

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION KAZAKHSTAN







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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Independent Evaluation of the UNDP Country Programme in Kazakhstan. This is the first country-level assessment of UNDP interventions in Kazakhstan by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This evaluation covers the programme period 2016 to mid-2019. It has been carried out in collaboration with the Government of Kazakhstan, UNDP Kazakhstan country office, and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

UNDP has been in Kazakhstan for over 20 years and over the years its programme has been shaped by the country's development priorities and challenges. Its current programme (2016-2020), which is under review, responds to the national priorities identified in the Nurly Zhol medium-term plan and Kazakhstan-2050 Vision, reflected in the 2016-2020 United Nations Partnership Framework for Development. UNDP's programme strategy seeks to address the nexus between inclusive growth and sustainable development, governance, and regional cooperation, playing the role of convener and facilitator between the Government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and communities, as well as United Nations organizations and other international bodies.

The evaluation found that UNDP has made notable contributions in promoting and supporting institutional and policy reforms around public administration, civil service and environmental governance creating an enabling environment for improved public services and resilience to climate change. UNDP's work in promoting civil society and its role in decision-making processes has been widely

recognized, which have the potential of bringing transformative changes from the perspective of democratization of the society.

Within the sphere of climate change adaptation, UNDP has piloted models for sustainable use and management of land and water resources and promoting energy efficiency. Piloted green technologies demonstrate they can not only reduce pressure on natural resources, but also improve profitability and mitigate disaster risks. The needs, however, are large, requiring deepened engagement in these areas and a focus on upscaling of these initiatives.

UNDP's programme in Kazakhstan has been highly relevant to the country's national priorities and Kazakhstan's vision of becoming a global player and provider of development assistance to countries in the region and globally. UNDP is well-positioned to support Kazakhstan in the realization of this ambition.

I would like to thank the Government of Kazakhstan, the various national stakeholders, and colleagues at the UNDP Kazakhstan country office, and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States who graciously provided their time, information and support to this evaluation. I have every confidence that the findings, conclusions and recommendations provided herein will help to strengthen the formulation of UNDP's next country programme strategy in Kazakhstan.

Indran A. Naidoo

Director, Independent Evaluation Office

FOREWORD III

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB Asian Development Bank

AIDS Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CCM Country Coordination Mechanism

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CIS Commonwealth of Independent States

CO Country office

CPD Country programme document

CRPD Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability

CSO Civil society organization

DAMU National Fund for Support of Entrepreneurs

DRR Disaster risk reduction EU European Union

GBV Gender-based violence
GDP Gross domestic product
GEF Global Environmental Facility

GF Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

GHG Greenhouse gas

HIV Human immunodeficiency virus

ICPE Independent Country Programme Evaluation

IEO Independent Evaluation Office
IFI International financial institution

INDC Intended Nationally Determined Contribution
NAMA Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action

ODA Official development assistance

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PA Protected area

PLHIV Persons living with HIV
POP Persistent organic pollutant
PWD Persons with disability

ROAR Results Oriented Annual Report
SDG Sustainable Development Goal
SME Small and medium enterprise

TB Tuberculosis

UMIC Upper-middle-income country

UN United Nations

UNCT United Nations Country Team

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNPFD United Nations Partnership Framework for Development
 uPOP Unintentionally produced persistent organic pollutant
 USAID United States Agency for International Development

WHO World Health Organization

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Evaluation Brief: Kazakhstan

UNDP has been present in Kazakhstan for over 20 years during which its programme has been shaped by the country's development priorities and challenges. Its current programme (2016-2020), which is under review, responds to the national priorities identified in the Nurly Zhol medium-term plan and Kazakhstan-2050 vision, reflected in the 2016-2020 United Nations Partnership Framework for Development. UNDP's programme strategy seeks

to address the nexus between inclusive growth and sustainable development, governance, and regional cooperation, playing the role of convener and facilitator between the Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and communities, as well as United Nations organizations and other international bodies. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an independent country programme evaluation of Kazakhstan in 2019.

Total programme expenditure (2016-2018)

US\$42,606,567

Funding sources, 2016-2018





Million (US\$)

25



Key findings and conclusions

UNDP has maintained a close relationship with the Government of Kazakhstan and is strategically positioned to respond to the needs of the government institutions. However, the demand-driven nature of its work results in a multitude of interventions within a loosely defined theory of change and limited cross-sectoral linkages. These weaknesses undermine its outcome-based programmatic approach, thus limiting the overall effectiveness of UNDP's country programme.

UNDP has made notable contributions in promoting and supporting institutional and policy reforms

around public administration, civil service and environmental governance, creating an enabling environment for improved public services and resilience to climate change. UNDP has modelled a number of approaches, mechanisms, services and demonstrated important results in experimental settings and pilots across all sectors of its support. Significantly more sustained work is required to take advantage of the momentum created for institutionalizing and upscaling to ensure the sustainability of results.

UNDP has invested moderate efforts in coordination with UN agencies, resulting in partial utilization of the partnership potential. The

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) process has brought agencies together. The UNDP-facilitated SDG national platform, launched recently, which includes a broad range of stakeholders, including UN agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs), the Government and civil society organizations (CSOs) provides an excellent opportunity to enhance coordination and explore synergies to enhance the cumulative impact of interventions in the country.

UNDP has made commendable progress in bringing about system-level changes in the manner the Government addresses issues of gender and rights of most vulnerable groups, particularly persons with disabilities (PWD), as well as empowerment and inclusion of CSOs in decision-making processes to promote and protect their rights. UNDP's work in these areas has been commendable and brought important results in the way the Government views, addresses and protects rights of PWD and integrates gender in policies. These results are still delicate and dependent on political and institutional commitment, resources and willingness to invest in addressing long-rooted practices and social norms.

UNDP has been effective in fostering regional, South-South and triangular cooperation modalities to enhance Kazakhstan's profile as a regional actor by sharing its best practices, experiences and results. While this has strengthened Kazakhstan's positioning and recognition as a regional and global player in line with Kazakhstan's ambition to join the family of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development states, the sustainability of these efforts, which are still in their early stages, remains a question.

Kazakhstan's upper-middle-income country status, declining core resources, shrinking landscape of donors and development partners and unpredictable government cost-sharing presents UNDP with a demand to be innovative and diversify its resource portfolio. While the Government remains UNDP's largest contributor, government funding often comes with delays and has seen significant variations over the recent years. This makes UNDP's country programme vulnerable from the standpoint of financial stability.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP needs to consolidate its country portfolio and ensure support is provided in the areas where it has the strongest comparative advantages. The demand-driven nature of its work will remain, but responsiveness to government demands needs to happen within the parameters of outcome-level results and a well-defined theory of change with proper analysis of causal assumptions and risks. UNDP should ensure that piloting and modelling of services and/or approaches is done within this larger institutional framework to ensure the sustainability of results.

RECOMMENDATION 2. UNDP should invest strongly in gathering and utilizing evidence towards improved programming and knowledge management in the country office. This should be supported by a crossportfolio knowledge platform for regular reflection on results, synergy and coherence within and across the country office portfolio.

RECOMMENDATION 3. UNDP should continue investing in social, public administration and civil service reforms, particularly in the areas in which support was initiated during this country programme cycle, such as meritocracy, anti-corruption and social service delivery.

RECOMMENDATION 4. UNDP needs to continue spearheading initiatives for empowerment of women, the most vulnerable groups and civil society to take a more active role in decision-making processes based on lessons learned and results of interventions in these areas achieved thus far.

RECOMMENDATION 5. UNDP should build on the achievements in the energy and environment sector and deepen its engagement to upscale and institutionalize the results by strengthening existing partnerships and engaging with non-traditional partners.

RECOMMENDATION 6. UNDP should develop an exit strategy and engage with the Government to discuss the sustainability, institutionalization and future of services and approaches modelled by UNDP across its portfolio, most notable of all being the Astana Regional Hub and support to the national official development assistance system.

RECOMMENDATION 7. UNDP should develop and proactively pursue a long-term resource mobilization strategy and implementation plan that includes a predictable government cost-sharing agreement and innovative financing mechanisms, including partnerships with the private sector and IFIs.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

VELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL ON stainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT responsiveness COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability FION relevance sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT as COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP relevance MARESULTS effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainal AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT responsibility MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT responsiveness HUMAN RESPONSIVENESS RESPONSIVENES

1.1. Purpose, objective and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to national development priorities, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.

This is the first country-level evaluation of UNDP's work in Kazakhstan and is an integral part of the cluster evaluation of UNDP country programmes in 10 countries and one territory of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (ECIS), each of which goes to the UNDP Executive Board in 2020 for the approval of their new country programme document (CPD).

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

- 1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
- 2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
- 3. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, the sustainability of results?

The evaluation covers the period from 2016 to mid-2019 of the current country programme cycle (2016-2020). The scope of the ICPE includes the entirety of UNDP's activities in the country and therefore covers interventions funded by all sources, including core UNDP resources, donor funds, and government funds. It also includes any projects and activities from the previous programme cycle that either continued or concluded in the current programme cycle. The ICPE pays particular attention to the ECIS subregional and regional development

context within which the UNDP country programme has operated (Annex 1, available online).

The evaluation is guided by three main evaluation questions (Box 1). It presents findings, conclusions and recommendations which will serve as an input to the formulation of UNDP's new CPD for 2021-2025.

The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Kazakhstan country office (CO), the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC), the UNDP Executive Board, and the Government of Kazakhstan.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards,¹ ensuring that all steps of the evaluation adhere to ethical and professional standards of evaluation practice.

The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach.2 An abridged theory of change was developed at the inception stage based on the desk review to explain causality and change, including underlying assumptions. This was further refined as the evaluation progressed, based on discussions with stakeholders during the country missions on the progress of UNDP towards the achievement of the country programme outcomes (Figure 2). Choices about the methods and the strategy for undertaking the evaluation were grounded in the theory of change and its assumptions. An evaluation matrix was developed identifying the sub-questions, sources of information and evaluative evidence for each of the three evaluation guestions (Annex 2, available online). Qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis in line with the nature of the evidence, and to facilitate triangulation of findings.

Documentation review: The evaluation team undertook an extensive review of documents. This included, among others, background documents on the regional, subregional and national context,

¹ http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914.

² Theory-based evaluations are usually based on a theory of change and/or results framework that seeks to explain causality and changes, including underlying assumptions.

documents from international partners and other UN agencies during the period under review; project and programme documents such as work plans and progress reports; monitoring and self-assessment reports such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs), strategy notes and project and programme evaluations conducted by the country office,³ regional bureau and partners, including the quality assurance and audit reports.

Portfolio analysis: Based on the analysis of the country portfolio, the team selected 33 percent of projects representing a cross-section of UNDP's work in the country for in-depth review and analysis (Annex 4, available online); and also used the analysis to further refine and elaborate the evaluation matrix. The purposive sampling was used based on a number of criteria, including programme coverage (projects covering the various thematic and cross-cutting areas such as gender and human rights); financial expenditure (a representative mix of both large and smaller projects); maturity (covering both completed and active projects); gender marker⁴ (mix of projects from GEN 0-3) and implementation modality (both national implementation and direct implementation).

Stakeholder analysis: The desk review and the portfolio analysis were used to undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify all relevant UNDP partners, including those that may not have worked with UNDP but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributes. The analysis was used to identify key informants for interviews during the main data collection phase of the evaluation, and to examine any potential partnerships that could further improve UNDP's contribution to the country.

Pre-mission questionnaire: A pre-mission questionnaire was administered to the UNDP country office as a self-assessment and reflection tool as well as to gather evidence of results. This additional evidence was very valuable in providing an additional source of information on UNDP country

programme, its effectiveness and sustainability, allowing triangulation of data with that collected in the framework of the country field visit and from the secondary data and documentation review.

The preliminary findings of the desk review (which was conducted according to the evaluation matrix) were validated in the field phase and used to identify gaps in data and any important issues requiring subsequent follow-up.

Country missions and key informant interviews: A country mission for data collection was undertaken from 20 to 24 May 2019. A multistakeholder approach was followed and a total of 54 stakeholder interviews were conducted with government representatives, civil society organizations (CSOs), private-sector representatives, UN agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and beneficiaries of the programme. Field visits were undertaken to the CSO BALAMA-Al supporting disabled children and youth in Astana and to Arnasay village to observe UNDP's work on energy-efficient lighting and low carbon urban development and hold discussions with the project beneficiaries.

Triangulation: All information and data collected from multiple sources were triangulated to ensure its validity. The evaluation matrix was used to guide how each of the questions was addressed and to organize the available evidence by key evaluation questions. This facilitated the analysis and supported the evaluation team in drawing well-substantiated conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation quality assurance: Quality assurance for the evaluation was provided by three IEO internal reviewers to ensure a sound and robust evaluation methodology and analysis of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. Following the peer reviews, the draft ICPE report was shared with the country office and the RBEC and finally with the Government and other national partners in Kazakhstan for comments.

³ The CO completed 12 decentralized evaluations during the review period. Of these, four were rated satisfactory, five moderately satisfactory and three moderately unsatisfactory by the IEO quality assurance mechanism.

⁴ UNDP adopted a Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 as the strategic guidance to UNDP COs and business units to mainstream gender, through specific measures to address gender inequalities and gender (and sex) disaggregated data and indicators. Gender markers were introduced as a tool to rates gender mainstreaming and equality at the project level on a scale from zero to three, with a recommendation for country offices to allocate 15 percent of expenditure towards gender mainstreaming.

1.3. Evaluation considerations

The ICPE Kazakhstan is part of a cluster evaluation of UNDP country programmes in 10 countries and one territory in Europe and the CIS, which is being piloted by the IEO to ensure 100 percentage ICPE coverage of countries going to the Executive Board with their new CPD. The pilot aims to increase the country coverage in a reduced time-frame allowing for efficiency gains while maintaining the ICPE quality and methodological rigour. To ensure this, the evaluation design front-loaded the bulk of the research and analysis before the country mission and team members used their presence in Kazakhstan to validate the emerging findings. Most of the research for the evaluation was conducted remotely and only five working days were spent in each country to interview key stakeholders as well as visit project sites to meet the beneficiaries to assess the effectiveness of programme interventions.

The evaluation design posed challenges related to the coverage of stakeholders and the number and depth of field visits. To offset the challenges, the evaluation team, in consultation with the CO, carefully planned the country mission by ensuring full coverage of the CO portfolio and stakeholders. To address the volume of stakeholder meetings, the team members commissioned parallel meetings and where possible, held focus group discussions. Field visits were confined to project sites near the CO that the team members could return the same day. This may have some influence on the level of consultations during the field visits to collect primary data and consult data sources. The limited time-frame in the country also affected the quality of CO debriefing at the end of the mission, which became a wrap-up meeting with discussions on the next steps and follow-up.

1.4. Country context

Kazakhstan is an upper-middle-income country (UMIC) and over the past decade has made remarkable progress in infrastructure, service delivery, human development and reduction in inequalities. In 2018, it ranked 50th out of 189 countries globally, according to the UNDP Human Development Report.⁵ The following paragraphs highlight the key development challenges in Kazakhstan.

Socio-economic: The country saw an acceleration in its GDP growth in 2017, reaching 4.3 percent, mostly due to the recovery in global oil and gas markets.⁶ The non-oil economy also expanded in 2016-2017 contributing to over 70 percent of GDP, mostly in agriculture, transport, and trade sectors, thus opening new opportunities for the development of small and medium- enterprises (SMEs). Kazakhstan has committed to shrinking the role of the state-owned enterprises in the economy through a mix of privatization and restructuring measures, creating favourable conditions for SMEs, by helping reduce red tape and administrative barriers. However, SMEs still contribute less than 30 percent of GDP annually.7 According to Asian Development Bank data, 4.3 percent of the Kazakh population lived below the national poverty line in 2018, while the unemployment rate was 4.9 percent overall, with 5.6 percent of unemployed women.8 However, independent assessments such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) put the real number of unemployed and those in highly precarious jobs at over 20 percent.9 Due to economic reliance on unevenly distributed natural resources, regional disparities are very high in Kazakhstan, with a GINI coefficient of 0.37 in some of Kazakhstan's regions against the national value of 0.263.10 For example, data from 2011 show poverty rates twice the

 $^{^{5}\,2019\,}Human\,Development\,Report:\,http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/KAZ.pdf.$

⁶ World Bank Economic Update, 2017.

⁷ Statistics Committee, 2017.

 $^{^8}$ https://www.adb.org/countries/kazakhstan/poverty.

⁹ https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2018_KAZ.pdf.

¹⁰ OECD, 'OECD Review of Health Systems: Kazakhstan', 2018.

national average in Southern Kazakhstan, Mangistau and Northern Kazakhstan at around 10 percent.¹¹ Kazakhstan achieved almost universal literacy rate (99.8 percent)¹² and its spending on health amounted to 3.6 percent of GDP.¹³ The health services provision budget is considerably lower than many other countries in the high human development bracket.

Governance and human rights: The smooth transition of political power in 2019 has been a positive move for Kazakhstan, bringing new energy for cooperation and investment in the country. Worldwide Governance Indicators show good ranking for Kazakhstan in terms of political stability, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality, but low ranking for accountability, control of corruption and rule of law, along with the electoral process, civil society, independent media, national and regional governance. Kazakhstan has made significant strides in modernizing the public service, but there are challenges in ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of public sector institutions at all levels, particularly at the local level. As a result of streamlined business procedures and the introduction of client-friendly services, Kazakhstan has one of the most advanced one-stop-shop systems in the region; however, public value approach to service delivery remains to be fully understood and implemented.

