developing an early warning communication scheme, in which AMD would issue warnings that are communicated with the ANDMA central office in Kabul. However, UNDP's CDRRP project selected

MAIL to develop a component of a community-based early warning system. UNDP's rationale for selecting MAIL was that AMD/ANDMA did not have competence in the other three areas the project aims to deliver. This may be true, but MAIL did not have the institutional competence in early warning either.

Finding 25. The CPD identified the key issues and challenges in the country. Although the CPD did not have an explicit theory of change for the livelihoods programme, there were implicit assumptions that underpinned its results chain. However, the validity of the assumptions had not been confirmed. A deeper analysis of UNDP's capacity, resources and competence would have given the portfolio a greater focus. Rather than the country programme being driven solely by the country's needs, it should have been driven by evidence and the potential for impact, i.e. an assessment of where UNDP can add value, working with others to drive changes that are achievable in the context.

There are a number of major programmes related to outcome 9 in which several organizations have been undertaking substantive work, providing a wealth of evidence about what works and what doesn't in the country. For example, the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise and Development Programme and the Government's Comprehensive Agriculture Rural Development Facility attempted large-scale rural development interventions similar in scope to some of UNDP's current projects. Yet, there is very little evidence that UNDP has taken these lessons on board. Another important lesson that appears not to have been reflected in the design of the CBARD project is that the US Government alone spent \$8.62 billion (2002–2017) to control poppy growing

¹⁷¹ In 2017, the CCAP (i) constructed 98 greenhouses, built 8 underground cold storage facilities and 2 raisin production houses, and planted 481 hectares of degraded rangeland with drought-resistant plants to reduce soil erosion, benefiting 2,180 households; (ii) completed 23 irrigation, flood protection and water supply projects; (iii) completed 11 irrigation projects, installing intakes to better divert water in canals for irrigation and reinforcing waterways by lining three canals, repairing one karez (an indigenous method of irrigation in which groundwater is tapped by a tunnel that after some distance comes out in the open and conducts water to the command area) and constructing 21 aqueducts. (Source: GEF CCAP Annual Progress Report, 2017).

¹⁷² Source: UNDP Afghanistan, project document, 'Strengthening the resilience of rural livelihood options for Afghan communities in Panjshir, Balkh, Uruzgan and Herat provinces to manage climate change-induced disaster risks', April 2014.

¹⁷³ Training for livelihood sub-projects has been completed, and rangeland rehabilitation has exceeded targets. The CCAP trained 190 government officials and local development council members (137 women) on integrating climate change adaptation measures, such as water management infrastructure and livelihoods options, into policies and development plans. Source: GEF CCAP, 2017.

¹⁷⁴ Source: ROAR 2015.

¹⁷⁵ Source: ROAR 2015.

in Afghanistan, including alternative development, with very little success.¹⁷⁶ Project documents do not explain how UNDP interventions in similar areas will address these well-documented challenges.¹⁷⁷

The CPD did not have an explicit theory of change, but there were assumptions underpinning its results chain.¹⁷⁸ However, neither the CPD nor subsequent progress reports provided evidence to test the validity of those assumptions. For example, several UNDP projects (CBARD, CCAP, SALAM, LITACA) aim to promote high-value crops and market access for the poor, without examining institutional factors that may influence such outcomes. Evidence from independent research in the country (and elsewhere) suggests that the relationship between citizens and the State is mediated by personal relationships based on kinship and tribal links (now compounded by access to means of violence), and that resources and markets are inaccessible to poor and vulnerable people, who usually have poor connections.¹⁷⁹ Access to credit, markets and State services is determined by one's standing in this relationship. Yet UNDP interventions assume that poor and vulnerable people will benefit from technical interventions, such as efforts to promote high-value crops or storage facilities or to expose producers to export markets.

Finding 26. UNDP's support on livelihoods and natural resource management has produced several important project-level outputs. However, the level of UNDP's contribution to the CPD outcome is speculative, as the outputs are not linked to the

CPD indicators. Significant implementation delays were also reported among some projects (SALAM, ASERD and CDRRP).

There is evidence that the projects have produced output-level results, namely: (i) introduction of drought-resistant crops, (ii) construction of green-houses and cold storages, benefiting 33,571 households,¹⁸⁰ and (iii) water harvesting measures, improving irrigation of 4,972 hectares of agricultural land, benefiting 28,000 people.¹⁸¹ The project-level output data, however, do not lend themselves to direct assessment against the CPD, as CPD output indicators are not tracked. As noted in the country programme midterm review, UNDP's practice of focusing its results assessment primarily at project output level is problematic, as is its limited tracking of CPD indicators. UNDP's contribution at the higher programme level is unclear.¹⁸²

Implementation delays were observed in several projects. The SALAM project was beginning to get off the ground only in 2019, after two years of delays due to a fractious relationship between MoLSAMD and UNDP. The project has less than a year to deliver an ambitious programme of vocational training and trainee placement, in addition to setting up institutional structures in support of regular labour migration. The electricity projects under ASERD have been in the assessment and design phase for most of the four years of their existence; construction of one of the five planned mini-grids will start during 2019. As 2019 is the last year of ASERD implementation, by the time the commissioning of the only mini-grid under construction is completed, it will

¹⁷⁶ United States Government, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 'Lessons Learned Report, Counter-narcotics: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan', June 2018. The report showed the bulk of USAID's "alternative development programming focused on large-scale, short-term interventions designed to replace poppy with another crop. Some projects, for example improvements to irrigation systems, even contributed to increased poppy cultivation."

¹⁷⁷ The evaluation noted that under CBARD, UNDP has recently partnered with UNODC to develop a monitoring system to gather evidence and track progress of the project.

¹⁷⁸ The assumptions included (i) a reasonable degree of stability in the country within which local markets operate; (ii) government institutions (and their leaders) have a similar understanding of needs and are committed to addressing them; and (iii) farmers/rural producers, entrepreneurs and small/micro-businesses have access to capital and credit and are able to operate freely.

¹⁷⁹ Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, Policy Paper 1, 'No more standard programming: economic development in fragile settings, lessons from Afghanistan', April 2018.

¹⁸⁰ ROAR compilation Afghanistan 2015–2018.

¹⁸¹ Op. cit.

¹⁸² Dr. Wolfgang Hass, 'UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme 2015–2019 Midterm Review', December 2017. The review noted that the obsession with monitoring project outputs and lack of a CPD indicator tracking "prevents the Country Office from understanding the aggregate contribution UNDP is making against higher-level results, and from communicating this overall contribution to national development priorities."

be time for the project to close. This will leave little time to set up and test management and operations and maintenance systems with local authorities and Community Development Councils (CDCs). CDRRP started in late 2017 and is still in the preparatory phase. Delivery of community-level activities is yet to begin.

The definition of the livelihoods and resilience outcome in the CPD is ambitious and broad: 'Economic growth is accelerated to reduce vulnerabilities and poverty, strengthen the resilience of the licit economy and reduce the illicit economy in its multiple dimensions'. Due to the vast scope of the outcome, lack of indicator tracking and implementation delays, there is insufficient evidence to determine UNDP's contribution to it.

Finding 27. UNDP's efforts under outcome 9 are fragmented, uncoordinated, isolated and lacking in influence. UNDP has yet to find an appropriate niche to influence the pro-poor development landscape in the country.

UNDP aims to deliver a wide range of activities and outputs spread over a vast geographical area, covering at least 17 provinces in the country. Among the activities planned are: Train government officials at central and provincial levels; develop irrigation infrastructure; promote alternative livelihood options; introduce high-value crops; facilitate access to markets; strengthen biodiversity; support rural energy projects; aid rangeland development; support vocational training and off-farm employment; address migration issues; contribute to rural infrastructure development; support cross-border trade; develop a community-based early warning system; develop national policies; support capacity development for climate change adaptation; and support counter-narcotics campaigning (CBARD projects).

With total annual funding averaging about \$12 million to \$13 million, delivering such a wide range of outputs in such a large and complex country as Afghanistan is unrealistic, even if security were assured.¹⁸³ As noted earlier, resource mobilization for 2015–2018 fell far short of what was envisaged in the project documents. Low fund mobilization has forced UNDP to scale back the ambitious scope of the projects, often drastically, in line with available funding. This results in disconnected initiatives, with UNDP working on irrigation development in one area, providing support for growing high-value crops in another, developing local markets in a different area, and supporting vocational training in an entirely different community, with few linkages among the wide range of programme activities.

As noted in an internal review, UNDP needs to focus on a smaller number of geographical areas and pursue partnerships with other organizations, including CSOs, the Government and the World Bank.¹⁸⁴ The World Bank — in partnership with the Government, the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, United Kingdom Department for International Development, USAID and WFP — is currently working to develop a social assistance programme aimed at the most vulnerable and ultra-poor people. UNDP's voice and presence in this initiative is peripheral. Currently, as key informant interviews showed, partnership or joint programming remains limited in scope and depth even with other UN agencies that have complementary programmes, such as UNHCR, FAO and WFP. UNDP is mostly seen as working on its own, albeit with a Government of Afghanistan counterpart.

Finding 28. UNDP needs to strengthen gender and equity consideration in its programming in terms of how its benefits are distributed among communities.

¹⁸³ The total annual expenditure on outcome 9 for 2015–2018 was \$23.6 million in 2015, \$12.8 million in 2016, \$15.8 million in 2017 and \$15.6 million in 2018. This amounts to 3.3 percent of the total programme expenditures (or 22.1 percent without LOTFA). Data as of November 2018, Atlas/PowerBI, 17 May 2019.

¹⁸⁴ UNDP, Afghanistan Alignment Mission report, 2015.

UNDP's strategic programme review (2016) noted a tendency in the country office to equate gender mainstreaming and equality with implementing women-targeted activities.¹⁸⁵ In some projects (CBARD, CCAP), the CDCs — which are controlled by men from dominant ethnic groups — control all decision-making and tend to corner a large portion of project benefits (commercial greenhouses, for example¹⁸⁶). UNDP, without direct access to communities, may have no choice but to leave the selection of project beneficiaries to the CDCs. However, in a society driven by tribal and ethnic divisions, allowing CDC members full control over such decisions, especially where private benefits are part of project delivery, could have a pernicious effect in the medium to long term. Although most projects incorporate gender in targeting, most of the indicators in the logframe were not gender disaggregated.

Promoting gender equity is a challenge in Afghanistan. UNDP Afghanistan reported that through livelihoods and resilience projects UNDP is pursuing dialogue and advocacy with CDC members to include women, and with project developers to incorporate gender equality in the projects.

