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United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION UZBEKISTAN



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Government of Uzbekistan, representatives of the United Nations agencies, civil society, and bilateral and multilateral development partners.

Foreword

I am pleased to present the Independent Evaluation of the UNDP Country Programme in Uzbekistan, the second country-level assessment conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 2009. This evaluation covers the programme period 2016 to mid-2019. It has been carried out in collaboration with the Government of Uzbekistan, the UNDP Uzbekistan country office, and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

UNDP has been supporting the Government of Uzbekistan since 1993 to pursue economic and social reforms and facilitate the country's development amid the challenges during its transition period. Over the years, UNDP's programme has been shaped by Uzbekistan's development priorities and challenges. During the programme cycle under review (2016-2020), the UNDP country programme focused on supporting the Government in advancing economic and democratic reforms and in strengthening and fostering the participation of civil society in development processes at the national and local levels.

The evaluation found that UNDP's current country programme operated in a period of significant political changes, which presented considerable opportunities but also challenges to implementation. UNDP strategically adopted its approach responding to the emerging demands and maintained its strategic position and continued relevance as a trusted development partner, although the frequently changing needs and priorities affected the consolidation of efforts and synergies across the assistance portfolio. UNDP has played a key role in promoting sustainable economic growth and supporting justice and public administration reforms in the country, with notable contributions

in improving access to justice and public services and transparency and participation in policymaking processes. It has played a catalytic role in the integration of Agenda 2030 and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals in Uzbekistan.

UNDP's support within the environment and climate change agenda has made important contributions towards protection, mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity conservation, although significantly more efforts are required in the future. In cooperation with the other UN agencies, UNDP has made a significant contribution in establishing an integrated multisector and multilevel approach to mitigate human security risks for communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster. Although this is still in the early stages, strong donor engagement is foreseen through the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund. There remain considerable development challenges in Uzbekistan, and UNDP can be expected to remain a preferred provider of development support for the foreseeable future.

I would like to thank the Government of Uzbekistan, the various national stakeholders, and colleagues at the UNDP Uzbekistan 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 Uzbekistan.



Indran A. Naidoo
Director
Independent Evaluation Office

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
CAT	Convention Against Torture
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country office
CPD	Country programme document
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DB	Doing Business indicators of the World Bank
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECIS	Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
E-SUD	National electronic case management system
EU	European Union
FLA	Free Legal Aid
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HCFC	Hydrochlorofluorocarbons
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
ILO	International Labour Organization
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MoES	Ministry of Emergency Situations
MPHSTF	Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
ODS	Ozone-depleting substance
PWD	Person with disability
RAC	Refrigeration and air conditioning
RBEC	Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
RBM	Results-based management
RMU	Resources Management Unit
ROAR	Results Oriented Annual Report
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

Evaluation Brief: Uzbekistan

UNDP has been supporting the Government of Uzbekistan since 1993 in pursuing economic and social reforms and facilitating the country's development amid the challenges emerging during the nation's transition period. Over the years, UNDP's programme has been shaped by Uzbekistan's development priorities and challenges. During the programme cycle under review (2016-2020), the

UNDP country programme focused on supporting the Government in advancing economic and democratic reforms and strengthening and fostering civil society participation in development processes at the national and local levels. The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation of Uzbekistan in 2019.

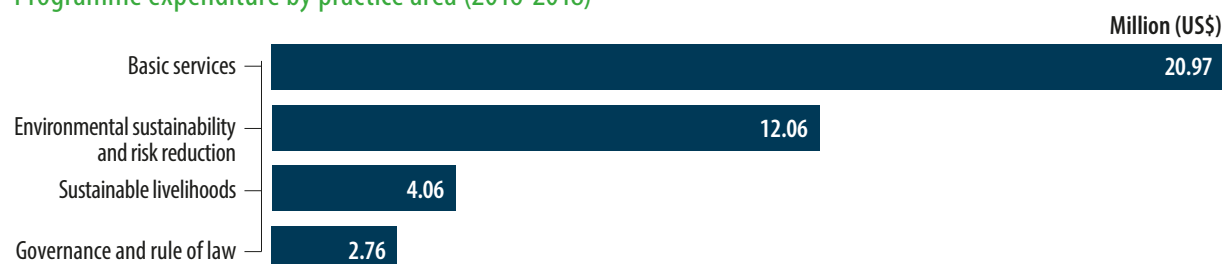
Total programme expenditure (2016-2018)

US\$39,851,451

Funding sources, 2016-2018



Programme expenditure by practice area (2016-2018)



Key findings and conclusions

UNDP's current country programme operated in a period of significant political changes that presented considerable opportunities but also implementation challenges. The broad nature of the country programme document allowed UNDP to respond to frequently changing government priorities and needs, but also affected the consolidation of efforts and synergies across its portfolio, leading to fragmentation of assistance in the absence of a clear programme theory. These challenges have had

direct implications for the achievement of country programme objectives and impact in areas of UNDP's engagement.

UNDP's results-based management (RBM) practices are weak, particularly in terms of the quality of its monitoring and evaluation systems, procedures and practices and its results frameworks. These challenges represent a weakness of the CO in practising sound RBM approaches, which also compromise the visibility of UNDP's achievements in the country.

UNDP has played a catalytic role in promoting sustainable economic growth, nationalizing the Sustainable Development Goals and facilitating a coordinated response to the Aral Sea disaster with significant contributions towards ensuring a coherent joint response through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund. Much of the work is still at an early stage to ensure stronger donor engagement in the MDTF. However, the support of the Government and UN agencies has brought significant leverage in recognizing the problem and its response.

UNDP support in the justice sector and public administration reform has been diverse and varied, with notable contributions in improving access to justice and public services and more transparency and participation in policymaking

processes. However, the sustainability of these results is still fragile and depends on many political factors beyond UNDP's control.

UNDP support within the environment and climate change reform agenda has made important contributions towards protection, mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity conservation. However, the sustainability of its work is partly hampered by the lack of most-needed regulatory frameworks, which also compromise the results of the efforts. UNDP and the UN Environment Programme's recent joint efforts in securing Global Climate Fund support have opened doors to accelerate climate financing, potentially leading to tangible environmental benefits.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP needs to consolidate its portfolio of support. UNDP should invest time and effort to ensure that the country programme is based on a strong theory of change for each consolidated area of intervention and cumulatively at the level of the country programme. This process will provide a strategic focus to the programme and a coherent approach with synergies across projects and thematic portfolios. In doing so, UNDP should focus on substantial upstream engagement to ensure that the Government is receiving adequate support to push the reforms forward, while maintaining its strategic position.

RECOMMENDATION 2. UNDP's country programme should be backed up by a strong monitoring and evaluation framework and a mechanism for systematic reflection on outcome-level results.

RECOMMENDATION 3. UNDP should continue to support the justice sector reform

process by building on the lessons learned and best practices from its engagement with the civic courts and develop a replicable model that can be adapted and scaled up across the entire court system in Uzbekistan. This support should be ingrained in strong programme theory, to enable adequate tracking of outputs-outcomes-impacts of the assistance for citizens.

RECOMMENDATION 4. UNDP should use the Government's momentum and readiness to invest in strengthening the human rights framework and mechanisms for ensuring access to and protection of rights of most vulnerable groups, in particular, women and people with disabilities.

RECOMMENDATION 5. Given the wide scope and appetite of the Government for public administration reforms, UNDP needs to ensure that its support within the sector is well targeted and defined to ensure clear focus and desired outcomes

of assistance in a limited number of areas of UNDP's comparative advantage. UNDP's public administration portfolio needs to be consolidated to ensure that it does not fall into the trap of doing too little of everything.

RECOMMENDATION 6. Building on the foundations of its existing work, UNDP should deepen its engagement in the areas tackled under environmental sustainability and risk reduction portfolio, working closely with the Government and in line with the government priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 7. UNDP should strengthen its value proposition and develop a long-term resource mobilization strategy based on a well-articulated plan of engagement with partners and clear targets to diversify its funding base and pursue it more forcefully.

A decorative graphic consisting of a dotted line that starts vertically on the left, then turns horizontally to the right. Along this line are five colored circles: an orange circle at the top of the vertical segment, a dark blue circle below it, a yellow circle at the end of the vertical segment, an orange circle on the horizontal segment, a dark blue circle on the horizontal segment, and a yellow circle at the far right end of the horizontal segment.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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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 development results at the country level, 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.¹

This is the second country-level evaluation of UNDP's work in Uzbekistan 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 and donor 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 Uzbekistan country office (CO), the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC), the UNDP Executive Board, and the Government of Uzbekistan.

1.2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation methodology follows the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards,² ensuring that all steps adhere to ethical and professional standards of evaluation practice.

The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach.³ 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 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 3). Choices on the evaluation methods and the proposed strategy for undertaking the assessment 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 questions (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 background documents on the regional, subregional and national contexts; documents from international partners and other UN agencies; project and programme documents such as work plans and progress reports; monitoring and self-assessment reports such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented

¹ <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>.

² <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>.

³ Theory-based evaluations are usually based on a theory of change and/or results framework that seek to explain causality and changes, including underlying assumptions.

Annual Reports (ROARs), strategy notes and project and programme evaluations conducted by the country office⁴ and the regional bureau, including quality assurance and audit reports.

Portfolio analysis: Based on the analysis of the country portfolio, the team selected 30 percent of total CO projects, representing a cross-section of UNDP's work in the country, for in-depth review and analysis (Annex 5, available online); and also used the analysis to refine and elaborate the evaluation matrix. 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 marker⁵ (mix of projects from GEN 0-3); and implementation modality (both national 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: Prior to the country mission, a strategic 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 the UNDP country programme, its effectiveness and sustainability, allowing triangulation of these findings with those to be collected in the framework of the country field visit and from the secondary data/documentation review.

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

Country mission and key informant interviews:

A country mission for data collection was undertaken from 11 to 18 May 2019. A multi-stakeholder approach was followed and a total of 114 stakeholder interviews were conducted with government representatives, civil society organizations, private-sector representatives, UN agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors, and beneficiaries of the programme. Field visits and site observations were undertaken to two selected projects in Syr Darya region of Uzbekistan for discussions with the project beneficiaries. The visited projects included the Rule of Law Partnership in Uzbekistan within the good governance, policy and communications cluster with visits to the Gulistan civil cases court; and Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Rural Areas in Uzbekistan: Technical Capacity-Building within the sustainable development cluster.

Triangulation: All information and data collected from multiple sources was 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 question. 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 review, the draft ICPE report was shared with the country office and RBEC, and finally with the Government and other national partners in Uzbekistan.

⁴ The CO completed 14 decentralized evaluations during the review period, seven of which were rated moderately satisfactory, and four moderately unsatisfactory by the IEO quality assurance mechanism. Quality assessment for three evaluation was not done.

⁵ 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 rate 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 is part of a cluster evaluation of UNDP country programmes in 10 countries and one territory in the ECIS, 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 and used the country mission to validate the emerging findings. Most of the research for the evaluation was conducted remotely and only five working days were spent in the 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 number and depth of field visits. To offset the challenges, the evaluation team, in consultation with the country office, carefully planned the field mission by ensuring a statistically sound 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 country office so 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 ended up being a wrap-up meeting with discussions on next steps and follow-up.

1.4. Country context

Uzbekistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia with a population of over 32 million, 49.4 percent of

whom live in rural areas.⁶ Uzbekistan is ranked as a lower-middle-income country,⁷ with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of US\$1,223⁸ and a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.710.⁹ The country is positioned in the high human development category, with life expectancy at birth of 71.4 years in 2018 compared to 66.5 in 1990.¹⁰ Nearly two-thirds of the rural population depend on agriculture, which contributes to almost 18 percent of the country's GDP.¹¹

Governance: Uzbekistan went through sweeping political changes in 2016, with the new leadership bringing a stronger focus on reforms and opening the country to international relations, including currency liberalization and lifting many regulatory restrictions on businesses. The new Government has made efforts to break Uzbekistan out of its international isolation and economic stagnation, adopting an agenda that includes the reform of the judiciary and public administration, liberalization of the economy, education, health and social protection reforms, and also security and constructive foreign policy. The reforms have brought new momentum but are slow, and gaps and deficiencies are still visible, most notably on justice, public administration and local governance.

Relevant challenges include limited capacities of public administration and mechanisms and transparency for participatory decision-making. Uzbekistan performed poorly in terms of human rights and the 2016 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and public awareness of and adherence to human rights principles by the Government, access to justice for vulnerable groups, and gender equality remain some key weaknesses. Acting on the UPR review committee's recommendations, the Government issued a decree for ending forced labour in May 2018 and has taken on board other recommendations in the new reform agenda. There are also improvements in media freedom and freedom of expression, as noted in the independent media score (6.75 compared to 7.00 in previous years).¹²

⁶ <https://stat.uz/en/181-ofytsyalnaia-statistika-en/6383-demography>.

⁷ http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups#Lower_middle_income.

⁸ The World Bank in Uzbekistan, Country Snapshot, October 2018.

⁹ UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators: Statistical Update 2018 Uzbekistan.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://www.gtai.de/resource/blob/31498/2ce46914b09157126c740b4f243453e9/pro201705085000-data.pdf>.

¹² Nations in Transit: Uzbekistan 2018.

Socio-economic context: Since independence, Uzbekistan has pursued long-term economic reforms that included active state interventions designed to achieve self-sufficiency in cereal and energy resources. The economy is still driven primarily by state-led investments, and export of natural gas, gold, and cotton, which remains the central feature of Uzbekistan's agriculture, despite efforts to diversify crops. Since 2017, Uzbekistan has undertaken several reforms towards building a more open and market-oriented economy. The reforms include liberalization of the foreign exchange market, reducing import tariffs and excise taxes on imports, facilitating visa regime and business and investment incentives and taxes as well as expanding social safety net coverage.¹³

As a result, Uzbekistan's Doing Business ranking improved to 69th in 2019 from a record-low 76th in 2018.¹⁴

Uzbekistan faces a variety of socio-economic challenges, particularly in terms of unemployment and regional disparities in living standards between rural and urban areas. According to government data for 2018, the unemployment rate for the first six months of 2018 was 9.3 percent,¹⁵ with 17 percent youth unemployment and 12.9 percent female unemployment.¹⁶ The poverty rate declined from 27.5 percent in 2001 to 13.7 percent in 2014/2015 and was limited by the remittances,¹⁷ with 12.8 percent of people below the national poverty line, 75 percent of whom live in rural areas.¹⁸ Regional development is very uneven and is reflected in employment, supply of infrastructure and electricity as well as in access to finance.

According to International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Bank estimates, the gender gap in economically active men and women equalled 28 percent in 2016, with 53.8 percent female participation in the labour market compared to 77.9 percent for men.¹⁹ Gender parity challenges remain as most women are self-employed or take unpaid care of the family.²⁰ Women hold a total of 16.4 percent of parliamentary seats.

Health indicators in Uzbekistan show a positive trend. The country's public spending on health averaged 3 percent of GDP in 2015,²¹ higher than the 1.7 percent average in other lower-middle-income countries. Data show that in 2015 the HIV prevalence was estimated at 0.15 percent in the general population,²² 7.3 percent of which were people who inject drugs, 3.3 percent men who have sex with men, and 2.1 percent female sex workers.²³

Environment and energy: Nearly 9.3 percent of Uzbekistan's total area is at risk of natural and man-made disaster and 65.6 percent the population live in such areas.²⁴ Natural disasters, especially mudflows and avalanches, remain a concern as they directly impact the livelihoods of people and affect development programmes.²⁵ Climate change has intensified desertification and led to reduced biodiversity, especially in the Aral Sea region. Uzbekistan uses some 90 percent of its available surface water for irrigation. Lack of water resources and land degradation coupled with high soil salinity negatively impact agricultural productivity and threaten the country's food security.²⁶ This is compounded by the challenges in the efficient use of available water resources. Forty-six percent

¹³ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/866501562572675697/pdf/Uzbekistan-Toward-a-New-Economy-Country-Economic-Update.pdf>.

¹⁴ <https://tradingeconomics.com/uzbekistan/ease-of-doing-business>.

¹⁵ Data by Republican Scientific Centre for Employment, Labour Safety and Social Protection of the Population under the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations.

¹⁶ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-investment-climate-statements/uzbekistan/>.

¹⁷ The World Bank-Uzbekistan Partnership: Country Programme Snapshot, April 2016.

¹⁸ <http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/countryinfo.html>.

¹⁹ UNDP Human Development Indices and Indicators: Statistical Update 2018 Uzbekistan.

²⁰ European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Uzbekistan Country Strategy 2018-2023, September 2018.

²¹ The World Bank-Uzbekistan Partnership: Country Programme Snapshot, April 2016.

²² <https://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=uz&v=32>.

²³ https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/2642/oig_gf-oig-16-001_report_en.pdf?u=637001820820000000.

²⁴ http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/operations/projects1/environment_and_energy/strengthening-disaster-risk-management-capacities-in-uzbekistan.html.

²⁵ <https://adaptation-undp.org/explore/central-asia/uzbekistan>.

²⁶ Ibid.

of the territory is rangeland of which a substantial part lies in arid and semi-arid areas and most of it is poorly managed.²⁷ Uzbekistan's mountain ecosystems are subject to environmental degradation due to unsustainable levels of livestock grazing, high levels of dependency of rural communities on fuelwood from mountain forests for heating and cooking, and extensive wildlife poaching.²⁸ The lack of effective integrated and sustainable land use and management practices is one of the key development challenges the country faces.

Uzbekistan is the third-largest gas producer in the region, behind Russia and Turkmenistan. Despite being energy self-sufficient, Uzbekistan's ageing electricity infrastructure and under-investment in network maintenance have led to electricity shortages, inefficiency, high losses and low reliability of service.²⁹ Renewable energy sources remain low, at 1.2 percent of the total.³⁰ Expanding the use of renewable energy and reducing energy intensity is one of the challenges recognized by the Government and reflected in its strategies.