Public participation in decision-making is organized through a system of involving the people in formulating national legislation and policies. While there is increasing involvement of civil society and vulnerable groups in the discussion process, this does not always yield positive outcomes and impact on decision-making.¹⁴

Studies and relevant UN reports note that national legislation is not always aligned with ratified

international human rights instruments - nor is its implementation. Serious gaps remain regarding alignment with international standards in areas such as the administration of justice (including the independence of the judiciary, freedom of expression and assembly, and the right to adequate housing,15 among others), contributing to poor access to justice and legal aid. Universal Periodic Review recommendations are monitored and assessed both by the Government and civil society, but there is no progress with some of the recommendations (death penalty, Rome Statute, ratification of Convention on Migrants, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly).¹⁶ Corruption remains a challenge, and the Government is tackling it through efforts to implement its Anticorruption Strategy. 17 18

Violence against women persists despite the President's attention to the issue and a draft law in the Parliament that increases criminal punishment for sexual violence ('On amendments and additions to some legislative acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the improvement of criminal and criminal procedural legislation').¹⁹

Kazakhstan has developed the 'Concept of State Youth Policy' which identifies threats and risks for young people as pressure on traditional value systems, paternalism (cementing gender stereotypes and hampering progress to de facto rather than de jure gender equality), social infantilism, consumerism and risky/unhealthy lifestyles. Active engagement with the youth in decision-making, employment issues, and higher level educational support including vocational education and training remain as important challenges.

Environment: On the environmental front, Kazakhstan's arid climate is characterized by scorching summers and harsh winters. The country

¹¹ Ibid, p.43.

 $^{^{12}\,}https://www.indexmundi.com/kazakhstan/literacy.html.$

 $^{^{13}\} https://www.bti-project.org/content/en/downloads/reports/country_report_2018_KAZ.pdf.$

 $^{^{14}\,}https://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/OECD-ACN-Kazakhstan-Progress-Update-2019-ENG.pdf.$

¹⁵ As concluded by the UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, other UN Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council, who have visited the country; see https://uhri.ohchr.org/Summary/Country.

¹⁶ https://bureau.kz/en/monitoring/shadow_alternative_reports/.

 $^{^{17}\} http://anticorruption.gov.kz/ru/pages/nacionalnyy-doklad-o-protivo deystvii-korrupcii-2018-0pp 10-32.$

¹⁸ https://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/OECD-ACN-Kazakhstan-Progress-Update-2019-ENG.pdf, pp.10-11.

¹⁹ http://www.parlam.kz/ru/mazhilis/itreceived, pp.19-25.

is prone to natural disasters, including droughts, heatwaves, floods, mudflows and landslides which are also responsible for land degradation, infrastructure damage and loss of life. Kazakhstan faces severe environmental challenges in the Aral Sea region, a disaster²⁰ that has resulted in serious economic and environmental degradation,²¹ and social and health problems resulting from nuclear weapons testing at the Semipalatinsk site. These are exacerbated by the accelerating impact of climate change, mainly associated with a redistribution of precipitation and increasing severity and frequency of drought.²² Transboundary water issues persist and water resource management is expected to become ever more critical, with high irrigation demands (90 percent of national water consumption) set to become problematic as changing rainfall patterns increase the intensity and frequency of droughts.²³

Kazakhstan's steady economic growth since 2000 has led to 100 percent electrification as well as increased energy demands. With an extensive electric and fossil fuel network, Kazakhstan's energy supply is vulnerable to the effects of extreme weather on energy infrastructure from floods and mudflow.²⁴ Although the country relies heavily on fossil fuels, hydropower accounts for 13 percent of Kazakhstan's electricity production and 3 percent of total energy. The country is planning to expand renewable energy in coming years (from 1.56 percent in 2015²⁵ to 50 percent by 2050²⁶). However, its hydropower potential is threatened by decreasing glacial contributions to river volume and increased withdrawals by neighbouring countries along transboundary rivers important for hydropower, such as the Irtysh, Ili and Syr Darya.27

1.5. National development planning architecture

Kazakhstan's Government has undertaken a number of reforms to enhance its development, particularly economic diversification, SME development, reduction of inequities in social well-being and health, development of sustainable practices and enhancement of the local governments. Besides, the Government has set a goal of entering the top 30 developed countries in the world. The Kazakhstan 2050 Development Strategy presents an overall framework of reforms with the 'Plan of the Nation -100 Concrete Steps to Implement Five Institutional Reforms' and the 'Concept of Transition of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Sustainable Development (2007-2024)' complemented by the Nurly Zhol (Path to the Future) programme, setting forth concrete steps to achieve the goals. The reform priorities are further elaborated by national development programmes such as the Strategic Development Plan 2025 as a key mid-term development document; Industrialization Programme; Digital Kazakhstan; Territories Development Programme, Employment Roadmap-2020, Business Roadmap-2020; Education Development Programme for 2011-2020; National Health Strategy 'Densaulyk' for 2016-2019; Concept for Family and Gender Policy till 2030; and the Roadmap by the General Prosecutor's Office 'Kazakhstan without domestic violence, etc. In the area of environmental protection, the country's strategy is guided by 'Green Economy Concept' (2013), supported by a programme called Zhasyl Damu 2014-2017 (Green Growth) and the Green Economy Law (2016).

²⁰ The disaster has been the consequence of the Aral Sea's drying up, resulting in a range of socio-economic and environmental consequences, including land degradation, a loss of biodiversity, climate change, and deterioration of health and socio-economic status among the region's population.

²¹ USAID, 'Climate Risk Profile: Kazakhstan (Factsheet)', 2017, p.1: https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID%20ATLAS_Climate%20Risk%20Profile%20-%20Kazakhstan.pdf

 $^{^{22}\,}https://www.adaptation-undp.org/explore/central-asia/kazakhstan.$

²³ USAID, 'Climate Risk Profile: Kazakhstan (Factsheet),' 2017, p.3: https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID ATLAS_Climate Risk Profile - Kazakhstan.pdf.

²⁴ USAID, 'Climate Risk Profile for Kazakhstan, 2017: https://www.liportal.de/fileadmin/user_upload/oeffentlich/Kasachstan/10_ueberblick/2017_USAID_ATLAS_ Climate_Risk_Profile_-_Kazakhstan.pdf.

 $^{{}^{25}\,}World\,Bank\,data\,for\,renewable\,energy\,consumption:\,https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.FEC.RNEW.ZS?locations=KZ.$

²⁶ The Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE) rating at 49. Maintained by the World Bank. RISE scores reflect a snapshot of a country's policies and regulations in the energy sector, organized by the three pillars: energy access, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. Indicators are assigned to each pillar to determine scores.

²⁷ USAID, 'Climate Risk Profile: Kazakhstan (Factsheet)', 2017, p.4: https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2017_USAID ATLAS_Climate Risk Profile - Kazakhstan.pdf.

Kazakhstan is a signatory to major international and regional agreements, including the UN conventions and treaties²⁸ on human rights and anti-discrimination, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). In the field of environment protection, Kazakhstan is a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought. In 1995, Kazakhstan ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a non-Annex I party, and in 1999 committed to limit greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and accepted a binding and quantified emission limitation of 100 percent over a 1992 baseline. The Kyoto Protocol was ratified in June 2009. Kazakhstan's Third-Sixth National Communication to the UNFCCC29 - revised in 2014 - presented feasible adaptation measures for a number of sectors. However, the country's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC), which later became its first Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) when the Paris Agreement was ratified in 2016, is heavily focused on mitigation and does not consider adaptation activities. Kazakhstan proposed as its NDC an economy-wide reduction of GHG emissions of 15 percent from 1990 emissions levels by 2030 and 25 percent by 2050. The INDC explicitly refers to the Green Economy Concept and identifies the link between development priorities outlined in the Concept and the mitigation targets expressed in the INDC, especially on energy saving and renewable energy development.

1.6. Kazakhstan's positioning in the region and key development partners

Kazakhstan's ambition to become a regional and global player has been translated into the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, which sets the goal to become a member state of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as to play a consequential geopolitical role by that year. Within the framework of long-term reforms initiated since its independence,

Kazakhstan has succeeded in moving up to UMIC status, and to become a member of the World Trade Organization, also securing a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for a two-year term from January 2017. Kazakhstan works towards strengthening its regional and international geopolitical positioning through its multi-vector diplomacy and through investment in building its capacities as an emerging donor for bilateral as well as South-South and triangular cooperation. In 2014, the Government adopted an Official Development Assistance (ODA) Law, creating the foundation for its international aid policy, with steps undertaken, inter alia with support of UNDP, to establish a government agency KazAid dedicated to ODA (assessed in this report).

The main donors active in Kazakhstan include the European Commission; international finance institutions such as the World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamic Development Bank; bilateral donors such as Governments of Switzerland, United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany; and funds, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Green Climate Fund.

1.7. UNDP programme strategy in Kazakhstan

The UNDP country programme for period 2016-2020 has been developed to respond to the national priorities identified in the Nurly Zhol medium-term plan and Kazakhstan 2050 vision, reflected in the 2016-2020 United Nations Partnership Framework for Development (UNPFD). UNDP programme strategy seeks to address the nexus between inclusive growth and sustainable development, governance, and regional cooperation, playing the role of convener and facilitator between the Government, private sector, non-governmental organizations and communities, as well as United Nations organizations and other international bodies. Table 1 presents an overview of UNDP CPD outcomes and country office (CO) budget.

²⁸ See the full list at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=89&Lang=EN.

 $^{^{29}\} https://unfccc.int/files/national_reports/annex_i_natcom_/application/pdf/kaz_nc3,4,5,6_eng.pdf.$

TABLE 1: Overview of UNDP country programme outcomes (2016-2020)

Theme	Outcomes		Budget (2016-2018) US\$	Expenditure (2016-2018) US\$
Inclusive and sustainable growth	Outcome 18	Diversification of the economy provides decent work opportunities for the underemployed, youth, and socially vulnerable women and men.	7,938,242	5,921,734
Environment and energy	Outcome 19	Ecosystems and natural resources are protected, and sustainably used, and human settlements are resilient to natural and human-induced disasters and climate change.	28,933,844	24,834,424
Democratic governance	institutions are fair accountable and		16,030,513	11,850,409
	Outcome 21	The Government, together with partners, promotes achievement of sustainable development goals in the region, and leads in promotion and implementation of United Nations principles, standards and conventions.		
Total			52,902,599	42,606,567

Source: UNDP ATLAS, February 2019

The UNDP country portfolio consists of 66 projects under implementation (some of which started during the previous country programmes) under the four outcomes. The majority of projects (28) are small with budgets below \$200,000 and 14 with projects budget between \$200,000 and \$500,000. Six projects have budgets between \$500,000 and \$1 million; 16 between \$1 million and \$3 million and 2 over \$3 million. A review of the portfolio shows that 40 projects closed by the end of 2018 (with the majority ending by the end of 2017). The majority of the projects (41) are implemented by national agencies and 22 are directly implemented by UNDP.

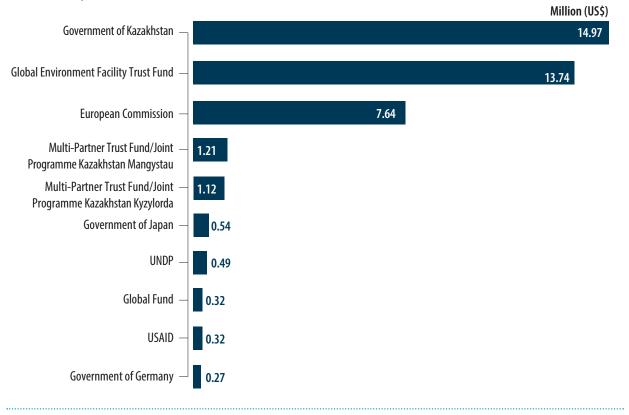
Under inclusive and sustainable growth, UNDP has implemented initiatives tackling a range of issues including competitiveness; procurement of health products; local development; and social protection. The democratic governance portfolio includes interventions from different sub-sectors focusing on issues relating to justice sector reform; elements of public administration reform; empowerment of women; procurement of medicines; establishment of the ODA system, etc. in line with the OECD principles and international

standards. The work towards supporting justice sector reform engaged with human rights and rule of law institutions in order to strengthen their capacities.

The energy and environment portfolio has six sub-portfolios (biodiversity and natural resource management, climate change mitigation, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction [DRR], sustainable urbanization, chemicals and waste management, and policy support) with 36 projects. UNDP focuses on regulatory framework, supporting and piloting measures related to sustainable energy and climate change adaptation, transboundary issues in natural resources management, effective waste management, strengthening national and local resilience and risk management, among others.

The Government of Kazakhstan is by far the largest donor for the country programme, contributing approximately \$17.45 million, followed by the GEF (\$15.20 million) and the European Commission (\$7.65 million). The UNDP country office receives small funds from a number of donors, including Japan, the Global Fund, and the US Agency for International Development.





³⁰ UNDP, ATLAS, February 2019.

FIGURE 2: UNDP Kazakhstan — Reconstructed theory of change

Theory of Change – Reconstructed Intervention

Inputs .

Time-frame 2016-2020

Budget

US\$52,902,600 (2016-2019)

Donor

Government of Kazakhstan, USAID, European Union, Government of Japan, Government of Germany, Coca-Cola Foundation, Korean Forest Service, GEF. Global Fund, etc.

Financing modalities

Grants

Project funding
Joint programmes

Human resources

Project staff Country office staff RBEC

Technical inputs

Know-how and best-practice exchange Dialogue and partnership with the Government, private sector and CSOs

Dialogue with UN agencies and donors; donor coordination

Policy dialogue and advocacy

Policy inputs

Combination of political dialogue and financial support; project and sector interventions

Activities .

Supporting evidence-based legislative development and policymaking through technical assistance in the form of capacity-building and advisory services to sectors of economic development, health and social service provision, environment and climate change, rule of law, civil service reform; local and regional governance and development, ODA and SDGs

Supporting establishment and/or strengthening of government mechanisms for quality service provision in the areas of social protection and inclusion; business development and management; employability and access to decent work for rural youth, persons with disabilities, and underemployed men and women, interlinking climate change, environment and sustainable development

Supporting the civil service reform processes in Kazakhstan and internationally through advisory, knowledge sharing and the Astana Regional Hub and related civil service reform projects

Strengthening existing capacities of government institutions and service providers, civil society, entrepreneurs and business startups by piloting services and approaches; provision of training, advisory, and equipment (on issues including but not limited to policy making, governance, economic development and climate change, environment protection, etc.)

Supporting the Government to maintain observation of its human rights commitments through technical assistance, including advisory for review of bills, regulations, policies and mechanisms that address Kazakhstan's international and domestic human rights commitments

Facilitating inter-agency and cross-border cooperation, interactions and networks (e.g. through services of the Astana Regional Hub; workshops, conferences and seminars, or joint projects and partnerships)

Supporting establishment and functioning of Kazakhstan's ODA system (KazAid)

Communication for development and awareness raising on public administration, governance and economic reforms, environment protection and climate change; promotion of public-private partnerships, small and medium enterprises and Kazakhstan's international ambitions

Assumptions

- Proactive engagement from government stakeholders
- Levels of political stability that do not deteriorate
- Availability of financial and human resources to complete the reforms

- Framework conditions conducive for reforms
- Inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups leads to stability

Logic — UNDP Country Programme Kazakhstan

Outputs _____ Outcomes ____ Impact/Goal _____

Strengthened government legislative and policy framework through

- Enhanced policies, systems and institutional measures at the national and subnational levels to generate and strengthen economic development and business climate strangthen forget, wildlife and protected area management.
- Enhanced policies and legislation for access to justice and service delivery
- Strengthened inter-agency links and networks

Strengthened mechanisms for

- Social service provision and better targeting of needs of most vulnerable
- Economic and policy analysis, business registration and licensing, PPP dialogue and employability
- Fiscal decentralization
- Introduction of meritocracy and performance management in civil service
- Monitoring and observance of persistent organic pollutants and medical waste
- Participatory policymaking

Kazakhstan's positioning in international relations enhanced through:

- Piloted and established KazAid agency
- Services of the Astana Regional Hub
- International and regional events

Awareness raised on:

- Energy efficiency in residential sector and renewable energy
- Economic and public administration reforms, business opportunities and
- protection of migrant workers right
- Role of civil society and other social actor.

The national and subnational governments have the capacity to strategically plan, budget, monitor and deliver services in an inclusive, transparent and participatory manner

policies provide for equitable, accountable and effective delivery of public services

Razakhstan's agencies (e.g. KazAid, Astana Regional Hub) promote and assist other countries in the region in their reform efforts

People, in particular the most vulnerable, are aware of and exercise their rights and use public services

People in Kazakhstan have their rights protected and benefit from high-quality equitable and just services delivered by accountable, transparent, and gender-responsive legislative and executive branches of government at all levels



People of Kazakhstan enjoy equitable and sustainable socio-economic growth through enhanced climate change and environment protection, productive employment, improvement of environment for business, entrepreneurship and innovations

- Mutual interest for partnership building between the Government, UNDP and the donors
- Beneficiaries remain open to capacity-building initiatives and willing/available to participate/attend capacity-building initiatives

CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS

VELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL Obstainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT responsiveness COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability ION relevance sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT of the sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP relevance MARESULTS effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT responsiveness COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT responsiveness sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (SECONDINATION Efficiency PARTNERSHIP SUSTAINABILITY RESPONSIVENESS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (SECONDINATION Efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP relevance MADINATION AND DEVELOPMENT (SECONDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT).