Finding 29. There is little evidence of UNDP playing a coordinating or convening role in the country on livelihoods, climate change or resilience issues. That role has been taken over by the World Bank.

UNDP has struggled to position itself in the development landscape of Afghanistan, where dozens of entities have been working for at least the past two decades, often on a much larger scale. UNDP is perceived to be working on its own, without close coordination with other relevant players or major initiatives by other organizations. There have been some interactions with UN agencies on different projects. However, except for UNODC's involvement in UNDP's CBARD projects, engagement with

other agencies (UNHCR and International Organization for Migration on the SALAM project) has been sporadic. A durable solutions working group was set up in 2016 with UNDP as co-chair, but in the absence of any progress, the initiative is reported to have fizzled out.

Drawing lessons from the previous CPD cycle, UNDP has rightly made a shift from implementing mega-projects to community-oriented projects focusing on livelihoods and resilience, which provide a degree of coherence, given UNDP's emphasis on poverty and vulnerability. However, UNDP is struggling to draw lessons from this work that would enable it to lead thinking and debate among development actors in the country. This is a role played largely by the World Bank. UNDP Afghanistan informed that the livelihoods and resilience team is conscious of this gap and is beginning to engage with other institutions and initiatives in this regard.

Finding 30. Some projects have strong government ownership, which encourages sustainability. Others will require continued funding for the foreseeable future to ensure that benefits continue to flow. Capacity development has been an elusive goal in some cases.

The Government has ownership of some of the activities, and these are therefore likely to be sustained. For example, mini-grids and irrigation infrastructure are being implemented with active participation by relevant government departments, and local authorities are taking responsibility for levying use fees and performing maintenance.

A number of factors have affected sustainability. First, as noted in an earlier finding, implementation delays have beset many of the projects (ASERD, SALAM and CDRRP in particular). This has reduced the time available to fully institute systems established through projects. The biodiversity project may

¹⁸⁵ UNDP, 'Afghanistan Strategic Programme Review', 2016.

¹⁸⁶ For example, the CBARD-W project established 95 commercial greenhouses in Badghis, while another 184 greenhouses are under construction in Farah and Badghis. Through its training of trainers curriculum in gender-sensitive business training, the project trained farmers on how to apply sound business practices based on value chains and market analysis. Each commercial greenhouse costs about \$7,733, of which the farmer/owner contributes 10 percent; the project provides the rest of the capital. At interviews in Jalalabad, there were three CDC members (all men) who claimed to be beneficiaries of four greenhouses. In the same project as well as in CDRRP, mini greenhouses are provided to women farmers, with each unit costing about \$500-600.

require continued funding, as revenue generation for the protected area is still low and the Government is financially constrained, as was noted in the project's midterm review.¹⁸⁷

Another factor relates to UNDP's approach to capacity development. Interview results suggested that UNDP's partnership with MAIL and MoLSAMD is relatively new (compared with its partnership with MRRD); and that UNDP interventions have not built their capacity as UNDP established project units outside the ministerial structure, and UNDP's interactions are mostly with the project units. A midterm evaluation of the SALAM project,¹⁸⁸ for instance, noted that UNDP's intervention replaced MoLSAMD capacity rather than strengthening it. This may have been an unintended consequence of solely focusing on project implementation.

A further constraint has been the lack of resources for scaling up project activities. The same issue has rendered the targets set in the CPD unrealistic. The resulting scale of activities is often too small to provide sufficient evidence or learning to underpin expansion beyond project areas.

2.5 UNDP's coordination/ convening role

Finding 31. Through its partnerships with the Government, UNDP is well placed to contribute to and influence policy debate and development. Despite much expectation among partners, UNDP's engagement in policy dialogue has been limited. In the presence of UNAMA and large-scale players, UNDP has yet to play its traditional convener role.

UNDP's brand is built on its ability to provide a platform or act as a convener for development partners and institutions to contribute to governments' development goals. Interviews for this evaluation indicated that UNDP should be well-positioned in Afghanistan to work in such areas as strengthening political processes and peacebuilding; enhancing service delivery; promoting gender equality and human rights; improving legal systems and the rule of law; and addressing corruption. UNDP's comparative strengths were perceived as its established partnerships with the Government and its ability to bring together relevant partners to address issues through policy and legal reforms.

UNAMA has a strong presence in Afghanistan, given its responsibility for coordinating development aid.¹⁸⁹ While UNDP has maintained a close relationship with UNAMA, its voice in policy debates, particularly on issues relating to poverty, livelihoods and resilience, has been conspicuously absent, according to several donors and partners interviewed for this evaluation. Interview results suggested that a combination of factors have influenced this: pressure to focus UNDP energy on implementing projects for which it can obtain funds; a lack of clarity in project objectives; reliance on consultants for sector-specific technical work; and limited ability to generate and disseminate evidence-based data that can be brought to the policy table. Policy development, especially evidence-driven policies, requires skills that go well beyond contract or project management.

The legitimacy of UNDP's convening role and power was also disputed during the interviews. Some noted it was UNAMA and the World Bank who "set the dialogue" in Afghanistan, with their political mandate and funds, respectively; and that UNDP's role should be to "implement projects" that can demonstrate impact on the ground. These views somewhat echoed a recommendation of the

¹⁸⁷ Kris B. Prasada Rao and Abdul Rauf Meraj, 'Mid-Term Review of the UNDP-GEF Project: Establishing integrated models for protected areas and their co-management in Afghanistan' (Biodiversity Project) 2014–2018, Final, 12 December 2017.

¹⁸⁸ Sue Emmott, 'Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM), Midterm Evaluation Report, Final Report', 14 December 2018.

¹⁸⁹ UNAMA is led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, supported by two deputies on political, military and police affairs; and a Deputy Special Representative on development matters as Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator. UNAMA is part of One UN, represents the UN system at donor meetings, and leads meetings and coordinates activities at the regional level. UNAMA collaborates with UNDP on election support and has its own technical staff on governance and rule of law, gender and child protection.

strategic programme review that UNDP produce something tangible.¹⁹⁰ However, these views fall short of the expectation at UNDP's corporate level and within the UN as a whole that UNDP serve as an 'integrator' in the UN system, connecting the dots in a complex operational environment.¹⁹¹

2.6 Sustainable Development Goals

Finding 32. The Government's SDG efforts to date have been supported through a dedicated project under the Governance programme. Across UNDP's portfolios, however, limited attempt was observed to explain how they link to specific Goals or how their results feed into monitoring and analysis efforts at national/subnational levels. Given Afghanistan's continuing conflict, supporting the SDGs has also been viewed as somewhat secondary to its core work. A fragility-sensitive approach should be fully applied to the SDGs. A broader government engagement would be required for its financial sustainability.

The Government's commitment to the SDGs was demonstrated by its presentation of the voluntary progress report at the UN High-Level Political Forum in 2017.¹⁹² There are three phases to the country's SDG implementation process: nationalization, alignment with national strategies and implementation.¹⁹³

UNDP has supported this approach through one of its governance projects, focusing on the national SDG Secretariat's coordination and advocacy capacities (e.g. working groups, communication strategy) at the Ministry of Economy.

Given Afghanistan's various constraints, support from UNDP and other development partners was reported as crucial in achieving the SDGs in the country. Results of this evaluation suggested, however, that UNDP has yet to conceptualize a comprehensive support strategy beyond delivering a project. There was little evidence of any programme efforts substantively feeding into SDG monitoring, analysis, reporting or policy development at the national or subnational levels.¹⁹⁴ The scope of UNDP's engagement with the Government on the SDGs has also been limited to the Ministry of Economy; it has not engaged with the Ministry of Finance, which controls the national budget.¹⁹⁵ Further, the predominant view among UNDP staff (and some UN officials) was that engaging with the SDGs is somewhat secondary to their work in Afghanistan because "humanitarian work takes priority" in a country undergoing conflict.

Given the country's protracted conflict, it is critical for UNDP to apply a 'fragility-sensitive' approach to the SDGs at the country programme level, by designing programmes that address root causes of

¹⁹⁰ The Strategic Programme Review noted an urgent need to "address not only State building and capacity development but to produce tangible and positive results for the average Afghan sufficient to making it attractive to remain in the country" (p. 6).

¹⁹¹ Sources: (i) General Assembly resolution A/RES/72/279 (adopted 31 May 2018) on the repositioning of the UN development system, i.e. "...giving due consideration to the role of a responsive UNDP as the support platform of the United Nations development system providing an integrator function in support of countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda;" and (ii) UNDP Strategic Plan 2018–2021 (DP/2017/38) says, "Development challenges are increasingly complex, requiring ever greater collaboration across sectors and partners to deliver impacts at scale and to utilize limited resources efficiently. The breadth of expertise and country presence of UNDP make it unique within the UN development system to help countries to 'connect the dots' on the most complex sustainable development issues. Given this and its reputation as an impartial partner, UNDP helps governments to convene across line ministries and development partners to promote 'whole-of government' and 'whole-of-society'; responses vital for transformational change."

¹⁹² Source: 'Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political Forum: SDG Progress Report – Afghanistan', July 2017.

¹⁹³ The phases involve: (i) SDG nationalization: e.g. consultations between the Government, private sector, academia and other groups; establishment of policy structures; and creation of sector-specific approaches; (ii) SDG alignment: e.g. assessment of alignment with the NPP/ANPDF; formulation of an action plan; and (iii) implementation, communication and outreach: e.g. production of material in multiple languages.

¹⁹⁴ The evaluation team noted that it was not within the objective of the SDG support project under the UNDP Governance Unit to establish links to other UNDP programmes/projects; and that, within the Governance-related projects, a pilot attempt was made to map its various projects against the SDGs. However, at the country office level, there have not yet been systematic efforts to address the SDGs across all programmatic efforts, outside the existing SDG support project.

¹⁹⁵ The Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Finance represent different political factions under the National Unity Government, and thus it is critical to bring the Ministry of Finance into the SDG efforts. Particularly, the SDGs should be addressed through the Ministry's Public Expenditure Review process.

the fragility to accelerate development.¹⁹⁶ In addition to the regular mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support process for the SDGs, applying a fragility-sensitive approach requires that UNDP focus on demand-driven solutions (with ownership/leadership by government and national stakeholders); linkages between development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work (the triple nexus); harmonization of business processes and plans among partners; and ensuring results and accountability, human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability.¹⁹⁷

2.7 Incorporation of past evaluation recommendations

Finding 33. Lessons from the last country programme evaluation and reviews have largely been reflected in UNDP's portfolios. UNDP continued to prioritize the flagship programmes (Governance and LOTFA) and introduced smaller scale projects with community-level support (Livelihoods). Along the way, however, opportunities to provide high-level strategic advice were missed. UNDP has struggled to position its livelihoods work in the overall development landscape of Afghanistan.