1.5. National development planning architecture

Since the presidential elections at the end of 2016, the Government has undertaken key economic reforms, including currency liberalization and lifting many regulatory restrictions on businesses. In 2017, the new Government created the Action Strategy on Five Priority Areas of the Country's Development for 2017-2021 foreseeing an ambitious programme of market-oriented reforms. The Strategy focuses on ensuring the rule of law, reforming the judicial system, promoting economic liberalization, and the development of the social sphere. All this is aimed at contributing to a fundamental transformation of the relationship between Uzbekistan's Government and

its people, as well as to "elevate independent civic advocacy organizations and informal institutions, such as Mahallas, to the status of partners of the Government".³¹

Key documents foreseeing advancements in the reform of public administration as well as overall governance in Uzbekistan include a Programme to Reform the Judicial and Legal System and a Concept of Administrative Reform. The Concept aims at achieving an effective and transparent system of public administration capable of protecting the rights of citizens and bolstering Uzbekistan's economic competitiveness globally. The Agency for Public Services under the Ministry of Justice has been a leading force in improving public service delivery, overseeing 201 public service centres within an institutional framework for effective civil service. Citizen engagement and transparency has been promoted by the approval of the Law on Public Oversight, establishing legal forms of public scrutiny, and the launching of the *Mening Fikrim* e-petitions portal and public councils under government bodies with the help of UNDP.

Within the area of human rights, the Government has taken steps to address a number of issues raised by concluding observations and recommendations of both UN treaty bodies and the UPR, namely, on ensuring financial independence of judiciary, decriminalization, abolishing arrest as a form of punishment for crimes, reducing the detention time of suspects and extending the tenure of judges. The reform agenda, UPR recommendations, and UNDP's human rights and development mandate have been the driver of UNDP's work in the areas of rule of law.

Uzbekistan has taken deliberate steps to incorporate climate change considerations into its national strategies, plans, and governmental decrees. For example, the Development Action Strategy

²⁷ UNDP Uzbekistan, 'Reducing Pressures on Natural Resources from Competing Land Use in Non-irrigated Arid Mountain, Semi-desert and Desert Landscapes of Uzbekistan ID# 00087414', 2016, p.6.

²⁸ UNDP Uzbekistan, 'Midterm review of "Reducing Pressures on Natural Resources from Competing Land Use in Non-irrigated Arid Mountain, Semi-desert and Desert Landscapes of Uzbekistan ID# 00087414"', 2016, p.6.

²⁹ <https://www.eu4energy.iea.org/countries/uzbekistan>.

³⁰ See Regulatory indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE) and SDG tracking for sustainable energy related data 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.

³¹ <http://isdpeu/publication/political-reform-mirziyoyevs-uzbekistan/>.

2017-2021 has five priority areas, including ensuring environmental safety. To ensure the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Government has committed to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 30-35 percent per unit of GDP by 2030. However, Uzbekistan still lacks a comprehensive, nationwide framework for climate change adaptation.

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

Following the political change, Uzbekistan has been gradually opening to regional initiatives. The new leadership declared Central Asia as a foreign policy priority, followed by a spate of high-level visits to and from all neighbouring countries. Significant progress has been made on border delimitation as well as in discussions on the management of common resources, notably with Tajikistan.

Uzbekistan is a signatory to major UN conventions³² such as the UN Convention Against Corruption; UN Convention to Combat Desertification and UN Convention on Climate Change; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and conventions of the ILO.³³ The country is also a member of key international bodies, including the United Nations, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, Partnership for Peace, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Among the development partners active in Uzbekistan are Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation), European Union (EU), Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund), World Wildlife Fund, development agencies (such as United States Agency for International Development [USAID], Korea International Cooperation Agency, Japan International Cooperation Agency); international financial institutions (IFIs) (such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank); embassies (such as those of Switzerland, Germany, Israel, Russia, Turkey and United Kingdom). The Government also works closely with the United Nations country team,³⁴ and within this cooperation the Government of Uzbekistan promotes the Action Strategy 2017-2021 as a means of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation, whereby a joint roadmap on furthering cooperation between the UN and Uzbekistan was approved in December 2017.

1.7. UNDP programme strategy in Uzbekistan

Within the contextual framework and aiming to address governance, socio-economic and environmental challenges, UNDP has designed the UNDP country programme to "support the Government in enhancing human development through interventions in inclusive economic development and social/environmental sustainability",³⁵ investing in inclusive economic development, environmental protection, effective governance to enhance public service delivery; and protection of rights³⁶ (see Table 1). The CPD stems from and is aligned with the 2016-2020 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in Uzbekistan.

³² https://tbinetnet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=189&Lang=EN.

³³ For example, Forced Labour Convention; Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention; Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention; Equal Remuneration Convention; Abolition of Forced Labour Convention; Discrimination [Employment and Occupation] Convention; Minimum Age Convention; Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention; Employment Policy Convention; Forty-Hour Week Convention; Holidays with Pay Convention; Maternity Protection Convention; Workers' Representatives Convention; Collective Bargaining Convention.

³⁴ Representative offices of a number of UN agencies are operating in the country, such as the World Health Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS.

³⁵ UNDP Country Programme Document, p.4.

³⁶ Ibid.

TABLE 1: Overview of the country programme outcomes³⁷

Theme	Country programme outcome		Budget (2016-2018) US\$	Expenditure (2016-2018) US\$
Sustainable livelihoods	Outcome 1	By 2020, equitable and sustainable economic growth through productive employment, improvement of environment for business, entrepreneurship and innovations expanded for all.	4,944,113	4,059,607
Environmental sustainability	Outcome 6	By 2020, rural population benefit from sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to disasters and climate change.	13,467,256	12,059,805
Basic services	Outcome 7	By 2020, the quality of public administration is improved for equitable access to quality public services for all.	27,493,714	20,969,395
Governance and rule of law	Outcome 8	Legal and judicial reforms further ensure strong protection of rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens.	3,305,025	2,762,644
Total			49,210,108	39,851,451

The portfolio includes 48 projects within the current CPD (some of which that started during the previous country programme), divided under four outcomes. There are 33 projects with a budget of under \$1 million, nine projects between \$1 million and \$3 million, and six projects over \$3 million. Projects are implemented by both direct implementation (19) and national implementation (29) modalities. By January 2019, 17 projects were closed, and 31 projects were under implementation.

Review of the financial portfolio indicates that the total budget for the period 2016-2018 was \$49.2 million with a total expenditure of \$39.8 million. Figure 1 provides an overview of the evolution of the programme budget and expenditure during the period under review until the end of 2018.

In the area of sustainable livelihoods, UNDP has invested in policies through the provision of policy advice and international best practices. It has been working to promote inclusiveness in reforms so that the needs of disadvantaged or marginalized groups such as youth, women and persons with disability (PWD) are properly considered.

Within governance and rule of law, UNDP has implemented a mix of thematic interventions focusing on legislative drafting and justice sector reform and human rights. The projects in the portfolio focus on law-making and regulatory impact assessment; rule of law partnership; the UPR follow-up with the national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and support to the Ombudsperson's Office. Most of the projects have been long-term initiatives.

UNDP's work on basic services focuses on public administration reform-related interventions (strategic planning, policy/legislative drafting, service provision, and public finance management); as well as strengthening of women and enhancement of social protection system and service provision. The portfolio covers five themes: health and social protection; women empowerment; aid effectiveness; public administration reform; and local government support.

Within the environment and climate change portfolio, UNDP aimed to promote sustainable, transparent, equitable and accountable management of natural resources by focusing on climate change adaptation,

³⁷ UNDP ATLAS, 26 February 2019.

building national capacities to improve the quality of degraded land, preserving and enhancing fragile ecosystems from desertification and land degradation, and promoting the best use of limited water resources. Its interventions in energy efficiency and renewable energy aimed at strengthening communities' coping capacities to climate variability and climate-related hazards through the introduction of clean energy technologies to improve energy efficiency, as well as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) phase-out; preservation of biodiversity; meeting the country's obligations vis-à-vis

international environmental conventions; disaster risk reduction (DRR) and integrating principles of sustainable natural resource use into policymaking, legislation and institutional reforms.

The country programme financial envelope includes nearly 87 percent non-core resources with the largest share from Uzbekistan's government cost-sharing and UNDP's own funds, followed by vertical funds (Global Fund, Adaptation Fund, Global Environment Facility). The country office also mobilized resources from USAID, the United Kingdom and the EU (see Figure 2).

FIGURE 1: Evolution of expenditure per thematic area (2016-2018)³⁸

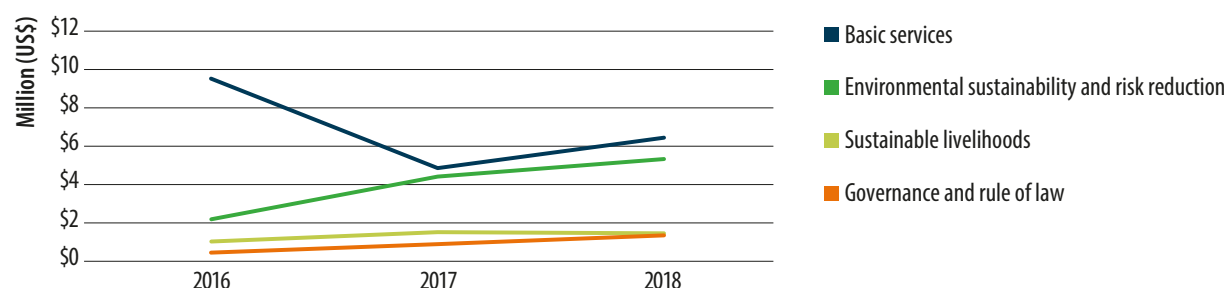
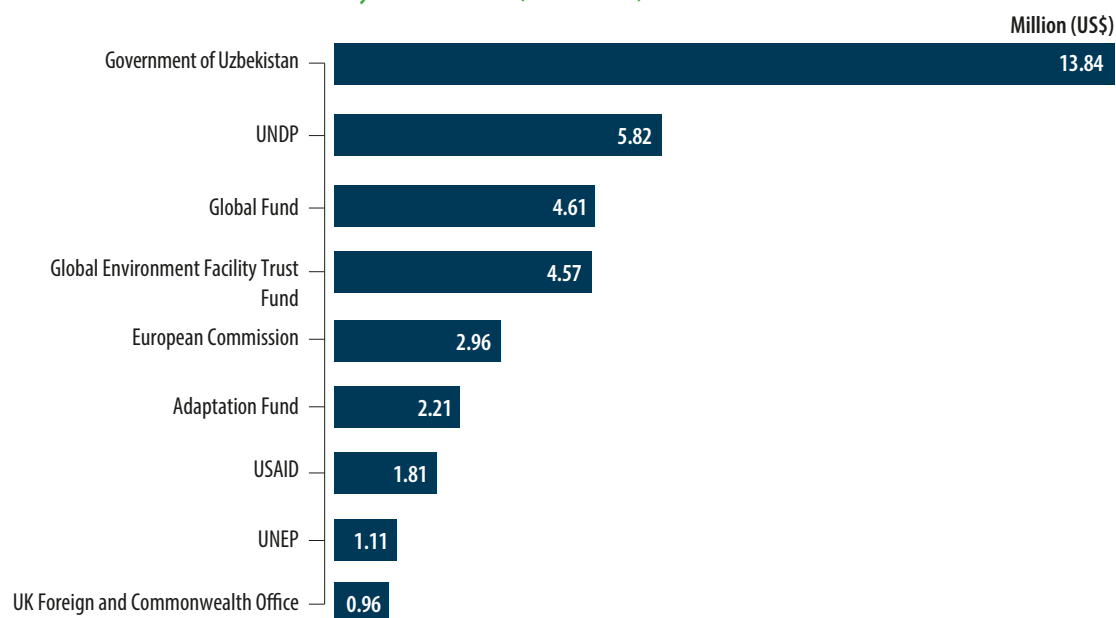


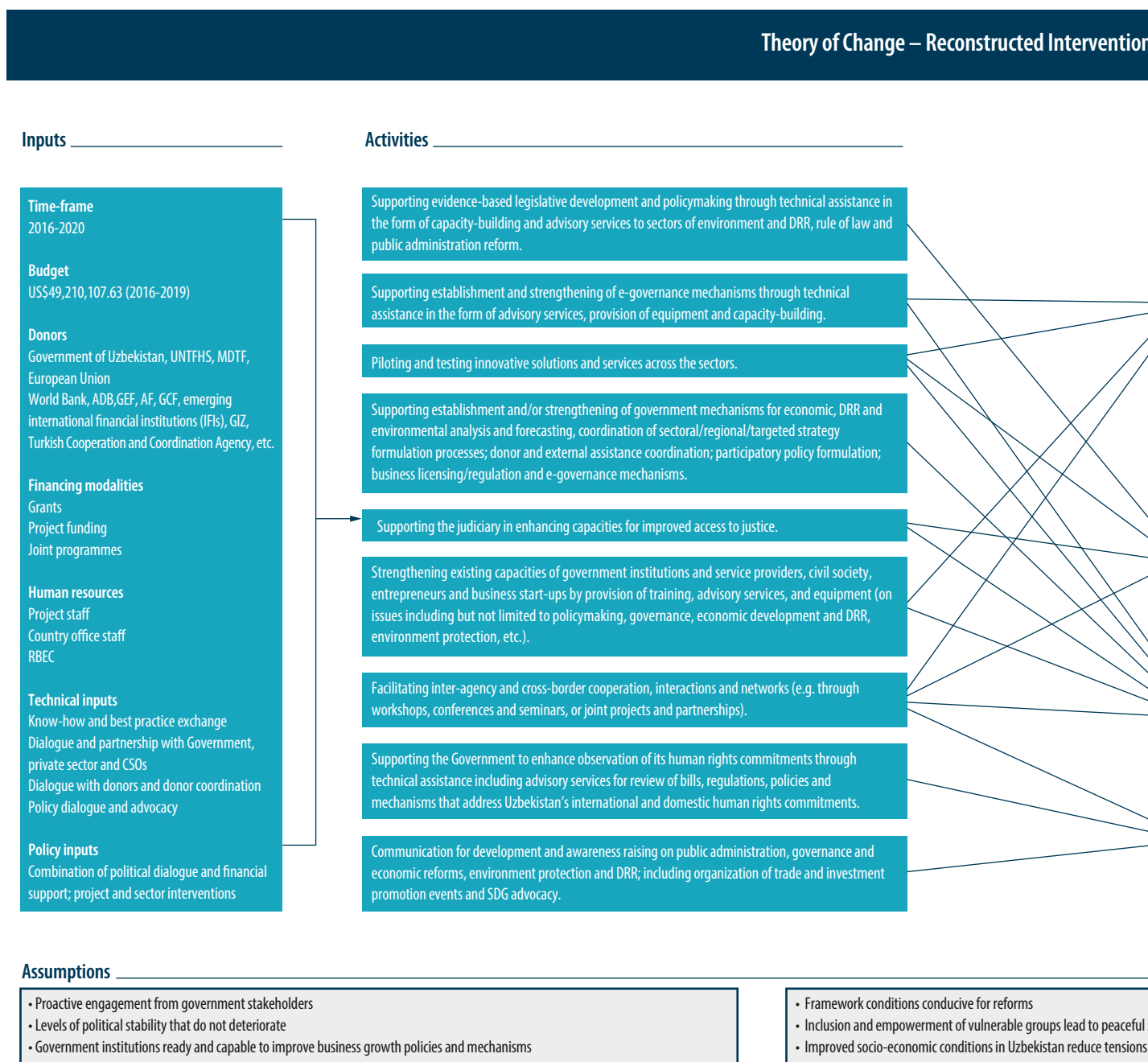
FIGURE 2: UNDP Uzbekistan - key contributors (2016-2018)³⁹



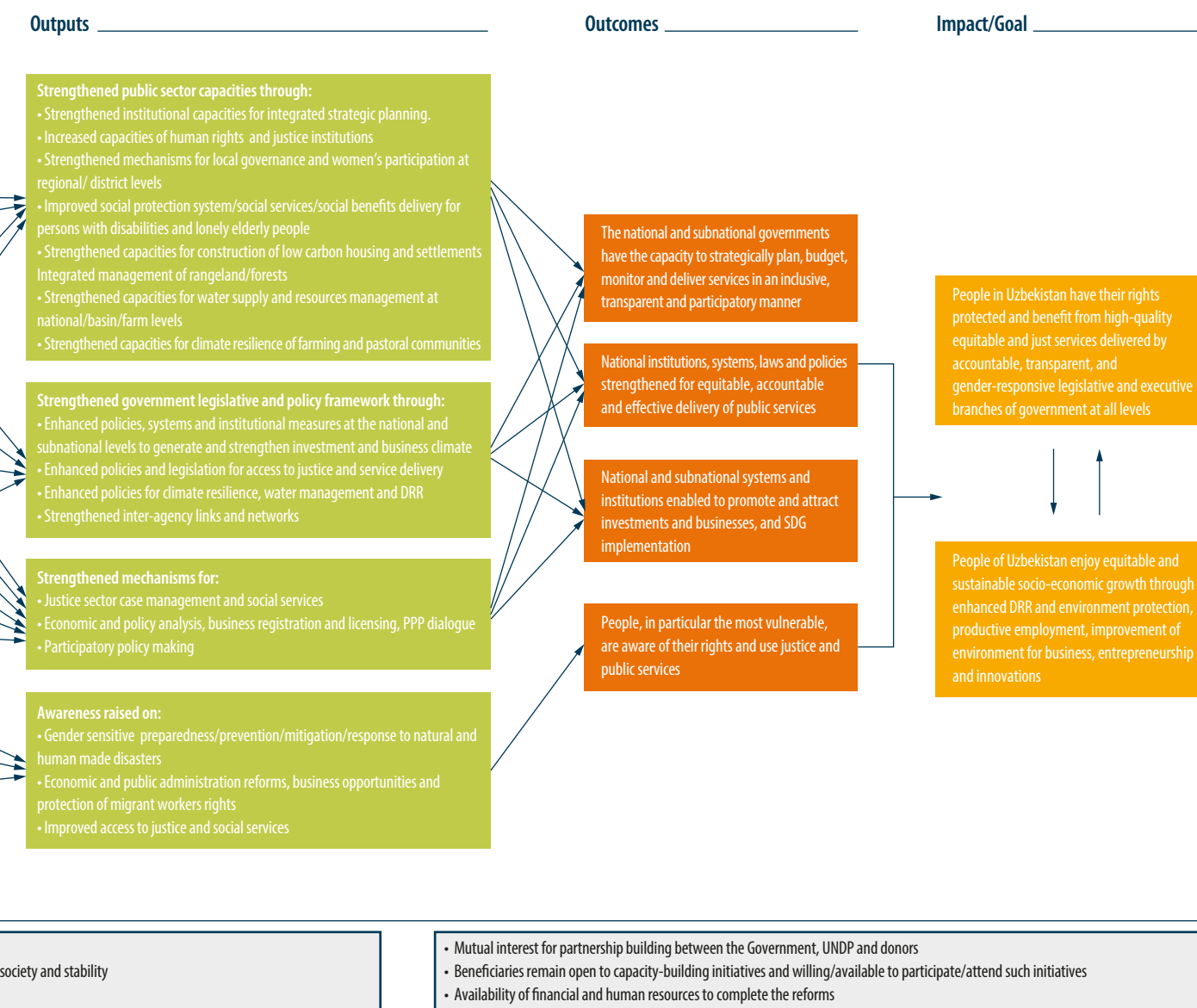
³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ UNDP ATLAS, February 2019.