This chapter presents the evaluation's findings in terms of UNDP's effectiveness in achieving its objectives (as stated in the CPD) for each programme outcome and cross-cutting area. It also describes the main factors that influenced UNDP's performance and contributions to results. The assessment, which is qualitative in nature, is based on an analysis of the correlation between reported project achievements, their contribution to expected outputs under each outcome, and consequently the overall outcome objectives.

2.1. Overall programme implementation

Finding 1: UNDP's programme in Kazakhstan is highly relevant to the country's national priorities and Kazakhstan's vision of becoming a global player and provider of development assistance to countries in the region and globally. The sustainability of results, however, is often affected by the frequently changing government priorities and reform directions, requiring ongoing adaptation of UNDP interventions and programmes to fit the changing needs and policy landscape. This is further compounded by the country's UMIC status, the shrinking landscape of donors and development partners and unpredictable government cost-sharing.

"UNDP is constructive, proactive, demand responsive and open, pertinent and to the point. They try to go deep into a subject and invest efforts to understand the needs and respond to them with a strategic view and best practices." **Key informant**

The UNDP country programme has been consistent with Kazakhstan's national priorities and strategic areas, building on the Government's Strategy 2050, its medium- and longer-term development plans, including Agenda 2030 and other international conventions and commitments of Kazakhstan. The programme responds to Kazakhstan's ambition to be a regional and global player as a provider of development assistance as well as sharing its best practices and experiences in public administration reforms. UNDP interventions covered all key sectors

ranging from public administration and civil service; justice; energy and environment; economic diversification and competitiveness; to social and health reforms focusing on regulatory frameworks, strategies and legislations, supporting and piloting best practices, and investing in institutional and human resource capacity development. Stakeholders recognize UNDP for its multistakeholder approach, working in close cooperation with a range of partners at the national and subnational level, with regional and local governments, civil society organizations, community groups, think tanks, academia, local financial institutions and the private sector. This close association and engagement have helped build the partners' trust and confidence in UNDP, an attribute also noted in recent external outcome evaluations.

Stakeholder interviews reveal that UNDP is valued for its neutrality, visibility, access to international networks and expertise, due diligence in the utilization of government funding, effective procurement systems, transparent decision-making and the ability to mobilize support from a range of UNDP and UN structures. UNDP is an active participant in key governmental advisory/working groups ranging from Green Economy Council, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) working groups and SDG Coordination Council, working groups on strategy development, legislative drafting, and ministerial annual reporting sessions.

The frequently changing policy directions and priorities of the Government in some sectors have, however, influenced UNDP's programming of support and the sustainability of results, due to discontinuation of some models or approaches that were initially agreed for uptake by the Government. This was further intensified with the political change in 2019, which brought changes at the levels of ministries. One such example is KazAid (Kazakhstan's ODA system), which UNDP supported continuously through modelling of developmental assistance (to Afghanistan). The agency is still not institutionalized (see Finding 19). UNDP has maintained its relevance in changing circumstances, through measures to adapt its programme throughout the cycle. For instance, when the Government shifted its approach towards modernizing its institutions, UNDP shifted gears and moved from practical on-the-ground

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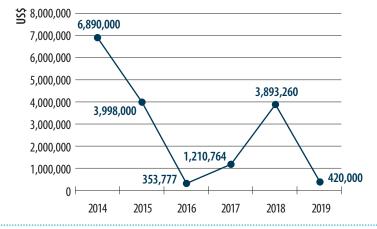
work to provision of strategic and advisory support services, acting not only as a source of knowledge and expertise but also as an integrator of expertise and solutions providing a collaborative platform for many development partners. This is appropriate from the perspective of the country's UMIC status. Also, when the government funding was reduced, UNDP successfully used market-based mechanisms for investments in infrastructure and loans within its energy and environment portfolio to establish a sustainable financing mechanism.³¹ Another example is found in UNDP's initial CPD, which envisaged investment in regional development, which was one of the Government's top priorities until 2017. However, the Government moved the focus from regional to local development, demanding the change in focus for development partners too, including UNDP, particularly by investing in measures in environment and governance sectors.

Another key issue affecting UNDP's approaches is the high turnover of government staff, which requires ongoing investment in building links and maintaining its continued relevance and buy-in. This challenge was experienced across projects within all portfolios, with a high turnover of staff within line ministries and institutions and reshuffling of key government personnel involved in the implementation of projects. Closely linked to this is the consequent burdening of existing government staff with additional obligations

and a multitude of tasks and assignments, which made it more difficult to fully focus on projects under implementation.

Resource mobilization remains another key challenge for the country office because of Kazakhstan's UMIC status and the dwindling donor base. While the Government remains UNDP's largest contributor, government funding often comes with delays and has seen significant variations since 2016. This makes planning very difficult and UNDP's country programme vulnerable from the standpoint of financial stability (Figure 3). In 2016, Kazakhstan faced an economic crisis and volatility of the national currency which led to frequent devaluations of Kazakhstani Tenge (Kazakhstan's currency) resulting in budget cuts and the President's moratorium on all new initiatives until 2018. This dealt a huge blow to government commitments. The challenge was further intensified with the political change in 2019, which brought changes at the levels of ministries, bringing insecurity and uncertainty for projects across the country programme. A large number of projects in UNDP's portfolio were in their final stages by the end of 2017, practically closing all the work under outcome 18. Another challenge is a negligible allocation of core resources (TRAC - \$0.15 million annually) which creates difficulty in co-financing, a requirement for the main donors.

FIGURE 3: Government cost-sharing (2014-2019)



³¹ Market-based solutions for starting alternative businesses for communities living near protected areas include microcredit programme Eco-DAMU in partnership with the Fund for Financial Support to Agriculture and measures to attract private investments into the low-carbon urban projects with interest rate subsidy for loans in second-tier banks.

The UNDP country office has so far not strongly engaged with international finance institutions (IFIs) in this and the previous programme cycles, though there have been some collaborative initiatives with Asian Development Bank and World Bank since 2018. Interviewees noted that cooperation with IFIs is an important area for UNDP to explore from the perspective of helping the Government utilize loans received. This is a missed opportunity and UNDP should use the momentum and work closely with IFIs by offering technical assistance to the Government in the efficient utilization of the loans.

Finding 2: A multitude of activities, many of which are small interventions, and a lack of a detailed theory of change compromise the consolidation of results of UNDP's interventions. The CO has restructured its programme portfolios, but there have been limited synergies and coherence among them. Programme planning and implementation is informed by monitoring and reporting at the level of inputs, activities and outputs, and outcome-level assessment is mainly approached by commissioned external outcome evaluations.

The bouquet of UNDP's interventions is pretty much demand-driven, with strong responsiveness to the specific demands and requests from the Government and national actors, reflected in the programme portfolio funded by the Government. A broadly defined CPD allows UNDP to respond to such ad hoc requests. Yet, an incomplete and weak theory of change (TOC) does not provide clarity on the chain of causal assumptions linking programme resources, activities and intermediate outcomes to the country programme outcomes. Each country programme outcome has a TOC that describes the development challenges; lessons learned; UNDP role; overview of stakeholders and partners; and assumptions and risks; however, it stops short of the most critical step forward in analysing and discussing the causal linkages within the hierarchy of results. This is a shortcoming which affects the understanding of how inputs, activities and outputs bring transformative effects on UNDP's target groups and beneficiaries.

The demand-driven nature with changing priorities and interventions, as well as dependence on government funds (with a three-year funding cycle), makes it difficult to ensure systematic synergies and interlinkages across portfolios. UNDP CO invests efforts to programme and plan in response to government requests and financial cycles, and this takes away the time for reflection and active exploration of deeper interlinkages and synergies across interventions and portfolios. The CO is sizeable, with offices in Nur Sultan and in Almaty. This structure allows for better positioning and responsiveness to government priorities. The country programme includes an extensive number of projects, with 66 interventions under implementation within the current programme cycle. Such widespread portfolio inevitably leads to silos and stovepiping and fragmentation of support. In efforts to overcome silos and enhance interlinkages, the CO went through a restructuring and is now organized into two clusters - sustainable development and governance. This has resulted in better internal organization and synergies within portfolios. However, there is a strict division of individual and team roles and responsibilities for projects within each cluster. With a large number of projects covering a variety of themes divided among teams and ongoing demands by the Government, there seems to be limited space and time for reflections across the clusters and portfolios. This affects cross-sectoral synergies and coherence.

The evaluation did find interlinkages across thematic fields. For example, between economic development interventions and environment protection, where UNDP, in partnership with the National Fund for Support of Entrepreneurs (DAMU), launched an innovative financial mechanism for municipal low-carbon projects; as well as Eco-DAMU, a microcredit programme in three regions, which have brought significant benefits to environmentally friendly businesses, and particularly women through the availability of the Eco-women microcredit programme.³² Another example is the interlinkage between socio-economic projects and UNDP's

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³² The Eco-DAMU Microcredit Programme during 2014-2024 in three regions of the country offered the lowest lending rate in the country (4 percent) enabling the creation of more than 200 new 'green' jobs (of which 73 are for women); 49 additional jobs were created through rehabilitated irrigation water supply systems and restored 1280 ha of abandoned lands and pastures. As a result of the development of centres of medical waste treatment (in three regions) 15 vacancies were created (including five for women); and as a result of the organization of the Ile-Balkhash natural reserve and the Tarbagatai National Natural Park, 238 new jobs were created.

sustainable development unit interventions to ensure the provision of grants to non-government organizations that provide vocational training and employment opportunities to use energy-efficient ways of doing business. During site observation at one such project (day care centre), the evaluation team had the opportunity to see the use of energyefficient lamps for farming. Two regional projects in Kyzylorda and Mangystau are other examples of interlinkages between the portfolios with an integrated area-based approach combining strands of sustainable development, social and economic development, capacity-building of local government, and the promotion of green technologies. In some cases, the interlinkages are not explicitly identified and articulated by the team during the design stage but happen during implementation. For example, the anti-corruption team and the health team are working on corruption risks assessment in the health sector. Similarly, the public administration reform team is now being involved in joint UN gender initiative implementation utilizing its prior work and expertise. However, such examples are still exceptions rather than a norm, pointing to the continued need for ensuring synergies and coherence.

Regarding monitoring and evaluation, the country office has evaluated several of its projects and programmes.³³ However, its annual reports rarely offer a glimpse of achievements beyond outputs with limited analysis of outcome-level results. Interventions are monitored along prescribed UNDP procedures, with ROAR being the backbone of outcome reporting. At the level of interventions, monitoring is done, albeit with varying level of detail and elaboration. ROARs elaborate on achievements and contributions to outcomes, though mostly on the positive side, but without extensive reflection on how outputs transform into outcomes and with little assessment of risks, challenges and mitigation factors. The CO conducts outcome evaluations (three out of four outcomes for this cycle have been evaluated) as well as project-level evaluations rather systematically.

Finding 3: UNDP has made notable contributions in promoting joint efforts and collaboration with other UN agencies in Kazakhstan, although there is a perception that UNDP tends to lead and then take over the joint initiatives. The cooperation has mostly been within the framework of the UN country team working groups, and projects addressing regional disparities and social development as well as partly supporting the SDG nationalization process. However, joint efforts are seldom when it comes to using UN leverage in addressing strategic issues such as human rights and disaster risk reduction where a joint response would yield greater results.

UNDP has actively collaborated with a host of UN agencies in implementing a number and variety of projects and initiatives in Kazakhstan. In the Kyzylorda and Mangystau regions it implemented two joint programmes focusing on delivery and modernization of economic, social and environmental services and opportunities in pursuit of sustainable development. Both projects engaged a number of UN agencies (UNDP, United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], World Health Organization [WHO], United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN Women], Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) with UNDP as the administrative agent. While the interviewed stakeholders confirmed that both projects have been rather successful, bringing important results to the target groups, they also noted limitations with regard to coordination among UN agencies and the projectized nature of activities implemented in silos, which compromises synergies and affect the level of results expected from wellcoordinated holistic interventions.

Other examples of collaboration exist in the area of social protection, where UNDP works with UNICEF with clearly defined roles. UNICEF works more on revision of standards and definition of social work, while UNDP engages in both soft components and provision of

³³ The CO completed 12 decentralized evaluations during the review period. Of these, four were rated satisfactory, five moderately satisfactory and three moderately unsatisfactory by the IEO quality assurance mechanism.

hardware (e.g. provision of IT equipment, training and institutional set-up). Within the energy and environment sector, Kazakhstan is a partner country of the Partnership for Action on Green Economy, a joint initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme, International Labour Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Institute for Training and Research and UNDP; besides, UNDP and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe have been jointly implementing the European Union (EU)-funded project on green economy. UNICEF's situational analysis in Kazakhstan informed UNDP programming on the most urgent climate issues affecting children in the country. UNESCO's biodiversity reserves initiative in Western Tien Shan benefited from UNDP's efforts to preserve snow leopards. Cooperation with the International Organization for Migration has helped to mainstream migration into local and national development strategies, including those on climate change. UNDP and WHO have cooperated in carrying out joint assessments and data sharing related to health and climate change. In other cases, there were introductory meetings between UNICEF (which is engaged in training of children in DRR) and UNDP to strategically collaborate on DRR in the country, but these did not mature into any substantive coordination or synergy in implementation.

Within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), UNDP participates in UNPFD working groups and consolidates UN joint working plans and reports for UNPFD outcomes that are directly transposed into UNDP CPD, while it also drafts a chapter on key development trends for the pillar of strengthened and innovative public institutions. UNDP also takes part in inter-agency thematic working groups (on communications, gender, human rights, operations), and participates in regular, strategic discussions and in planning and implementing joint initiatives. This includes the gender System-wide Action Plan assessment of UNCT performance in mainstreaming gender equality in UN operations, and an SDG communication and advocacy campaigns. UNDP also worked closely with UN Women to provide technical and financial support for piloting the roll-out of a Gender Scorecard and to set minimum standards for gender equality to be followed by the

UNCT. UNDP also worked jointly with UN Women on the 16 Days Campaign Against Violence Against Women and Girls, by participating in events to raise awareness on the issue. Besides, over the past two years ADB and UNDP have been closely and successfully working together on promoting SDGs in Kazakhstan, and this collaboration has been noted as one of the most successful examples in the region by ADB headquarters.

UNDP is playing a key role within the UNCT in supporting the Government in the SDG nationalization process by supporting the work of the five interministerial working groups, mirroring the 5 'Ps' clustering around five SDG groups to promote a more coherent approach in tackling the thematic issues. UNDP leads and co-leads three out of five working groups with the government counterparts and participates in the other two, playing a key role in communicating the principles of 2030 Agenda and providing expertise with baselining, target setting and mainstreaming into national policies. UNDP is working with five other UN agencies (led by UNFPA) to support the National Statistics Committee under the Ministry of National Economy in developing the local SDGs targets and indicators, bringing international expertise, the outcomes of which have been presented to the Ministry of National Economy for approval.

UNDP has continued to play a significant role in promoting and preparing new joint programmes. One example is the development of the \$10 million nation-wide programme on local self-governance. UNDP invested resources in the development of the programme concept note, brainstorming sessions and consolidating inputs. Other examples of UN joint proposals include the SDG proposal to the Government and the preventing violent extremism proposal to the Human Security Trust Fund, both led by the UNDP programme team. Yet, stakeholder interviews reveal varying degrees of contentment with the collaboration by UNDP, with some interviewees noting that it is easier to collaborate with other UN agencies.

There have been missed opportunities where a joint UN approach would have had a long-lasting impact.

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For instance, some interlocutors highlight the perceived lack of communication and collaboration or joint stance on advocating and supporting the Government to fulfil its international human rights obligations. In this case, UNDP took the lead within UN agencies to work on Universal Periodic Review recommendations on CEDAW and CRPD but worked mostly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) without much communication with other UN agencies on ways in which recommendations on these two conventions could be integrated. Another example is the OHCHR-UNDP-Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions-led Dialogue Platform on Human Rights which was perceived as a useful tool overall, though the main weakness was found in the varying level of participation opportunities for UN agencies and potential for collaboration. Another area is DRR, where UN agencies have not had an opportunity to plan joint interventions but have been making their own initiatives in parallel.

Feedback received during interviews suggests that UNDP uses its strategic position to secure projects even within thematic areas that are not necessarily its core mandate. For example, UNDP's engagement in assisting the Government with gender mainstreaming has been criticized by some agencies as overstepping the mandate of other UN agencies. Another example is the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) and Rapid Impact Assessment mission, which were organized within the SDG efforts. UNDP engaged other agencies to participate in the events of the SDG week and contributed to the MAPS report, while UNDP covered all costs for consultancy to produce an integrated report. However, UNDP was criticized for not being inclusive and conducting these processes alone, with the engagement of only UNDP experts. Most interlocutors, including UNDP, emphasize the issue of ambiguity and lack of full understanding of the notion of UNDP's integrator role, which at times can be frustrating to other UN agencies willing to take a more active part in processes, particularly relating to their core mandates.