The 2014 Assessment of Development Results (ADR) recommended that UNDP continue to prioritize democratic governance and the rule of law, where it has a “clear comparative advantage”. This was the case in the review period for this evaluation, in which UNDP continued to make substantive investments in these two portfolios and was most recognized for this work (e.g. in elections and police payroll).

The ADR called for UNDP's continued assistance to municipalities, provincial and district governor's offices, and provincial assemblies to promote decentralization. It argued that UNDP should revive its assistance to Parliament, broadening its focus

beyond the secretariats, to support and train parliamentarians themselves. In response, a new project (Institutional and Capacity Support to the Parliament of Afghanistan, or ICSPA) was launched as part of the Subnational Governance Programme. As discussed earlier, through the ICSPA, UNDP embedded staff to support the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament.

In recognition of extensive de facto local autonomy, the ADR recommended that UNDP pay specific attention to engaging with customary Afghan governance and judicial systems, which may not reflect international standards but have the advantage of legitimacy in the eyes of the people. In response, UNDP supported the formulation of the district coordinating councils to become the formal district-level elected bodies, which provide oversight and offer a platform for participatory decision-making. UNDP funded a pilot of implementing the subnational governance policy and has included these coordinating councils in new projects under the subnational governance and development strategy.

The 2017 midterm review of the country programme argued that UNDP should improve the balance between assisting the Government and supporting the Afghan people. To this end it argued UNDP should increase its focus on (i) “community-level support to service delivery, livelihoods and resilience building” and (ii) “strengthening civil society to increase public pressure towards accountable governance and effective and equitable service delivery.”¹⁹⁸ The LoGo project reflects a greater emphasis on strengthening civil society. Similarly, the Global Fund programme has boosted local capacity to deliver health services, train community health workers and deploy them to hard-to-reach areas.

The ADR noted that UNDP's focus on mega-projects like the National Area-based Development Programme (NABDP), while it invested heavily in

¹⁹⁶ A UNDP guidance document defines the ‘fragility-sensitive approach’ as “a process of understanding the nature and extent of the risk of shocks and stresses, and the context and dynamics that shape people's responses; the interactions of different hazards and their impact on institutions and systems; and the design and implementation of targeted development programmes to address the root causes of fragility, build resilience, protect sustainable development gains and accelerate development progress.” ‘Fragility’ is defined as a situation in which institutions (i) exhibit chronic deficits in delivering on their core functions; (ii) are susceptible to wholesale breakdown when they experience shocks and crisis; (iii) are slow to recover after crisis; and (iv) have weak State-society relations. Source: UNDP, ‘SDG-Ready: UNDP Offer on SDG Implementation in Fragile Situations’, 2016.

¹⁹⁷ Op. cit.

¹⁹⁸ Dr. Wolfgang Hass, ‘UNDP Afghanistan Country Programme 2015–2019 Mid-Term Review’, December 2017.

much-needed local infrastructure development, made little contribution to reducing poverty or increasing livelihood opportunities for people. It also noted that UNDP did not adequately invest in natural resource management and disaster risk management, which are crucial for addressing vulnerability. The present evaluation found that UNDP tried to address both issues, moving away from rural infrastructure to direct livelihoods support at household level. However, as noted earlier, the community-based micro-projects have been too small and isolated to make a significant impact, and the evidence on their outcomes is not strong.¹⁹⁹

The midterm review noted that, in dividing its support between national and subnational institutions and delivering numerous livelihoods and resilience projects at local level, UNDP had failed to demonstrate its capacity to provide high-level strategic advice to the Government or leverage its global mandate to influence national policies.²⁰⁰ Similar observations were made in the past: An evaluation on a project with the MRRD (the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise and Development Programme)²⁰¹ noted that UNDP functioned as a channel for donor funding but did not add substantive value as the UN's global development agency. A recent evaluation on the SALAM project noted that, while it was relevant at the time of design (2016), its relevance had been reduced by slow progress in implementation, the presence of larger and more sustainable interventions, and a less urgent political climate in 2018.²⁰²

The present evaluation reconfirmed the validity of these observations from the past. UNDP is still struggling to position its livelihoods and resilience work in

the development landscape of Afghanistan, where dozens of other partners have been working for at least the past two decades, and often on a much larger scale. During the evaluation, many external stakeholders pointed to UNDP's significant engagement in the areas of elections and police payrolls (LOTFA) but struggled to identify any area where they saw UNDP playing a significant role in livelihoods and resilience.

2.8 Programme design, implementation and oversight issues influencing performance

Finding 34. UNDP's programme performance was influenced by various factors. Favourable results were observed (or indications were promising) when UNDP exploited its long-term relationships with government and UN partners and used innovation. Weaknesses in programme design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluations were observed in all programme areas. Lack of clarity in the overall programme-level strategy, capacity development approach and attention to the country's fragility are critical issues moving forward.

UNDP's programmes are broadly aligned with national development priorities. Its performance was facilitated by the following, among others:

Long-term close relationships with government partners. UNDP's access to government partners has facilitated its governance work, including election and parliamentary support and promotion of a gender equality agenda. Its collaboration with key

¹⁹⁹ Only in the case of the LITACA, UNDP appears to have been able to lobby the Government to take forward the successful model of linking producers to local markets. Discussions were under way to launch a national programme utilizing lessons from the project. Except for the LITACA, however, UNDP has not demonstrated sufficient capacity to mobilize resources to scale up the activities on its own, or by influencing government policies or donors to invest further.

²⁰⁰ Source: Country programme midterm review, p. 23: "[UNDP Afghanistan's] strong service delivery orientation over many years has lowered UNDP's profile and capacity in Afghanistan to provide high-level strategic advice to the Government and donor partners. ... UNDP in Kabul is still primarily perceived as a service provider and has not fully leveraged its mandate to influence national policy and programmatic choices, including the formulation of the ANPDF and the NPPs." The review made several recommendations, including that UNDP: (i) invest in national statistical capacity to ensure evidence-based planning and programming; (ii) balance its support to government capacity and service delivery; (iii) incorporate conflict analysis in assessing vulnerability and ensure that the most vulnerable people are targeted; (iv) provide clear exit strategies for all projects; (v) develop linkages and synergies within project portfolios managed by different programme teams.

²⁰¹ Erik Lyby, Sayed Ahmad Rohani, 'Independent Evaluation of the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise and Development Programme REDKAN and RED-Helmand projects', UNDP, MRRD Final Report, 22 March 2014.

²⁰² Sue Emmott, 'Support Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM)', Midterm Evaluation Report, Final Report', 14 December 2018.

ministries in the rule-of-law and justice sector (such as MOIA, Ministry of Justice, Attorney General's Office and MOWA) as well as the formal and traditional justice service providers has helped policy harmonization (as recommended by the previous evaluation) and reforms in core business planning processes, finance and budget execution, and human resource management. UNDP's long-term, strong partnership with MRRD (which has extensive capacity to implement government projects) and MAIL (which attracts significant resources from donors for agricultural programmes) was a key factor driving its achievements in livelihoods and resilience work.

UN inter-agency partnerships. The One UN framework encourages sector-wide collaboration and guides UNDP's inter-agency work. Good collaboration was observed in several areas during the review period.²⁰³ Mutual knowledge and information sharing about 'who is doing what' were important in facilitating inter-agency collaboration. At the same time, some informants reported tensions due to inter-agency competition for finite resources. It was noted that the success of One UN "depends a lot on personality". Significant duplication was also reported, for example with UN Women, in the area of rule of law and justice.

Innovation. The use of innovation and knowledge management is expected to facilitate the rule-of-law programme, particularly in its upcoming anti-corruption efforts. A cutting-edge technology has been sought to enable complex information analysis, which will be part of the M&E plan under the new LOTFA, which has an anti-corruption component.²⁰⁴ UNDP plans to compile best practices in anti-corruption from UNDP worldwide, which will be shared online and made available to all stakeholders.

Programme design, approach and oversight were generally weak in all programmes. UNDP lacked programme-level strategy in the four outcomes; clarity in its capacity development approach; and attention to the country's fragility in programme/project design.

Programme design. Despite its commitments in the CPD, UNDP did not establish the theories of change for its programmes and thus implemented projects without clear outcome-level strategies. In some cases, this was due to the uncertainty in the government's policies.²⁰⁵ However, the overall lack of programme-level strategies resulted in (i) limited partner selection in design, affecting UNDP's performance;²⁰⁶ (ii) limited scale of interventions and lack of linkages with other similar but larger programmes in the country, undermining their relevance and effectiveness;²⁰⁷ and (iii) limited efforts to learn from best

²⁰³ For example, UNDP's financial support and UNAMA's provision of technical expertise in UN support to elections; UNDP's collaboration with UN Women to promote women's participation in elections and the national gender-based budgeting; with UNODC on anti-corruption; and with UNAMA and UNFPA in identifying short-term and long-term action plans to strengthen access to justice. The Rule of Law and Justice Donor Group provided an important framework for UNDP's work in justice and police governance, enhancing trust in the country's justice institutions.

²⁰⁴ For example, the use of the 'Cynefin' framework and research with SenseMaker.

²⁰⁵ For example, the Government does not have a clear policy on devolution. This made UNDP's LoGo project particularly important, and through it UNDP developed a roadmap/policy on local governance. But some donors reported having lost their 'appetite' for supporting the project, as the design reflected "only what the Government asked for" and lacked interventions at subnational level.

²⁰⁶ For example, the AIHRC, a critical partner in human rights, has been missing in UNDP's work, though it was expected in the CPD.