FIGURE 3: Reconstructed theory of change – UNDP Uzbekistan country programme



Logic – UNDP Country Programme Uzbekistan





CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS

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

This chapter presents the evaluation's findings on 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 is based on an analysis of the reported project achievements, their contribution to expected outputs under each outcome, and consequently the overall outcome objectives.

2.1. Overall programme implementation

Finding 1: The presidential elections of 2016 brought sweeping changes in the country not only in the Government but also across society with new momentum for reform. UNDP strategically adapted its approach to respond to the emerging demands, thereby maintaining its strategic position and continued relevance as a trusted development partner.

The country programme implementation has been affected by two distinct periods of reforms in the country: the pre-2016 reforms in the socio-economic sphere and legislation but without deep reforms in human rights, governance and anti-corruption; and the post-2016 period, when the development context in Uzbekistan dramatically changed with the Presidential elections, creating new momentum for a broad range of reforms across almost all sectors, including those of UNDP focus.

The UNDP country programme for Uzbekistan (2016-2019) was designed prior to the shift in power and hence reflects a somewhat cautious approach, given the political realities and limited cooperation possibilities with the Government. At the same time, the CPD is broadly framed and inclusive of different themes, which allowed the country office to align its programmes quickly and move with the full pace of reform after the presidential elections in December 2016.

The governance and economic reforms in the country opened possibilities to address issues of human rights and anti-corruption, justice sector and public administration reform, as well as economic

diversification. In light of these reforms, various government institutions have approached UNDP to help resolve bottlenecks and to lead organizational change. UNDP has been responsive, taking up the challenge and working with government agencies. UNDP used the opportunity to align its areas of interventions with the five pillars of the Action Strategy on the Development of Uzbekistan in 2017-2021: spearheading the improvement of the system of state and public construction; ensuring the rule of law and further reforming the judicial system; economic development and liberalization; development of the social sphere, security, inter-ethnic harmony and religious tolerance; and implementation of a balanced, mutually beneficial and constructive foreign policy. UNDP has made direct contributions to the Government's decrees, resolutions, policies, among others, in the draft Law on Domestic Violence, the Citizen's Budget, Concept for Improvement of Law-making and Rule-making, and the Concept of Pension System Reform.

In some areas, such as rule of law, UNDP has provided relevant support, as reported by all interviewed interlocutors. However, interventions to support rule of law failed to target human rights or the development needs of vulnerable groups more strongly, as also noted in the rule of law evaluation report.⁴⁰ Human rights are still a grey area, but interlocutors emphasize that the window of opportunity exists, and UNDP is pursuing changes in the area with appropriate interventions, such as playing an advisory role in establishing and/or upgrading mechanisms for implementing UN and other international conventions and human rights standards. Examples include UNDP's work in support of the Ombudsperson's Office and UPR follow-up with NHRIs.

The reforms also put climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability on the Government's policy agenda. UNDP reprioritized its environment portfolio to focus on climate change adaptation, DRR and sustainable energy and has since been more active and successful in resource mobilization. UNDP/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

⁴⁰ Lees, Sean, 'Final evaluation of joint project of UNDP, USAID and Supreme Court of Uzbekistan Rule of Law Partnership in Uzbekistan', 2017.

funding from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) is an important milestone for the country to access climate funding. While the funding levels are not yet at par with the needs, UNDP's programme on climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmental sustainability is well aligned with the country's needs and national priorities. The focus of UNDP's portfolio in the rural agenda is explained by the government priorities at that time. There is a need to diversify it to address urban challenges as well.⁴¹

In conclusion, UNDP's response to the reforms has been highly relevant as the country programme made sure to consider and provide support to government needs, as reported by key government interlocutors. Although relevant, the dispersed nature of demands and interventions implemented by UNDP often makes it difficult to link the results and impact of UNDP interventions to the outcome targets identified in the CPD. While more analytical and advisory support to the Government on the pace and approach of reforms based on international best practices would have been ideal, this was limited to a large extent because UNDP was primarily seen as a service provider and less so as a strategic adviser.

Finding 2: The frequently changing government priorities and UNDP's consequent demand-driven nature have led to a fragmented and piecemeal programmatic approach, lacking a results focus based on a theory of change, and leading to silos within and between the CO portfolios. This compromises the achievement of outcomes as well as the sustainability of some of the structures and initiatives supported.

The country's political change makes it challenging to keep up and try to respond to ad hoc and somewhat erratic demands for technical assistance by the government partners. This demand-driven nature has resulted in a piecemeal approach with a weak programme theory. The country programme portfolio includes 48 projects, of which 38 are small initiatives of under \$1 million spread across a variety of themes. While the projects address many issues of relevance to country priorities, analysis shows fragmentation across

the portfolios. The topics broadly belong to thematic portfolios within which they have been placed. However, the actual contribution of specific interventions to the given outcome is not always so clear. For example, the positioning of the health portfolio within the broader public administration reform portfolio can be explained as an investment in the improvement of the health procurement system and its transparency and as such it is linked to the improvement of public services. However, direct linkages between health and the other interventions within the respective outcome are not elaborated anywhere in programme- and intervention-level documentation.

A very broad programme and a weak theory of change have inevitably led to fragmentation and silos in project implementation. New interventions and areas of support are being included erratically based on funding availability and government requests, without time to reflect if the activity contributes to or leverages on previous results. Internal linkages are not always clear and not explored, with little analysis of assumptions, risks and mitigation strategies. For example, the CPD does not present an overview of risks and their mitigation strategies. Silos are inevitable as teams do not have time for reflection to seek synergies and coherence in approaches due to time that is consumed by addressing needs and new requests of the Government. To overcome this, UNDP has set up focal points responsible for finding and developing synergies within and among portfolios. Interviews show that, to some extent, this has helped to ensure internal coherence within portfolios, but a lot more needs to be done.

Although examples of cross-sectional projects and linkages are found across all portfolios, these linkages are not always clear. Positive examples may be found across interventions in the Aral Sea region, where there are good examples of synergies between the governance of natural resources, economic development and human development. Projects within the environment portfolio also present complementarities, both in terms of design and implementation, but these interconnections are not always well articulated. Weaknesses

⁴¹ UNESCAP/UNDP/CER, 'Improving City Infrastructure Management in Uzbekistan: Problems and Search for New Mechanisms and Instruments', 2011; and UNESCAP/UNDP/CER, 'Urbanization in Central Asia: Challenges, Issues and Prospects', 2013.

are found in cross-outcome synergies, for example, in terms of environmental monitoring data accessibility, human rights-based approaches to natural resources management and rule of law in environmental protection. Limited funding for topics which were not a priority of the Government before the political change (e.g. human rights, anti-corruption), as well as government funding cycles emerged as a reason for this weakness. Another constraint found was the availability of funds to support the reform process more comprehensively. Before the political change, UNDP had already programmed core funds for ongoing interventions. This created a huge gap in terms of seed funding for new initiatives resulting from the reform momentum despite the high demand for UNDP services from the Government and the slow entry of international donors into the country.

The demand-driven nature showed its consequences on the human and financial resources in the office, with a threat of spreading too thin. It placed a strain on the teams to deliver while making sure to follow changing government priorities and directions. This added to the other hindering factors elaborated above, resulting in suboptimal achievement of outcomes set out in the country programme.

The sustainability of UNDP efforts varies due to a few factors, including political and capacity-related challenges within the government institutions, but also because of weak interlinkages between interventions within UNDP. The external factors, such as the political and capacity limitations, are mostly outside UNDP's control, but analysis of sustainability factors reconfirms weaknesses in realistic goal setting and absence of a theory of change for interventions. As a result, many initiatives have had weak or no sustainability prospects (e.g. the labour migration interventions; pilot shelters for victims of violence; business facilitation centres for public service delivery).

Finding 3: Results-based management (RBM) is weakened by generally defined objectives and weak indicators across the CPD and projects. Monitoring is conducted as an integral part of the management practices, but mostly at the activities and output level. The country office commissions external evaluations at project and CP outcome levels, but the quality rating of these reports is rather low.

Reviewed CPD and intervention-level documentation show weaknesses in terms of RBM. Across programming documents, and in particular, in the CPD, outcome definitions are very general, allowing freedom to programme a diverse set of interventions. As an illustration, outcomes 7 and 8 deal with four distinctive topics, i.e. public administration, legislative drafting, justice sector reform and basic services. However, the linkage between outputs, outcomes, and CPD goals is not entirely clear, while the grouping of these topics under each outcome does not present a comprehensive picture. For example, outcome 8 combines justice and legislative drafting, the latter much more interlinked with interventions taking place within the public administration reform agenda. UNDP's support to basic services has been delinked from other outcomes and is a stand-alone package, though interventions relating to the procurement of medical equipment directly relate to this outcome. From the perspective of the Government's reform initiatives, the programme theory works slightly better than if assessed from the point of the political context prior to the change in government.

Indicators are rather ambitious. For example, the indicator "availability of unified national system of civil service (merit-based system for appointment/promotion/performance evaluation) to serve public interest" is, even in the current context of fast-paced reform, very ambitious, particularly taking into account the status of public administration and the projects implemented by UNDP. At the output level, indicators are better defined, and each indicator has established baselines and targets.

The country office does not have a full-time monitoring and evaluation (M&E) position. These responsibilities are distributed across the programme teams/clusters with a focal point responsible for M&E. The responsible focal points have benefited from training on gender-sensitive M&E by the Istanbul Regional Hub. The CO team has also benefited from an RBM training in 2017 on UNDAF results monitoring, reporting and evaluation. However, the focus continues to be at activity- and output-level monitoring and reporting and challenges remain in establishing linkages between project outputs (within and across portfolios) and outcome-level results. During the current country programme, monitoring efforts

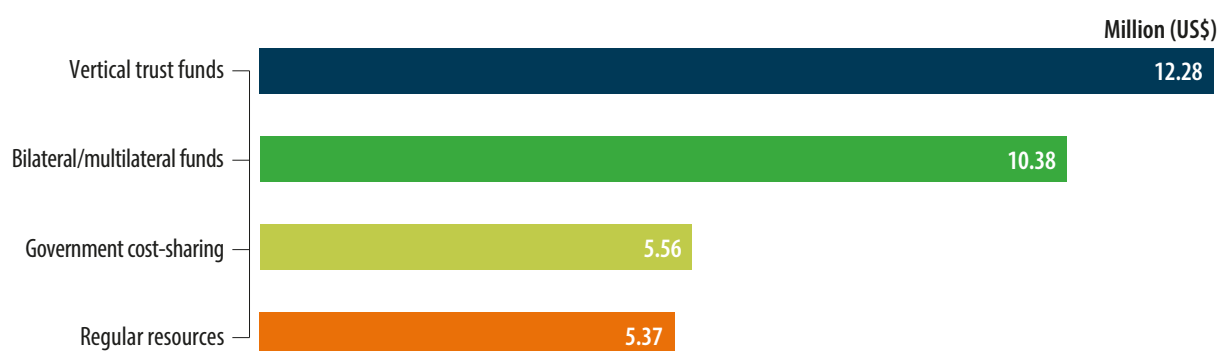
have resulted in the availability of a consistent evidence base on the achievement of output-level results, but seldom at the outcome level. A challenge that affects M&E processes, confirmed through document review and stakeholder interviews, is the availability of reliable government statistics.

The country office conducts evaluations of its interventions across the different sectors as well, especially the larger projects. During the review period, the country office completed 14 decentralized evaluations, seven of which were rated moderately satisfactory and four moderately unsatisfactory by the IEO's quality assurance mechanism.⁴² Quality assessment for three evaluation was not done. These ratings point to quality gaps in evaluations and a weakness in the present approach to designing, commissioning and oversight of the evaluation process.

Finding 4: The changing donor landscape, reduction in UNDP core resources and the over-reliance on vertical funds pose a risk to the financial stability of the country office unless UNDP strengthens its value proposition and diversifies its funding base.

The delivery of results by the country office has been somewhat constrained by the reduction in TRAC (Target for Resource Assignments from the Core) resources, particularly in light of the changing national context following the political change. The core funds for this programme cycle were already programmed and allocated before the political change, making it difficult to change and adapt to the changing needs of the Government post-2017. The country office relies heavily on vertical funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Global Fund (Figure 4) due to lack of diversified donor base and funding sources, mainly due to limited donor presence but also to some extent due to limitations of the UNDP resource mobilization strategy. The Global Fund has been traditionally an important source of funding together with TRAC funds (Figure 2) making a comfortable situation for the country office in the previous country programme cycle. However, the current country programme has been characterized by multiple challenges linked to Uzbekistan's lower-middle-income-country status, which has led to reductions in core resources of UNDP.

FIGURE 4: Total expenditure by fund category (2016-2018)



⁴² The IEO quality assessment ranks evaluation on a six-point scale – highly satisfactory (6), satisfactory (5), moderately satisfactory (4), moderately unsatisfactory (3), unsatisfactory (2), and highly unsatisfactory (1).

At the time of the evaluation, the donor community was still small in the country (see section 1.6), though with prospects for a sharp increase, particularly with the big IFIs like World Bank planning to establish its operations in the country. The changing government circumstances and the opening up of the country to reforms show positive prospects for increasing donor space, though this may work both for and against UNDP's strategic priorities. As many development partners come in with their own projects or their preferred implementing agencies, this might pose a threat for UNDP. The country's recent opening to international cooperation has enabled bilateral donors to work with the Government directly, which created a shrinking space and challenges for UNDP to secure funds. While UNDP has made some efforts to diversify its funding sources with new donors such as UNDP-Russia Trust Fund, UNDP Funding Windows, and the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, these funds constitute just about 3 percent of its budget. There is a need for UNDP to strengthen its value proposition within the changing donor dynamics in the country and produce a strong resource mobilization strategy.

The rapid entry of a variety of development partners, but also the unpredictability of government plans and programmes, represents another threat. There is a potential risk of overlaps among development partners, which may hinder the success of support to the government agenda, particularly since 2017. There is also weak donor coordination, particularly in the areas of governance, justice, human rights and anti-corruption. In response, UNDP has organized regular donor coordination meetings to ensure synergies and avoid overlaps between different projects, but cooperation is hindered by the unwillingness of partners to participate and share information.

Finding 5: UNDP has been successful in working closely with UN agencies and development partners on issues of strategic importance requiring a coordinated response. However, at the project level, implementation happens in silos with each

UN agency working on its own portfolio with little synergy across portfolios, making it difficult to reflect on the cumulative results and limiting the catalytic effects of the support.

Though coordination among UN agencies shows weaknesses in ensuring exchange of information, coherence and synergies, particularly with multidimensional areas of support (women, DRR, etc.), sometimes joint UN interventions have brought results. Examples include joint work on the SDGs and the support to the Aral Sea region. Within the support to SDG nationalization, UNDP has worked closely with the World Bank and several UN agencies (UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), World Health Organization, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). World Bank and UNDP conducted the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) mission together in 2018, which resulted in a draft resolution on the adaptation of the SDGs. The resolution was submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers and adopted in October 2018.

Another example is the UN Joint Programme for the Aral Sea Region implemented by UNDP, UNESCO, UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Volunteers. This flagship UN project aimed to address multiple human insecurities in the region through a joint approach to tackle social, economic, health and environmental consequences of the Aral Sea disaster.⁴³ This ICPE confirmed the positive findings of the project-level evaluation⁴⁴ on the effects of the interventions in improving livelihoods in the region. Still, the ICPE found evidence of silos and stovepiping within the project, with each UN agency working on its own portfolio with little coordination and synergies across portfolios. The problem is compounded by the individual upstream implementation, monitoring and reporting of each agency for their own portfolio, which makes it difficult to collectively reflect on cumulative results and impact of the joint programme.