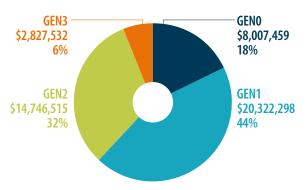
Finding 4: UNDP has made significant efforts to integrate and mainstream gender across its

programmes and operations by investing in strengthening its internal gender policies and strategies. Its programmatic work has been gender-responsive and has succeeded in incorporating gender equality and women's empowerment considerations at institutional- and policy-level frameworks and national laws.

The UNDP CPD does not provide for clear gender mainstreaming across its results framework and lacks a systematic definition of gender indicators and gender-related outputs and outcomes. The extent to which projects invest in the elaboration of the gender dimension and gender mainstreaming varies, even for projects that are nominally marked with higher level gender marker. There are projects that only superficially take into account gender specificities and analyse the gender dimension of outcomes and impact on both genders, while some projects, particularly within governance and social protection, elaborate the gender dimension in greater detail. Reporting at the level of projects and overall is challenged by gender statistics, which is recognized by UNDP as an area for improvement. While the CPD mentions gender equality in some indicators at the output level, it does not set any gender-disaggregated targets. For example, two of the major joint programmes one on improving the welfare and quality of life in the Kyzylorda region and another on expanding the opportunities in the Mangystau region to achieve sustainable development - do not have genderspecific targets even though the activities have significantly benefited women. The social protection project was focused on people with disabilities but did not report separately on women with disabilities. Instances like these result in the underreporting of UNDP's contribution to gender equality.

The country programme budget framework shows that 38 percent of expenditure for the programme outputs is committed to contributing to gender equality in a noticeable way (GEN2 and GEN3 projects) and 44 percent on GEN1 projects (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: Expenditure by gender marker across the UNDP CO portfolio of projects (2016-2018)



The evaluation found that UNDP's role in contributing to the improvement of normative and institutional structures in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment has been significant and responsive.34 UNDP has been a long-term partner providing support to the integration of gender in the Government, in particular to the Committee for Labour, Social Protection and Migration within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy for the last decade. In this area, UNDP implemented a set of combined interventions of investing in policy and institutional framework along with extensive capacitybuilding at national and subnational levels. There have been subsequent projects focusing on social issues, including gender. The Government was supported to develop the first Gender Strategy 2006-2016, and upon its conclusion UNDP has been providing support in drafting the follow-up strategy through technical assistance and expertise. This resulted in the Family and Demographic Strategy for 2017-2025 which was approved in 2017. UNDP's contribution was also valued for the Government's compliance with CEDAW and implementing the recommendations of the UN Committee's Concluding Comments to Kazakhstan's Report on CEDAW. The Government formulated the Family and Gender Law 2017, which can be directly attributed to UNDP's support. The UNDP study on unpaid work and its impact on women's employment is an important contribution as well. UNDP's engagement

in enhancing awareness and capacities of all deputy heads of the government units (central agencies and ministries at the village, district, central level), who by nature of their position have responsibility for gender, resulted in 46 key government officials across the country's 16 regions utilizing gender approaches and short-term gender planning. The outcomes of these interventions are still to be seen in the level of actual integration of gender, but the investment is timely taking into account the deeply rooted social norms and practices that affect negatively women taking more active roles in the society. Gender is one of the seven priorities that the President has set forth in the development strategy, linking it with SDG 5, and is integrated with SDG nationalization. However, there is space for better integration, as there are 20 indicators dealing with SDG 5, mostly indirectly.

Within the energy and environment portfolio, the gender focus has improved over time, both in terms of design (with specific measures to address gender inequalities and promote gender empowerment) and implementation (mainstreaming gender equality into policy documents, and targeting women in the pilot infrastructure projects with specific measures) helping them, for example, with diversifying access to energy sources and energy efficient retrofits, often prioritizing female-headed households. This has empowered women in some cases to become agents of change

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³⁴The 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, failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys, or marginalized populations ('gender blind'); (iii) result focused on the number of equity (50/50) of women, men, or marginalized populations that were targeted ('gender-targeted'); (iv) result addressed differential needs of men or women and addressed equitable distribution of benefits resources, status, and rights, but did not address root causes of inequalities in their lives ('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.

in their communities.³⁵ The CO has also contributed to an improvement of the gender perspective in environmental and energy policy, e.g. by organizing a side event on the promotion of gender policy in the energy sector in the framework of the World Petroleum Council (Astana 2018); by advocating for a gender lens to the management of chemical substances and dangerous waste in a recent Green Energy and Waste Recycling Forum; and by conducting a seminar on the intersection of gender and biodiversity (2018).

Internally, the CO has a dedicated gender specialist since 2018, with the Assistant Resident Representative also serving as the gender focal point. The country office also has a gender task force, composed of representatives from different portfolios, looking into gender aspects of CO work. The country office also has a Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan for Mainstreaming Gender Policy in all segments of its operations (procurement, operations, etc.), and the office is implementing the action plan for 2019, intending also to develop one for 2020.

The country office has joined the Gender Equality Seal process with the view to integrating/mainstreaming gender in all activities. Within these efforts, the CO team conducted a self-assessment as entry points for interventions to enhance gender mainstreaming. One of the results thus far is that annual work plans of projects integrate gender, with 90 percent of annual plans being revised by the time of the evaluation. This is a good practice and presents strong foundations for further integration of the gender dimension in UNDP performance.

2.2. Inclusive and sustainable growth

Outcome 18: Diversification of the economy provides decent work opportunities for the underemployed, youth, and socially vulnerable women and men.

Finding 5: The outcome has been ambitiously defined with outputs partially contributing to it. There has been some discrepancy between the definition of the outcome and actual projects implemented under it. Interventions to improve the social protection system for people with disabilities and interventions in the health sector only have a very indirect or no linkages to the outcome.

In order to assist Kazakhstan's efforts to diversify its economy and ensure more equitable and inclusive economic and social development, particularly for the most vulnerable groups, UNDP has undertaken a number of interventions across themes, including competitiveness, procurement of health products, local development and social protection, etc. Some interventions under this outcome have also engaged UN agencies in joint projects, particularly those targeting local development and social inclusion in Kyzylorda and Mangystau regions. All projects under this portfolio concluded by the end of 2017. One project that contributes to social inclusion is active until 2020 but is not included in the outcome portfolio of interventions.

This evaluation confirms the finding of the outcome evaluation³⁶ that outcome 18 was very ambitiously defined. The ICPE found further evidence that most interventions do not contribute to the outcome directly, taken from the perspective of outcome definition and elaboration through outputs. Interventions implemented within the outcome are very diverse, with notable activities in the area of social protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWD) and improvement of response to HIV/AIDS. However, analysis of interventions in these thematic areas shows that they did not directly contribute to the provision of decent work opportunities for PWD or direct engagement with persons living with HIV (PLHIV). For instance, the project on HIV focused on the procurement of drugs and medical equipment but did not have targeted interventions for PLHIV. At the same time, engagement within

³⁵ UNDP Kazakhstan, 2018: "Evaluation of the Country Programme Outcome 1.3 - Ecosystems and natural resources are protected and sustainably used, and human settlements are resilient to natural and human-induced disasters and climate change", p.83.

³⁶ Sharma, Pradeep, 2017, Outcome Evaluation of Outcome 18: "Diversification of the economy provides decent work opportunities for the underemployed, youth, and socially vulnerable women and men", UNDP Kazakhstan.

economic diversification has been confined to piloting of vocational training, microloans and livelihood interventions (Finding 7), with very limited or no potential to generate the critical mass of new approaches or businesses that could impact the composition of the economy, as also confirmed by the outcome evaluation. Implemented projects were mainly successful in promoting inclusive economic development practices and policies by ensuring that microloan schemes and training opportunities engage young people and women proactively.

The health portfolio is divided between two outcomes. For example, the project to support the capacity development of the Republican Centre for the Prevention and Control of AIDS of the Ministry of Health and Social Development is programmed under outcome 18, while the Support to Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) project is implemented within outcome 20. The reasoning for this is not clear. In order to present an analysis of UNDP's contribution to fighting HIV/AIDS (which is administratively divided between this and outcome 20), Finding 17 deals with all aspects across the two outcomes.

Finding 6: The support provided for the advancement of rights of persons with disabilities in Kazakhstan has led to an improvement in the legislative and institutional foundations for the protection of rights of PWD and improved provision of social services. These efforts bring important investments in strengthening the system of response and its transparency. If continued, the results achieved thus far have a high potential for impact.

At the onset of the cooperation between the Government and UNDP on issues of PWD, the Government faced several challenges across the social protection and inclusion sector. These included limited or no interdepartmental or intersectoral work on PWD, with silos present even within government institutions across different subsectors of relevance to PWDs. These challenges have had a direct negative effect on the provision of services, which were either not interlinked and/or did not respond to the multidimensional needs of PWDs. At the same time, particularly in regions outside bigger centres, the Government has faced the challenge

of limited availability and low quality of social work and social services across the country. The Government faced a scarcity of social workers and overall social service providers, particularly for PWD, due to a variety of issues, including the salary levels, education attainment and training to work with the population. In addition, the Government did not have a full overview of social service providers across the country, which would enable it to conduct better costing and ensure coherence of the level and quality of service provision.

UNDP has supported the Government through measures such as raising awareness, representing and advancing the rights of PWDs, tackling institutional, policy- and capacity-level needs to enhance government response to rights and needs of PWD. At the same time, UNDP is working directly with PWDs on raising their capacities, employability and encouraging active participation in policymaking processes in issues concerning their rights jointly with the Government. Long-term partnership on issues of PWD and wider social service provision has strategically positioned UNDP as an adviser to the Government, enhancing the potential for achievement of positive outcomes of its interventions. The result of sets of activities across the spectrum of duty bearers and right holders has resulted most importantly in raised awareness, sensitivity and stronger responsiveness to needs and rights of PWD across relevant government institutions at the central and subnational levels, as confirmed by stakeholder interviews. UNDP support resulted in changing the mindset and approach to tackling the needs of PWD from an application-based model to a protective model with the Government proactively engaged in identifying and responding to the needs of PWD.

The changing mindsets have boosted improvements of legislative and policy solutions for PWD, which for the first time engaged representatives of PWD into policy processes, according to government and UNDP records. UNDP advocated for and provided technical assistance and expertise within the ratification of CRPD, triggering the adoption of 24 legislative acts to respond to the Convention requirements. This legislative package solves most pressing issues of access to rights and services for PWD. Besides, UNDP

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has supported the drafting of the national plan for improving the welfare of PWD in Kazakhstan, which incorporates standards stipulated in the UN CRPD and recommendations from the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, provided during the visit to Kazakhstan in September 2017. The Government approved the document in 2019.

Closely related to this has been the investment in the improvement of professional competencies for social work through the establishment of resource centres, in cooperation with UNICEF, for more education and training. UNDP piloted training sessions for multidisciplinary teams on the provision of special social services in 10 regions, applying an integrated model of social services. This approach was designed on the concept of 'one-stop-shop', as explained by one interlocutor, providing a venue for multidisciplinary teams to assess persons in difficulty based on the appropriate services that could be provided to the person and their family. This model, together with resource centres, has been timely and relevant, responding to the scarcity and low level of professionalization of social workers and more generally social service providers. However, this model has not been scaled across the social protection system.

UNDP's investment in digitalization of systems for supply and demand in the area of service provision has a high potential for impact on the lives of PWD. UNDP has been working with the Government on a range of important information technology tools to help both identify individuals that need assistance and mapping service providers. The Government and UNDP have been working together in planning a database that would enable identification and assessment of needs of PWD and interlinking the needs with the service providers in proximity. A portal for social services with an accessibility map has been developed as an online database of all service providers across the country, with a list of services offered, areas of expertise of engaged caregivers and coverage. Thus far, UNDP and government records show that 31,000 service providers and facilities have been mapped and will be available for PWD and their families to choose from. The two databases are envisaged to interact and serve as a platform for connecting PWD in need of specific services with service providers in their proximity, thus ensuring improved and timely access. Additionally, the map also has a feature for citizen inputs on the accessibility of public institutions for PWD. The map provides the opportunity to rate the accessibility of around 9,000 government facilities (at the time of the evaluation), with notification to the institutions on what and how to improve in terms of accessibility with a feedback mechanism on the institution's action on the notification. These contributions are commendable and have the potential to directly affect the well-being and livelihoods of PWD through improved services, accessibility and better targeting.

The evaluation found that UNDP's engagement has been a critical driver for stronger inclusion of CSOs representing rights and interests of PWD in policymaking processes with the Government. With support of UNDP, a CCM for PWD has been established with the Deputy Prime Minister as chair and with the engagement of civil society. The CCM has become a key advisory platform on PWD issues and rights, with instances where joint reporting was conducted on status and challenges of protection of rights of PWDs – a measure that was recognized as good practice by a Special Rapporteur on the rights of PWD.37 As a result of investments in awarenessraising, each Akim³⁸ of the region now has an adviser (usually a PWD) voluntarily providing services related to issues and rights of PWD. This evaluation could not establish the outcomes of these measures due to time limitations, but anecdotal evidence points to better understanding and sensitization of Akims to issues of PWD, resulting in further local investments in accessibility to public institutions or services in some cases.

The combined results of these UNDP interventions already show positive signs in the levels of systematization of response to needs and rights of PWD.

³⁷ OHCHR, 'End of Mission Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Catalina Devandas-Aguilar, on her visit to Kazakhstan; Astana, 12 September 2017: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22048&LangID=E.

 $^{^{\}rm 38}$ The head of a local government in Kazakhstan.

The evaluation found keenness of the Government to move the reform forward, confirming that UNDP has achieved a strong momentum for achievement of positive impacts across the PWD population. Key informants confirm that UNDP's dedication, expertise, investment in piloting and developing tools and mechanisms have brought significant results without which the Government would not have been able to move forward so strongly.

UNDP has also engaged directly with PWD on measures to increase employability and through ensuring other interventions focusing on economic empowerment are providing space for participation of PWD. The most notable output-level achievements have been investments in the development and testing of methodologies for vocational education of PWD. Project reports show positive results in terms of increase in knowledge and skills of engaged beneficiaries in an experimental setting. However, the evaluation did not find evidence of institutionalization of these methodologies thus far. Employability and livelihoods of PWD have been positively affected in the piloting phase, but this approach has not been scaled up, keeping the benefits confined to the small target group that was engaged in pilot activities.

In conclusion, UNDP's system-level investments through support to legislative and institutional frameworks and mechanisms have created strong foundations for a systemic response to the rights and needs of PWD. Piloting has brought relevant lessons learned and models, however, with no firm scale-up potential at the time of the evaluation. In light of UNDP's engagement in UMIC countries, i.e. system-level engagement, UNDP could have planned the pilots better, ensuring clear government commitment to nationwide replication and more elaborate costing and analysis of the investment underlying the institutional conditions necessary for scale-up. Multidisciplinary teams are extremely relevant and necessary, considering their high potential to improve the quality of life of PWD. Given Kazakhstan's context, however, it would be unrealistic to expect such scaling up, especially considering the scarcity of social workers and overall low quality of services, particularly in smaller communities outside the regional centres.

Finding 7: UNDP has contributed to the promotion and provision of decent work opportunities for the unemployed, youth, and socially vulnerable women and men. It has also assisted in the expansion of entrepreneurship and employability, most notably through 'green jobs', by the provision of microloan schemes and training. The contribution, however, is limited to certain regions and communities with no clear strategy for scaling-up and replicability.

UNDP has made significant efforts in enhancing business opportunities through investment in skills, social and business networks, online support centres, business development activities, partnerships with commercial chambers and entrepreneurs, as well as microcredits and loans institutions across the board in targeted regions. UNDP support targeted hard-to-employ vulnerable people (e.g. women, youth in rural areas) through interest-free loans, market intelligence, information on market opportunities, and other financial and legal matters. UNDP invested in partnerships with regional and local governments, chambers of commerce and also entrepreneurs to ensure stronger effects of job creation activities in rural areas, connecting investments in agriculture, environment, adaptability and climate change. Market-based solutions were also modelled. Such an example is a microcredit programme, Eco-DAMU, that was launched in 2015 in partnership with the Fund for Financial Support to Agriculture with the lowest interest rates in the country. A second market-based solution was introduced to attract private investments into the low-carbon urban projects, entailing interest rate subsidy for loans in second-tier banks. As of spring 2019, the mechanism has attracted around \$35.2 million in investments as part of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA).