²⁰⁷ For example, the livelihoods programme (e.g. SALAM, CCAP and CBARD). In its current truncated form, SALAM is less relevant today than it was at the national level three years ago, owing to the presence of the World Bank-funded programme on labour migration on a far greater scale and budget. In skills development, GIZ and the International Organization for Migration are also better placed in the long term. The CCAP incorporated climate change in the provincial and district-level development plans, but no budget was made available by the Government or donors for implementation. The design of CBARD poses a serious challenge in terms of its grand aims versus the realistic potential of making an impact. While the objective is highly laudable in theory (improved household income with less dependence on illicit production [poppy growing] for selected communities), the reality is that poppy growing continues to flourish after billions of dollars of investment in alternative crops, along with measures for eradication and interdiction. The reasons are many, including insecurity and absence of State apparatus, lack of markets, drought-resistance of poppy, availability of easy credit, lack of crop insurance, poor agricultural infrastructure, and lack of alternative high-value crops and irrigation. In this situation, the CBARD may have an effect only in the very long run. Even if the alternative development interventions (greenhouses, agro-processing, irrigation, etc.) are successful in themselves, there is no easy and realistic way UNDP can establish a clear relationship between its interventions and poppy growing. In fact, as one study noted, irrigation infrastructure in some areas led to increased poppy cultivation in the past. Though it is too early to comment on the project's outcomes, UNDP may have a challenge in demonstrating to donors, first, a reduction in poppy cultivation, and second, establishment of clear attribution to the project's interventions.

practices and lessons available from other countries, i.e. through South-South cooperation, except for a few examples.²⁰⁸

In addition, UNDP does not have a clearly articulated strategy for capacity development. Its approach was viewed as focusing primarily on the recruitment of short-term consultants (substitution of capacity), rather than using its own technical expertise to develop long-term local capacities for Afghanistan's self-reliance. Delays in identifying qualified technical experts were reported, for example, as a significant bottleneck in working with UNDP (e.g. election). UNDP has yet to engage with the large-scale capacity support framework that exists in the country, i.e. the ARTF-funded Capacity Building for Results Programme.²⁰⁹

An important question was also raised on the appropriateness of UNDP's initial programme/project conceptualization process. 'Insecurity' was frequently cited as a reason for projects not achieving the intended results, despite the fact that security has long been an issue in the country. Many of the projects were designed to operate in multiple provinces (e.g. LoGo), including those under non-State control. Yet, the presence of risks and potential challenges in implementation did not seem to have been sufficiently examined or reflected in the initial scoping and target setting.

UNDP's engagement with UNAMA and CSOs also appeared opportunistic, not based on well-conceived strategies. UNAMA has been in the country for 17 years, increasingly as a coordinating point for both humanitarian and development work. UNDP should have fully and substantively engaged with it when designing its projects. UNDP's partnership with CSOs, both national and international, was also reported as limited, despite their ability to access hard-to-reach areas.

Implementation modality. Previous internal reviews and evaluation reports recommended the direct implementation modality (DIM) as UNDP's main model of project delivery for the current programme cycle, given the widely recognized institutional capacity deficit and corruption. Many of the national implementation modality (NIM) projects under review had significant design issues and low delivery rates, raising questions about the appropriateness of the initial project conceptualization, budgeting and oversight.²¹⁰ Additional implementation support and oversight would be needed for NIM projects to ensure appropriate management of fiduciary risks.²¹¹

M&E and oversight. An evaluation plan for the country programme (2015–2019) was submitted together with the CPD for Executive Board approval. Efforts have been made to enhance M&E activities during the period, as demonstrated by a steady increase in annual expenditures for them.²¹² For the new LOTFA MPTF, a new and innovative M&E system has been developed.²¹³

²⁰⁸ For example, UNDP collaborated with Turkey for the SIVAS training for police professionalization under LOTFA, and with Tajikistan under LITACA to address poverty and the drug trade across the border areas of the two countries, creating weekly markets for rural producers from both countries.

²⁰⁹ This is an institutional development and public administration reform programme launched in 2012, budgeted for \$150 million for the initial five years. Source: Ministry of Finance, 'Capacity Building for Results Programme.'

²¹⁰ Among the projects under review, DIM was used for Global Fund projects, some of the governance-related projects (ICSPA, ANDS/RECCA, SDGs), and the rule-of-law initiatives (Afghanistan Access to Justice, anti-corruption, and Justice and Human Rights in Afghanistan Phase II). Alternatively, NIM was used in election, LoGo, support to HPC and all LOTFA projects; and ASERD, CBARD, SALAM and CCAP under Livelihoods.

²¹¹ For example, LITACA's modality changed from DIM in the first phase to NIM in the second. While delivered under NIM, the LOTFA has incorporated more M&E attention than other NIM projects, with much UNDP involvement in oversight. Various structural oversight mechanisms exist under the SPM, and a rigorous M&E framework and reporting format have been established for MOIA under the LOTFA Transitional Support to MOIA (e.g. development of specific M&E plans for seven directorates in the Ministry).

²¹² The annual M&E expenditure increased between 2015 (0.69 percent of the annual programme budget) and 2017 (1.7 percent). At the time of the ICPE, the country office had completed a midterm evaluation of the CPD and UNDAF evaluation, as well as 11 of the 19 project evaluations initially planned. Four outcome evaluations had been planned but not conducted in lieu of the UNDAF and CPD midterm evaluations.

²¹³ The M&E system includes an evidence-based results framework with clearly defined indicators; recruitment of a dedicated M&E team; a company (UNA) to build an online system; a communication team to improve sharing of information and learning from the project; and administration of 30-40 baseline surveys by the end of 2019 (e.g. a Kabul safety and security survey and a police/community perception survey).

However, project monitoring remained a significant challenge, as worsening security severely restricted staff access to many of the areas where projects are implemented. The Kabul-based staff undertook occasional visits to the field, but the project implementation and monitoring responsibilities were largely left to implementing partners and their local partners. UNDP's new sub-offices were not yet directly involved in those activities. While the need to strengthen remote monitoring was emphasized in the various internal reviews, the present evaluation was unable to find good examples of this approach being systematically used and generating results,²¹⁴ raising a question about its utility.

UNDP has made use of the independent midterm review mechanism to assess performance of various projects. But most such reviews have been undertaken by consultants, who, like UNDP staff, have limited access to beneficiaries. One of the donors interviewed for this evaluation was highly critical of this approach, noting that a recent midterm review report it received was based purely on desk reviews of documents containing self-reported data they had already seen.²¹⁵ One of the solutions may be to require implementing partners to systematically recruit national evaluation consultants. They would be more likely to produce better quality primary evidence than that obtained by international consultants relying on remote interviews and review of self-reported data. UNDP needs to revisit third-party monitoring to enable real-time monitoring and independent evaluations in hard-to-reach areas of the country.

2.9 Resource mobilization and partnerships

Finding 35. The partnership and resource mobilization strategy is outdated, containing UNDP's value propositions that do not reflect the reality of the country. While the timing of the transfer of LOTFA payroll management to the Government has been continually debated, there is an urgent need for the country office to develop an appropriate strategy. This should be done in parallel with the identification of UNDP's next country programme focus, reflecting Afghanistan's fragile state context.

With the eventual transfer of LOTFA SPM, UNDP revenues from the general management support (GMS) will significantly decline.²¹⁶ Even with the 2015 launch of UNDP's partnership with the Global Fund, which started various health projects, the country office's GMS has declined by some \$8 million since the start of the current country programme period, and that decline is expected to continue.²¹⁷ The effects of funding cuts in the projects have already been felt.²¹⁸ Given the declining GMS and core funds, along with donor fatigue and worsening security, UNDP needs to urgently develop its resource mobilization strategy.

The partnership and resource mobilization strategy at the country office is outdated, and its value propositions do not reflect the reality. For example, (i) they assume a time-based LOTFA SPM transfer, when in reality the donor criteria approach has been applied, complicating negotiations; (ii) despite its claim of presence in "all 34 provinces," half of the country's districts are said to be under non-State control,

²¹⁴ For example, in the livelihoods area, UNDP started to engage third-party monitors in late 2018 to undertake spot checks. The evaluation team was not given access to the third-party monitoring reports as these are not yet 'finalized' by the Minister concerned.

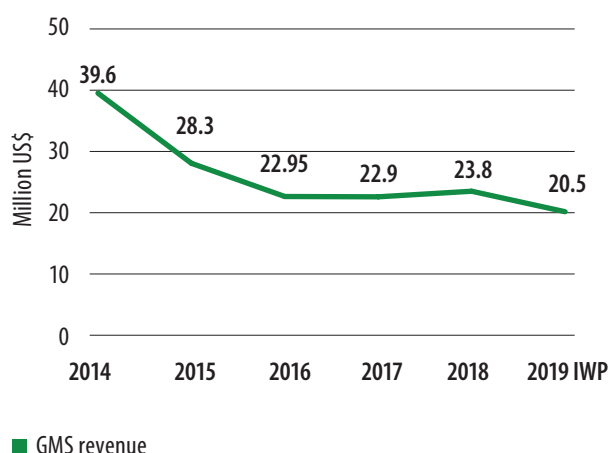
²¹⁵ This was, in the words of the donor, "a revolving door whereby the donor, which has no access to communities, outsources implementation and monitoring to UNDP which, like us, is confined to a bunker, then contracts an implementing partner to deliver the activities and outsources its monitoring to a third party who, like the donor and UNDP, has no access to the communities. So in the final account, neither we nor UNDP know what is actually happening in terms of end results, but we are both led to believe that things are fine as we are told so."

²¹⁶ As alerted by the internal reviews (e.g. UNDP Management Consulting Team report and programme review).

²¹⁷ Source: Country office data. Currently, a GMS rate of 4 percent has been applied to LOTFA. With the launch of the MPTF, the GMS is expected to be 3 percent.

²¹⁸ For example, in the Global Fund projects, implementing partners reported loss of experienced staff due to salary reductions, and raised concerns about project sustainability due to cuts in planned activities, such as training and other capacity-building efforts.

FIGURE 8. GMS revenue, 2014–2019



Source: UNDP Afghanistan

limiting staff/consultant access for project implementation and monitoring; and (iii) its “unequalled operational capacity with a cadre of national experts” and “approach to capacity development” have been disputed by some of the donors and development partners interviewed.²¹⁹ The strategy is also limited in its approach.²²⁰

The strategy also has not reflected the country’s fragility, which would require a careful, strategic assessment of its partnership approach. This would include enhancing UNDP’s engagement with CSOs, which can operate in remote areas outside State control with high levels of poverty and vulnerability; with UNAMA, which has been an increasingly important actor for the country’s development work; and with UN humanitarian agencies under One UN.