Successful coordination was also recorded regarding the GCF funding which UNDP and UNEP secured

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ Ballamy and Usupova, 'Mid-Term Evaluation of UN Joint Programme "Building the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster through a Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region"', 2018.

jointly for the GCF Readiness Project, easing access to climate financing. Similar robust collaboration existed between UNDP and UNESCO on the technical capacity-building component of the EU Programme on Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Rural Areas in Uzbekistan to enhance capacities of national experts in charge of training provision related to water resources management.

UNDP has also been successful in forging collaboration with other development partners. It partnered with the Red Crescent Society of Uzbekistan on raising awareness on DRR; with the Islamic Development Bank on capacity-building within the framework of the ongoing national programme on construction of affordable rural housing; with Israel International Cooperation Agency for training agriculture specialists and local farmers on advanced and effective methods of irrigation by Israeli experts; and with national think tanks on policy research, like the Centre for Economic Research. The task force led by UNDP also assisted in the drafting of the law on violence against women and on equal rights of women and men. UNDP has also promoted partnerships in the country, especially between the academia and the local governments, communities/ community groups and the government structures.

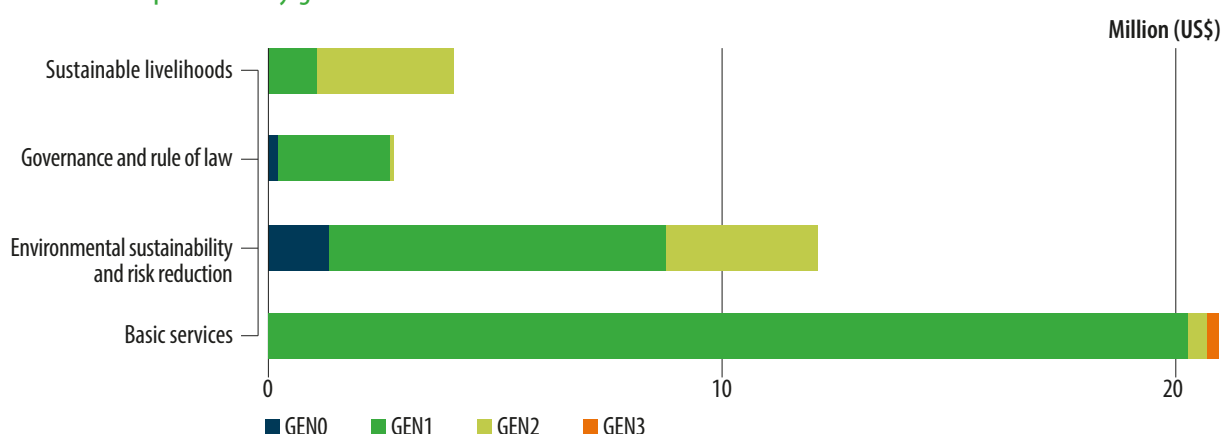
With the delinking between UNDP and the Resident Coordinator (RC) system, the mandate for

strengthening UN inter-agency cooperation and coordination has shifted to the RC. Interviewed stakeholders see this as a new dynamic for inter-agency cooperation that has the potential to strengthen collaboration, although it is too early to see the actual results of this change.

Finding 6: Despite the weak gender marker ratings of projects, the country office has made considerable efforts to promote women's rights and women empowerment which have the potential to bring transformative change in the long term.

Measured by project gender marker ratings, the level of gender mainstreaming across the programme portfolio looks rather bleak. Most projects, 33 out of 48, have gender marker 0 (5 projects) or 1 (28 projects); 14 projects have GEN2 rating and only one project has GEN3 rating. Analysis showed that many of the GEN2 projects should realistically be awarded GEN1 rating as they do not go deeper into the gender dimension than ensuring that M&E efforts include gender-disaggregated data or that women are engaging in some activities. However, despite the weak gender markers, UNDP has invested efforts to integrate women's rights and empowerment issues across its country programme interventions and made some notable contributions in promoting gender equity and women's empowerment.

FIGURE 5: Expenditure by gender marker and thematic area



Source: UNDP ATLAS, Feb. 2019

UNDP has ensured that the main gender principles and standards are advocated in interventions to support legislative policymaking, most notable being UNDP's and other UN agencies' direct contribution in setting the age of marriage at 18 years through legislation. Another notable contribution was towards increasing women's access to justice, through mechanisms such as the Free Legal Aid (FLA) or the E-SUD national electronic case management system (see more in section 2.5).

The evaluation found that projects whose outputs have strong potential for transformative effect for women are those dealing with local and regional development and reforms, where direct access to women and to the services that may empower them are supported.⁴⁵ One example is the Rule of Law project, which was under implementation since 2014 and assigned the GEN1 marker. In essence, this project has very little in terms of linkages to gender in its presentation, focusing primarily on access to justice through the transformation of (civic) courts and strengthening other justice sector mechanisms (e.g. the use of the E-SUD (e-court) system) across multiple inter-district courts, the development of new training standards and institutions, and the employment of technical expertise to influence reform policies and legislation, as well as and the FLA. Nevertheless, the evaluation found that the project, through its transformation of civic courts and E-SUD system, has opened up opportunities for women, particularly from rural areas, to benefit from the system, for example, in cases of filing alimony, access to land rights, or other petitions for the civic court. While the evaluation could not verify the results due to time constraints, data collected through document review and during stakeholder interviews show that these contributions have a high potential for transformative effects on women and

their empowerment, particularly given the context and ingrained negative social norms surrounding women accessing rights, as also noted in the Rule of Law Partnership project evaluation.⁴⁶ Key informants did, however, confirm that the project had brought catalytic effects on women, which were not initially analysed and expected when the project was set up.

Another positive example is the Aral Sea response, which did not include a gender strategy in its design. However, some of its actual interventions have the potential to affect positively the lives of women in the targeted areas, through their empowerment for entrepreneurship and income-generation activities, and by taking a more active role in the farmers' associations and local decision-making processes. Further, the project empowers women, particularly in rural areas, through building their skills, access and resilience to socio-economic challenges, as also confirmed by project-specific evaluations.⁴⁷ The project also focuses on raising awareness and sensitization of local authorities, farmers associations and other local and regional institutions on the importance of gender mainstreaming.

The Empowering Women to Participate in Public Administration and Socio-Economic Life project, implemented in partnership with the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan,⁴⁸ has significant prospects for strengthening the legislative framework for women's empowerment (e.g. the law on guaranteeing equal rights to men and women and the law on prevention of domestic violence/harassment and violence, both of which were adopted in September 2019). This partnership also resulted in a study on women participation in public administration, which identifies the participation of women in different spheres in order to benchmark and define future priorities as well as advocate for 30 percent

⁴⁵ The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale is used to classify gender results into five groups: (i) result had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced existing gender inequalities and norms ('gender negative'); (ii) result had no attention to gender, 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.

⁴⁶ Lees, Sean, 'Final evaluation of joint project of UNDP, USAID and Supreme Court of Uzbekistan Rule of Law Partnership in Uzbekistan', 2017.

⁴⁷ Bellamy and Yusupova, 'Mid-Term Evaluation of the UN Joint Programme "Building the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster through a Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region"', 2018; and Toritsyn, Arkadi and Yusupov, Yuliy, 'Final Evaluation of UN Joint Programme "Sustaining Livelihood Affected by Aral Sea Disaster"', UNCT Uzbekistan, 2015.

⁴⁸ Women's Committee of Uzbekistan is a government agency that coordinates women's affairs, focuses on assistance to women in the context of strengthening the institution of the family as well as providing support and assistance to women in different fields, such as entrepreneurship, health care, education, culture, etc.

women representation in Parliament.⁴⁹ Ahead of the parliamentary elections in 2019, UNDP and the Women's Committee worked intensively to improve the voting culture of women and understanding of rights through awareness-raising activities, working directly with women aspiring to take a more active political role. According to UNDP records, out of 6,000 women initially identified, 1,400 participated in project activities, of which 300 have received positions across the Government. UNDP records and interviews with key informants from UNDP and the State Committee also suggest women participants have engaged more intensively in political parties and local affairs. The ICPE could not verify these results since triangulation with other sources could not be completed due to time limitations.

UNDP, the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan and the State Statistics Committee have also started the data compilation on CEDAW indicators for collecting gender-disaggregated statistics in the country in line with UN gender indicators. This includes an update of the official website,⁵⁰ which now has gender-disaggregated statistics as well as the UN Minimum Gender Indicators. Also, across its interventions within public administration reform, UNDP managed to bring gender into the agenda, with the Government now exploring ways of addressing gender issues in public administration.

Across the environment and climate change portfolio, there is evidence of gender mainstreaming in relation to the new energy-efficient rural housing stock. UNDP provided recommendations to the local authorities on improving the existing decision-making process on selecting energy-efficient and low-carbon housing designs and their allocation. While examples of gender mainstreaming in policies, laws and strategies are rare under this portfolio, there are several examples of women's

targeted engagement in project activities often as part of pilots. For example: (a) female-focused community groups were established to implement landscape-level adaptation measures in two pilot districts through local employment programmes to enhance the environment and social benefits as well as their greater resilience to climate change;⁵¹ (b) a number of on-the-ground initiatives were implemented to promote resource-efficient agricultural practices, with women trained on the use of potassium geohumate (organic fertilizer) on their household plots to improve soil structure, and increase the water-holding capacity of lands;⁵² (c) water-saving practices (drip and sprinkler irrigation as an example) were introduced in communities with women constituting around 40 percent of the beneficiaries;⁵³ and (d) 12 local small businesses were established providing women alternative livelihoods to reduce pressures on natural resources from competing land use in non-irrigated arid mountain, semi-desert and desert landscapes.⁵⁴

The UNDP country office seems to take gender mainstreaming more resolutely as well in its internal processes. Because the UNDP workforce gender ratio was 70/30 in favour of male personnel,⁵⁵ the country office adopted the Gender Recruitment Strategy 2018-2020 and Women's Empowerment Programme with the aim to improve gender recruitment and empower women within its ranks. At the time of the ICPE, there was no conclusive evidence on the progress of the strategy and its outcomes.

Another measure taken by the country office was to establish the Gender Equality Assurance Team, composed of focal points from all programme and operations clusters and selected project specialists, to support the process of gender mainstreaming throughout programmes and operations and in UN joint programming. The evaluation found that the Gender Equality Assurance Team's interventions

⁴⁹ As per data collected within the evaluation process, women representation is 16 percent in Parliament; 17 percent in the Senate and 23 percent at the local level (deputies in the councils).

⁵⁰ <https://gender.stat.uz/ru>.

⁵¹ ROAR 2018, p.13; through the Developing Climate Resilience project.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ UNDP Uzbekistan, 'Progress report for 2018: Reducing pressures on natural resources from competing land use in non-irrigated arid mountain, semi-desert and desert landscapes of Uzbekistan', 2018, p.3; Through Integrated Landscape Management project.

⁵⁵ UNDP, Gender Recruitment Strategy for UNDP Uzbekistan, 2018, p.2.

are directed to helping improve the integration and enhancement of the gender dimension in its interventions. Outputs and outcomes of these efforts are yet to materialize.

Finding 7: South-South cooperation facilitated by UNDP to support the exchange of global and regional experience and best practices is highly valued by the stakeholders. However, these exchanges are predominantly one-time events rather than longer term institutional exchanges which would lead to the strengthening of the country's capacities by engaging with other countries. This approach limits their utility and effectiveness.

UNDP has utilized its international network to support global exchanges of experience and exposure to best practices from other countries across all country programme portfolios, particularly within human rights, governance and climate change and environment. Examples include the Asian Forum on Human Rights in Samarkand, Uzbekistan (2018), facilitated by UNDP as a platform for representatives of the three branches of government, civil society, NHRIs and development partners active in the region to reaffirm their commitment to ensuring human rights for all. As confirmed through interviews, the forum was a strong game-changer for both the Government and civil society and development partners, particularly in light of the fact that human rights were an extremely sensitive topic during the previous political establishment.

Besides this high-level event, UNDP supported a number of events that brought together regional partners to discuss issues relating to women entrepreneurship, trade facilitation, open government and e-services or public administration and civil service reform. This includes a number of regional exchanges and training between the Academies of Public Administration of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to share knowledge on civil service reforms through the Astana Regional Civil Services Hub; regional training on quality assurance for sustainable trade facilitation engaging experts from Kyrgyzstan

and Tajikistan within the Aid for Trade project; cooperation with Singapore and South Korea on issues of anti-corruption resulting in study tours and also mobilizing South Korean funding for a study visit to the United Kingdom to exchange experiences about e-governance (Go UK project); and training to study experiences on customs regulation of the European Union based on the Hungarian example. This evaluation could not establish direct outcomes of these endeavours.

Participation at the IX International Conference on Energy-Efficient Buildings of XXI Century in Minsk, Belarus (June 2018), in the 9th International Forum On Energy for Sustainable Development in Kiev, Ukraine, on 12-15 November 2018 and at the 10th Anniversary of the 'Day of Energy Saving in Kazakhstan' in Astana, Kazakhstan (November 2018, co-organized by the Government of Kazakhstan and UNDP in Kazakhstan) facilitated the sharing of innovative approaches to scale up national and international investments in energy-efficient rural housing through green mortgage scheme in Uzbekistan.⁵⁶ In addition, UNDP Uzbekistan's experience in promotion of green energy best practices in the Aral Sea region, including on the establishment of the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund (MPHSTF) for the Aral Sea, was shared during the International Workshop on Perspectives of Green Energy Development in Aral Sea Basin (November 2018); the Forum on Strengthening Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development (June 2018); and the International Conference on Aral Sea: Joint Actions to Mitigate the Consequences of the Aral Sea Catastrophe: new approaches, innovative solutions, investments (October 2018).⁵⁷

In other instances, UNDP supported an Uzbek delegation to the People's Republic of China in 2018, where participants learned about China's experience in introducing water-saving systems in cotton production through meetings with manufacturers, investors and representatives of research centres and the Xinjiang Institute of the Academy of Sciences of China. A Chinese team paid a reciprocal visit to discuss

⁵⁶ ROAR 2018, p.11.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.9.

joint research on water management in arid regions and the introduction of water-saving technologies.⁵⁸ In addition, 10 members of the Inter-agency Working Group under the GCF Readiness Programme learned about effective approaches in accessing climate finance in Belarus in 2017;⁵⁹ and 13 staff members from seven environmental agencies learned about effective approaches in establishing a smart patrol system in target protected areas in Bhutan (2018)⁶⁰ and Kyrgyzstan (2018).⁶¹

In conclusion, evidence shows that most of these events and exchanges are one-off and do not bring forward deeper cooperation between countries or institutions on issues of focus. Such exchanges of experience in most cases are not developed systematically within an institutionalized context or follow-up, which diminishes their transformative effect beyond the increase of knowledge and exposure of engaged individuals. The evaluation could not find evidence of any substantial change that has resulted from these events/exchanges.

2.2. Sustainable livelihoods

Outcome 1: By 2020, equitable and sustainable economic growth through productive employment, improvement of environment for business, entrepreneurship and innovations expanded for all.

Finding 8: UNDP has made significant contributions towards enhancement of the Government's structures to support sustainable and equitable economic growth. UNDP strengthened the analytical system for the SDGs; contributed to the improvement of the business climate; and most importantly, built the foundations for a coherent response to the Aral

Sea disaster. It was partly effective in promoting exports and foreign direct investment, while little progress was made with regard to the rights of labour migrants. A fragmented approach and a lack of consolidation of the portfolio against a coherent theory of change have limited the catalytic effects of interventions and their sustainability.

UNDP's engagement within the economic growth area has been broad and included a range of interventions and initiatives, some of which were also regional like the Preventing Violent Extremism initiative. Most of the initiatives have been extremely relevant for the Government, especially after the political changes, when the Government took intensive efforts to open up and invest in its international profile, including work towards improving its Doing Business (DB) ranking, and attracting foreign investments. Uzbekistan managed to significantly improve its DB ranking from 87th position in 2016 to 76th position among 190 countries in 2018⁶² and further to 69th position in 2019⁶³ through policy and programme improvements. These enhancements included those supported by UNDP, such as the simplification of business registration procedures, single windows (i.e. one-stop-shop for business registration) that transformed into Public Service Centres, and assistance to the Supreme Court to develop and adopt a Law on Mediation in January 2019, creating alternative ways of settling disputes and reducing the burden on the Uzbek judicial system. The most important achievement was the improvement in time-efficiency of business registration, from some 20 days to around 30 minutes through an online system, a process business owners can complete from home. In this key DB indicator, Uzbekistan climbed to 8th position from as low as 40th.

The Doing Business report of the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation provided a low

⁵⁸ Minutes of the Third Meeting of the National Coordination Board of the Programme of the European Union, UNDP and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Ministry of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan), 'Sustainable Management of Water Resources in Rural Areas in Uzbekistan: Technical Capacity Building (Component 2)', 29 November 2018, p.4.

⁵⁹ UNDP Uzbekistan, 'Decision of the Second Project Board meeting of the project "Sustainable natural resource use and forest management in key mountainous areas important for globally significant biodiversity"', 2018, p.3.

⁶⁰ ROAR, 2017, p.33.

⁶¹ ROAR, 2018, p.45.

⁶² <https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/u/uzbekistan/UZB.pdf>.

⁶³ <https://tradingeconomics.com/uzbekistan/ease-of-doing-business>.

ranking to Uzbekistan in DB's Contract Enforcement sub-index in 2018. In response, the Government adopted a road map to improve the indicators of DB, resulting in increasing ranking to 22nd position in 2019. UNDP supported the Government by researching the experiences of top-performer countries in this sub-index. The goal was to identify the improvements those countries had undertaken, while also supporting Uzbekistan's Supreme Court in introducing interactive tools (publication of de-personalized court decisions, new Supreme Court website, blind case distribution, etc.) within the e-justice systems essential to improving Uzbekistan's ranking in this sub-index. UNDP's work with the Supreme Court has brought these measures into operation with positive feedback from citizens on improved transparency, as noted by key evaluation informants.