At the local level, the effects have been very positive across communities and individuals directly benefiting from the interventions, particularly for most vulnerable groups. There is evidence of direct effects in improvement of livelihood and quality of life of those entrepreneurs and their families having access to training, loans and other marketing and business opportunities. For instance, across the different projects more than 200 jobs have been created, with important results in terms of strengthening business opportunities and networks. However, the

evaluation found that the effects are confined within these groups. The Government has committed to scale up the mechanism and use the state budget for the second phase across Kazakhstan in 2019-2020. However, no firm scale-up mechanisms were set up at the time of the evaluation. UNDP could have also invested more strategically and systematically to strengthen partnerships with and within the private sector (e.g. through partnerships with chambers at different levels and not only in targeted regions), which could have brought a stronger voice in the reform process. This is an important sustainability factor, which directly affects UNDP's contribution to the diversification of the economy. Based on the evidence this evaluation collected, UNDP's contribution is minimal due to a lack of systemic changes brought by the organization's engagement.

an enabling environment and promoting resilient technologies and financial mechanisms, UNDP has contributed to the establishment and expansion of the protected areas totalling 1.4 million ha. This involved the creation of four new protected areas (PAs) and one ecological corridor (Kapshagai-Balkhash).³⁹ UNDP piloted new approaches in planning and management of the PAs by helping introduce management plans in Ustyurt, Barsakelmes, Altyn Yemel and Ile-Balkhash PAs for 2018-2023. It supported the establishment of PA Public Committees for Altyn Emel National Park and Barsakelmes PA, for the first time in the country involving local communities in PA management, making recommendations for amendments of the legislative framework in Kazakhstan to allow for the formation of such committees.

Through its cross-sectoral interventions, creating

2.3. Environment and energy

Outcome 19: Ecosystems and natural resources are protected and sustainably used, and human settlements are resilient to natural and human-induced disasters and climate change.

Finding 8: UNDP has laid the necessary groundwork for strengthening environmental governance in protected areas and reduction of pressure on the biodiversity of desert and semi-desert ecosystems and wetlands through its work on improving the regulatory environment for forest, wildlife and protected area management. Once approved, the legislative and institutional frameworks have the potential to ensure the mainstreaming of economic valuations of ecosystems in natural resources management.

In partnership with the Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture (FFSA), UNDP supported microcredit schemes Eco-DAMU in locations adjacent to PAs aimed at the replacement of unsustainable practices with alternatives in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, hunting management and ecotourism by offering loans to rural inhabitants who do not cause damage to the wildlife but rather help to restore lands, flora and fauna.⁴⁰ UNDP also supported the introduction of a pilot Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme,⁴¹ which upon successful completion is now being replicated nationwide.

UNDP's work also contributed to improving the regulatory environment through the introduction of ecosystem approach/PES, biodiversity offsets, and environment impact assessment principles into the concept of the new draft Environmental Code; revision of wildlife, forestry, and protected areas codes,⁴² and amending the Environmental

 $^{^{\}rm 39}$ ROAR, 2018, p.8 and interviews.

⁴⁰ An Eco-DAMU initiative in partnership with the Fund for Financial Support of Agriculture completed in 2017 is being replicated nationwide, aimed at providing concessional loans at the lowest in the country interest rate (4 percent) to individuals, living near the protected areas to launch an alternative green business (ROAR 2018, p.3). 63 registered land users (relating to 9 percent of land users) have received microcredit; this equates to a total of \$1.5 million being lent by the time of writing this report (with the project contributing \$0.5 million and the FFSA contributing \$1 million (interview).

⁴¹ For the first time in the Aral-Syr Darya region (Kyzylorda region, Aral district), a pilot scheme for the development of ecotourism was tested through the example of Lake Kambash (PES scheme is the territory of private guesthouses on a 2 ha area). The Akimat of the Aral district, Aral State Forestry Department, guest houses of Lake Balkhash, Kyzylorda Tourist Association and tourists participated in the PES scheme. In September 2017, an agreement on cooperation and implementation of the PES scheme was concluded between the parties.

⁴² UNDP supported the Government in the revision of the Forestry, Wildlife, and Protected Areas codes and relevant regulatory and legal acts and helped introduce and mainstream the concept and methods of economic valuation in environmental impact assessments and other instruments in the context of biodiversity conservation, land degradation and climate change.

Impact Assessment procedures. The amendments to the Forestry, Wildlife, and Protected Areas Codes and relevant regulatory and legal acts in relation to environmental impact assessment in the context of biodiversity conservation, land degradation and climate change, as well as the recommendations on the improvement of the legislative framework related to natural resource valuation, once approved, will provide the legislative and institutional frameworks needed to ensure the mainstreaming of economic valuations of ecosystems in the Government's work. UNDP's Biodiversity Finance Initiative phase II project should allow the deepening of the achievements in these areas.

Finding 9: UNDP has made a significant contribution towards climate change mitigation/greenhouse gas reduction by promoting energy efficiency in the residential sector and renewable energy. However, the highly subsidized energy tariffs continue to be a strong disincentive impacting the scale of effectiveness of efforts.

UNDP has played a pivotal role in establishing policy mandates contained in the national Energy Saving Programme (2013) by improving the regulatory and legal framework on renewable energy and promoting the engagement with the private sector and the Programme of Modernization of Housing and Communal Services until 2020 (transformed into the Programme of Regional Development until 2020). The initiative aims to overhaul the old housing stock by increasing the energy efficiency of buildings by up to 30 percent. UNDP supported the Government in improving the regulatory environment in its efforts to phase out the use of incandescent lamps.

This included support in developing a set of regulations and mandatory standards on specific lighting technology and applications, including light-emitting diodes; helping to boost the capacity of the Institute of Metrology (MID) with equipment and advice on the certification and accreditation of laboratories related to the lighting industry/market; piloting recycling schemes for mercury-containing

lamps in Mangystau and Kyzylorda; and facilitating the MID's issuance of rules for state procurement of lighting products.

Street lighting upgrades in five cities, supported by UNDP, led to municipal and regional investment in energy-efficient lighting and accelerated market transformation nationwide, through government investment. In addition, the lighting-related pilots in a number of schools and healthcare facilities, upgrades in entryways and courtyards in residential and office buildings were implemented across the country by the Government.⁴³ UNDP has contributed to introducing voluntary energy efficiency labelling of domestic appliances and equipment, and energy efficiency performance standards in government procurement rules. For example, UNDP helped one of the largest industrial enterprises in Kazakhstan, the Eurasian Resources Group, to approve the requirements for minimum energy performance standards for transformers and electric motors. Support to transform the market for domestic appliances and equipment included a programme with the private sector to replace the old home appliances (with discounts) to promote energy-efficient ones in Astana and Almaty.

In addition, a solar atlas was developed to help potential investors and developers identify investment opportunities in Kazakhstan, together with a number of small solar projects in education and healthcare facilities in the Astana and Almaty regions. UNDP has helped in promoting private sector investment in renewable energy to achieve Kazakhstan's target of scaling up the deployment of renewable energy in electricity generation, from a 1.1-percent to 10-percent share of wind and solar energy, with mechanisms like auctions and improving the approval system, issuance of permits and connection to grids with regard to small-scale renewable energy projects. While UNDP's efforts have the potential of triggering market transformation (if the Government fully takes on board all the recommendations), the highly subsidized energy tariffs continue to be a strong disincentive impacting the scale and effectiveness of this contribution.

⁴³ Projects were implemented in energy consumption in six public sector buildings: an administrative building (Astana city), schools (three schools in total in North Kazakhstan and Kyzylorda city), a polyclinic (in North Kazakhstan region), and University building (Aktobe city).

Finding 10: UNDP has used innovative market-based mechanisms for sustainable urbanization, including through the promotion of public-private partnerships and small and medium enterprises, under urban NAMA. However, the success of the overall efforts largely depends on the assumption that integrated urban transport planning is carried out in conjunction with overall urban planning at the country level targeting urban, semi-urban and rural areas as part of homogenous development.

UNDP contributed towards sustainable urbanization through urban NAMA44 in 15 municipalities to mainstream sustainable growth models into the city planning and strategic documents by helping them identify, prioritize and prepare bankable energy efficiency projects through a variety of instruments, including public-private partnerships, two of which have already been adopted by the municipalities of Temirtau and Astana.45 The financial mechanism for urban NAMA is in the form of the Municipal Energy Efficiency Investment Support Facility in partnership with DAMU and includes 10 percent interest rate subsidies for private sector projects aimed at energy saving in city heating, water supply, public and residential buildings, urban sewage and treatment systems, street and interior lighting, etc. There is a high demand from both the private sector and commercial banks for participation in the established partnership, which for the first time has allowed Kazakhstan to attract private funding for municipal/urban energy efficiency projects. With \$3 million in subsidies, 94 energy efficiency projects were supported with a total investment of \$48.5 million. These projects are expected to reduce an equivalent of 55 thousand tons of CO, per year or 1.1 million tons per project life cycle. As of the end of September 2019, out of 94 approved projects, 34 projects for a total investment of \$11 million received funding from banks and are being implemented, benefiting an estimated 118,200

people, including 60,300 women. Low energy tariffs (especially for the residential sector) are a significant impediment to operating such schemes without subsidies. However, for now, the Government has committed to taking over the subsidy scheme after the UNDP-supported project is completed.

Efforts to attract greater investment in the housing and utilities sector through SME-involved in modernization received a boost from UNDP. The organization supported the identification of regulatory and financial incentives for improving the management of housing stock and promoting energy efficiency in the residential sector⁴⁶ with a new scheme for residential buildings piloted in three regions.⁴⁷ Recommendations for state participation in the form of partial subsidization of the interest rate for major renovations are improving conditions for the gradual transition to the professional management of residential housing using this financing mechanism. Akimat of Astana has already piloted the modernization of five apartment buildings with ecological considerations for the city of Astana.

In order to promote sustainable transport in the city of Almaty, UNDP has supported the Government in the development of a number of policies and strategies, e.g. the methodology for the estimation of the GHG emissions in the transport sector, Transport Demand Model, Sustainable Urban Transport Strategy and Action Plan, a feasibility study for implementing of light rail transit line, parking strategy and organization of on-street parking management, methodology for public transport services, etc. The introduction of the standard public service contracts was on the priority agenda of Almaty Akimat at the time of writing this report. More than 100 staff members from the Almaty municipality and other stakeholders were equipped with the knowledge and know-how in management and operating of public transport. It is

⁴⁴ The programme contains a defined urban GHG emission reduction target (in line with the national target under the Paris Agreement), list of priority GHG emission reduction measures with estimated investment cost, GHG emission reduction potential, assessment of risks, as well as financing and business model for implementation.

⁴⁵ Two urban NAMAs were developed and officially adopted by the municipalities of Temirtau and Astana: "Complex plan of measures for improving environmental situation in Temirtau city for 2018-2020", and "Complex plan-measures for improving environment of Astana city for 2017-2018".

⁴⁶ This project is included in the Complex Action Plan for Improving the Environmental Situation of Astana city for 2018–2020 (Activity No. 1.10), approved by the Akim of Astana city in February 2018 within the implementation of Memorandum of Understanding between the Akimat of Astana and UNDP in Kazakhstan, signed in June 2017.

⁴⁷ The scheme includes new principles and conditions for the participation of the owners in the management of multi-apartment houses (MAH); amendments in regulations to allow attracting investments in repair, modernization and service of MAH to enable the owners of apartments to access debt financing at acceptable rates, and to increase incentives of the owners of apartments to accumulate funds for repair and maintenance of MAH.

important, however, that integrated urban transport planning is carried out in conjunction with the overall urban planning at the country level and that plans are in place for homogeneous development at an aggregate level (including urban, semi-urban and rural areas), so that the unnecessary rush towards the cities can be restricted.

Finding 11: UNDP has made an important contribution towards climate change adaptation, piloting models for sustainable use and management of land and water resources. Piloted green technologies demonstrate they can not only reduce pressure on natural resources, but also improve profitability and mitigate disaster risks. The needs, however, are large requiring deepened engagement in these areas and a focus on upscaling of these initiatives with the Government.

According to UNDP annual reports, 48 UNDP's contribution has led to the restoration of over 234,000 ha of degraded agricultural lands, including a reduction in 58,000 ha of deforested and overgrazed area, and recultivation in more than 106,000 ha of land. UNDP's focus during the period under review was on demonstration of innovative techniques and schemes in integrated territorial and land-use planning in steppe, arid and semi-arid zones in six different regions of Kazakhstan, ultimately aiming at enhancing the conservation-friendliness and sustainability of productive agricultural landscapes.⁴⁹ This was achieved with, inter alia: strategies and action plan for sustainable land management for the Aral-Syr Darya and Ile-Balkhash regions; introduction of technologies in 11,000 ha saving more than 22,900m3 of irrigation water (40 percent) and energy (30 percent),50 with increased yields (up to 2-2.5 times) benefiting more than 500,000 people from enhanced livelihoods and floods protection. Water management policies

and practices were strengthened through a grant programme, whereby the pilots demonstrated that green technologies could not only reduce pressure on natural resources, but also improve profitability⁵¹ and mitigate disaster risks.⁵² Another significant milestone was the development of a strategic action plan for the sustainable management of the Chu and Talas river basins based on the transboundary diagnostic analyses the Governments of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan ratified. By addressing both the financial and administrative drivers of land use, UNDP has made a long-term contribution in addressing land degradation problems in the country.

In related efforts, UNDP contributed towards improving the climate resiliency of Kazakhstan wheat with the introduction of a new method of assessment of the current level and availability of soil moisture and the interrelation of this data with values of selected soil samples in three northern Kazakhstan regions, thereby increasing the crop fertility by 20 percent.53 This is important moving forward, as climate forecasting in Kazakhstan is hampered by (a) inadequate surface reporting network and large amounts of non-digitalized station data; (b) lack of trust by the farmers in medium to long-term forecasts of Kazakhstan Hydromet (KHM); and (c) a fee-based system for accessing most meteorological information from KHM, which impedes the sharing and use by farmers and agencies.54

UNDP has also made an important contribution to the legal framework of the fisheries and aquaculture sector by developing 66 normative acts and 15 directives; training 150 companies on sustainable fishing practices together with the Food and Agriculture Organization; and pilot demonstrations (e.g. supporting a sturgeon breeding farm in the Aktobe region).

⁴⁸ ROAR, 2017, 2018.

⁴⁹ Demonstration of sustainable land use and management has occurred over an area of 145,503 ha in six oblasts: Akmola, Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Kostanai, Kzyl Orda and North Kazakhstan (with the total landscape area covered under sustainable productive use through territorial planning in 750,000 hectares).

⁵⁰ Based on four large pilot projects in Almaty, Astana, Kyzylorda and Aktobe regions.

⁵¹ UNDP Kazakhstan, 2018: "Evaluation of the Country Programme Outcome 1.3 - Ecosystems and natural resources are protected and sustainably used, and human settlements are resilient to natural and human-induced disasters and climate change", p.59.

⁵² A few examples illustrate the latter point: (a) UNDP helped mitigate water-related risks for (a) 0.5 million residents of Aktobe region through the introduction of hydraulic engineering technologies/automated control system of the water reservoir in Aktobe reservoir; and (b) on the territory of 122 ha in Akhsi village introducing a model of efficient management of water infrastructure (reconstruction of the drainage system, use of water saving technologies and improvement of drinking water quality) mitigating flooding risks (green economy).

⁵³ https://www.weadapt.org/placemarks/maps/view/17796

⁵⁴ USAID, 'Performance evaluation: Improving climate resiliency of Kazakhstan wheat and central Asian food project, 2015, pp.vii-viii.

However, given the vast arid ecosystem and the associated environmental challenges, there is a need for UNDP to further deepen its work around climate change adaptation and work (and lobby) with the Government to upscale and mainstream these proven green technologies across the country.

Finding 12: UNDP has helped the Government to improve monitoring and liquidation of persistent organic pollutants and medical waste. However, the low prices of old combustion technologies for healthcare medical waste management remain a key risk for further promotion of good quality non-burn technologies in Kazakhstan.

UNDP helped the Government to improve regulatory framework around persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and medical waste by (a) updating the national implementation plan for new and unintentional POPs (uPOPs) in line with the Stockholm Convention commitments; (b) strengthening POPs inventory, monitoring capability and institutional coordination on chemicals; (c) introducing amendments to the Environmental Code on standard emissions of dioxins and furans and developing accreditation mechanisms; (d) helping establish three centres of medical waste treatment with the installation of non-burn technologies (autoclaving); and (e) assisting with the introduction of replacement mechanism of mercury-containing thermometers (with plastic waste recycling).

Interviewed interlocutors confirmed that the awareness among the public about uPOPs, new non-burn technologies and mercury recycling has certainly improved, and the targeted efforts should enable reduction of uPOPs in Kazakhstan. The awareness and learning from the initiative have generated private sector interest on investments in new technologies for medical waste management projects which can serve as input not only in Kazakhstan but for all UNDP-supported GEF-financed project in the area of uPOPs reduction.

However, low prices of old combustion technologies for healthcare medical waste management are the main risk for further promotion of good quality non-burn technologies in Kazakhstan, as the State procurement regulations do not factor consideration on the reduction of uPOPs or environmental cost. UNDP's work with the Ministry of Energy in conducting the Initial Mercury Assessment (ongoing at the time of the evaluation), should enable the Government to identify the requirements for the ratification of the Minamata Convention and create the basis for promoting non-burn technologies.

Finding 13: UNDP's contributions in DRR during the current programme cycle have been limited in scope and scale. While initial steps have been taken to transition from 'response and recovery actions' to 'prevention and risk reduction' as per the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, systemic barriers impede the effectiveness of DRR efforts in the country.