In addition, donor support to the Government is guided by a series of mutual accountability frameworks. This approach and donor mandates should be fully examined in identifying areas of interest. Further, partnership opportunities with international financial institutions such as the World Bank should be fully exploited.²²¹ So far, only a few donors have provided the Government with direct budget support (on-budget), i.e. the World Bank (through the ARTF) and the European Union. UN agencies, particularly UNDP, are increasingly expected to demonstrate their relevance and value for money by doing the same.²²²

At the time of the evaluation, the country office was just recruiting a new resource mobilization specialist, who expressed the need for a new approach to partnership building.²²³ The office was also developing a structured process map for preparation of the next CPD.²²⁴ The evaluation found that both would be highly useful resources in preparing the next country programme.

As cited in the internal reviews, UNDP will need to redefine its programme focus following the transfer of the LOTFA SPM. Given Afghanistan’s protracted conflict and continuing fragility, UNDP’s development work needs to be fully informed by efforts being made in the humanitarian and peace spheres. The triple nexus approach integrating development, humanitarian and peace efforts needs to be reflected in UNDP’s programme design, as well as in the conceptualization and development of a partnership and resource mobilization strategy.

²¹⁹ Source: UNDP, ‘Partnership and Resource Mobilization Strategy and Action Plan: Review and Update 2017’. The original paper was prepared at the time LOTFA SPM’s transfer was drawing closer and before many of the structural adjustments were implemented or took shape.

²²⁰ It cites RBAP-led headquarters meetings, development of projects that address government capacity constraints (e.g. SDGs, CBARD), donor consultation and exploring emerging donors (e.g. China).

²²¹ For example, UNDP Yemen has successfully collaborated with the World Bank through a \$300 million Yemen Emergency Crisis Response Project. It works to build the resilience of vulnerable populations, restore public services, create employment opportunities and support small businesses.

²²² At the time of the present evaluation, UNDP was one of the four agencies named to be expelled from the country in recent remarks by the President if government needs are not met.

²²³ The approach would include bringing all partners together; inclusion of both Afghans and internationals; taking into account the varying planning cycles (e.g. donors’ one- to two-year horizon vs. UNDP’s five-year cycle); and exploring untapped funding sources.

²²⁴ Source: UNDP Afghanistan, ‘Scenario Planning Steps for Next CPD Development’.

2.10 Sustainability

Finding 36. Despite some positive elements (e.g. government ownership), sustainability is a major challenge in UNDP's programme operations in Afghanistan. This is due to the continued erosion of security, donor fatigue, weak institutional capacity and pervasive corruption.

Elements of sustainability were observed in some projects. For example, the Government demonstrated strong ownership of some activities in the livelihoods area. The mini-grids and irrigation infrastructure being designed have been implemented with active participation by government departments, and local authorities have been taking responsibility for levying user fees and performing maintenance. The law clinics in the universities, currently funded by donors, are expected to become a regular part of the university curriculum funded by the Ministry of Education. Investments in capacity building in academia and community-based organizations have been particularly promising in the rule-of-law and justice sector, which can facilitate continual skills transfer and monitoring of public institutions.

Sustainability is a key consideration for all actors in the Afghan development context, and it determines the level of funding and scope of project implementation moving forward. Sustainability is part of a commitment by all project document signatories to ensure that project implementation at all levels is carried out in a productive, transparent and accountable way. The continued erosion of security conditions and donor fatigue have led to considerable uncertainty about how long the current levels of development assistance can continue.²²⁵

Notwithstanding this uncertainty, clear-cut exit strategies were not present in many of the projects, and UNDP's programming seemed to continue on the assumption that it always will. The transfer to greater Afghan ownership through One UN also appears challenging unless a concerted effort is made, given the dearth of local capacity, pervasive corruption and varying levels of buy-in by local officials.

2.11 Gender equality and women's empowerment

Finding 37. A majority of UNDP's projects were designed with limited contribution to gender equality (GEN1 on Gender Marker). Among those examined, results ranged from 'gender targeted' to 'gender responsive.' Reflection of gender in its programming remains a challenge at UNDP Afghanistan. During the review period, the office developed a gender strategy with entry points identified for each programme area and appointed a full-time gender focal point, creating a foundation for improvement.

UNDP's corporate strategy seeks to achieve 15 per cent programme budget allocation to GEN3; that is, projects that advance gender equality and women's empowerment as their principal objective.²²⁶ In the period under review, only 0.6 per cent of the total Afghanistan programme expenditures were dedicated to GEN3 (excluding LOTFA, the proportion rises to 3.7 per cent).²²⁷ The majority of the expenditures were GEN1, projects with limited contribution (82.5 per cent overall; 62.5 per cent excluding LOTFA).

²²⁵ The midterm review of the CPD also suggests the need for continued donor support and peace and security over the coming years, as well as exit strategies for each project and exploration of government contribution for gradual takeover. It noted "even the most optimistic scenario will not allow Afghanistan to finance and ensure the sustainability of the framework of central and subnational institutions that have been built with abundant donor-funding over the last 15 years."

²²⁶ UNDP gender strategy 2018–2021.

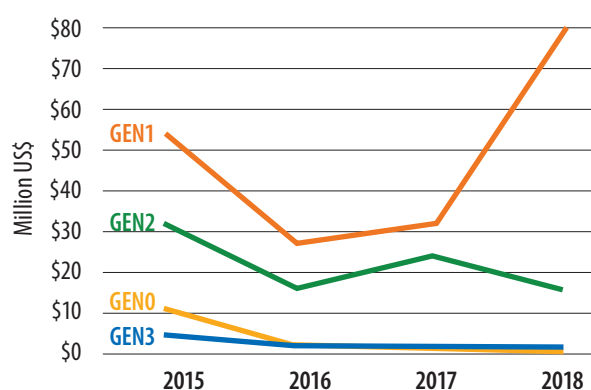
²²⁷ UNDP Afghanistan's GEN3 projects include EGEMA, the Gender Equality Project (GEP-II), the AA2J output (EVAW) and selected outputs of LOTFA Phase VI and VII.

FIGURE 9. Expenditure by gender marker, 2015–2018



Source: PowerBI/Atlas

FIGURE 10. Expenditure by gender marker and year



Source: Atlas/PowerBI

Among the projects examined, UNDP's contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment was predominantly rated either 'gender-targeted' or 'gender-responsive.' This means results were focused on the number of women and men targeted or on differential needs between them, rather than on bringing about changes in norms, cultural values and power structures addressing root causes of inequality and discrimination ('gender-transformative').²²⁸

- **Livelihoods and Resilience:** All projects except one (ASERD) were gender-targeted. Only one project (LITACA) was categorized as gender-responsive, in that it has proactively involved women in managing the enterprises, accessing markets and creating women producers' groups. Beyond gender targeting, UNDP's livelihoods projects have not demonstrated a strong focus on gender equality issues. There were also equity issues in implementation of some of the activities.²²⁹ In the NABDP project, UNDP supported MRRD to mobilize women's participation in district development assembly elections.

In the biodiversity/protected areas project, UNDP supported formation of community associations for protection of biodiversity, with each association board comprising at least 20 percent women.²³⁰ The rural energy projects (ASERD) did not have any gender-specific component, though distribution of improved cooking stoves should have contributed to better health of women and children. The midterm review of CCAP (strengthening the resilience of rural livelihood options) noted that most of the indicators in the original log frame were not gender disaggregated,²³¹ though in subsequent revisions of the logframes, separate baseline and target values were specified for women and men. In the SALAM project, gender was overlooked in the initial stages,²³² but efforts are now being made to select a minimum of 35 percent women trainees for vocational training in Nangarhar.

- **Governance:** EGEMA, ELECT II and Global Fund projects were assessed gender-responsive. Under EGEMA (which builds on two past gender projects), government capacity was strengthened to address women's rights in monitoring

²²⁸ Source: Section 1.4 of the Methodology on Gender Results Effectiveness Scale.

²²⁹ For example, in the CBARD project, targeted women farmers were provided with mini-greenhouses costing \$500 while commercial greenhouses run by CDC members (men) were provided assistance to the tune of up to \$7,700 each.

²³⁰ Source: ROAR 2015.

²³¹ Source: Tanvir Hussain and Mohammad Wasim, 'Final Report, Mid-Term Review of UNDP GEF-LDCF2 Project Afghanistan, Strengthening the resilience of rural livelihood options for Afghan communities in Panjshir, Balkh, Uruzgan and Herat Provinces to manage climate change-induced disaster risks', November 2017.

²³² Source: UNDP, 'Support to Afghanistan Livelihoods and Mobility (SALAM)', 2018, 2nd quarterly project progress report.

and oversight, and enforcement of legislation against gender discrimination. It also contributed to gender-responsive budgeting within the Ministry of Finance; integration of gender priorities into all national policies; establishment of an EVAW court; and training of government officials in gender mainstreaming skills.

Under the election project (ELECT II) women were actively involved as election staff and candidates. IEC acknowledged gender as the “fundamental and cross-cutting issue” and introduced a gender unit that works with several other departments, including public outreach. Women represented a greater proportion of provincial council candidates (11 percent) than ever before and won 21 percent of the seats available.²³³ The project facilitated the development of an IEC gender strategy, which included a 30 percent female staff quota as stipulated in the national gender equity policy. However, this was not approved by the IEC, and only 7 percent of all positions were ultimately occupied by women.²³⁴ As the primary purpose of the project was capacity building of the IEC, it nevertheless tried to ensure greater gender equality in elections.

- Global Fund: Although the Global Fund has had some success in training and deploying female community health nurses, significant challenges remain in overcoming cultural impediments to gender equality. Many barriers to gender equality exist in the health sector, including a shortage of female staff, limited transportation options, the need for women to travel with male escorts, limited decision-making power including on decisions regarding their own health, discomfort in providing services to address physical and sexual violence, and stigma associated with HIV. Many Afghans are unaware of their rights to quality, equitable health services, and UNDP has a great role to play in this area.

- Rule of Law and Justice: The projects under review ranged from gender-targeted to gender-responsive. They facilitated the recruitment and training of female police officers in the male-dominated ANP and addressed the differential needs of women by providing legal support to them (particularly gender-based violence victims) and promoting the EVAW law. UNDP supported the revision of the Penal Code to include gender-based violence crimes, aligning the Afghanistan justice system closer to international standards. In partnership with other actors, as well as through evidence-based work, UNDP needs to ensure that its intervention approaches will not negatively affect women in a country where many rely on the traditional justice system.²³⁵

UNDP Afghanistan underwent UNDP’s corporate gender certification exercise, Gender Seal, in 2015–2016 and earned a silver certification. The office achieved benchmarks in gender review of key projects, training on gender and partnerships. However, it had major gaps, including the lack of a gender adviser and limited focus on gender equality across the portfolio, as indicated by the Gender Marker.