UNDP also supported the piloting of Public Service Centres, a one-stop-shop for documentation processing by the local administration. These were then replicated and significantly increased the efficiency of the work of the public administration and of businesses. Although they started as one-stop-shops for businesses, the Government mandated the expansion of their services to reach individual residents (e.g. for driving licences). According to UNDP, 55 services have been established and another 120 are under construction.

Another noteworthy UNDP contribution was the establishment of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) for the Aral Sea. UNDP used its convening power to set up and implement a joint UN project in response to the Aral Sea disaster, advocate and engage the Government and other donors in a coherent response. This model has the potential to be replicated in other sectors and be exported to other countries through South-South cooperation, if adequately documented and disseminated.

An area in which UNDP made little progress is advocacy on the rights of labour migrants. Although there are significant challenges to inclusivity and productive capacities in the country as recognized in the CPD, UNDP has not adequately addressed this issue and no major interventions were either planned or implemented. This was primarily due to lack of

funds but also lack of willingness by the Government to engage on this front. One notable contribution is the study of the labour market and unemployment issues in Uzbekistan completed in 2018, which has a separate section on labour migration. The study provided relevant analysis of labour market issues, but the evaluation could not find evidence that it made clear direct contributions to further policy efforts.

Some projects have targeted labour migration and women entrepreneurship on a smaller scale. This includes the initiative on building the resilience of communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster through a MPHSTF, which, according to project records, trained 45 rural women on business development and made connections with local banks to facilitate loans, and created 20 jobs with the assistance of the UN joint programme. UNDP also conducted some research work in 2017 on the barriers to women's entrepreneurship and labour market participation rate for women and men, as part of the Human Development Indices and Indicators report in 2018. UNDP used the study for its advocacy efforts, according to the interviews.

Across its portfolio, the added value of UNDP lies in its actual capacity to convene various stakeholders around the same goal and bring credibility and expertise into the processes, drawing on its international network and resources. UNDP combines the convener role with capacity development activities for the Government and other sectors (e.g. Chamber of Commerce), research and advocacy.

From a variety of interventions detailed above, however, a certain level of fragmentation of the assistance is visible due to the demand-driven nature of this portfolio. The most important UNDP limitation is the lack of consolidation and niche in this area. UNDP seems to aspire to do a little of everything across the sector, which scatters the assistance and dilutes the catalytic effects. Its achievements are rather fragmented and isolated, albeit bringing positive output-level results (mainly). This is due to a lack of an elaborate theory of change founded on close analysis and reflection of what the end-goal of development intervention is and how to reach it through consolidation of outputs that can transform into viable outcomes leading to the ultimate goal.

This fragmentation directly affects sustainability, which is still fragile given the unpredictable political context in the country and the level of commitment for uptake at the national level.

Finding 9: UNDP has laid a strong foundation for the integration of the Agenda 2030 and localization of the SDGs in Uzbekistan. UNDP support resulted in the adoption of a government resolution on the implementation of national SDGs up to 2030 and the integration of the SDGs into the national development agenda, as well as the development of a comprehensive framework for data collection and monitoring. Work still needs to be done to ensure the system for monitoring and analysis of the SDGs is in place and utilized.

UNDP used its strategic position to convene the Government, civil society and the private sector as well as development partners in the promotion of the SDG agenda. UNDP played an important role in supporting the mapping of global SDGs against national priorities spearheading three out of six results groups from the UN side and leading the UN-World Bank MAPS mission in April 2018. It supported the review of the existing national programmes and action strategy 2017-2021 against the global SDGs towards streamlining the SDGs in the national development agenda, while at the same time raising awareness and understanding of the SDGs among national stakeholders. This process resulted in a detailed agenda for SDG nationalization and a roadmap on furthering cooperation between the UN and Uzbekistan on the SDGs approved in 2017. The process of review and optimization of the nationally proposed SDG indicators resulted in a significant reduction of national SDG indicators and the adoption of the Government Resolution on implementation of national SDGs up to 2030 that established 16 national SDGs and 125 targets in 2018 with clear oversight and monitoring mechanisms.

Support to the national SDG web portal and accompanying training to the Statistics Committee

was an important input in supporting the Government in the monitoring of the SDGs in Uzbekistan. Its beta version was launched in March 2018. Yet, work still needs to be done to ensure the system for monitoring and analysis of SDGs is actually used and effective. UNDP is working on continued advocacy for its further optimization.

Finding 10: In cooperation with other UN agencies, UNDP has made a significant contribution to the establishment of the integrated multisector and multilevel approach to mitigate human security risks for communities affected by the Aral Sea disaster.

In response to the Aral Sea disaster,⁶⁴ UN agencies initiated a joint project to promote a multidimensional human security approach at the local and national level to address economic, food, social, health insecurities of the population, as well as increasing quality of public service delivery and ensuring gender equality. The multidimensional approach was developed in response to the fragmented response by the Government and donors and duplications of efforts. UNDP, along with other UN agencies, has been vocal in raising the issues of a coordinated and coherent response to the disaster and supporting the Government to adopt an integrated approach through the Inter-Agency Government Working Group.

These efforts resulted in the MPHSTF, which was launched in a high-level side event to 73rd session of UN General Assembly on 27 November 2018. Following a comprehensive needs assessment, it marked an important milestone in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable region of Uzbekistan. UNDP led the process, which also involved UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNODC as participating UN agencies and UN MPTF office as an administrative agent. At the time of the evaluation, the Government of Uzbekistan announced an allocation of \$6.5 million while the Government of Norway pledged \$1.2 million. Other donors, such as Coca-Cola and Swiss Development Cooperation, with \$6 million each, are also part of the Fund. Through support to the MDTF set-up, UNDP

⁶⁴ The Aral Sea region is the most vulnerable and deprived region of Uzbekistan, due to the disappearing Aral Sea, which has caused a complex range of human, environmental, socio-economic and demographic problems in the adjacent areas. The drying-up of the Aral Sea, largely as a consequence of highly inefficient agricultural and irrigation practices, has had a devastating effect on the human security of the Karakalpakstan region (in proximity to the Aral Sea) residents and has affected almost all areas of life in the region.

and partners managed to leverage \$6 million with a \$2 million investment. At the time of the ICPE, donors such as the European Union, Canada and Germany were also considering investing in the MDTF. This coordinated approach is expected to ensure synergies and avoid duplication of efforts.

Finding 11: UNDP has promoted public-private partnerships and exports/foreign direct investment within efforts to improve the business climate. However, due to the demand-driven nature of support, these efforts are often ad hoc without a clear strategy and lead to fragile results due to the unpredictability of reform processes and overall business environment. UNDP could have done more to ensure sustainability, particularly through a stronger and more coherent theory of change within the outcome and an elaborated risk assessment across the portfolio.

UNDP contributed to public-private policy dialogues and improvement of business climate through activities and interventions including research studies, surveys, technical assistance to the Government in developing national and regional strategies and direct project implementation. Across the portfolio, UNDP has invested efforts to improve the evidence base on various issues pertaining to the improvement of the business climate and economic growth, either directly or commissioning studies and analytical reports to think tanks.⁶⁵ These studies have been particularly useful in providing policy recommendations on priorities and reform directions, as confirmed by interlocutors. However, some interlocutors noted varying quality and reliability of data, particularly from the point of weaknesses of applied methodologies, the validity of data and their sources.

UNDP's contributions to the improvement of business climate and economic development have more generally been in the drafting of strategies, laws and guidelines. These include the drafting of the Regional Development Strategies for four regions of Uzbekistan; Law on Investments; Concept of Free Economic Zones; Investment Guide for the Regions; Innovation Policy;

and the Law on Public-Private Partnerships. UNDP also contributed to the establishment of the Agency for Development of Public-Private Partnership in 2018 under the Ministry of Finance. While these strategies, policies and laws are important drivers of economic reforms in the country, the evaluation, however, could not establish evidence of outcomes emerging from these interventions.

UNDP's collaboration with the State Customs Committee on the identification of bottlenecks in foreign trade and the scope and quality of the services provided by Business Facilitation Centres has been slow and did not bring many changes. This was mostly due to financial constraints within the Customs Committee, which has not been able to ensure the expected funds. A result of the cooperation has been the establishment of a system of authorized economic operators at the end of April 2019, where UNDP supported the development of legislation on authorized economic operators. While some outputs have materialized from this support, absence of strong risk assessment of the cooperation resulted in depletion of seed funds without government (or other donor contribution), leading to weak results without any transformative changes. The cooperation and challenges with government co-financing are a good example of UNDP's demand-driven nature, which is not based on clear strategy and risk analysis resulting in many cases with developed initiatives with no secure funding for their continuation or uptake.

UNDP also directly worked with the beneficiaries, including women and youth, to support entrepreneurship in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Ministry of Innovation, Youth Union and other partners.⁶⁶ Reviewed documentation and stakeholder interviews point out that this initiative included commendable efforts and intentional focus on reaching women. However, it lagged in achieving equality in gender distribution in terms of participants' parity, as women make up 18 percent of all project participants (an increase from 13 percent in 2017) according to UNDP records.⁶⁷ Data on the

⁶⁵ For example: Report on the 'Analysis of Priority Markets for Diversification of Product Exports'.

⁶⁶ Business Climate Improvement in Regions Project.

⁶⁷ UNDP country office, 2018; ROAR, 2018, p.21.

outcomes of the initiative in terms of improved livelihoods of women and youth was, however, not available.

In yet another effort, UNDP supported 20 major trade partners of Uzbekistan and export-oriented small enterprises to participate in two key international exhibitions of agro-industrial products. According to UNDP records and interviews with the UNDP team, the support had a good cost-to-benefit ratio as the supported companies managed to conclude export contracts worth over \$16 million. The evaluation could not further verify this statement from other sources.

The examples above give a clear indication of UNDP's efforts to respond to requests for assistance by national partners, which have varied, often being short term and ad hoc. Some such interventions have yielded results, yet the sustainability of these interventions is mixed. The policy and legislative documents have set the foundations for further investments in these sectors. However, institutional structures and business support investments have not benefited from more structured support and clear uptake commitments by the Government. UNDP has done very little to ensure sustainability and resilience of its results to possible shocks from the unpredictability of reform processes, due to lack of elaborated theory of change and risk assessment.

2.3. Environmental sustainability and risk reduction

Outcome 6: By 2020, rural population benefit from sustainable management of natural resources and resilience to disasters and climate change.

Finding 12: UNDP, together with other development partners, has made an important contribution to improving the policy and legislation around the environment and climate change. This is partly due to

the refocusing of the government priorities since 2017 that led to reprioritization of UNDP's portfolio, with climate change, DRR and sustainable energy gaining more attention as well as funding. The overall reform needs are, however, larger as in some areas of UNDP's pilot interventions, the needed policy frameworks for upscaling and institutionalization are not yet in place, which limits the effectiveness of UNDP's initiatives both at the national and local levels.

The Action-oriented Roadmap on Further Cooperation between Uzbekistan and the UN System for 2017-2020 identified climate change and water management, with a particular emphasis on mitigation of the drying up of the Aral Sea and prevention of the collapse of the ecosystems in the Aral Sea region, and DRR as priorities requiring immediate attention. UNDP used this opportunity to reprioritize its work around these issues,⁶⁸ highlighting the role of innovation. This recalibration and the enhanced government focus on environment and climate change, opened up new windows of opportunities for UNDP helping to secure more funding. At the time of the ICPE, the portfolio was the second largest by expenditure at UNDP CO at \$12.06 million (after basic services at \$20.97 million) growing every year during the last three years under review. The main donors are: the GEF, Global Adaptation Fund, the European Union, and the GCF. DRR is an exception with a low level of engagement, stemming from the challenges in obtaining funding.

UNDP successfully facilitated the Government's signing of the Paris Agreement and the adoption of the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), as a continuation of the Low Emission Development Strategy (2015), which was also developed with UNDP's support. UNDP assisted the national partners in monitoring implementation of various conventions (e.g. by supporting periodic reports), and also supporting Uzbekistan in implementing its obligations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol; the UN Convention on Biological Diversity; UN Convention

⁶⁸ Advocacy for environmental policy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainability agenda; promotion of water-saving and resource-efficient practices in agriculture, pasture and water management; promoting alternative sources of income in highland ecosystems with special focus on women-led and women-owned households and businesses; coordinated assistance to sustain livelihoods of people affected by the Aral Sea disaster; supporting the country in accessing climate financing opportunities; and enhanced preparedness for natural disasters.

to Combat Desertification; the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer; and the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting substances (ODS), among others.

The change in the political climate at the end of 2016 also facilitated a greater focus on improving the national policy milieu related to environment and climate change. The policy documents developed with UNDP support include the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (2017)⁶⁹ and three new building codes promoting energy efficiency, which culminated in a Presidential decree in 2018 mandating that effective 1 January 2020 all new residential housing contain energy-efficient equipment.

UNDP's support has laid the necessary foundations for improved policies in the energy and environment area. Some policy-related work is, however, taking a long time. The draft Law on Pastures has been in the process of elaboration since 2015 (at the time of writing this report, it had passed the first reading at the National Assembly). The new draft Water Code developed with UNDP support in 2015 was still not adopted at the time of the ICPE. Draft laws on the land code and on food security; the draft Strategy on Long-term Use of Non-irrigated Drylands of Uzbekistan; the draft Plan of Measures for Long-term Development in the Field of Rain-fed Areas) and several regulations⁷⁰ were still under review at the time of the ICPE. Most of the delays result from the Government being overwhelmed by the speed and scope of reforms process since 2017. This has limited the effectiveness of several national and local UNDP pilot initiatives, for example, in land and water resources management, where the absence of an overarching policy framework limits replicability and institutionalization.

Finding 13: UNDP, together with UNEP and other development partners, has made an important

contribution in building capacities of local organizations to better coordinate access to GCF climate finance at the national level. Several funding proposals are ready, and subject to funding could potentially result in tangible environmental benefits.

UNDP played a significant role in achieving GCF funding to accelerate climate finance in Uzbekistan and to facilitate GCF readiness. In partnership with UNEP and relevant government agencies, local financial institutions and other stakeholders, UNDP helped to promote coordination of climate finance at the national level (through interagency working groups)⁷¹ and build capacities of local organizations⁷² in developing project proposals to attract investment in climate change adaptation and mitigation. These local organizations are now in a better position to prepare applications, as communicated to the evaluation team in several interviews.

At the time of this ICPE, there were three full funding proposals, two by UNDP (Improvement of Disaster Risk and Response Management System to Facilitate Adaptation to Climate Change in Uzbekistan Through a Multi-Hazard Early Warning System and Construction of Energy-Efficient and Low-Carbon Rural Settlements in Uzbekistan), and one by UNEP (Development of Agrometeorological Services for Ensuring Climate-resilient Sustainable Agricultural Production in Uzbekistan) and a concept note by UNEP (Integrated Solid Waste Management System for Mitigation of Climate Change). If the applications to the GCF are successful, this will open up new avenues of engagement by UNDP/UNEP in climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Finding 14: UNDP contributed to climate change mitigation, through (a) promoting energy-efficient construction including through using innovative green mortgage schemes; and (b) facilitating the initial stage of HCFC phase-out in Uzbekistan through

⁶⁹ Nationally Determined Contributions embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

⁷⁰ Procedure and timing of reforestation and afforestation in the forest fund of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Brief guidelines for technical design and acceptance of reforestation and growing planting materials; Brief guidelines for technical design and the acceptance of works on reforestation and growing of planting material; Regulations for the creation of forest shelterbelts in the Republic; Regulations on the Procedure for the Creation and Reconstruction of Protective Forest Plantations for Combating Wind Erosion of Irrigated Lands and Against Sanding of Water Facilities; On measures to establish and reconstruction of protective forest plantations to combat wind erosion of irrigated lands and against sanding of water facilities.

⁷¹ <http://www.gcfreadinessprogramme.org/news-content/first-set-project-applications-green-climate-fund-selected-uzbekistan> and UNDP Uzbekistan, Green Climate Fund (GCF) Readiness Programme in Uzbekistan, Project Document, 2016.

⁷² Government agencies e.g. Uzhhydromet, Financial institutions and Centre for Economic Research.

improved legislation and capacity-building. However, addressing the growing amounts of unwanted ODS still remains a barrier to the latter case.

UNDP's efforts to provide Uzbekistan's rural population with improved, affordable and environmentally friendly low-carbon housing was very relevant in the light of the National Programme on the Construction of Affordable Rural Housing for the Period 2017-2021.⁷³ The national programme stipulates (a) developing an increased variety of options for rural house designs; and (b) providing more favourable mortgage terms for affordable rural housing with subsidies from the government budget. The Presidential decree (adopted in 2018) mandating energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in new housing construction in Uzbekistan stipulates that effective 1 January 2020, all new residential housing must be equipped with energy-efficient and energy-saving equipment at the stages of design, survey, construction and installation works, and must also obtain an energy audit passport prior to commissioning.

UNDP supported the efforts of the Ministry of Construction through the development of 21 energy-efficient and low-carbon housing designs that have now been nationally adopted for mass construction under the national Rural Housing Programme for 2019-2021. The energy-efficient designs, along with the three revised building codes (with UNDP's support) mandating stricter thermal performance requirements as of 2 January 2019, promise a nearly 30-percent reduction in energy use. UNDP complemented its efforts with outreach to raise public awareness about energy-efficient and low-carbon rural housing and green mortgage lending, leading to a growing number of residents inquiring about and applying for green mortgages,⁷⁴ which the evaluation confirmed. Also, the professionals' knowledge of the financial institutions was raised related to energy-efficient housing and related financial products (loans). To boost the supply side of the market, UNDP assisted 20 local companies/manufacturers of energy-efficient materials/equipment used in the construction of rural

housing with the promotion of their products. These brochures developed with UNDP's support are now available at the local authorities and bank branches, as observed by the evaluation team.