The priorities of the Government of Kazakhstan include building financial resilience to natural disasters and strengthening disaster preparedness measures in national and local policies, but preparedness is a serious challenge for the Government.⁵⁵ During the last decade, UNDP has helped in raising awareness about DRR and response through the development of 'hazard maps' and an improved methodology for post-disaster needs assessment and recovery preparedness. During the current CPD, however, there were very limited strategic initiatives and progress on DRR apart from a set of recommendations for the revision of the National Disaster Preparedness Action Plan (2015-2020) with a gender-sensitive approach. Other initiatives included a vulnerability assessment with gender analysis and sex- and age-disaggregated data for Almaty region; a comprehensive climate risk mapping methodology which was developed and mainstreamed into the operational activities of the Almaty Department of Emergency Situations; an action plan for Almaty airport; a master plan for construction of small and medium-size dams for the Centre for Emergency Situations and republican state enterprises KazSelezashita and Kazvodkhoz with a risk management tool; a comprehensive map and report on flood risks assessment; and a catchment-based

⁵⁵ https://www.gfdrr.org/en/kazakhstan

approach for regulated river systems of Talgar city of Almaty region with on-site and off-site risk-based emergency plans.

Of utmost importance, and still missing, is a strategy and plan for the transition from 'response and recovery actions' to 'prevention and risk reduction', in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). There appears to be a general lack of understanding of the problem's complexity and its scale of impact on the development of the economy and society. The shortcomings in the risk assessment systems, the underestimation of the cost of damage and losses, and the fragmented nature of data collection, coupled with the limited authority of emergency departments, as well as insufficient cross-sectoral coordination remain some key barriers to effective DRR in the country.

The establishment of the Centre for Emergency Situations and Disaster Risk Reduction in Almaty, as well as the work of the regular regional platform in the form of annual meetings with participation of heads of disaster management authorities of the Central Asian countries is a positive step that demonstrates understanding and desire to work together.⁵⁶ UNDP should capitalize on the opportunity and consider strengthening its work in this area.

2.4. Democratic governance

Outcome 20: Judicial and legal systems, and public institutions, are fair, accountable and accessible to all people.

Finding 14: UNDP has helped the Government strengthen foundations for improved public service delivery through investment in public administration and civil service reform. Investments on the improvement of meritocracy across the civil service have resonated well there, however, sustainability is still weak and depends on continued political commitment to scaling up and maintaining the reform results and policy direction.

UNDP has achieved a number of outputs in terms of enhancing legislative, policy and institutional set-up to respond to the need for more transparent, inclusive, accessible and accountable civil service and public and justice institutions. Combination of policy advice to decision-makers in drafting legislation and/or operationalization of mechanisms in line with Kazakhstan's international and local commitments; investment in institutional and human capacities; modelling of concrete tools and mechanisms for improvement of services (e.g. e-services, portals and consultative mechanisms; public service solutions), networking, and engagement of civil society and citizens has brought positive results on the level of progress of public administration as such. However, most of these contributions are still at the pilot level and have not been fully scaled up by the Government. UNDP has thus far not managed to ensure full commitment with financial allocations for scaling up, which limits its system-level contributions and changes.

The most notable contribution to the civil service reform has been the demonstration pilot on the establishment of the factor and point scale (grading and salary) remuneration system to support the reforms in Kazakhstan (i.e. system of performance assessment and grading). The system was piloted in Astana City Akimat; Shymkent City Akimat; Mangystau Oblast Akimat; Ministry of Justice and the Agency for Civil Service Affairs. The system is envisaged to change the entire way in which civil service performance is measured, based on meritocracy and as a tool to avoid corruption and enhance transparency. Another notable contribution is the introduction of comprehensive approaches and methodologies for implementing the Common Framework of Competencies (Competencies Model). The model as such is an important mechanism, and together with the performance assessment system allows defining the input of each candidate and, depending on the required competencies, helps to establish a reasonable payment. The piloting of the models and its five factor point scale has brought forward relevant lessons and modelled practices, which are expected to increase the attractiveness of the civil service in Kazakhstan, as noted by all

⁵⁶ http://www.kz.undp.org/content/kazakhstan/en/home/blog/risks-of-natural-disasters-in-central-asia--how-to-move-from-res.html

interviewed interlocutors. Based on lessons learned from piloting, UNDP has been advocating for the system's scale-up with the Government. However, government interlocutors see challenges in scaling it up across the civil service due to resource limitations but also the sensitivity such assessment model brings in implementation. Considering the incremental nature of public administration reform, the evaluation team sees such UNDP support as still relevant, even though it has not been immediately scaled up. It takes more time for some ideas and approaches to take root. UNDP needs to ensure, though, that this support is sequenced through the next cycle of the country programme to ensure continuation and sustainability of its results.

Another long-term investment in civil service reform is change management with the engagement of civil servants across the board, to enhance knowledge and understanding about the role of politicians and innovators to manage changes in the public sector, towards excellence and effective implementation. This has been an ongoing effort of the Astana Regional Hub, with regional events contributing to raising awareness on the potential of civil service reform and Kazakhstan's leadership in the process. Other countries in the region have recognized Kazakhstan's progress by their willingness to engage in the Hub's events. However, UNDP could have done more to assess and explore their direct contribution in enhancing the quality of civil service.

To further strengthen the civil service and public administration more widely, UNDP laid the foundations for the integration of anti-corruption mechanisms through piloting external assessment of corruption risks in four government agencies. This approach proves to be useful for early detection of corruption-prone areas in the public sector as confirmed by interviewed stakeholders. This was complemented with a national survey on corruption, whereby 9,000 residents were surveyed nationwide on their experience in interaction with the government officials. Results received from the pilot and the survey led to the elaboration of proposals towards legislative changes in administrative, criminal and criminal procedure codes. However, thus far, no legislation was amended to integrate the proposals.

Besides, extensive efforts focused on transforming the understanding and approach from combating corruption to the prevention of corruption through training and workshops and strengthening the civil society oversight/watchdog role. Such training and workshops have not only been conducted for the members of public councils and government institutions, but also for civil society to strengthen their capacity to work with the media and in the monitoring of government work. Support was also provided for the work of Special Monitoring Group composed of civil society representatives to review the implementation of Anti-Corruption Strategy in the regions which followed public meetings and discussions to identify constraints in implementation. However, the work on anticorruption is still in its initial stages. The Government sees UNDP as a key player in this field, though it is not certain to what extent the pilots and initial investment will materialize in more tangible changes in practices within the public administration.

Finding 15: UNDP has laid the necessary groundwork for improved local governance towards fiscal decentralization. However, the results have been limited in terms of systemic changes and uptake of approaches and mechanisms owing to insufficient capacity of local governments and resource constraints.

UNDP has been working continuously on the core institutional reforms with regard to local governance, including decentralization from the perspective of reforms to establish a fourth layer of the budget system for settlements. Support to the Government led to the drafting and consequent adoption of the new Law on Local Government and Self Governance in 2017 as well as a number of institutional regulations stemming from the law. To assist the Government with implementing the Law, UNDP has supported institutions at the national and regional levels to increase capacities on fundamentals of budgeting, service delivery, communal property management and related areas. It engaged with over 2,000 (about 74 percent) local Akims (local governors) in the country providing assistance in the law's implementation as well in enhancing the skills of front-line service providers (Akims local civil service).

The evaluation found that these investments have been timely and effective, helping the local-level governments to understand the law and implement it by equipping them to competently manage local budgets, communal property, social infrastructure and public procurement systems. However, the challenge is in the full implementation of the law, as the budget system is threatened by a lack of local governments' capacities to prioritize and perform budget planning and expenditure. The capacity issue is further exacerbated by the transfer of additional competencies to local governments, as part of the decentralization effort (e.g. school and kindergarten management, etc.), which places a demand for further support and resources.

Another public administration reform effort was a functional analysis conducted across line ministries and public institutions within the civil service modernization efforts. In 2017, UNDP assisted analysis of 4,618 functions of 10 line-ministries, recommending that 14 percent of functions should be reallocated to the local level and 43 in-demand public services to be re-engineered to improve their accessibility, timeliness and quality. Functional reviews have also been initiated for three regions/ oblasts (Aktobe, East Kazakhstan, Kyzylorda) and one city of republican significance (Almaty) in 2018, as an effort to extend the outreach of reform to a wider pool of institutions. Within these efforts, UNDP also assisted introduction of evaluation system of public bodies as a tool, which according to UNDP data, assisted in the reduction of untimely rendered public services by 46 times, while the volume of underdelivered funds by state bodies decreased four times. Interviews did not provide additional data or confirmation of this information. These are important investments and contribute to the streamlining of public services, hence stronger efficiency.

Finding 16: UNDP has made a notable contribution in promoting civil society and its role in decision-making processes, which have the potential of bringing transformative changes from the perspective of democratization of the society.

Across all its interventions within the country programme, UNDP has invested efforts in promoting

the role of civil society from the perspective of an important player in policymaking and monitoring processes. Taking a two-pronged approach, on the one hand, it has supported government institutions to create and apply mechanisms for more inclusive policymaking and transparency. On the other, it has worked with civil society to take a more active role in watchdog and policy functions. UNDP projects also offered opportunities for joint work of the Government and civil society, such as meetings on the promotion of human rights mechanisms and legislative changes in Kazakhstan; the partnership between Akimats and civil society to provide the services needed for the vulnerable groups with a goal to establish a platform for future cooperation and continuation of the initiatives with funding from the local budget.

Within the support for civil society watchdog function, UNDP focused on increasing civil society capacity to conduct an assessment of the work of civil servants on promoting ethics in institutions and promoting meritocracy principle in civil service.⁵⁷ To support the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, a Special Monitoring Group mechanism was established, composed of civil society representatives. Engagement, research and advocacy on areas for improvement of the state social contracting culminated in integrating the recommendations from the report on Social Contracting into the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 13.06.2018, No. 160-VI 'On Amendments and Additions to Certain Legislative Acts on NGO Activities Related Issues'. UNDP also actively promoted and engaged civil society in the SDGs process, through ensuring their participation in all relevant events of importance or localization of the SDGs.

The outcomes of UNDP support to civil society have been very positive and lauded by interlocutors, who confirm that civil society actors are taking a more active role in the CCM on issues of PWD and persons living with HIV and tuberculosis (TB); while also being engaged as experts in the revision of legislation, oversight and assessment of quality of public services; and also as the Government's partners in social service provision. Most notably, the Public Control

⁵⁷ Project Civil Service Reform through Ethics, Meritocracy and Anticorruption.

Network has been established together with an e-application called 'Digital Agent' to enable citizens to assess the quality of public services. Additionally, the accessibility platform is an important output that may bring transformative outcomes for PWD, as it offers space for citizens, activists and particularly PWD themselves to report on inaccessible buildings and spaces, that limit PWD mobility; as well as act as a public service feedback mechanism.

Finding 17: UNDP's support to improve government systems for procurement of medical goods and services has helped overcome the risk of corruption and promoted improved access to quality treatment, particularly for the most vulnerable population like people living with HIV and tuberculosis.

UNDP's engagement with the Global Fund (GF) and the Government on ensuring more systematic and transparent delivery of medicines and services for people living with HIV and tuberculosis started in 2014. The decision to use UNDP procurement system was made based on findings of GF inspection in 2010-2012 – which revealed several corruption cases during the implementation of the previous cycle of GF - to outsource procurement to an agency that could help create an improved structure for procurement and minimize corruption risk. Compliance with UNDP procurement policies has ensured the purchase of high-quality health products at competitive prices openly and transparently, with no further cases of corruption. It has also resulted in increased capacity of local procurement agents. The support also included outreach to the most vulnerable groups with quality medicines and services as well as early diagnostics. The support has resulted in 10-fold decrease in prevalence indicators in last 10 years, with the current incidence of TB confined to 50 cases per 100,000 population, with mortality of three persons per 100,000 as per data provided by UNDP and government sources. The main drivers for improved indicators are the use of new technology for early diagnostics and cure, new drugs and supplies and medicines using the advanced treatment in line with WHO guidelines. Sustainability of the initiative is beginning to emerge as the government budget now covers the full procurement of TB molecular tests.

UNDP's support to the Republican AIDS Centre has been very technical, limited to procurement services of medical goods, in line with UNDP's procurement rules. The cooperation resulted in full coverage with anti-retroviral (ARV) drugs now fully funded by the Government, the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machine (DNA amplifier) and other diagnostics equipment necessary to monitor overall coverage and disease trends. Monitoring and ARV should help people get better treatment in the future. However, interlocutors emphasize that regardless of contributions, there has been a steady trend with about 2,000 people infected with HIV each year on average. The project was successful in reaching the most vulnerable groups and providing better services, yet the evaluation could not establish any direct contribution to the diversification of the economy, except the very broad notion that accessibility of drugs for PLHIV can contribute to their improved quality of life including employability. UNDP has not conducted any study or analysis on the outcome of their technical support on the livelihood of the users of procured medical goods.

At the institutional and policy level, as discussed in Finding 16, ongoing coordination with the CCM has led to more transparent and inclusive mechanisms with civil society playing an active role. UNDP has intended to improve government performance in the HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis response by including civil society as motivators of good performance and thereby enhancing oversight. Key informants emphasize the fact that the voice of CSOs has become louder and more visible, particularly in CCM on TB, with 50 percent representation. As a result, CSOs are vocal on issues of price, accessibility and have dialogue with the Ministry of Interior and other institutions involved in issues of migration. The CCM mechanism has provided CSOs with recognition, credibility and visibility. However, these are still first steps and basic elements of the system with scope for further improvement, particularly in terms of fully inclusive policymaking and CCM governance, as well as the need to increase cooperation with local and international organizations to make them more effective.

Finding 18: UNDP's support has made important inroads in promoting human rights, prevention of gender-based violence and access to justice. However, the efforts remain fragmented without a long-term goal or strategy for transformative change.

UNDP has implemented a variety of activities across key institutional actors, including the Supreme Court, and justice and law enforcement institutions, and across themes within the sector. These efforts have been relevant, however fragmented and demand-driven, with a variety of small mostly one-off interventions, giving a clear indication of unplanned interventions implemented as a result of government requests for ad hoc support.

Yet, some notable outputs have been achieved, mainly in the field of human rights, gender-based violence (GBV) and prevention of torture which have a potential for transformative long-term impact if pursued strategically. For example, UNDP has engaged in policy advisory on the Istanbul Convention and capacity-building of law enforcement, local government, public councils and forensic experts on the Istanbul Protocol on effective investigation and documentation of torture on GBV and also wider governance issues through training workshops across the country. Advanced courses were organized for police academies on prevention of torture and GBV, along with the publication of a resource book on GBV for police academies towards integrating the GBV course in their training plans. These efforts have a potential for transformative effect if assumptions such as the commitment of law enforcement and other justice and executive government institutions remain in place. The evaluation found declarative support to furthering the integration of human rights across government interlocutors. However, UNDP has not worked sufficiently to develop a full theory of change for such interventions along with the elaboration of assumptions and risks that need to be mitigated. In particular, challenges in changing the deeply rooted social norms and practices, particularly regarding GBV have not been explored yet. It may be concluded that these interventions have not been set at the system/institutional level and remain ad hoc and fragmented.

Support to the High Judicial Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been provided towards the implementation of reform linked to the modernization of judge selection in Kazakhstan, through a combination of technical assistance efforts including analytical and advisory inputs (e.g. comparative analysis of the national legislation and law enforcement practices of the Republic of Kazakhstan and international good practices); training and study visits and a perception survey among acting and retired judges on an understanding of the current situation, vision for development prospects and approaches to regular court staffing. These efforts have been demand-driven and relevant to the reform, yet rather fragmented and with no analysis of what transformative effects they may have. The evaluation could not find conclusive evidence of the outcome of this assistance.

Another area of intervention has been in support to the Academy of Justice under the Supreme Court of the Republic of Kazakhstan. UNDP supported the drafting of the strategy for the development of the Academy of Justice, including implementation mechanisms and training, and infrastructure financing action plan, ensuring that these documents are founded on best practices of judicial training in the OECD countries. This support was important from the perspective of a paradigm shift, assisting the Academy to enhance its curriculum and transform the structure to respond to the modernization of justice system and judges training in particular. However, the evaluation could not establish any evidence on the outcome or transformative potential of this intervention.

To conclude, it may be inferred that activities implemented within the area of justice and human rights have produced important outputs in terms of improved knowledge, awareness and institutional capacities for improved access to justice and protection of human rights. However, this evaluation could not find conclusive evidence of transformative effects or strategic intervention to sustain the long-term potential impact of such outputs, since support to the justice reform started in the midst of the CPD implementation.

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Outcome 21: The Government, together with partners, promotes achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in the region, and leads in promotion and implementation of United Nations principles, standards and conventions.

Finding 19: UNDP has played a key role in supporting Kazakhstan's regional and global leadership ambitions by supporting the establishing of KazAid (Kazakhstan's ODA system), providing institutional support to the Astana Regional Hub for Civil Services and in promoting South-South cooperation. While this has brought recognition and helped share Kazakhstan's experience, the sustainability is fragile due to lack of institutionalization of KazAid and the Astana Regional Hub.

From the perspective of its geopolitical position and UMIC status, Kazakhstan has strong international and South-South participation and leadership ambitions. The Government actively participates in South-South cooperation, offering its expertise in areas such as civil service reform, mining, agriculture, sustainable energy, international technology and oil and gas industries.