The evaluation found that a series of concrete actions taken by the country office during the period under review were strong steps that should be fully supported and implemented at the office level in the next cycle. For example, the office established a full-time gender specialist post in 2017 to address the gender gaps identified by the Gender Seal exercise. The gender specialist, placed strategically under the SPRU, reviews project documents, annual work plans and other documents produced by the office to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are considered in UNDP interventions; in the past they were not. The specialist serves as the focal point on preventing sexual harassment and coordinates UNDP’s work at the UN level; engages in the

²³³ Of the 97 winning female candidates, 18 would have won their seats even without the advantage of the gender quota, and three received more votes than any of their male competitors, evidencing public confidence in the ability of women to assume leadership roles. Source: UNDP Afghanistan, ‘Enhancing Legal and Electoral Capacity for Tomorrow (ELECT) II: January 2012–31 July 2015’, final project report (undated).

²³⁴ Source: op. cit.

²³⁵ The defense lawyers used by AA2J were trained by UNDP through the Afghanistan Independent Bar Association.

gender working group and the women, peace and security working group;²³⁶ and provides training to all staff and national project partners.

The office also created a gender focal team, led by the country director. It established a gender strategy with seven focus areas,²³⁷ outlining specific

entry points to address each of the four programmatic areas (Table 6). These efforts are expected to improve programme/project performance on gender (including development of programmes/projects with a gender focus) as well as improve gender parity in the workplace.

TABLE 6. Gender entry points by thematic area

Governance	Rule of law	Economic growth	Social equity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy, policy and legal reforms • Advance [...] women's empowerment in governance processes • Women's leadership and participation in conflict mitigation, mediation and peacebuilding • Gender equality perspectives into policy making and legal reforms • Support actors to expand women's access to services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's access to justice in formal and informal systems • Strengthened gender-responsive justice and police governance • Gender-sensitive Afghan police professionalization • Effective legal aid grant facility: legal support to victims/survivors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and legislative reforms ensure women's equal access to and control over productive assets (land, finance, property) • Support partners to transform norms, reduce barriers to women's economic empowerment • Support community-level women's income generation • Mainstreaming of climate policies and disaster risk reduction planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support national efforts in gender commitments, priorities in sector plans and gender-responsive budgeting • Support MOWA on NAPWA monitoring database • Sexual and gender-based violence legal and policy framework, enforcement and public awareness • Support to gender-based violence survivors / victims

Source: UNDP Afghanistan Gender Equality Strategy 2015–2019a

²³⁶ UNDP took the lead in an initiative to eliminate violence against women, '16 days of activism'.

²³⁷ The focus areas include: (i) eliminate gender-based discrimination in laws and policies (gender review of policies and legislation); (ii) strengthen enforcement of women's rights, including access to justice and protection from violence (gender-responsive budgeting, gender monitoring); (iii) enhance awareness by women and men, including traditional community and religious leaders, of the critical importance of women's rights; (iv) promote greater representation of women in public institutions, including in positions of leadership; (v) enhance voice and participation of women in their communities and in the national political process, including peace and reconciliation; (vi) promote greater economic opportunities for women; and (vii) improve delivery of public services for women. Source: UNDP Afghanistan Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy 2015–2019.



CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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

3.1 Conclusions

- **Conclusion 1. Afghanistan entered a protracted crisis immediately after the launch of the CPD, reducing the relevance and value of the CPD as a planning and accountability instrument. UNDP's operational environment became increasingly complex during the period under review.**

While the CPD was designed with the assumption of continued improvements in the development and security situation, the reverse happened. The fast-deteriorating security environment since 2014, now regarded as a protracted conflict, brought significant challenges for programme operations, limiting the country office's ability to obtain value from the CPD as a strategic instrument. Instead of following the five-year country programme, UNDP's focus was primarily decided in the context of annual work plans. The CPD correctly acknowledged insecurity as a risk in the context of Afghanistan, but the fragility of the country had not been fully understood or reflected in the design of programmes and projects.

- **Conclusion 2. The country office was in full transition during the period, when adjustments resulting from various internal reviews and change management processes were taking shape. The office responded well in implementing the recommendations from these processes. The adjustments brought about positive changes (e.g. an improved programme management structure). However, signs of volatility/distress were observed in programme delivery and the staff's workplace environment at the time of the evaluation, requiring further attention.**

UNDP Afghanistan responded well in implementing various recommendations suggested by a series of internal operational and programmatic reviews, including the alignment mission (2015), the UNDP Afghanistan transformation plan (2016) and the strategic programme review (2016). Key structural adjustments were made in the first few years of the present cycle including

the establishment of an integrated results team with a dedicated chief financial officer and results-based management approach and the creation of four regional sub-offices to increase UNDP's field presence.

During the period under review, the country office was still adjusting to the change in its business model, including a significant reduction in human resources. There was significant variability in practices in programme/project delivery approaches and implementation rates. As the office quickly adopted drastic structural and operational changes, the need emerged to address workplace matters, including office culture (e.g. internal communication) and staff development.

- **Conclusion 3. LOTFA remained UNDP's flagship work during the period under review. It provided police payrolls and secured a steady ANP workforce, particularly a crucial female police force. Contributions were made in systems development and the establishment of effective and efficient police payroll management functions. UNDP's support to institutional development for MOIA was limited due to project design change. The timing of a full transfer of LOTFA's payroll management function to the Government remains a contentious issue among the Government, UNDP and donors, as agreed-upon targets for the transfer were missed. UNDP's ability to provide timely and quality financial reporting also remains a concern among donors. The new LOTFA, with a multi-partner trust fund scheme, is well articulated but ambitious, with an expanded mandate to cover the country's entire rule-of-law and justice reforms. This requires a well-functioning collaborative approach among partners.**

LOTFA accounted for over 85 percent of UNDP's programme expenditure during the period under review, and funded payrolls for the ANP and GDPDC in all provinces. The initial trainee training provided a steady source of officers for the female police force. Significant progress was made on the technical aspects of the LOTFA payroll

management functions during this cycle, including systems digitization, development of standard operating procedures and oversight/governance mechanisms. The Government strongly pushed for the immediate transfer of the payroll functions to MOIA, after the initial target timelines (2016 and 2017) were missed. There was an equally strong consensus among donors that the transfer is premature and that conditions set for the transfer have not been met.

Given the amount of contributions, donors have continued to request improvements in UNDP's financial reporting on LOTFA activities in terms of accuracy, timeliness and level of detail. The institutional capacity development component of LOTFA did not progress as initially planned, with a key project ending prematurely due to systemic issues. Since the end of 2018, LOTFA has been redesigned into an MPTF, expected to encompass Afghanistan's entire rule-of-law and security sector (e.g. anti-corruption). Close coordination and consultation with partners will be crucial to avoid duplication of efforts and enhance synergy.

- **Conclusion 4. In other programme areas, UNDP made various contributions. Its continued election support brought credibility and legitimacy to Afghanistan's election process; its management of the Global Fund projects is now in the second grant cycle; economic livelihoods opportunities increased; and legal aid support was enhanced. However, UNDP's thematic work generally lacked an overarching programmatic framework and had limited results reporting. UNDP has not been able to effectively monitor and assess projects where insecurity is high. The livelihoods programme — referred to as important work for UNDP Afghanistan's diversified programme portfolios during the internal reviews — generally lacked a clear evidence base and struggled to demonstrate scale in its work. Limited visibility among partners at the technical level was an issue for the rule-of-law portfolio.**

In the Governance, Global Fund, Livelihoods and Resilience, and non-LOTFA rule-of-law areas, UNDP has made progress towards achieving the targeted outputs. Apart from the insecurity issues, UNDP's performance was influenced by various factors, including the degree to which it was able to exploit its high-level government access; establish effective partnerships with national partners, relevant UN agencies, and major development players in the country; design well-conceived projects; and use innovation. Despite its commitments in the CPD, UNDP did not develop theories of change for its programmes, and results were primarily reported at the activity level. Remote monitoring activities were weak, and UNDP's new regional sub-offices have yet to directly engage in oversight activities.

Internal reviews had recommended that UNDP focus on livelihoods support due to its direct impact on the Afghan population, which would also serve to diversify UNDP's country programme portfolio in a time of transition. The livelihoods and resilience projects under review were weak in design, however, often lacking in scale and collaboration with other players delivering similar but larger programmes. This was also the case for UNDP's legal aid work under its Rule of Law programme, resulting in missed opportunities to design robust, evidence-based projects to address violence against women.

In close consultation with partners such as UNAMA and UNODC, UNDP supported a number of activities in the area of anti-corruption, which led to preparation of a new, full-fledged anti-corruption project in 2019. However, UNDP's current anti-corruption efforts have been limited to the security and justice sector. Coordination of stakeholders is complex in Afghanistan's rule-of-law and justice sector. UNDP has often lacked visibility and failed to provide leadership to coordinate substantive discussions or to use a consultative approach at the technical thematic level, despite expectations from its development partners.

- **Conclusion 5. UNDP's efforts to enhance women's political and socioeconomic rights have progressed at the project level. However, the programmes were generally weak in addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of Afghanistan's deep-rooted cultural challenges. Evidence-based approaches were limited, as was collaboration with critical partners. Within the country office, gender parity remained consistently low.**

Most UNDP Afghanistan projects were designed to contribute only modestly to gender equality and women's empowerment, suggesting the need for greater attention to gender in programme design. Some good gender outputs were reported among the projects reviewed (e.g. integration of gender aspects into national policies and enhanced legal aid for women). But overall gender results effectiveness was primarily assessed as gender-targeted or gender-responsive, rather than gender-transformative, failing to address root causes of gender inequalities. Gender parity in the country office is low; women make up only 11 per cent of the workforce. A full-time gender specialist was recently appointed, and continued efforts will be required to accelerate promotion of gender equality in both the workplace and programming.

- **Conclusion 6. UNDP made significant efforts to align its programmes with the evolving national development framework. While Afghanistan's self-reliance is the cornerstone of the Government's national development, to which UNDP has pledged its support, UNDP's institutional capacity development efforts have been generally limited, despite some positive work.**

After the launch of the current CPD, the UN-level programme framework changed from the UNDAF to One UN in response to the government's strong request and in light of the development of the ANPDF. Many partners recognized UNDP's leadership during this process, which also helped UNDP

to re-examine its own programme approaches in the context of the new national development framework and the NPPs.