In order to improve the enabling environment for the Green Mortgage Market Mechanism to Scale-Up Demand for Low-Carbon Housing, UNDP is developing a tool for analysing the energy survey data of pilot houses to be constructed in 2019 that is expected to help statistically substantiate the economic viability of funding for energy-efficient housing. Interlocutors confirmed that at the time of this ICPE, the green mortgage scheme of the Qishloq Qurilish Bank was operational. Mortgages for the first batch of 500 pilot energy-efficient/low-carbon (EE/LC) rural housing units were extended to borrowers (out of a planned 800 with at least 35 percent women-headed rural households)⁷⁵ to cover the incremental cost of EE/LC measures. Overall, however, subsidized energy tariffs serve as a disincentive for forcefully pursuing energy efficiency and renewable energy goals.

In response to Uzbekistan's obligations under the Montreal Protocol (HCFC), UNDP contributed to improving the regulatory environment by addressing the accelerated HCFC phase-out in the medium and longer term and to strengthening the country's preparedness for the complete phase-out of HCFCs. As a result, Uzbekistan incorporated HCFC-related legal provisions into the Law on Atmosphere Air Protection in Uzbekistan. The country office built the capacity of the customs and environmental inspectors and helped incorporate relevant training into the national programmes for training and retraining of the enforcement officers, thus ensuring the sustainability of training on ODS. Centralized and semi-centralized national schemes for ODS recollection, recycling and reclamation were established with UNDP support, which triggered collection of data on amounts of ODS recycled and reclaimed for reuse. In addition, selected eligible enterprises in the manufacturing sector were assisted with the introduction of energy-efficient

⁷³ Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, No.2639 of 21 October 2017.

⁷⁴ UNDP policy brief on lifeline power tariffs.

⁷⁵ Presidential resolution on scaling up affordable rural and social urban housing.

technologies such as refrigerants with low global warming potential.

In the continued absence of a national Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC) Association in Uzbekistan, the UNDP project team substituted its function, which the evaluation considers a risky and unsustainable solution. However, at the time of the ICPE, the RAC Association was being reformulated with the support of the Government. The lack of incentives for ODS end-users (in particular from the residential sector) to call for services of trained and certified refrigeration service technicians, instead of engaging the so-called 'suitcase technicians', who constitute around 20-25 percent of RAC service operations, has been addressed through legislative amendments, but in practice, this needs to be promoted, in part by promoting the certification for RAC service technicians and licensing of RAC service workshops. The lack of capability to address the growing amounts of unwanted ODS remains a barrier to be addressed.

Finding 15: Although still in the early stages, UNDP is making important advancements in biodiversity conservation in high-altitude mountain ecosystems by enhancing conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and capacity development of the local stakeholders. In particular, UNDP has contributed to improved cooperation and collaboration in the conservation of snow leopards and their ecosystems through integrated planning, stronger cooperative governance and improved institutional capabilities of all partners.

Although in its initial stages, UNDP is making notable advancements towards conservation of biological diversity in high-altitude mountain ecosystems. In order to reduce ecosystem pressure and promote environmentally sustainable use of pastures, UNDP supported the establishment of 10 pasture management cooperatives in four districts (Kegeily, Kanlikul, Chimbay and Takhtakupir) to create the prerequisites for the introduction of pasture user associations.

Sustainable land use was facilitated through enhanced management capacities of local stakeholders. In particular, the management capacities of forestry enterprises were built in relation to the core conservation zones and high conservation value forests, leading to better protection and reduced deforestation. As demonstration pilots, UNDP supported establishing companies in pasture areas, which promote sustainable land-use practices and alternative livelihoods (e.g. by modernization/building of greenhouses), thus contributing to integrated land use planning together with the local governments. UNDP supported these efforts by raising awareness of local residents on land degradation and desertification through publications, films and supporting centres for knowledge dissemination.⁷⁶ The interlocutors interviewed during the evaluation confirmed that these awareness-raising efforts are making a big difference in the professional knowledge of customs and border guard officers in the field of biodiversity and environmental legislation, contributing, for example, to the prevention of illegal cross-border trade of endangered species.

Conservation of snow leopards is an integral and one of the important focus areas of UNDP efforts to improve biodiversity preservation in Uzbekistan. While it is too early to gauge the outcomes, the research and monitoring programme for the conservation of the snow leopard by the Government in cooperation with environmental non-government organizations (started in 2018) along with the draft programme and action plan (submitted for approval) have a great potential to boost conservation and improve the management of protected areas. To enhance wider cooperation on snow leopard protection, a memorandum of understanding between the environmental authorities of countries in Central Asia was being discussed at the time of the ICPE.

Finding 16: UNDP's engagement in DRR has been extremely limited and narrow in scope. While efforts have been made to raise awareness of the population and capacities of relevant stakeholders in gender-sensitive

⁷⁶ In related efforts, UNDP also helped to establish (a) the Centre for the Implementation of Innovative and Resource-saving Technologies in rain-fed agriculture in Zaamin district; (b) the Information and Resource Centre on Soils and Landscapes at the Agrobiotechnology laboratory of the National University of Uzbekistan aimed to serve as a demonstration and training institution; (c) and the Centre for Remote Methods of Studying Properties of Land Resources of Various Landscapes in Uzbekistan at the Tashkent Institute of Agricultural Irrigation and Mechanization. In order to strengthen the capacity of the State Scientific Design Institute Uzdverloyiha and its regional branches, the project purchased 12 types of modern laboratory equipment to study the physical and chemical properties of soils.

preparedness and response to natural and human-induced disasters, the focus has been on disaster response, rather than risk reduction and preparedness.

UNDP's engagement in DRR has been extremely limited in scope and focus, and non-existent since 2017. UNDP supported the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MoES) in integrating the principles of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 in its work. There was a particular focus on gender-sensitive preparedness response to natural/human-made disasters in the policy framework through revisions to the agency guidelines and developing a draft national strategy and the action plan on DRR which the Government approved on 12 April 2019. UNDP also contributed towards strengthening the intergovernmental dialogue and regional cooperation in DRR by supporting the participation of national stakeholders in regional and international platforms on DRR. As evidenced by various interviews, these regional events have been instrumental in improving regional cooperation on DRR in recent years.

While UNDP aimed to strengthen Uzbekistan's capacity to prepare for and respond to natural and human-induced disasters, in reality, however, the improvements have mostly been on response and not in preparedness. In terms of response, the technical capacity of the MoES has been enhanced with the modern tools like the modern robot-simulator 'Gosha-01', which allows users to practise skills regarding the application of the 'precordial thump' method to revert cardiac arrest, chest compressions, resuscitation methods and first aid. Awareness related to disaster prevention and mitigation has been raised through numerous events, a documentary film and brochures. However, the MoES is still short of empirical methodologies for, among others, the post-disaster needs assessment and damage and loss assessment and, hence, rigorous data.

The evaluation notes the limited scope and focus is at least partly due to limited available funding, although

the country office is pursuing several avenues to increase the engagement.⁷⁷ If successful, this could allow a shift to improved preparedness.

2.4. Basic services

Outcome 7: By 2020, the quality of public administration is improved for equitable access to quality public services for all.

Finding 17: UNDP has made significant contributions to public administration reforms by supporting the evolution of e-government services and improvement of the public services. The pace of public administration reforms is slow with incremental changes affected by factors such as changing priorities and turnover of staff. These factors affect the sustainability of inputs, structures and initiatives supported by UNDP. This is further exacerbated by the fragmentation of interventions due to the demand-driven nature of the UNDP programme and the absence of a long-term structured approach with clear focus and depth.

The political change in 2016 brought with it momentum for public administration reform. The new Government placed strong emphasis on improving the delivery of public services. In response to the new demands, UNDP adapted its strategy and positioned itself to assist the Government in meeting its commitments towards reforming the public administration and governance.

Across all different thematic and governance levels, UNDP has been a continuous provider of technical assistance in the form of capacity-building, advisory services, analytical support and sharing best international practices with government partners and stakeholders. UNDP's support to public administration reform included assistance in legislative drafting and reporting as the first stream of support interventions. UNDP assisted in drafting the Law on Civil Service;⁷⁸ the Concept of

⁷⁷ UNDP CO currently has two project proposals: i) on implementation of the Sendai Framework in Central Asia, which is pending resource mobilization; and ii) on Multi-hazard Early Warning System, for submission to the GCF. Plus, a UN joint programme in the area of DRR was formulated and consultations have been initiated with the Government on priority areas for support.

⁷⁸ Official letter No.02-08/1728 dated 6 April 2018 from the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations.

Tax Policy Reform;⁷⁹ the Concept of Pension System Reform;⁸⁰ the Concept of Administrative Reform; the Concept on Improving the System of Law-making and Rule-making; the Law on Public Oversight; the Local Governance Law; as well as curriculum review and design of regional management programme at the Academy of Public Administration. UNDP provided policy advice on functional review, public services, citizen engagement,⁸¹ and other relevant legislative documents aimed at transforming the public administration and financial management in the country. However, most of the legislation was yet to be adopted at the time of the ICPE, except for the Law on Public Oversight adopted in 2018.

UNDP also supported the central Government to prepare and present/submit to the Parliament and the President the state budget in the medium-term budget framework format, with a detailed annual budget for 2019 and macro-fiscal estimates/indicators for 2020 and 2021. Interviews with key stakeholders confirm that the intervention was valuable. Government representatives confirmed their declarative commitment to move to a mid-term budgetary framework; however, timelines and the pace of its introduction were still unclear. Slow adoption of legislation and policies that UNDP helped draft is a good illustration of challenges for the Government to follow through the reform investments it requests support for and the incrementality of changes within the government system. Interviewed stakeholders confirm that UNDP's support was timely and of good quality. However, actual adoption and/or implementation are beyond UNDP's control.

The second stream of support was directed at improving e-government and open government data through policy advice on the sustainable and long-term development of e-government platforms and e-services. Specifically, besides other e-services supported by UNDP in other sectors (see findings on justice sector), UNDP supported the Ministry of

Justice in streamlining the digital services of Public Services Centres through its website,⁸² which has been upgraded and now provides access to 135 e-services. As mentioned in Finding 8, 55 services are currently provided through Public Service Centres, and another 120 are under construction. The main added value of UNDP's intervention as shared by key interlocutors is in the ability to model services and ensure their feasibility within the government context. At the same time, the driver for the success of e-services is their current attractiveness to the Government, fulfilling its ambition to be more open and accessible to citizens. Digital transformation of public services supported by UNDP has brought significant time efficiencies for citizens. For example, the consolidated service regarding birth-related administration significantly reduces paperwork and allows several services in one place simultaneously, as confirmed by stakeholders' interviews and government records. Applying for a primary school place or kindergarten has been digitalized and made available through Public Service Centres and a dedicated portal.⁸³

UNDP also invested in the introduction of blockchain technologies for improved provision of public services through implementing pilot projects. However, this area was in its embryonic stage at the time of the evaluation, hence it was not possible to gather evidence on the utility of UNDP's outputs.

The third stream has been training and capacity development support across public administration in a number of areas including project management, service delivery, integrity and anti-corruption, public finance reform, etc. UNDP has been working closely with the Academy of Public Administration under the President of Uzbekistan to support investment in knowledge and capacities of key staff of the Academy (through study visits to Kazakhstan and training by Russian experts under the Knowledge Management and Capacity-building in Russia-UNDP Partnership

⁷⁹ <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/06/30/tax-concept/>.

⁸⁰ <http://pfru.uz/ru/page/518/proekt-koncepciya-reformirovaniya-sistemy-gosudarstvennogo-pensionnogo-obespecheniya>.

⁸¹ Official Letter No.03/2-1946 dated 10 August 2018 from Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Official Letter No.1-10/03-946/8 dated 11 July 2018 from Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

⁸² www.my.gov.uz.

⁸³ Ibid.

project, Phase II, etc.). Due to the incremental nature of public administration reform and limited interventions of UNDP in light of the scope of public administration in Uzbekistan, it is still too early to find evidence of direct outcomes of the capacity-building support as confirmed by stakeholders' interviews.

The fourth stream of support was the provision of analytical inputs across public administration, through publications and research studies within the sphere of public finance management. Examples include the development and dissemination of the publications *Citizens' Budget 2018*⁸⁴ and *Citizens' Budget - Draft Budget 2019* in cooperation with the Ministry of Finance. Such publications have helped to share case studies on the impact of the Government spending on various vulnerable groups (e.g. PWD, children, etc.). The documents did not provide gender-disaggregated data, making it impossible to assess the impact of government spending by gender. Overall, no direct outcomes of these publications were evidenced in terms of changes in public finance management.

Despite the ongoing support of UNDP and other development partners, public administration reform in Uzbekistan is moving slowly with only incremental changes, due to factors including changing priorities and turnover of staff. Support depends on the Government's full commitment to their uptake. This results in a very uncondusive operating space for the sustainability of delivered outputs. An example of uncondusive operating space due to changing priorities is the termination of UNDP's cost-sharing agreement with the Ministry for Development of Information Technologies and Communications (MITC) for \$900,000 due to changed priorities for utilizing MITC-administered Information and Communication Technologies Development Fund. This ministry has seen frequent staff changes in management, including three Ministers of ITC in one year. As a result, UNDP's digital transformation projects were moved to the newly created Ministry of Innovation. Due to external factors but also UNDP's own weaknesses in terms of its demand-driven nature and RBM, the sustainability of most of the outputs is still fragile. For example, UNDP investments in legislation, services and training

through the delivery of expertise and advisory services has been instrumental for key government partners to increase their knowledge and understanding of the reform agenda and necessary steps, but their sustainability is questionable.

In conclusion, the uptake of organizational change and changing mindsets, particularly within the area of public administration reform, public financial management and local governance, require long-term structured engagement with clear focus and depth of interventions, which UNDP did not sufficiently have within this CPD. UNDP's interventions were demand-driven and too broad and superficial to achieve deeper success under any of the three huge sectors of support.

Finding 18: UNDP sought to fill the gap in the provision of services to women victims of violence, the elderly, and PWD through modelling of services, with an aspiration for these to be scaled up by the Government. However, due to factors such as changing government priorities and funding constraints, the future of these services remains questionable.

Between 2016 and 2019, UNDP received and responded to a number of ad hoc requests from the Government to address the unmet needs of vulnerable groups (i.e. women victims of violence and the home care services for lonely elderly and PWD). UNDP support was provided mainly through modelling of services for social rehabilitation and care. For example, UNDP modelled shelter services for women victims of violence by establishing a pilot Centre for Victim Rehabilitation and Suicide Prevention in the city of Nukus, Karakalpakstan in line with the Presidential decree on measures on improving the system of social rehabilitation and adaptation as well as prevention of domestic violence (2018) and best international practices. The centre for victims of (domestic) violence includes medical, psychological, social, pedagogical, legal and other aid, and has brought important results at output level for clients in terms of availability and accessibility of such services. However, the Government has not scaled up the model due to a variety of reasons, including lack

⁸⁴ <https://www.mf.uz/component/k2/item/2838-byudzhnet-dlya-grazhdan.html>.

of commitment and budget limitations, as confirmed by stakeholder interviews. At the time of evaluation, UNDP struggled to ensure financial support for its continuation from any sources, which challenges the provision of services to existing clients and no clear plan of referral of clients to other support institutions.

Another modelled service was the home care service for lonely elderly and PWD. UNDP supported the key development processes concerned with the provision of social services: designing the business processes for identification of persons at risk; establishing procedures for needs assessment; development of individual social services programmes and service responses with clear allocation of roles/responsibilities of the different local public agents at community (Mahallas) and district levels, while also introducing the administrative forms and instruments to be used. However, the evaluation could not establish evidence of a clear plan of how these inputs would be integrated into existing government systems and their uptake.

In order to scale-up and achieve sustainable outcomes in the improvement of social services, UNDP also invested efforts in developing standards for home care services, technical specifications for wheelchair production, introduced various training activities, including new degree courses in social work focusing on the elderly and PWD. At the same time, an in-service training course for the Ministry of Health, and a vertical functional review of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of People (MLSP) was conducted. However, these interventions have not brought significant results, as also confirmed by the evaluations of respective projects. For illustration, since the MLSP lost its social protection policy portfolio, the study became redundant despite its quality. This is another illustration of the unstable policy environment and changing administrative set up of the system, which directly affects UNDP's support and its catalytic potential.

Finding 19: UNDP, with the support from the Global Fund, has made a very significant contribution in addressing HIV/AIDS incidence in Uzbekistan.

UNDP's work with the Global Fund has brought important and mostly sustainable results. The Global Fund is one of the major donors to the UNDP CO within the current country programme. In late 2016, UNDP's role changed to that of a procurement agent with the Republican AIDS Centre as the principal recipient. In 2018, Partnership with the Republican AIDS Centre and the Ministry of Health proved effective in establishing a transparent procurement architecture for drugs and other related materials to prevent and fight HIV, as confirmed in interviews with the diverse stakeholders in the partnership. UNDP played a key role in the provision of functional systems for collecting the necessary data about patients, health needs, treatment facilities and commodities to support accurate quantification; monitoring of usage; application of standard treatment guidelines and setting up standard operational procedures. UNDP also managed to mobilize \$9 million for health sector procurement support in cooperation with the Republican AIDS Centre. As confirmed during stakeholder interviews, this partnership has resulted in scaling up of the antiretroviral therapy (ART) and related care in Uzbekistan, with the number of people receiving ART increasing from 215 in 2006 to 24,329 by the end of 2018.⁸⁵

UNDP's support has been critical for the development of three government resolutions aimed at strengthening measures on HIV and reforming the health care system of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Advocacy efforts from the Global Fund, UNDP and programme partners have resulted in the partial takeover of ART financing by the Government – allocating \$2 million (2015-2016); \$1.8 million (2017); \$2.4 million (2018); with plans to mobilize \$3.2 million in 2019 – to ensure uninterrupted and timely delivery of ART to people living with HIV. These measures have had a very positive impact on patients, through timely delivery of ART medicines and health supplies by UNDP, but also through improved policies and mechanisms of the Government.