UNDP has strategically positioned itself to assist the Government in fulfilling its regional and global cooperation ambitions, through organization and facilitation of regional and global events, institutional and human resources capacity development, and promotion of Kazakhstan's potential regionally and globally. Most notable contributions, albeit with fragile sustainability at the time of the evaluation, have been support to the establishment of the national ODA Agency (KazAid) (Finding 20) and contribution to effective South-South and triangular cooperation through initiatives of the Astana Regional Hub for Civil Service by providing strategic knowledge and innovative solutions regionally and globally (Finding 21).

UNDP also supported a range of regional and international development initiatives to promote and position Kazakhstan as a UMIC country at the regional

and global levels. UNDP co-organized a South-South Development Exchange on Economic Diversification and Industrialization in Africa symposium in line with the UN SDGs, gathering high-level participants from 43 African governments and research centres as well as representatives from Eastern Europe and Kazakhstan to seek development solutions to transform African economies. The symposium was seen as an opportunity to exchange development practices, boost Kazakh-African partnership, build capacity and strengthen regional dialogue. Another relevant event supported by UNDP has been the EXPO 2017, which besides promotion of regional and global exchange, also enhanced women's visibility as innovators, 'green' entrepreneurs and change agents. The first International Forum on Energy Saving organized by UNDP in November 2018, is another such example. In several other projects implemented by the CO national stakeholders benefited from an exchange of experience with peers from other regions. For example, multi-apartment owners, house management organizations, and CSOs got acquainted with international experience of debt financing practices in Estonia and Uzbekistan.

These initiatives have helped Kazakhstan to share experience among its peers – regionally and globally – brought recognition and strengthened Kazakhstan's aspirations as a regional and global player. However, most of these exchange visits and events are short-term one-off events rather than long-term established institutional or bilateral partnerships with low sustainability prospects. The lack of institutionalization of KazAid, which is still pending, and the Astana Hub for Civil Services, which is still within the structure of the UNDP CO due to resource and political constraints, further questions the sustainability of these efforts (see Findings 20 and 21).

Finding 20: UNDP was instrumental in the operationalization of Kazakhstan's aid policies as stipulated in the ODA Law in 2014. However, the sustainability of these contributions is limited due to resource constraints and political environment.

UNDP has been instrumental in operationalizing the Government's ambition to strengthen its regional and international geopolitical positioning through the establishment of KazAid. UNDP used its high-level technical expertise, global network and international convening power within efforts to build capacities and profile of the Kazakhstan's ODA assistance through strengthening the capacities of the national ODA agency (KazAid). Kazakhstan's momentum for the establishment of the KazAid has been its aspiration to become a member of the OECD, for which existence of an ODA programme is one prerequisite. At the same time, moving to UMIC level, with increased GDP and development potential gives Kazakhstan the incentive to invest in helping and supporting the development needs of other countries.

UNDP has worked closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to build institutional and human resource capacities (through mentoring, piloting support and study visits) for the establishment and functioning of KazAid, including support to drafting the Presidential Decree on the establishment of KazAid. Specific support interventions included piloting an ODA project in Afghanistan, which focused on testing and modelling approach to formulation, implementation, monitoring and assessment of ODA projects. The pilot project, implemented through the support of Kazakhstan's ODA funds, has brought important results for beneficiaries on the Afghan side, also generating lessons learned and practices to be integrated in the formal establishment of KazAid. However, within the time of implementation of activities, Kazakhstan was hit hard by an economic crisis, which affected the extent to which the Government was ready to invest in ODA, resulting in delays in formally establishing KazAid as an agency, though the legislative framework is largely in place. UNDP investment in an enabling environment for KazAid has been strong, but its sustainability is fragile due to resource constraints and political factors beyond UNDP's control.

On a positive note, a lesson learned for UNDP regionally and globally has been that the network of UNDP COs has and can play an important role in supporting a country's cross-border/regional cooperation aspirations, as the access to information is better and faster than regular Ministry of Foreign Affairs channels. An example of this was the process of identification of Afghanistan's project beneficiaries

which was done in record time as a result of contacts of UNDP CO in Afghanistan during the piloting of KazAid in the country.

Finding 21: UNDP has been instrumental in promoting and sharing Kazakhstan's experience on civil service reform with professionals and peers from Central Asia and beyond through the Astana Regional Hub for Civil Service. Concrete solutions for the institutionalization of the Hub and its sustainability, however, remain unclear at the time of the evaluation.

Closely connected to KazAid has been Kazakhstan's promotion of its civil service reform experience and lessons learned, particularly among its neighbours. To respond to this aspiration, and also to expand on its technical assistance through the provision of strategic knowledge and innovative solutions in support to national and regional civil service reform processes, UNDP has invested strongly in the Astana Regional Hub for Civil Service. The Hub is established as a UNDP project which offers research, knowledge management, capacity-building and South-South/ East-East partnerships and cooperation opportunity, engaging with civil service professionals, academia and experts across Central Asia, but also in other regions. The evaluation found that the Hub provides quality services to participating states; organizes a series of events (including annual conferences, training and peer-learning opportunities); produces research studies and other knowledge products; and maintains a roster of experts on issues of civil service development, public service delivery and the SDGs. Of particular relevance are studies and publications as well as online resources available on the Hub's website, a rich knowledge resource for stakeholders interested in implementing reforms.

The evaluation noted that the Hub has managed to engage and work with 41 participating states, creating strong peer learning alliances with civil service agencies and regional hubs from Central Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and also Europe and Africa. For example, the Hub organized the first regional event of the South-South Network in Kazakhstan on 'Effective matchmaking for public service innovation through South-South Network' that allowed to identify the prospective

citizen-centric innovations for better public service. The Hub also leads and participates in a number of SDG-related events where it shares its experience in supporting public service development in the region, including from gender perspective, particularly growing number of female public servants and recent merit-based system accruing from ongoing reforms in the country. There is evidence of increasing interest by countries in the region to use the Hub resources in their work on civil service reform.

While the Astana Regional Hub is a part of the governance cluster, there is a certain level of tension regarding interactions and the position of the Hub within the cluster. The Hub is strategically positioned in-country, regionally and increasingly becoming relevant player globally within the civil service reform area. It was established through an agreement between the Government and UNDP, with funding from government sources and under UNDP hat, as a result of the decision not to have a (government) legal entity per se. UNDP implements projects in support of the Hub, which in a way makes up Hub's core funding at the same time. The chair of the Hub is directly appointed by the Prime Minister but holds a UNDP contract. As such, while being officially under the governance cluster, the Hub works very much in isolation and independently from UNDP. There are different opinions on the positioning of the Hub, both within UNDP and the wider government context in Kazakhstan. The Hub offers much assistance to the Kazakh Government, particularly on civil service reform areas such as anti-corruption and meritocracy, and is seen as an independent body. Given its project set-up with a demand-driven nature, the Hub is faster in responding to ad hoc demands of the Government (for studies, training, other types of events) than UNDP, which needs to follow its regular annual plans. The Hub initially had secured funding until 2018, which the Government extended to 2020. It is still not clear how the funding will be secured after 2020.

The Hub is still only a UNDP project, even though its operations have spanned years and also countries, tapping on Kazakhstan's resources and civil service reform lessons. The evaluation found that neither the Hub team nor UNDP have a clear exit strategy or plan for the institutionalization of the Hub. Evidently, there is value in the Hub being part of UNDP's structure: this brings credibility, regional recognition and raises the profile of UNDP as well. At the moment, this set-up is functional and serves its purpose. However, it does not provide for the sustainability of the Hub, which also affects its strategic position and credibility as a promoter of Kazakhstan's civil service reform, because it is not actually a part of Kazakhstan's structures but just a UNDP project. It also affects the financing of the Hub, which is vulnerable to changing commitment by the Government and donors. UNDP in consultation with the Government should have invested more in developing a strategic vision and plan (with an exit strategy) for its institutionalization and resourcing. As it stands now, the Hub's sustainability is very fragile and future uncertain.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

EVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL Custainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT re COORDINATIONATION HUMAN effectiveness COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability ATION relevance sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ess COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP relevance MR RESULTS effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness HUMAN DEVELOPMENT re INATION HUMAN effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP TO THE INATION HUMAN Effectiveness COORDINATION Efficiency COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIP ATION RESULTS RESULTS RESPONSIVENESS HUMAN DEVELOPMENT ESS COORDINATION Efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP relevance MRINATION AND DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIVENESS NATIONAL OWNERSHIP SUSTAINABILITY PARTNERSHIP SU

3.1. Conclusions

• Conclusion 1: UNDP has maintained a close relationship with the Government of Kazakhstan and is strategically positioned to respond to the needs of the government institutions. However, the demand-driven nature of its work results in a multitude of interventions within a loosely defined theory of change and limited cross-sectoral linkages. These weaknesses undermine its outcome-based programmatic approach, thus limiting the overall effectiveness of UNDP's country programme.

UNDP's strategic positioning within reform processes that are currently underway has been strong thanks to UNDP's ability to convene partners at the local, national and regional levels, and bring in expertise and international experiences when providing system-level support in policymaking, institutional reforms and capacity-building. UNDP is a trusted and reliable partner, which ensures that the demands are timely addressed to the extent possible.

However, there is a tension between the demand-driven nature and the programmatic approach of UNDP. UNDP aspires to maintain its strategic focus and stay true to the set country programme outcomes, but it is also pragmatic - ensuring that the Government demands are addressed and responded to, particularly in light of the fact that UNDP is increasingly dependent on government funds. UNDP has not deviated from its originally set country programme framework, as UNDP's country programme outcomes are sufficiently broad to allow necessary responsiveness to the Government's demands and needs arising across sectors. This approach is valuable from the point of relevance and contributes to the ownership of the country programme by stakeholders and partners.

While this has allowed UNDP to implement an impressive range and number of interventions, the programme lacked a coherent and integrated theory and implementation plan. Resulting weaknesses are seen in terms of fragmentation

of interventions and their outputs, with limited outcome-level changes across the respective sectors. This has affected the effectiveness and impacts of UNDP's support across all sectors, with challenges more visible in some sectors (e.g. justice sector) than others. In essence, a rather superficial engagement in some areas or subsectors has led to the weak transformative potential of the achieved outputs, which are too many and too scattered across the portfolio of UNDP's work. This has also had a direct impact on the synergies and interlinkages within and across the portfolios.

UNDP has recognized and acted upon the need to enhance synergies across thematic portfolios by integrating sectors and clusters of interventions, which to some extent, have helped cross-sectoral integration of approaches and interventions. However, more systematic integration, based on a detailed country-programme-level theory of change could have been done to ensure a strategic outcome-based approach based on UNDP's comparative advantage.

 Conclusion 2: UNDP has made notable contributions in promoting and supporting institutional and policy reforms around public administration, civil service and environmental governance, creating an enabling environment for improved public services and resilience to climate change. Most of these interventions have been delivered as demonstration pilots, and apart from a few successful cases, the institutionalization and scaling-up of results from the pilots limit their sustainability.

Across its portfolio of work, UNDP has made notable contributions in supporting institutional and policy reforms to create an enabling environment to facilitate change. UNDP has modelled a number of approaches, mechanisms and services and demonstrated important results in experimental settings and pilots across all sectors of its support. However, apart from policy-level support in the drafting of laws and regulatory instruments, the focus of most of UNDP's work has been on demonstration pilots and models, only some of which have been institutionalized. The pilots

have been helpful in demonstrating the value and feasibility of technologies, approaches and innovative concepts which have the potential for a transformative change. However, significantly more sustained work is required to take advantage of the momentum created for institutionalizing and upscaling to ensure sustainability of results.

Funding shortages, system weaknesses and/or insufficient government commitment beyond declarative support for institutionalization have been some of the factors limiting the sustainability of results. UNDP has not invested sufficient efforts in engaging with the Government and leveraging its support to ensure continuous commitment and scale-up during the planning of pilots. This resulted in the absence of a plausible framework of how resources and inputs, modelling activities and their results will lead to scalable models to be promoted and integrated into system-level response, contributing to the programme's ultimate goal. Further, no analysis of causal assumptions and risks is usually conducted, and there is little data and evidence on models and their success, which points to a weakness in monitoring, evaluation and knowledge management approaches.

 Conclusion 3: UNDP has invested moderate efforts in coordination with UN agencies, resulting in partial utilization of the partnership potential. The UNDP-facilitated SDG national platform, launched recently, provides an excellent opportunity to enhance coordination among UN agencies and explore synergies.

There are mixed results of cooperation and engagement between UNDP and other UN agencies. Joint projects that were implemented have been rather successful in terms of delivering results within the respective sectors of expertise and engagement of individual agencies, however the projectized nature of activities implemented in silos by agencies, compromise the cumulative synergies and overall effectiveness of results expected from well-coordinated holistic joint intervention.

On a more strategic level, there is a perception of competition among UN agencies with the

notion of UNDP occupying space and engaging strongly with the Government and issues related to inter-agency communication when exploring opportunities to work together. Although the SDG process has brought agencies together, the process has not been sufficiently used to maximize the potential for joint endeavours. The UNDP-facilitated SDG national platform, launched recently, which includes a broad range of stakeholders, including UN agencies, IFIs, the Government and CSOs, provides an excellent opportunity to enhance coordination and explore synergies to enhance the cumulative impact of interventions in the country.

 Conclusion 4: UNDP has made commendable progress in bringing about system-level changes in the manner the Government addresses issues of gender and rights of most vulnerable groups, particularly PWD, as well as empowerment and inclusion of civil society organizations in decisionmaking processes to promote and protect their rights.

Even though issues of PWD and gender were not addressed strongly in the CPD, UNDP has been successful in enhancing an enabling environment for CSO engagement, access to rights and services for PWD and strengthening the position of women in society. UNDP has managed to identify and maximize the potential of positive entry points within the Government to work on these issues. UNDP's work in these areas has been commendable and brought important results in the way the Government views, addresses and protects rights of PWD and integrates gender in policies. These results are still delicate and dependent on political and institutional commitment, resources and willingness to invest in addressing long-rooted practices and social norms. Working across the board of social, governance and health issues, UNDP has spearheaded the inclusion of civil society organizations in decision-making processes to address the rights of most vulnerable groups. UNDP's most important contribution has been in engaging these actors in decision-making processes and transforming their stronger voice in claiming and promoting the rights of their constituencies.

 Conclusion 5: UNDP has been effective in fostering regional, South-South and triangular cooperation modalities to enhance Kazakhstan's profile as a regional actor by sharing its best practices, experiences and results. While this has strengthened Kazakhstan's positioning and recognition as a regional and global player in line with Kazakhstan's ambition to join the family of OECD states, the sustainability of these efforts, which are still in their early stages, remains a question.

UNDP has been a trusted partner of the Government in supporting its ambition to become a recognized regional and global player in line with the OECD requirements for entering the family of member states. The support to the establishment of KazAid and services of the Astana Regional Hub for Civil Service has resulted in strengthening ties between Kazakhstan and neighbouring countries, but also raised the profile of the country regionally and globally. UNDP's facilitation and organization of a range of global and regional events, particularly through the Astana Regional Hub, and assistance to the Government to pilot an ODA project has also increased awareness and capacities of the government institutions to lead regional and global initiatives. The sustainability of these results, which are still in early stages, is, however, uncertain and their consolidation and continuation depend on political commitment and resource allocation.

 Conclusion 6: Kazakhstan's UMIC status, declining core resources, shrinking landscape of donors and development partners and unpredictable government cost-sharing presents UNDP with a demand to be innovative and diversify its resource portfolio. With the dwindling donor base from the country because of its UMIC status, resource mobilization remains one of the key challenges for the CO. While the Government remains UNDP's largest contributor, government funding often comes with delays and has seen significant variations over recent years. This makes UNDP's country programme vulnerable from the standpoint of financial stability (see Figure 3 in Section 2.1).

Many of the CO projects were in the final stages by end of 2017 and 2018. In many other instances, especially with the demonstration pilots, UNDP has created the momentum for institutionalization, but because of resource constraints, has not been able to replicate and scale up some of the successful and innovative pilots with sustainability potential. This becomes increasingly challenging in the UMIC context given the decreasing financing options from development donors combined with fiercer competition among development partners for a smaller pool of funding. Another challenge has been the negligible allocation of core resources which makes CO struggle with cofinancing, which is a requirement for some of the main donors.

UNDP has been successful in experimenting with and promoting a move from grants to market-based support mechanisms in some of its energy and environment projects. Instead of providing grants, UNDP has built partnerships and strengthened incentives and conditions for initiatives to access financial institutions for secure and affordable finance. This approach enables a larger impact and better likelihood for sustainability. UNDP introduced these approaches in the biodiversity and urban infrastructure sector and is now working on introducing such approaches in the renewable energy sector. UNDP should continue to explore such innovative financing mechanisms in other sectors of its work as well.

3.2. Recommendations and management response

Recommendation 1.



UNDP needs to consolidate its country portfolio and ensure support is provided in the areas where it has the strongest comparative advantages. The demand-driven nature of its work will remain, but responsiveness to government demands needs to happen within the parameters of outcome-level results and a well-defined theory of change with proper analysis of causal assumptions and risks. UNDP should ensure that piloting and modelling of services and/or approaches is done within this larger institutional framework to ensure the sustainability of results.