Institutional capacity development was the key objective in all programme areas in response to the internal reviews, which called for UNDP's support to the Government's Afghan-led and Afghan-owned approach. However, UNDP's approach was often questioned by development partners as being 'substitutive' rather than focused on developing local capacity. When asked about areas of challenge in project implementation, staff's common response was "lack of institutional capacity," when the projects' key objective was to strengthen their partners' capacity. This raised a question as to whether UNDP's initial project conceptualization process was appropriate. Its programming practices were often described as more government- or donor-driven while failing to fully engage important ground-level partners (e.g. CSOs, academic and research entities).

- **Conclusion 7. UNDP's policy-level influence has been limited, in the presence of UNAMA and other large-scale players in the country. UNDP has yet to exploit its visibility and comparative strengths (e.g. proximity to government partners) to solidify its strategic position in the country.**

Given its ability to leverage its partnerships with the Government, UNDP is well placed to contribute to various development issues, including governance, gender equality, human rights, rule of law and justice. While interviewees commented favourably on the level of communication between UNDP (particularly management) and development partners, some described UNDP as not being visible in policy-level dialogue and raised UNDP's limited ability to strategically and substantively engage in sector-specific discussions at the country level despite expectations from the partners. With UNAMA and other large-scale actors running similar programmes, UNDP has yet to demonstrate its 'integrator' role.

- **Conclusion 8.** UNDP's support to the SDGs has been limited to a single project, and it has lacked a fragility-sensitive approach. An opportunity to use the SDGs as an entry point to solidify UNDP's country programme has been missed. The architecture for effective subnational operations that would drive the Government's nationwide SDG efforts has not yet been established or sustainable funding secured.

UNDP has supported the Government's commitment to the SDGs through a dedicated project under the governance portfolio, which has established an institutional framework for this commitment at Ministry of Economy. Given the ongoing conflict, efforts on the SDGs have been considered 'secondary' to UNDP's other work. UNDP made limited attempts to explain how its various programmes link to specific Goals or how their results would feed into aggregated monitoring and analysis efforts at national/subnational levels. The newly created sub-offices have not yet been fully equipped to provide substantive regional inputs to programming or to guide the SDGs at the field level. UNDP has yet to develop a comprehensive SDG support strategy, including how to secure funding and expand its engagement with other parts of the Government. Strategies for scaling up existing support efforts are not clear, including how to secure funds and link with other parts of the Government and partners.

- **Conclusion 9.** UNDP's current partnership and resource mobilization strategies are outdated, limited in scope and inadequate for Afghanistan's fast-evolving and fragile context.

The resource mobilization strategy is outdated and contains value propositions that do not reflect emerging challenges (e.g. complexity in the traditional 'time-bound' LOTFA SPM transfer concept; and the premise of UNDP's presence in all 34 provinces when in reality half the districts are under non-State control). Opportunities to collaborate with other major players working in similar areas have not been exploited. The partnerships plan does not adequately reflect Afghanistan's new reality as a protracted and fragile country. It has lacked emphasis on the importance of (i) CSOs, both national and international, who often have better access in hard-to-reach areas outside the government's control; (ii) the role of UNAMA, which has been an increasingly important development actor; (iii) donors' underlying government support architecture, guided by a mutual accountability framework; and (iv) the mandate and ongoing work of various UN agencies under One UN, including humanitarian actors.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

Recommendation 1.



UNDP should revisit its approach to operating in Afghanistan as a fragile country in a protracted conflict. It should focus on strategic, analytical work to support the initial conceptualization for the next country programme. UNDP should use the SDGs to bolster its position in the country, ensuring its development work is informed by the triple nexus approach, complementing humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts supported by other partners. Key areas of concern and of importance should be addressed, including: (i) risk-informed, evidence-based programme design with the primary objective of capacity development to foster Afghanistan's self-reliance; (ii) improved regional operation capacity (enhancing the role of the sub-offices to inform programme design and engage in field oversight), including areas under non-State control; (iii) inclusion of substantive policy-level dialogue in all programme areas; (iv) improved transparency in allocation and use of donor funds; and (v) continued strategic communication activities.

UNDP's next country programme should fully reflect Afghanistan as a fragile country in a protracted conflict. A strategic analysis should be undertaken before the programme is conceptualized. The programme should reflect:

- **Integration of the SDGs at the core of programming:** As recommended in the internal reviews, UNDP should use the SDGs as an entry point and ultimate rationale for its presence and positioning in the country. Given Afghanistan's continuing conflict, a fragility-sensitive approach should be fully applied to the SDGs. Broader engagement with the Government will be required for its financial sustainability. As providing support to the government for the SDGs is UNDP's core business, its programmes should clearly explain their linkages to relevant SDGs, with a set of projects providing solutions to national priorities by demonstrating UNDP's comparative strengths. As part of the scenario exercise currently under way in preparation for the next programme cycle, UNDP should explore full use of the 'triple nexus' model, linking development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts, in collaboration with UN humanitarian agencies and UNAMA.
- **Coherent, risk-informed, evidence-based design with capacity development objectives:** UNDP should develop a theory of change for each outcome; conduct advance vulnerability and risk assessments for all projects as part of their design, scope and implementation approaches; define realistic goals to minimize gaps between planned and actual projects; examine similar programmes run by other partners in the country, distilling lessons of what works and doesn't work; focus on developing (rather than substituting) local capacities; and strengthen UNDP's ability to identify qualified technical experts in a timely manner.

- **Strengthening of regional operations:** UNDP needs to develop the capacity of sub-office staff to provide relevant regional-level inputs to Kabul for the programme/project design process; gather, monitor, analyse and report on field-based project activities in collaboration with project staff, particularly for projects with a large field presence (e.g. LoGo); and include measures to support the needs of UN Volunteers as heads of sub-offices. Also needed is a strategy for effective project delivery, monitoring and evaluation for areas already (or increasingly) under non-State control.
- **Policy dialogue:** While UNDP continues to 'implement projects' to produce tangible results, it should increase its voice in policy platforms to play the 'integrator' role in the country through an evidence-based approach to programming and by improving UNDP staff's technical expertise and knowledge on relevant sector-specific matters.
- **Reporting on donor funds:** Close and systematic communication needs to be established between the programme/project teams and the central results team to jointly develop an appropriate donor reporting plan. It will need to improve timeliness and transparency in budget and expenditure data as well as project progress, especially for large projects (e.g. LOTFA, ELECT, LoGo).
- **Communication:** The central communication team and programme/project-level communication focal points should ensure that a coherent strategy is shared with partners so all can communicate with one voice.

**Management
response:**

Agreed.



Since July 2019, UNDP has initiated a series of roundtable consultations with government and donor partners on integrating the SDGs into national macroeconomic planning and budgeting, programming and monitoring. In August 2019, the Country Office (CO) initiated a process of reorganizing its current programme portfolio in preparation for developing the new country programme document in 2020. Accordingly, the Livelihoods, Rule of Law and Governance portfolios and pipeline projects are being re-clustered under the following four new programmatic pillars that are currently being developed:

- Inclusive Economic Transformation pillar;
- Social Protection pillar;
- Governance for Peace pillar, and
- Energy & Environment pillar.

The four pillars will be established to function as an interrelated and mutually reinforcing circular system, instead of the traditional siloed approach.

UNDP has started to engage with government and donor partners, amongst other development stakeholders, to ensure financial sustainability and national ownership of its programmes. This includes building the foundation for an integrated SDG Country Support Platform in 2020. It will include a robust monitoring, evaluation and information management system, with an estimated annual resource mobilization target of USD 250 million from 2021 to 2025 – excluding the Support to Payroll Management project under the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

All new activities from design through to programming will be risk-informed and evidence-based, leveraging the new technology, methodology and systems developed under the LOTFA MPTF. The CO has initiated decentralizing its work and strengthening its regional capacities, by launching missions to consult with local provincial government and other stakeholders on their priorities. UNDP is bringing in partners early, including the Government, to ensure a collaborative, dialogue and consensus-based approach. A new communication strategy that supports increased transparency, combined with a new CO-wide approach for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning with related systems, has also been initiated. The new strategies will be implemented beginning 2020. The Senior Management Team of the CO will be undertaking a Strategic Review with RBAP, through which the management and reporting of programme financial information to donor partners will be addressed.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1.1.1. UNDP Afghanistan is integrating the SDGs at the core of its programming and will strengthen its role as the SDGs integrator in Afghanistan.	March 2020	RR & SDRR, supported by PSRU		Ongoing
1.1.2. Develop an SDG Country Support Platform action plan, which includes a comprehensive communications and monitoring strategy	March 2020	SDRR, PSRU & Communications Unit		Ongoing
1.2.1. UNDP Afghanistan will focus on coherent, risk-informed, evidence-based programming with capacity development objectives.	March 2020	SDRR, PSRU		Ongoing

Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

1.2.2. UNDP has commissioned new political economy analyses and Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) modelling efforts to better understand the evolving Afghan context, and to provide more strategic policy advisory and country programming support.	June 2020	SDRR, PSRU		Ongoing
1.3.1. A regional deployment and expansion strategy is being developed to improve UNDP's field office presence and capacities.	May 2020	SDRRs – Programme & Operations		Ongoing
1.3.2. UNDP will establish a greater role for its regional operations in the areas of programme/project design process; gather, monitor, analyse and report on field-based project activities in collaboration with project staff and local stakeholders.	August 2020	SDRRs – Programme & Operations		Ongoing
1.4.1. UNDP Afghanistan will focus on effective communication between programmes and projects through development and implementation of a coherent communication strategy.	March 2020	Communications Unit		Ongoing
1.4.2. UNDP Afghanistan will improve its reporting mechanism (based on results) to ensure timeliness and transparency, through the Strategic Review.	June 2020	RBAP & CO Senior Management		Ongoing

Recommendation 2.



UNDP should ensure that MOIA's institutional capacity development remains an urgent and key objective under LOTFA. The new LOTFA MPTF should establish strong linkages with the governance programme, especially in anti-corruption efforts; strengthen collaboration with current and potential partners in the rule-of-law and security sectors; and fully roll out its M&E strategy.

A capacity-building component of LOTFA (MPD) was discontinued a few years into its implementation. UNDP largely focused its efforts on the SPM during the review period, while some training and capacity support to MOIA and ANP continued but without a clear framework. Strengthening of institutional capacity of both entities should remain the cornerstone of UNDP's support, which is mandatory for LOTFA's payroll transfer to the Government. A clear strategy on MOIA and ANP capacity development should be developed. As the new LOTFA (MPTF) encompasses all rule-of-law and justice institutions, establishing a clear and solid collaborative approach with partners will be essential. Internally, the governance unit should be fully engaged in formulating various sector-specific strategies, particularly on anti-corruption.