⁸⁵ ROAR, 2018, p.37, and interview with the Republican AIDS Centre.

2.5. Governance and rule of law

Outcome 8: Legal and judicial reforms further ensure strong protection of rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens.

Finding 20: UNDP's contribution to the success of legal and judicial reforms in the country has been effective. The country office supported key justice sector institutions in the reform of the court system, with a particular contribution to the improvement of transparency and efficiency of civic courts. Support to anti-corruption efforts and law-making was relevant and got an additional positive boost in light of political change and related reforms, though with less visible outcome level results as of yet given the incremental nature of changes.

UNDP's support to the legal and judicial reforms has been considerable, taking into account the relatively small financial envelope for this outcome, with a total budget of \$3.3 million for the period 2016-2018. UNDP's work mainly focused on the provision of analytical and technical assistance. Results of support are visible in increasing streamlined court administration, which also confirms the assumption that longer term structural support with specific focus brings more sustainable results. An illustration is the support to the justice system, which benefited from technical assistance in legislative drafting along with institutional and process strengthening. Important achievements include the implementation and use of the e-tools on civil case management (e.g. verification of citizens' legal capacity when entering into various contracts and transactions (<http://incompetent.esud.uz>); database of civil court decisions (<http://decision.esud.uz>) for all users and citizens; online calendar of court meetings on civil cases; and an online platform for submitting appeals and cassation complaints that allows users to file, monitor their cases and receive court rulings in digital form without visiting court offices.

The most important investment was the introduction of E-SUD system across multiple inter-district courts,

the development of new training standards and institutions, and provision of technical expertise to influence reform policies and legislation, as confirmed by stakeholder interviews. There is strong evidence of improved transparency in court administration and judicial independence as a result of UNDP's support to the national e-justice system for civil courts in 75 inter-district civil courts (100 percent of civil courts) with improved capacities of 548 judges and court staff. The use of e-court system has increased the court efficiency by 50 percent and the number of visits required to receive a court decision has decreased by nearly two times (from 6-7 to 2-3 visits), as confirmed by key informants. Data from 2018 shows that 271,418 claims and 351,516 petitions for the issue of court orders were received via E-SUD information system, of which women submitted 4,938 cases.

As part of access to civil justice E-SUD case management system for civil courts, E-SUD was replicated in all 75 civil courts in the first instance followed by 14 courts in the next. These measures contributed to identifying the existing issues and revisiting the criminal code to better protect the rights of women for alimony as well as cases on violation of rights of women. UNDP worked with the Supreme Court on amendments to the Codes on Civil Procedure, Economic Procedure and Administrative Justice, which were focused on increasing the efficiency of the judicial system and further support court independence. UNDP also supported drafting and adoption of the Free Legal Law and FLA System and data from 2018 alone shows 309 citizens (42 percent women) received legal aid in the form of 320 free consultations.⁸⁶ UNDP support to the justice system through E-SUD and the FLA has high potential and is already showing strong transformative effects in improving public confidence and trust in courts, and more importantly increased access to justice, particularly for women, as also noted in the project evaluation.⁸⁷

Another contribution was towards an improved regulatory framework for the justice system through new Civil and Economic Procedural Codes, as well as the laws on amendments and additions

⁸⁶ 'Annual report of the Legal Clinic under Tashkent State Law University', 2018.

⁸⁷ Lees, Sean, 'Final evaluation of joint project of UNDP, USAID and Supreme Court of Uzbekistan Rule of Law Partnership in Uzbekistan', 2017.

to some legislative acts of Uzbekistan within the improvement of the supervisory proceedings of courts and court proceedings and on courts. The draft laws were submitted to the Supreme Court for approval and adopted in 2017. UNDP also provided consultations to the Legislative Chamber Law of the *Oliy Majlis* (Parliament) on the draft law on mediation,⁸⁸ which was based on international best practice in introducing alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and has helped reduce the burden on the Uzbek judicial system.

UNDP efforts to enhance law-making have also seen a boost following the political change, when most of the advocacy and support initiatives gained new momentum, bringing fast results with legislative and institutional changes across the board. Most significant have been the opening of previously taboo areas (e.g. civil service reform) and adoption of the Presidential decree on the Concept of Improvement of Rule-making in Uzbekistan; Law on Administrative Procedures; draft of the Civil Service Law; draft Concept of Public Administration Reforms; Concept of Law-making and Rule-making; and Law on e-Government. All these documents were designed with UNDP's support, and later adopted.

UNDP also contributed strongly to bringing back citizens' voice and participation on the agenda of the Government. This was done through support to e-portals: www.Regulation.gov.uz and an e-petitions system *Mening Fikrim* (www.meningfikrim.uz) to be used by government agencies for public consultations reflecting best practices of UK change petition portal, in the Uzbek language. The public consultation portal assists consultation process through collecting comments on articles of draft laws and bylaws for government consideration. The added value of this portal is the requirement for the Government to submit reports on accepted and rejected comments, as confirmed through stakeholder interviews.

Within the same area, support to regulatory impact assessment and anti-corruption helped the Government to develop the Concept for Improvement of Law (Rule) Making Process and set up a framework

for transforming law (rule) making in Uzbekistan by introducing tools and full-fledged mechanisms for anti-corruption scrutiny and 'smart regulation' allowing complex regulatory impact assessment of all draft laws. Stakeholder interviews confirmed the high value of this support, in particular, UNDP's support to citizen participation through e-portals, which were recognized for their direct influence in improving transparency and diminishing red tape and corruption.

The ICPE found that the support to rule-making has been relevant and valued by the Government. Yet it has been very fragmented, with different tools produced in several areas, and with little or no consolidation of efforts. This is a significant weakness considering the unpredictable reform process, with changing priorities and the Government's efforts experiencing a lot of trial and error. Lack of consolidated efforts by UNDP weakens its positioning: at the time of the evaluation multiple requests come to UNDP by the Government, but this variety of requests points that UNDP is seen more as a service provider than a strategic partner. The lack of consolidated efforts also affects the potential of achieving transformative effects of interventions, despite the valued and recognized support thus far.

Finding 21: Although fragmented in nature, UNDP's work with human rights institutions has been instrumental in laying the necessary groundwork to further strengthen the human rights work in the country. However, the success and sustainability of its efforts are impeded by the slow reforms in the field of human rights as well as the availability of funds.

As discussed in the previous sections, a big shift in the way the Government undertook reforms happened after the elections in December 2016, when the focus on rule of law and human rights started gaining momentum. The CPD provides for a rather ambitious set of outputs on human rights considering the state of affairs regarding human rights in the country at the time of CPD drafting. While the changes in the Government have brought a new momentum for the work on human rights, significant changes have not

⁸⁸ <http://review.uz/ru/post/jurnal-maqola/nomer11725>.

yet taken place in operational terms to move beyond declarative support.

UNDP's main contribution has been to provide an evidence base and share international practices, models and experiences with regard to different issues of importance for strengthening the framework for human rights. In line with more readiness of the Government to tackle human rights more systematically, UNDP supported the Government in organizing the Asian Human Rights Forum in Samarkand (2018). This event showed positive signs of the Government's changed stance on human rights. In the same vein, Uzbekistan submitted two reports to UN treaty bodies in 2018, namely the Convention against Torture (CAT) and the CERD. The CAT report contained data on five process indicators on human rights.

Another positive step was the adoption of the resolution on improving the work of National Human Rights Centre (NHRC) in 2018, to coordinate state bodies and other organizations on the implementation of international obligations of Uzbekistan and preparation of national reports in the field of human rights. This event has created a momentum for UNDP future work on human rights. UNDP worked with Parliamentary Ombudsman to share the international experience of NHRIs and preparation for international accreditation in the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in line with UNDP's support to the implementation of six UPR recommendations on the independence of NHRIs in line with the Paris Principles. Based on the proposals of actions required to improve the situation, a draft plan of actions envisaging elaboration of a methodology for the use of UN human rights conventions in court decisions, as well as training to judges, was developed and submitted to national partners for approval, however, with no follow-up.

Further, UNDP has, jointly with Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and OSCE, advocated for the establishment of national preventive mechanism and ratification of the CAT Optional Protocol, with UNDP also advocating for

the CRPD. UNDP did so through the provision of consultative and technical support to the working group on preparation for ratification of the CRPD to enable informed decision-making. However, neither of the documents were ratified thus far. Despite the advocacy actions taken by UNDP in implementing UN treaty bodies regarding usage of international provisions of UN human rights conventions by national courts in their decisions, domestic courts are not rushing with development of tools and/or methodological recommendation on implementing such mechanism. For example, the Joint Plan of Action between NHRC, UNDP and Supreme Court was developed but has still not been adopted.

UNDP also facilitated the development of the Concept of Free Legal Aid Law on the basis of the best international experience, as well as an analysis of CRPD ratification and impact of these conventions on PWD, including women with disabilities. Analyses conducted by UNDP are usually submitted to the government institutions, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Parliamentary Research Institute and NHRC for consideration. However, none of the documents, except the Free Legal Aid Law, have been adopted.

Another limitation for UNDP to work on human rights is financial. Upon adoption of the CEDAW National Plan of Action, UNDP planned a lot of activities to support its implementation, though not much has been done yet. UNDP, in cooperation with OHCHR, also provided support for the institutional development of Ombudsperson's Office, with some immediate results (outputs) in terms of capacity assessment of Ombudsman Office in line with Paris Principles. The assessment has been an important entry point as it opens up the road towards accreditation by GANRI assigning the status. This would be an important step, as the accreditation would mean to be regulated by the independent global alliance and make the Ombudsperson independent of government influence. It is yet too early to assess whether accreditation will happen, in which case the Ombudsperson's independence would mark an important outcome of investment in this sector and a boost to the human rights agenda.



CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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3.1. Conclusions

- **Conclusion 1: UNDP's current country programme operated in a period of significant political changes which presented considerable opportunities but also challenges to implementation. The broad nature of the CPD allowed UNDP to respond to the frequently changing government priorities and needs but affected the consolidation of efforts and synergies across its portfolio leading to fragmentation of assistance in the absence of a clear programme theory. These challenges have had direct implications on the level of achievement of envisaged country programme objectives and impact in areas of UNDP's engagement.**

The political change following the December 2016 elections and ensuing reform across all government sectors have been considerable and brought a new momentum for societal change in Uzbekistan. The impact of the political change has been significant, opening the country to regional and global affairs, through investing in changing the country image nationally and overseas, reform of public administration and service delivery, and opening the Government and transparency in decision-making processes. UNDP has supported the reform processes across the spectrum of thematic portfolios it implements. This was possible primarily because of the broad nature of the CPD and generally set outcome definitions, but also the wide scope of already initiated programmes, which allowed for expanding activities and responding to the ad hoc requests from the Government based on its changing priorities.

Throughout the country programme implementation, UNDP pursued a wide range of activities with an impressive coverage of themes and interventions. However, this variety heavily impacted the coherence and depth of strategic approach, affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the country programme as a whole. Exceptions may be found in individual interventions, mostly relating to e-services in governance and justice sector, and also the support to the health sector where thought-through engagement has brought

more tangible and sustainable outcomes on citizen's access to services. The key shortcoming of the CO assistance has been a multiplication of projects and interventions without clear planning and reflection of how such individual interventions lead to overarching goals in the absence of a well-articulated programme theory of change. This has resulted in overburdening the CO team, stretching the resources due to the proliferation of small projects resulting in fragmented assistance, ultimately hindering UNDP's ability to achieve the intended outcomes fully and effectively under the CPD.

At the time of the evaluation, there were a variety of incoming government requests for UNDP support, which is a positive indicator. However, in the evaluation team's view, this may be a worrying sign that UNDP is still seen as a service provider providing technical assistance rather than a strategic partner supporting upstream interventions towards the SDGs. This may affect UNDP's strategic position in the next programme cycle, particularly due to the influx of other donors and partners interested in providing technical assistance to the Government in similar areas.

- **Conclusion 2. UNDP's RBM practices are weak, particularly in terms of the quality of its M&E systems, procedures and practices and its results frameworks.**

Design of the CPD and its interventions has shown weaknesses, particularly in terms of the definition of indicators and outcome statements. These issues are closely connected to the conclusion above on the absence of a well-articulated theory of change, which would help to define the results and their accompanying indicators. Another important challenge to sound RBM practices are the CO M&E approaches. Monitoring is a part of the regular CO management duties, albeit with a focus primarily on activities and output level with weak or no reflection of outcomes and results. Decentralized evaluations are conducted by the country office along standard UNDP practice, yet their quality is weak – ranging from moderately satisfactory to moderately unsatisfactory – as shown by low-quality ratings

by the IEO quality assurance mechanism.⁸⁹ The combination of all the above challenges presents a weakness of the CO approaches in practising sound results-based management approaches, which also compromise the visibility of achievements of UNDP in the country.

- **Conclusion 3. UNDP has played a catalytic role in promoting sustainable economic growth, nationalizing the SDGs and facilitating a coordinated response to the Aral Sea disaster with significant contributions towards ensuring a coherent joint response through the MDTF. Much of the work is still at an early stage to ensure stronger donor engagement in the MDTF; however, the Government and UN agencies' support has brought significant leverage for recognition of the problem and its response.**

Across UNDP's country programme, and in particular within the work on sustainable economic growth, UNDP's contributions have been valued primarily for their convener and catalyst role. Notable contributions have been made in terms of nationalization of the SDGs and improvement of the business climate. The most significant has been the contribution to Aral Sea disaster response, with UNDP and other UN agencies providing support to strengthen institutional and human resource capacity of national, regional and local governments; investment in the improvement of livelihoods and entrepreneurship, and overall human security. This support was accompanied by advocacy with the Government and donor community on the need for a unified response to the disaster, resulting in the establishment of the MDTF. UNDP's and UN agencies' contributions to the structural solutions to the Aral Sea disaster are still in the early stages. More effort is required to consolidate the donor engagement and ensure that the response to the disaster is coherent and enables a holistic approach to improvement of human security in the region.

- **Conclusion 4. UNDP support within the justice sector and public administration reform has been diverse and varied with notable contributions in improving access to justice and public services and more transparency and participation in policymaking processes. However, the sustainability of these results is still fragile and depends on a number of political factors beyond UNDP's control.**

UNDP's contribution to public administration and the justice sector has been valuable. UNDP has implemented a multipronged approach in both sectors, through contributing to policy and legal frameworks; institutional and human resource strengthening and modelling of e-services for improvement of access, and ensuring Uzbekistan is abreast of regional and global trends in service provision. Significant improvements, which can be attributed to UNDP, include improved access to rights for deprived groups, protection mechanisms through free legal aid, E-SUD and investment in capacities of the justice sector overall. Notable contributions have also been made towards improved access to public services and public consultation processes through the introduction of e-portals and consultation mechanisms, one-stop-shops and e-services. These investments have demonstrated strong potential in increasing citizen's confidence and trust in the public administration's and justice sector. The CO assistance to the anti-corruption and overall strengthening of capacities for participatory and evidence-based legislative drafting has also contributed to a higher level of awareness of the Government on the need to ensure transparency and accountability of government processes and checks and balances. However, some of the investments have not yet transformed into tangible results. One such example is the investment in the public finance management sector, where UNDP's inputs have not transformed into tangible outcomes within the sector.

⁸⁹ The IEO quality assessment ranks evaluation on a six-point scale – highly satisfactory (6), satisfactory (5), moderately satisfactory (4), moderately unsatisfactory (3), unsatisfactory (2), and highly unsatisfactory (1).

UNDP's support has helped in moving the Government's reform agenda forward, but the sustainability of results is still fragile, as it very much depends on the Government's changing priorities, strategic direction and stability. Uzbekistan's Government is faced with a significant turnover of staff and changes in the most senior ranks across ministries, which cause instability in planning and implementing activities and pose a threat to each new joint initiative that is discussed between UNDP and the Government. In such a political environment, strong niche and consolidated focus on realistic results could have brought more stable results across the board.

- **Conclusion 5. UNDP support within the environment and climate change reform agenda has made important contributions towards protection, mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity conservation. However, the sustainability of its work is partly hampered by the lack of the most-needed regulatory frameworks, which also compromise the results of the efforts. UNDP and UNEP's recent joint efforts in securing GCF funding have opened doors to accelerate climate financing, potentially leading to tangible environmental benefits.**

UNDP contributed importantly to the reform agenda related to environmental protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation both at the policy level and with downstream-level projects – mostly as demonstration pilots feeding information to the policy level – but also supporting institutions such as water management bodies, community groups and local governments with training and capacity-building. However, in some cases, the progress has been hampered by the lack of the most-needed regulatory frameworks such as the revised Water Code. UNDP has made important contributions towards climate change mitigation by promoting energy-efficient construction including

through innovative green mortgage schemes and facilitating the initial stage of hydrochlorofluorocarbons phase-out in Uzbekistan through improved legislation and capacity-building through training and demonstration pilots. However, subsidized energy tariffs serve as a disincentive for forcefully pursuing energy efficiency and renewable energy goals. Likewise, the lack of incentives for the ODS end-users to engage services of technically certified professionals to address growing amounts of unwanted ODS remains a barrier.