Given the dwindling donor resources and country's UMIC status, UNDP needs to ensure that its support is relevant and contributes to system-level changes in a limited number of sectors where UNDP has most visible comparative advantages. Thus far, UNDP has engaged across multiple sectors. In many of them, this engagement lacked depth and was fragmented into one-off interventions without scaling and transformative potential. This was possible given the broad country programme framework and loose results framework. UNDP needs to invest efforts in elaborating its country-level theory of change based on a thorough assessment of the sectors with the strongest comparative advantages in terms of expertise and strongest strategic positioning and commitment by the Government. Assessment of risks and assumptions and detailed mitigation strategies need to be developed, particularly for areas where modelling/demonstration pilots will happen as part of a system-level intervention. It is also advisable to avoid embarking on new themes and sub-themes and areas of intervention that loosely belong to the wider programme's intervention framework.

Management Response:



The country office accepts the recommendation. Guided by the SDG Agenda, UNDP will support Kazakhstan as it seeks to realize national priorities enshrined in the Kazakhstan 2050 Strategy, Strategic Development Plan to 2025, and other key subnational as well as sectoral strategies and plans. As analysed in the theory of change, these stated priorities include the need for a new model of economic growth and increased productivity; boosting the business environment and scaling up new technologies across sectors; improved performance of public institutions and effectiveness of key state and sectoral programmes; responsible and effective budget allocations; modernization of law enforcement and judicial systems; improving the quality of education and health care, and economic development in the regions of Kazakhstan, especially the remote ones.

UNDP's work will cut across all the above priorities, with the overall objective of supporting Kazakhstan in sustaining its growth trajectory by diversifying the economy, modernizing institutions, reducing inequalities and sustainably managing natural resources. UNDP will consolidate its assistance to the country in four main areas:

- 1. Addressing social vulnerabilities and inequalities.
- 2. Rebuilding trust with citizens through more effective and accountable institutions, free of corruption.
- 3. Fostering high-productivity, diversified and knowledge-based economic growth.
- 4. Supporting climate and disaster resilience and nature-based, low-carbon growth.

Built on its comparative advantages, UNDP will facilitate integrated responses to complex issues through a five-fold approach, drawing on the six UNDP signature solutions and leveraging new technologies, resources and partnerships for impact.

- Strengthening thought leadership and the linkages between policies and implementation.
- Facilitating collective action, networks and more participatory approaches by leveraging UNDP's integrator role.
- Leveraging innovation.
- Mobilizing SDG-based financing.
- Promoting regional knowledge exchange networks and deepened cooperation.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible	Tracking*	
		Unit(s)	Status	Comments
1.1. Consultations are held with national stakeholders to define consolidated areas for UNDP support in the new CPD cycle.	April 2020	UNDP Senior Management	Completed	

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1.2. New CPD is formulated to reflect the consolidated approach and ensure support is provided in the areas where UNDP CO has strongest comparative advantages.

June 2020	UNDP Senior
	Management

Initiated



Recommendation 2.



UNDP should invest strongly in gathering and utilizing evidence towards improved programming and knowledge management in the country office. This should be supported by a crossportfolio knowledge platform for regular reflection on results, synergy and coherence within and across the CO portfolio.

UNDP is following standard monitoring and reporting procedures, and commissions external project and outcome-level evaluations. However, weaknesses are found in the manner in which UNDP gathers, analyses and uses the monitoring data, particularly from piloting and modelling for internal decision-making but also for the promotion of best practices to draw attention and commitment of the Government to scale up working models. Reporting is mainly output-oriented with little analysis and reflection on outcome-level results, and with little use of externally available research studies, analytical papers or reports to support this analysis. It is strongly advised to further invest in knowledge management within the office, with emphasis on outcome-level monitoring, reporting and analysis by thematic areas and/or programme clusters and to establish a knowledge-sharing platform for regular reflection on results, synergy and coherence within and across the CO portfolio.

Management Response:



The country office accepts the recommendation. In line with the #nextgen UNDP agenda, the office would like to set up necessary processes to improve knowledge management and analytical work in the office. The CO will mobilize external support seeking for recommendations to the CO management in terms of improving business processes in the office related to the programme management support, project implementation, including programme-operations integration aspects, as well as knowledge management and analytical work.

Along with the standard monitoring and reporting procedures, and commissioning of external project and outcome-level evaluations, the country office will focus on developing both external and internal knowledge management systems:

- Improved quality and efficiency of thematic and operational work of the staff.
- Getting the greatest possible advantage of existing knowledge resources available through UNDP; global network such as such as Communities of Practice, the Teamworks platform, public knowledge mobilization like the Rio+20 Dialogues.
- Evidence and lessons for learning reporting, results-based management and communication.
- Talent management.
- Cooperation with the external partners on knowledge management.

From 2019 the country office started to implement UNDP's People 2030 Strategy being a part of the knowledge management strategy.



Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
2.1. A series of knowledge-building training from Operations Unit in different areas of the operations work.	December 2020	Operations Unit	Initiated	
2.2. Trainings on UNDP programmatic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and financial procedures, tools and best practices.	December 2020	Resources Monitoring and M&E Associate	Initiated	
2.3. Business-processed review mission provided its report and recommendations, including on strengthening knowledge management in the CO.	February 2020	UNDP Senior Management	Initiated	
2.4. Monthly all-staff meetings to provide updates on the global, regional and CO levels, solicit feedback, share information and best practices as well participate in a team environment.	December 2020	UNDP Senior Management	Initiated	

Recommendation 3.



UNDP should continue investing in social, public administration and civil service reforms, particularly in the areas in which support was initiated during this country programme cycle, such as meritocracy, anti-corruption and social service delivery.

Investments in strengthening foundations for active delivery of social services, particularly for PWD as well as investments in public administration and civil service, demand long-term undwindling support and attention to ensure the changes take root towards changing mindsets and public service delivery habits. UNDP is strongly positioned in these sectors, so policy and technical leverage should be utilized to achieve change in an incremental manner, based on a clear theory of change and resource mobilization plan.

Management Response:



The country office accepts the recommendation. The mentioned development areas are prominently featured in the draft CPD 2021-2025. The intention is to scale up initiatives commenced in the current CPD cycle, especially in the areas of institutional reform (public administration and civil service reforms, justice sector reform, local self-governance reform), prevention of corruption. The CO is also commencing new initiatives on police modernization and strengthening capacity of the Accounts Committee. The overarching theme of this work is supporting government efforts to rebuild trust with citizens (and other people). In the area of social development, it is envisaged to focus on overcoming socio-economic exclusion of vulnerable groups and improving quality of services delivery, including special social services, especially in remote localities.

Key Actions	Time-frame Respo	Responsible	Tracking*	
		Unit(s)	Status	Comments
3.1. Ensure adequate funding of ongoing and new initiatives through the government cost-sharing mechanism, possibly complemented by other small-scale funding.	December 2021	Governance and Local Development Unit	Initiated	
3.2. Upgrade the UNDP offer to the national partners in key areas (social protection, public administration reform, police modernization, justice sector reform) by mobilizing high-calibre experts and practitioners and retaining them on flexible contractual arrangements, including through the Global Policy Network.	December 2020	Governance and Local Development Unit	Initiated	



Recommendation 4. UNDP needs to continue spearheading initiatives for empowerment of women, the most vulnerable groups and civil society to take a more active role in decision-making processes based on lessons learned and results of interventions in these areas achieved thus far.

> UNDP has achieved important results in terms of empowerment of vulnerable groups, notably women and PWD, and engaged strongly with civil society in various sectoral decision-making processes (e.g. health, human rights). This support should continue and build upon lessons learned gathered so far to ensure that partnering with the Government in different sectors is inclusive of various interest groups. Ongoing support needs to be based on human rights and leave no one behind principles, to ensure full inclusiveness and transparency of decision-making and service delivery.

Management Response:



The country office accepts the recommendation. In the new CPD cycle 2016-2021, UNDP will focus on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment through dedicated interventions across the areas outlined in four outcomes. Gender mainstreaming will yield results across all programmes. For instance, in the policy sphere, UNDP will provide assistance to advance the implementation of key gender-related legislation and ensure gender dimensions in key legislation relating to national priorities, strengthen national capacities to address gender-differentiated impacts of climate impacts and disasters, strengthen the gender machinery and promote the participation of women in decision-making, in parliament and public administration. UNDP will also seek to raise women's skills for employment and catalyse opportunities in new sectors such as green and digital jobs.

To help prevent sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), UNDP will advance legislative reform, policy dialogue and advocacy, technical assistance in the adaptation of world best practices. Capacities of police officers and the justice sector will be developed on prevention and response to gender-based violence. UNDP will also continue to support Kazakhstan's international cooperation initiative devoted to improving the economic empowerment of Afghan women.

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Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible	Tracking*	
		Unit(s)	Status	Comments
4.1. Launch of new regional project on Afghan Women Empowerment jointly with EU.	June 2020	Assistant Resident Representative	Initiated	
4.2. Launched as part of the Gender Equality Seal in 2019, UNDP will continue gender empowerment mainstreaming into programme. In particular, in the biodiversity portfolio, focus will be given to women empowerment in the natural protected areas (project pilot areas) of Kazakhstan.	December 2022	Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit	Initiated	
4.3. Development of the new government cost-sharing proposal on police modernization.	February 2020	Governance and Local Development Unit	Completed	
4.4. Contribute to the elimination of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Central Asia through co-development and co-implementation of the Regional EU Spotlight Initiative.	December 2022	Assistant Resident Representative	Initiated	

Recommendation 5.



UNDP should build on the achievements in the energy and environment sector and deepen its engagement to upscale and institutionalize the results by strengthening existing partnerships and engaging with non-traditional partners.

UNDP should seek to create more depth and expertise in the areas that it currently covers under the energy and environment portfolio. Climate change mitigation and adaptation, transboundary waters, environmental education, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and DRR are among areas where UNDP CO could play a larger role. Given the cross-cutting nature, DRR activities should be integrated into other thematic areas (climate change adaptation in particular), with a focus on disaster prevention and risk reduction. In doing so, UNDP should engage with both the government partners and institutions, and the private sector and other non-traditional partners.

Management Response:



The country office accepts the recommendation. In current and new CPD cycle 2021-2025 UNDP's work will centre on scaling-up and institutionalizing incentives and new and clean technologies for low-carbon business development, including through the SDG Finance Accelerator on green economy. These efforts will be based on a solid foundation already built in partnership with the Entrepreneurship Development Fund (DAMU), and will extend to other sectors, especially introduction of renewables. Low-carbon business development will also be promoted through other innovative mechanisms such as green bonds, financial de-risking instruments and carbon trading, among others. The success of these initiatives will depend on UNDP's capacity to bring together a variety of stakeholders, including private sector, financial and microcredit institutions (e.g. Astana International Financial Centre, International Green Technologies and Investments Centre), national institutions and international partners such as the EU, European Investment Bank (EIB), EBRD, ADB, and the World Bank.

In continuation of its work on biodiversity, pastoralism and irrigated agriculture, UNDP will scale up existing work and introduce new solutions and more efficient farming techniques, including new methods for water-saving and water-harvesting. Through engagement of the private sector, introduction of new technologies will also lead to an increase in agricultural productivity that will at least partially offset the decrease in yields in drought years. As the risk of natural hazards increases, the CO will initiate work with the Emergency Management Committee to develop policies, capacities and a system to prevent and respond to natural disasters. Work under this focus area is also expected to contribute to generating jobs for women and men, as part of the green economy facilitating support, as demonstrated by the almost 1,000 jobs created during the previous CPD cycle.

Key Actions	Time-frame	llnit(c)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
5.1. Launch the strategy for the Green Finance Accelerator lab.	December 2020	Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit	Initiated	
5.2. Introduction of financial solutions and stimulus for renewables uptake, biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management.	December 2020	Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit	Initiated	
5.3. Establishment of EIB partnership in agriculture to sustain food production practices and responsible value chains.	December 2022	Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit	Initiated	



Recommendation 6. UNDP should develop an exit strategy and engage with the Government to discuss the sustainability, institutionalization and future of services and approaches modelled by UNDP across its portfolio, most notable of all being the Astana Regional Hub and support to the national ODA system.

> UNDP has modelled a number of services, mechanisms and approaches across all the targeted sectors. However, apart from the support in the drafting of laws and regulatory instruments, the focus has mainly been on demonstration pilots and models, only some of which have been institutionalized. While the pilots have been helpful in demonstrating the 'proof of concept', significantly more sustained work is required to ensure the institutionalization and sustainability of results.

> Of particular relevance are UNDP's interventions in outcome 21. UNDP has achieved important results through the work of the Astana Regional Hub and modelling Kazakhstan's ODA interventions. Both have been successful in increasing the positive image of Kazakhstan and its civil service among the regional and wider network of countries and civil service peers. At the same time, the Hub has served as an important resource for domestic civil service reform efforts.

> However, the administrative and legal identity of the Hub remains within UNDP in the form of a project, funded mainly by the Government with funds expiring in 2020; while the KazAid Agency has not been formally established yet. Considering the circumstances and investments of UNDP and development partners in the Hub, the Agency and the models, it is urgent for UNDP to engage in discussions with the Government on future legal and administrative structures of the Hub and the Agency in particular. These discussions should lead to an exit strategy for UNDP, with measures to ensure sustainability and institutionalization of the modelled institutions, services and approaches.



Management Response: The country office accepts the recommendation. The possible scenarios of the Astana Civil Service Hub's future development are being discussed with the Government of Kazakhstan, including the funding of the next phase in 2021-2023. The exact size of further support is currently being considered by the Government, with the expectation of the funding envelope in the order of \$4.5 million for the next three-year budget cycle.

> The Hub will continue providing support to governments of the participating countries in strengthening institutional framework and human capacity in civil service, as well as in piloting and introducing innovative approaches and modern solutions in governance, including digitalization. In terms of the scope, the Hub is expected to sharpen its focus on innovations in the public sector, including digitalization.

> The CO management has regular consultations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to keep updated on developments around the ODA in Kazakhstan. UNDP stands ready to support the Government once the KazAid Agency is established and support is requested. So far, the CO provides expert support to keep up the collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this important area.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible	Tracking*	
		Unit(s)	Status	Comments
6.1. Complete negotiations with the Government with the aim of securing funding for the Hub's next phase.	December 2020	Governance and Local Development Unit	Initiated	
6.2. To further coordinate with state bodies of Kazakhstan and countries of the region the application of modern innovative methods and technologies in public administration at various levels, including the launch of accelerators.	December 2020	Governance and Local Development Unit	Initiated	
6.3. Provide ad hoc expert support as part of the SDG working group partnership.	December 2020	Governance and Local Development Unit	Initiated	



Recommendation 7. UNDP should develop and proactively pursue a long-term resource mobilization strategy and implementation plan that includes a predictable government cost-sharing agreement and innovative financing mechanisms, including partnerships with the private sector and IFIs.

> Given Kazakhstan's UMIC status, resource mobilization will remain a challenge for the country programme. Funding in the new CPD cycle will very much depend on government cost-sharing (GCS) and vertical funds, due to the shrinking 'traditional' donor environment, as well as the ability of the CO to engage better with the IFIs and the private sector, building on its competitive advantages, and above all being creative and innovative.

> UNDP should develop a long-term resource mobilization strategy with clearly defined targets and proactively pursue resource mobilization efforts both from traditional and non-traditional sources. Cooperation with the IFIs and the Government in utilization of loans and engaging with the private sector on market-based mechanisms should be integral parts of this strategy.

> Given the fact that Government will remain UNDP's largest contributor, the CO and the Government should agree on making the GCS more predictable by setting aside a set amount of funds to be 'reserved' for the CO in the next CPD cycle based on the Government's strategic priorities. This will make the UNDP programme less volatile and vulnerable from the standpoint of financial stability. This should also help the CO mobilize a bigger amount from other donors to match/co-finance the government funds.

Management Response:



In the current CPD cycle, UNDP will proactively pursue resource mobilization efforts both from traditional and non-traditional sources building a robust and more coherent portfolio to deliver the new country programme 2021-2025.

UNDP will continue working to enhance and expand the existing partnerships with such IFIs as EU, ADB, World Bank by targeting new development financing and seeking new stable cooperation with the private and non-government sector.

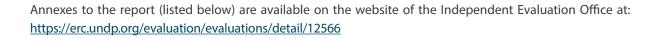
The primary goal will be securing the Government's endorsement of the new country programme and an agreement to provide cost-sharing for the CPD on a more predictable basis totalling \$30 million for the new cycle.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible	Tracking*	
		Unit(s)	Status	Comments
7.1. Establishment of the partnership with Bitfury LLP.	December 2019	Sustainable Development and Urbanization Unit	Completed	\$1.5 million mobilized

7.2. Start of the Spotlight project funded by EU.	June 2020	Assistant Resident Representative	Initiated	
7.3. Start of the new project funded through WB loan to the Government of Kazakhstan.	December 2019	Governance and Local Development Unit	Completed	\$0.4 million mobilized
7.4. Sign an agreement with the Government (MNE) to secure predictable funding from the Government of Kazakhstan for the new CPD cycle.	December 2020	UNDP Senior Management	Initiated	

^{*} Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Research Centre database.

Annexes



- **Annex 1.** Terms of reference
- **Annex 2.** Evaluation matrix
- **Annex 3.** Country at a glance
- **Annex 4.** Country office at a glance
- Annex 5. Project list
- Annex 6. Documents consulted
- **Annex 7.** People consulted

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