Management response:

Agreed.



UNDP will ensure MOIA institutional capacity development is prioritized through LOTFA MPTF.

In 2019, the LOTFA MPTF undertook multiple baseline surveys and functional reviews, including Afghan National Police satisfaction surveys; IT infrastructure survey in MOIA/Police Headquarters at the provincial level (PHQ), including functional reviews of PHQs. The data will ensure the design of the new Institutional Support Project to MOIA (ISM) is evidence based, and focused on providing targeted support for building the MOIA and ANP-PHQs' capacities in financial and human resource management systems, logistics management, ICT etc. The ISM project design is planned for completion by mid-March 2020, with implementation expected to commence by June or July 2020.

As part of interim programme management arrangements, the Governance Unit and Rule of Law Unit (including LOTFA) have been merged under a new, amalgamated Governance for Peace Team in September 2019. This will ensure improved coherence and synergy between security, justice and anti-corruption programming under LOTFA MPTF with the governance portfolio.

Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1.1. UNDP will design and initiate implementation of a new evidence-based capacity development project for MOIA-ANP, under the Security Window of LOTFA-MPTF.	June 2020	Head of Governance for Peace Team		Ongoing
2.2.1. UNDP Afghanistan will enhance its programmatic synergies (LOTFA-MPTF) to identify connectors and establish linkages with the other new programmatic pillars.	June 2020	SDRR-P, PSRU		Ongoing

Recommendation 3.



UNDP should continue to explore the avenues for solidifying its country programme portfolio. In addition to continuing the focus on governance and rule of law, UNDP should strengthen the livelihoods and resilience programme to ensure the appropriate scale and relevance of its contribution to national development priorities. The emerging initiatives launched in the present cycle under the governance portfolio (e.g. RECCA and the Global Fund) should be fully mapped under clear, dedicated CPD outcomes. The governance programme should ensure it has programmatic synergies and linkages with the other programmes (e.g. new LOTFA and Livelihoods on regional cooperation).

With the eventual transfer of the LOTFA SPM to the Government and in preparation for the next cycle, the country office should undertake a thorough review of its country portfolio. This should include its approach to livelihoods and resilience, engaging relevant institutions in the country that are major players in this area (e.g. World Bank, USAID, GIZ (German development cooperation), FAO, ILO, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance and NGOs). The focus should be on identifying a few key issues for projects on a significant scale based on an analysis of where UNDP can have the most impact at the national level. This involves demonstrating how it will invest in generating evidence and learning while also delivering outputs. The RECCA and Global Fund efforts should be assigned clear programme frameworks in the new CPD with a results framework to follow. Linkages between the governance and livelihoods programmes should be strengthened for the RECCA.

Management response:

Agreed.



As part of the recent repositioning of UNDP in Afghanistan and building a new Country Programme portfolio, UNDP is preparing a joint SDG Country Support Platform with the Government of Afghanistan, with integrated planning units to be designed and established within key line ministries. UNDP initiated drafting of a Project Initiation Plan (PIP) for developing this platform in October 2019. This will entail the development and application of a multidisciplinary, evidenced based, adaptive management and integrated systems approach to the design of innovative and catalytic solutions to address complex and interrelated development challenges.

Accordingly, the PIP will establish the outputs, activities, timelines and resources required for UNDP to develop and launch the SDG Country Support Platform by 2021. By investing in new data collection and information management systems, cutting-edge multidisciplinary analysis and new programming, UNDP will be well positioned to deliver on its mandate as the SDG Integrator through the four new programmatic pillars of the Platform.

From January to December 2020, the PIP will work with Afghan counterparts and other development partners to produce the following outputs:

Output 1: SDG Impact-Monitoring Systems and Tools Developed;
Output 2: SDG Analyses Developed to Bridge Policy and Implementation, including SDG Financing Strategies and Analyses for Afghanistan;
Output 3: New SDG-Specific Programming and Projects Developed.

In response to the CPD midterm review exercise, the Country Office agrees to add specific outputs to establish linkages with the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA) and the Global Fund projects under the new CPD to be developed in 2020.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1. UNDP Afghanistan will finalize reorganization of the country programme portfolio under four new programmatic pillars, under an SDG Platform.	June 2020	Senior Management		Ongoing
3.2. The RECCA and the Global Fund projects will be linked to a clear outcome/output in the new CPD results framework.	September 2020	Programme Units, PSRU		Ongoing
3.3. UNDP will map all new pillars against SDGs and NPPs	December 2019	Programme Units, PSRU		Ongoing
3.4. Launch of Country Support Platform on SDGs for Afghanistan	December 2020/ January 2021	Senior Management, PRSU		Not yet started

Recommendation 4.



UNDP should develop a robust partnership and resource mobilization strategy to strengthen its role in the country. This needs to include the major players in this fragile State (e.g. international financial institutions such as the World Bank, as well as UNAMA and CSOs) and reflect resource mobilization opportunities.

UNDP should urgently update its partnership and resource mobilization strategy to reflect changes in Afghanistan's country context and UNDP's value propositions. It should ensure that partnership is expanded beyond traditional partners to include those of strategic importance in developing and delivering robust programmes. For example, UNDP should establish a tangible partnership with the World Bank, which runs the ARTF, which operates in multiple development areas where UNDP also works. UNDP should expand its collaboration with UNAMA beyond election work, as UNAMA is not only a political entity but has been increasingly recognized for its wider development work, including on gender and rule of law. Effective engagement with CSOs is crucial for strengthening community and regional development, accessing hard-to-reach areas including those under non-State control, and reaching the poorest and most vulnerable people.

Management response:

Agreed.



The CO is preparing a resource mobilization strategy (RMS) that supports the new strategic direction and SDG focused programming for Afghanistan. The RMS will consolidate the existing base of long-term donors, but also seek to diversify the donor base through building relations with non-traditional donors and piloting innovative blended finance initiatives to support national budgeting, resourcing and planning on SDGs. The new RMS will reflect the new needs for SDG financing and improved capacity building across key government ministries.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1.1. Conduct a thorough analysis of UNDP Afghanistan's funding data in recent years, deriving funding trends, risks and opportunities (i.e. by using the Resource Mobilization Analytics tool)	September 2019	BERA Staff		Completed
4.1.2. Conduct a contextual analysis (political developments, socioeconomic factors, global trends, official development assistance, etc.), taking into account short-term and long-term perspectives	December 2019	Resource Mobilization and Partnership Specialist		Ongoing

Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

4.1.3. Conduct a Development Finance Assessment and SDG Costing exercise.	June 2020	Senior Adviser on SDG Finance, Resource Mobilization and Partnership Specialist		Ongoing
4.1.4. Resource Mobilization Strategy drafted	September 2020	Resource Mobilization and Partnership Specialist		Ongoing

Recommendation 5.



The country office, in close consultation with RBAP, should examine and address workplace matters at UNDP Afghanistan. Issues — such as office-wide communication, staff learning and development — have arisen from the fast-paced changes in its business model in the midst of an active conflict. UNDP should ensure that the gender strategy is fully implemented with sensitivity, and that the office addresses its low gender parity, particularly at the management level.

Workplace matters can affect UNDP performance. Given the challenging operational environment, senior management in the country office should work with RBAP to address internal workplace challenges identified in the recent staff and partnership surveys. UNDP Afghanistan should establish a robust centralized staff development and learning plan that links with its strategic goals, particularly by enhancing staff skills to design coherent programmes and projects and efficiently manage projects even in the midst of constant staff renewal. The office also needs to engage in sector-specific policy-level discussions with national counterparts and development partners. Gender parity issues reflect deep-rooted cultural challenges, and in promoting gender equality, UNDP needs to proceed with sensitivity in the office. The objective is to ensure that the ongoing initiatives to improve gender equality and women's empowerment in UNDP programming are fully supported at all levels.

Management response:

Agreed.



In response to general workplace matters, the CO is developing a new communication strategy under the supervision of a dedicated international communications consultant. A new Learning Committee is finalizing a new learning strategy in accordance with the corporate 'People for 2030' strategy, where Afghanistan is a pilot country. Additionally, the CO has made progress in the completion of all eight mandatory courses (from 72% in 2018 to 92% in 2019), including Fraud and Corruption Awareness and Prevention, Ethics and Integrity, UN Human Rights and Responsibilities, Legal Framework and BSAFE.

In addition, the CO is fully implementing the CO Gender Equality Strategy through development of a Gender Focal Team Action Plan and the implementation of an initiative called 'Young Women Professional Programme' to address low gender parity. Also, the CO has improved the percent completion of gender-related Mandatory Courses by staff as follows: (1) Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse of the Local Population (PSEA), from 77% in 2018 to 92% in 2019, (2) Gender Journey, from 75% in 2018 to 94% in 2019, and (3) the United Nations Course on Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority, from 76% in 2018 to 93% in 2019.

At the senior management level, the appointment of a woman from Zimbabwe as the D1 Senior Deputy Resident Representative for operations has been completed. A woman from Senegal has been recruited as the Senior Adviser to the Resident Representative on SDG Finance. At the middle-management level, a woman has been appointed as the P3 Human Resource Management Specialist/Head of HR Unit, and a P3 Programme Management Specialist from Japan for the Livelihoods Unit. A P3 Programme Management Specialist from India has been recruited for the Justice Window of the LOTFA MPTF.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1.1. UNDP will ensure a safe and harmonious workplace with consideration to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persons with disability Prevention of harassment and discrimination 	December 2019	RR, SDRR (Operations and Programmes) and Staff Association		Ongoing
5.2.1. UNDP will put in place tailored mechanisms for staff learning and development, corresponding to the UNDP People 2030 strategy	December 2019	HR Unit, Learning Committee		Ongoing
5.2.2. UNDP Afghanistan will revise its HR Policy for Gender Parity	March 2020	HR Unit and Gender Specialist (with support from RBAP)		Ongoing
5.3.1. UNDP will revise the Gender Strategy and develop its Action Plan	June 2020	SDRRs, Gender Specialist, PSRU		Ongoing

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/9389>

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. People consulted

Annex 3. Documents consulted

Annex 4. Country at a glance

Annex 5. Country office at a glance

Annex 6. Status of country programme outcome indicators

Annex 7. List of projects for in-depth review

Annex 8. Country programme document results and resource framework for Afghanistan (2015–2019)



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