Although still in the early stages, UNDP has taken important steps towards biodiversity preservation (especially in relation to snow leopards), with pilots on improved and integrated land-use planning, and cooperative governance for environmental conservation in high-mountain ecosystems. However, most of the developed regulatory instruments for improvement are yet to be adopted by the Government. There is a need to deepen the engagement to ensure the sustainability of efforts.

While the reform process (post-2017) opened new programming opportunities to address climate change and DRR, UNDP had very little seed funding available for new initiatives requested by the Government as most of its core funds were already programmed prior to the reforms. This is also compounded by Uzbekistan's status as a middle-income country, making it difficult to access the needed funding levels. Within these circumstances, UNDP/UNEP funding from the GCF has been an important milestone for the country to access climate financing, which is expected to contribute to better coordination nationally and enhanced capacities to access climate finance in future. Overall, the funding levels are not yet on par with the needs (especially in DRR), necessitating the look-out for non-traditional sources of funding by UNDP.

3.2. Recommendations and management response

Recommendation 1.



UNDP needs to consolidate its portfolio of support. UNDP should invest time and effort to ensure that the country programme is based on a strong theory of change for each consolidated area of intervention and cumulatively at the level of the country programme. This process will provide a strategic focus to the programme and a coherent approach with synergies across projects and thematic portfolios. In doing so, UNDP should focus on substantial upstream engagement to ensure that the Government is receiving adequate support to push the reforms forward, while maintaining its strategic position.

Given the current country context, with a very fast pace of reforms but also anticipated entry of international actors and other 'big' players (donors and their implementing partners, IFIs, international organizations), UNDP needs to reflect on achievements and lessons learned thus far towards identifying and elaborating thematic areas where it has a comparative advantage within the country context. Within this framework, UNDP should ensure upstream engagement, focusing its support to the creation of sector policies by bringing together the Government and its external partners, as well as mobilizing funding sources for policy implementation, and strengthen national capacities to prepare, implement and sustain the initiatives and their results in support of the SDG agenda.

UNDP will inevitably remain, at least partly, demand driven due to the nature of its engagement with the Government. However, due care should be given to ensure that the response to demands remains strongly within the theory of change of its country objectives to enable UNDP to bring the desired transformative effects. The desired change within the focus areas should be further elaborated through individual and joint (cross-programme) theories of change which should then be used to guide UNDP's work with the Government and other partners. Specifically, more systematic efforts are needed to ensure synergies across programme interventions within and across portfolios and to ensure transformative effects of UNDP assistance.

Management Response:




The recommendation is well noted. Steps to consolidate the programme portfolio were initiated and efforts made to revamp synergies across thematic areas, enhance strategic focus and coherence of the new CPD. A participatory approach for the development of the CPD was already put in place, including a two-day workshop on the theory of change and RBM facilitated by the regional adviser (October 2019) with the participation of all project managers and programme teams, as well as a series of brainstorming sessions with the entire programme team. This made UNDP well prepared to contribute to the preparation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and ensure it leads to a consolidated programme of UNDP.



Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
1.1. Design a strong theory of change for each outcome area for the next programme cycle, integrated around the pillars of effective governance and resilient growth towards the vision of a 'just, equal and resilient society by 2030'.	March 2020	Cluster leads, Senior Management	Initiated	
1.2. Ensure a more coherent and integrated programme design, trickling down to project implementation and synergies across thematic interventions. Assess all new interventions against the broader theory of change, by establishing cross-sector review teams (internal project appraisal committee), for more synergies across projects and portfolios. Prepare strategy notes/broad and sharp programme documents for each portfolio.	Ongoing	Programme team, Senior Management	No due date	
1.3. UNDP will align the priorities for the new CPD and subsequent programmatic interventions to the National Development Strategy 2030, as well as recently approved sectoral strategies – Green Economy Strategy, National Innovation Strategy, Commitment on Paris Agreement etc. Thus, substantive upstream engagement of UNDP support will be ensured, enhancing the relevance of the programme and support to the reform process.	Ongoing	Cluster leads, Senior Management	No due date	

Recommendation 2.

UNDP's country programme should be backed up by a strong M&E framework and a mechanism for systematic reflection on outcome-level results.

UNDP should invest in the improvement of its M&E framework to reflect the theory of change, not only in terms of ensuring the use of better indicators and use of innovative approaches to track the results at the outcome level (e.g. behaviour change measurement, outcome harvesting), but also a reflection on results and their transformative effects at project-portfolio-programme levels, and also in line with the SDGs. As this will require new approaches and skills in integrated outcome monitoring, analysis and reporting on results, UNDP should invest in building capacity of its programme teams and M&E focal points in this area, and consider creating a dedicated M&E specialist position in the country office.

Management Response: 	The need to boost M&E capacity is well noted. Some efforts to boost M&E capacity development for the CO were put in place, through the attendance of the M&E focal point in two regional training, including on the new methodology for the UNSDCF. Further actions are to be initiated in 2020.			
Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
2.1. Ensure the new CPD is supported by strong M&E framework and innovative approaches are considered.	May 2020	Resources Management Unit (RMU), Senior Management	Initiated	
2.2. Consider the creation of a dedicated/ upgraded M&E specialist position in the country office, during a CO realignment mission, scheduled tentatively for early 2020.	March 2020	Senior Management, Regional Bureau		
2.3. Ensure adequate funding for monitoring activities in each project and budget for evaluations.	Ongoing	M&E focal point/RMU	No due date	

Recommendation 3. 	<p>UNDP should continue to support the justice sector reform process by building on the lessons learned and best practices from its engagement with the civic courts and develop a replicable model that can be adapted and scaled up across the entire court system in Uzbekistan. This support should be ingrained in strong programme theory, to enable adequate tracking of outputs-outcomes-impacts of the assistance for citizens.</p> <p>Justice sector reform is extremely important for the new Government. Based on results achieved within the sector thus far, UNDP has been strategically positioned as a key partner of the Government in support to the justice sector reform. In the next programme cycle, UNDP should build on best practices and lessons learned from its support to the justice sector reforms, in particular the E-SUD civic court system, to develop a replicable model to be adapted and used across the entire court system. As part of its engagement, UNDP should ensure that a strong monitoring and evaluation framework is in place to ensure learning from the process, but also to use this evidence as an advocacy tool for reforms, particularly for improving access to justice for the most vulnerable groups, particularly women.</p>			
Management Response: 	The recommendation is well noted. Judicial integrity and rule of law are key elements for effective governance, as reflected in the draft vision for the new UNSDCF and will be one of the focus areas for the new CPD.			

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
3.1. Continue strategic review of the UNDP support to justice sector reform, considering opportunity for an elevated strategy and theory of change, with clear pathways for scale-up and replication across the country, including strong M&E framework.	May 2020	Good Governance Cluster, Senior Management	Initiated	
3.2. Based on the analysis of the lessons learned, aligned with the new direction of the CPD and theory of change, develop a new intervention focusing on improving access to justice, particularly for most vulnerable groups and improving judicial efficiency. Promotion of innovative tools/approaches will be part of it.	December 2020	Good Governance Cluster, Senior Management	Initiated	

Recommendation 4.

UNDP should use the Government's momentum and readiness to invest in strengthening the human rights framework and mechanisms for ensuring access to and protection of rights of most vulnerable groups, in particular women and PWD.

At the onset of the current country programme, human rights were extremely sensitive and resulting in very limited investments and results in this field. However, political changes brought new momentum and readiness of the Government to further invest in fulfilling its international commitments in the field of human rights. UNDP should continue and deepen its support to the operationalization of Uzbekistan's human rights commitments stemming from UN conventions the country is signatory to, particularly CEDAW, CRPD, and also UPR recommendations. Support should be provided in the form of technical assistance through training, mentoring, advisory and policy advocacy and dialogue on human rights, with particular emphasis of rights of women, PWD and other most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Also, support to the Ombudsperson's Office and the NHRC should be continued through long-term structural engagement by UNDP in cooperation with other UN agencies.

Management Response:

UNDP will continue capitalizing on the new momentum and openness from the Government to further advance the operationalization of Uzbekistan's human rights commitments, particularly advancing women rights and social protection of persons with disabilities, noting that adequate resources were mobilized from partners.



Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
4.1. With funding from the UN SDG Fund, in November 2019, a new UN Joint Programme (UNICEF, ILO, UNDP) was launched aiming to strengthen the social protection system in Uzbekistan. In a coherent and integrated approach, UNDP will support the Government to test the disability assessment procedures and design service delivery based on the CRPD.	31 December 2022	Good Governance Cluster	Initiated	
4.2. Further expand programmatic engagement for the advancement of women's empowerment and gender equality, especially by providing support to the Government to implement the two recently adopted laws on equality of women and men and on gender-based violence. Access to legal aid for victims of domestic violence will be part of it.	31 December 2021	Good Governance Cluster	Initiated	
4.3. Provide further support for the improvement of the legal and institutional framework as well as capacity-building of state agencies, Parliament, National Mechanisms for Reporting and Follow-up and NHRIs to strengthen the compliance of the national legislation and law enforcement practices with international human rights treaties, to ensure better fulfilment of international human rights obligations and promote the SDGs.	31 March 2022	Good Governance Cluster	Initiated	

Recommendation 5.



Given the wide scope and appetite of the Government for public administration reforms, UNDP needs to ensure that its support within the sector is well targeted and defined to ensure a clear focus and desired outcomes of assistance in a limited number of areas of UNDP's comparative advantage. UNDP's public administration portfolio needs to be consolidated to ensure that it does not fall into the trap of doing too little of everything.

Public administration reform is an extremely wide, all-encompassing notion, with many areas that are exciting from the reform point of view. UNDP needs to carefully analyse the areas and pace of public administration reforms and its related achievements within reform thus far. It should be done from the perspective of what UNDP, as a single actor, can realistically tackle in order to achieve transformative effects. One area that UNDP invested thus far with high-impact opportunity has been the support to e-governance and e-services. However, with the IFIs entering the country, there is a possibility these may well fall within their mandate as well in the upcoming period. UNDP should consider whether its support to e-governance and e-services is still relevant, particularly from the point of potential interlinkages with support to the justice sector. For wider public administration reform, UNDP should avoid engaging in areas in which it has little substantive expertise. The context of fast-paced reforms and changing priorities requires strong expertise and grounding and UNDP can serve better as an adviser within areas of its comparative advantage. In the context of the influx of development partners with similar expertise, the time ahead will be critically important for UNDP to reflect, re-strategize and strategically position itself in the country.

Management Response:



The recommendation is well acknowledged. Reconsideration of UNDP's public administration portfolio has been initiated to ensure an integrated, coherent and coordinated approach. It is aligned with the proposed vision of the new UNSDCF for an efficient, capable, responsible and accountable public administration.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
5.1. Develop a strong theory of change for the outcome area of the public administration reform, building on comparative advance and value-added of UNDP intervention, lessons learned and expertise.	March 2020	Good Governance Cluster, Senior Management	Initiated	
5.2. Restructure and consolidate the current portfolio of public administration reform, along the new theory of change to maximize the impact of interventions. Equitable access to quality public services will be at the core of it.	December 2020	Good Governance Cluster, Senior Management		

Recommendation 6.



Building on the foundations of its existing work, UNDP should deepen its engagement in the areas tackled under the environmental sustainability and risk reduction portfolio, working closely with the Government and in line with the government priorities.

The reprioritization of UNDP's environmental sustainability and risk reduction portfolio has strategically positioned UNDP in addressing the Government's priorities around climate change mitigation and adaptation, and DRR. UNDP should build on the achievements so far on climate change adaptation and mitigation, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and DRR. In particular, UNDP should continue to work to promote integrated land management approaches and the efficient use of water resources and link this with climate change adaptation. UNDP should continue to promote the deployment of renewable energy sources and systems and lead a participatory policy dialogue, advocating for the scaling-up of energy efficiency initiatives across the country. UNDP should support biodiversity conservation more broadly, including emphasizing its bio-economic value to help Uzbekistan meet its objectives under the international environmental conventions it is party to. And last, but not the least, UNDP should continue to enhance national capacities in DRR through, inter alia, enhancement of the multi-hazard early warning system in the country.

Management Response:



The recommendation is well noted. UNDP will continue its efforts to deepen engagement in the Aral Sea region and beyond, including through the SDG integration early mover's initiative (among the eight global cases).

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
6.1. Under the next CPD, UNDP will further strengthen its engagement in the Aral Sea region, which is the environmentally most depressed region in the country. For this, UNDP will promote the SDG integration agenda in the Aral Sea region to address the given complex issue through systems and innovations approach. As part of this effort, UNDP will i) support identifying the first portfolio of projects/priority projects to implement the Concept Note; and agree on UNDP-led projects; ii) support the preparation of priority projects under the Operational Framework/ Roadmap, including climate risk assessment, feasibility/concepts/proposals development; iii) promote alternative financing for the Aral Sea: Experiment crowdfunding scheme, green sukuk of other Islamic finance instruments.	31 December 2025	Sustainable Development Cluster	Initiated	

<p>6.2. UNDP will continue supporting the Government to finalize the development of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan that will set the national strategy on climate change adaptation in key sectors and regions most affected to climate change impacts, based on climate change vulnerability analysis.</p>	31 December 2022	Sustainable Development Cluster	Initiated	
<p>6.3. UNDP will continue working to obtain funding from the GCF for a large-scale initiative with the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Uzhydromet on enhancing the multi-hazard early warning systems to climate-change-induced risks.</p>	31 December 2027	Sustainable Development Cluster	Initiated	

Recommendation 7.



UNDP should strengthen its value proposition and develop a long-term resource mobilization strategy based on a well-articulated plan of engagement with partners and clear targets to diversify its funding base and pursue it more forcefully.

The changing donor landscape in the country and fast entry of IFIs presents UNDP with an opportunity to develop a long-term resource mobilization strategy based on its value proposition and comparative advantage. In parallel to pursuing funding from the vertical funds (the GEF, Adaptation Fund and the GCF) and traditional bilateral donors and the EU; UNDP should invest more systematic efforts in exploring non-traditional funding models including engagement with the IFIs and the private sector. The strategy should also explore strengthening its partnerships with other UN agencies in pursuit of joint programming towards the SDGs.

Management Response:



The recommendation is acknowledged. A strong value proposition will be developed as part of the new CPD and the new Partnerships and Communications Action Plan, with clear targets to engage with partners and diversify the funding base.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Status	Comments
<p>7.1. Develop the Partnerships and Communications Action Plan, and articulate clearly in the new CPD, UNDP Uzbekistan value proposition for a revamped engagement with partners and diversified donor base (including government cost-sharing).</p>	June 2020	Senior Management, Programme Clusters, RMU		

Evaluation Recommendation 7. (cont'd)

7.2. Given its long-term engagement and strengths, UNDP will continue work to capitalize on resource mobilization from vertical funds such as the GEF, Adaptation Fund and the GCF to further solidify its portfolio in the areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation and environmental sustainability.	Ongoing	Sustainable Development Cluster	No due date	
7.3. UNDP will further explore alternative finance instruments such as Islamic finance, green/social bonds as well as blending with IFI loans to scale up the best practices it has tested through small demonstration efforts.	Ongoing	Programme Clusters, Senior Management	No due date	
7.4. UNDP will support more multi-country and regional projects and facilitate the interaction with the Government to include Uzbekistan in such regional and subregional initiatives.	Ongoing	Programme Clusters, Senior Management	No due date	

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the Evaluation Resource Centre database.

Annexes



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at:
<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12564>

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Evaluation matrix

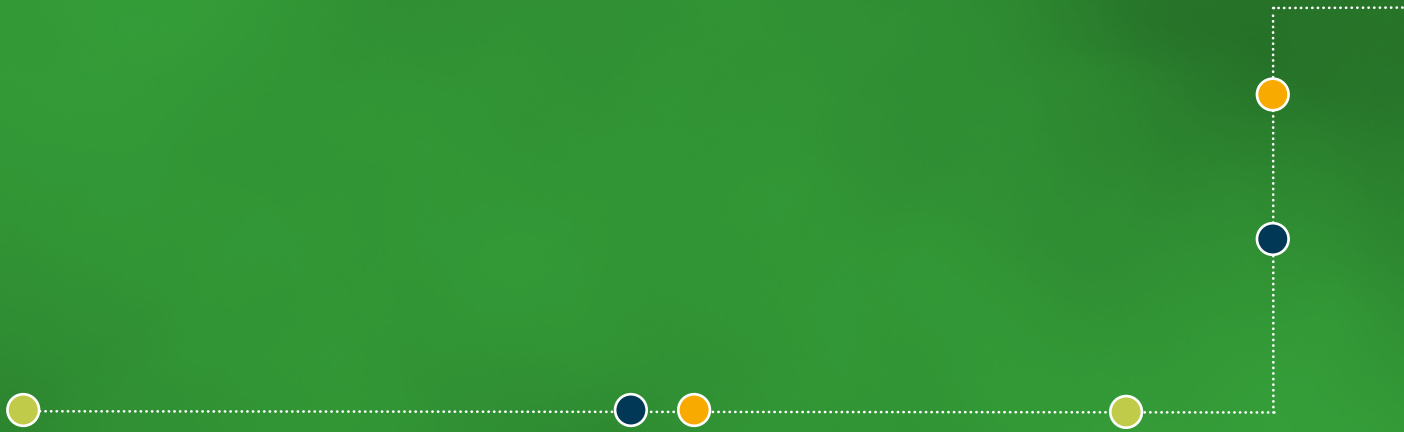
Annex 3. Country at a glance

Annex 4. Country office at a glance

Annex 5. Project list

Annex 6. Documents consulted

Annex 7. People consulted



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