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United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION
EL SALVADOR

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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: EL SALVADOR

Acknowledgements

Foreword

It is my pleasure to present the second Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in El Salvador. The evaluation, which covered the 2016–2020 period, was conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP in 2019 in close collaboration with the UNDP El Salvador country office and the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Relations between the Government of El Salvador and the United Nations Development Programme were formalized in 1975 with the signature of the Standard Basic Agreement. Over the last four years, UNDP's strategy has been guided by the 2016–2020 country programme document, which was structured around four pillars: (i) universal and equitable access to and coverage of basic goods and services; (ii) decent work and sustainable livelihoods; (iii) basic consensus that guarantees people´s full exercise of their rights; and (iv) human resilience to natural events.

The evaluation found that UNDP is valued as a reliable, credible and trusted partner that is well positioned to address human development challenges. To remain financially sustainable, UNDP has adapted its business model to work increasingly with a government cost-financing approach. This model in El Salvador combined UNDP's fiduciary role, through the provision of administrative development services to the Government and other UN agencies, with strategic technical advice on key national priorities. However, the reduction in office personnel in 2016, due to the decrease in infrastructure projects, constrained the balance between strategic technical support and the provision of administrative operational development services.

UNDP has successfully supported the country's environmental agenda, promoted an integrated approach to citizen security at national level and supported election processes. However, areas such as poverty reduction, inequality, exclusion and decent employment – issues that remain central to UNDP's mandate and that are considered crucial for its engagement in El Salvador – are yet to be fully addressed.

I hope the report will be of use to readers seeking to better understand the wide array of support provided by UNDP in the country, including what has worked and what hasn't, as well as the factors that have influenced UNDP's performance and development contributions to El Salvador. I am confident that the findings and recommendations of this independent evaluation report, combined with the management response from the country office, will provide valuable inputs to the formulation of the next UNDP country programme and engagement strategy with the Government of El Salvador, for the benefit of the people we serve.

Oscar A. Garcia
Director
Independent Evaluation Office

Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
CEPA	Autonomous Executive Port Commission
CPAP	Country programme action plan
CPD	Country programme document
CO	Country office
CONASAV	National Council for Environmental Sustainability and Vulnerability
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FOPROLYD	Fund for the protection of disabled veterans
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRES	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISBM	Salvadoran Institute for Teachers' Health
ISSS	Salvadoran Social Security Institute
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MAPS	Mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support
MINSAL	Ministry of Health
PDP	Provider Development Programme
PESS	El Salvador National Security Plan
ROAR	Results Oriented Annual Report
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TSE	Supreme Electoral Court
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Evaluation Brief: El Salvador

El Salvador has experienced both advances and challenges since its 12-year civil war ended with the signing of peace agreements in 1992. The country has consolidated its democratic system and seen improvements in life expectancy, schooling, health and poverty reduction. However, economic investments have been affected by high levels of citizen insecurity and violence, which particularly limit opportunities for youth, who represent more than half the population. Although strong inflows of remittances have built an informal social protection system, people's limited access to basic goods and services has led to significant social exclusion, vulnerability and inequality, with wide gaps based on sex, age and geography.

The UNDP country programme for the period 2016–2020 was aligned with the government's five-year Development Plan 2014–2019. The country programme outlined four main priorities: access to basic goods and services; sustainable livelihoods; consensus building; and human resilience to natural events. Over the period of implementation, the country office successfully mobilized non-core resources from government cost-financing and vertical funds.

Programme expenditure by outcome area (million US$)

Outcome	Expenditure
Outcome 29 DRR & climate change	2.44
Outcome 28 Governance & human rights	4.18
Outcome 27 Decent employment	12.72
Outcome 26 Basic goods & services	46.49

Funding sources

Other resources	Regular resources	Vertical trust funds	Bilateral/multilateral funds	Government cost sharing
0.3%	2.1%	4.7%	13%	80%
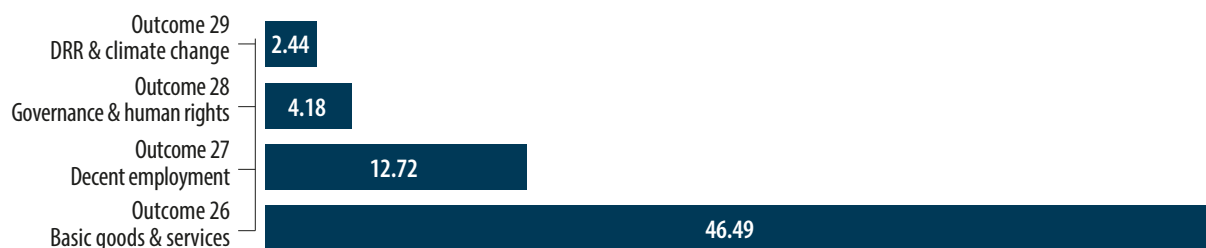
Findings and conclusions

UNDP is highly valued as a reliable, credible and trusted partner. It is strategically positioned with the Government through the provision of administrative development services, mainly on procurement, and strategic technical advice on key national priorities. UNDP has played an important role in bringing together diverse actors, creating opportunities for dialogue on priority and sensitive issues. It has also served as a knowledge broker, helping to increase access to data and information. Over the last 10 years, UNDP has adapted its business model to work increasingly with government cost-financing. Yet the reduction in office personnel in 2016, due to the decrease in infrastructure projects, upset the balance between strategic technical support and administrative operational development services.

UNDP has successfully supported the country's environmental agenda, including by facilitating access to funds, aiding compliance with international commitments and raising awareness on environmental sustainability. At local level, UNDP has contributed to the expansion of protected wetlands through the establishment of institutional frameworks for biodiversity and environmental protection. However, the limited engagement by the country office (CO) on economic development precluded it from addressing poverty, inequality, exclusion and decent employment through an integrated, inclusive sustainable development strategy to promote resilience and sustainable livelihoods. In the areas of women's economic empowerment and youth, efforts remained at initial stages. UNDP's contributions to rural development were limited to a fiduciary role.

The CO prioritized efforts for the prevention of violence, promoting an integrated approach to citizen security at national level and piloting social reintegration initiatives at local level. Support to justice and human rights institutions to sustain a holistic rule-of-law approach was limited. Efforts to promote citizen participation were limited and did not enable comprehensive implementation of a rights-based approach.

In terms of the effectiveness of results across the portfolio, an important challenge identified by the evaluation team is the fact that institutional capacity development strategies have not been systematically implemented to ensure exit strategies and sustainability for results.

UNDP has not been effective in promoting a culture of learning and strategic knowledge management, focusing more on procedural compliance. The use and dissemination of evaluations has been limited and has not led to learning or adaptive management.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1. UNDP should review the office operational and programmatic structure to ensure it can effectively address the country's priorities in line with UNDP's mandate. The CO should adapt its way of working to proactively position itself strategically with the new Government, promoting more innovation and South-South cooperation.

RECOMMENDATION 2. UNDP should review the underlying strategies and theories of change of its programme to enhance the effectiveness of the human-rights-based approach, institutional capacity-development strategies and knowledge management.

RECOMMENDATION 3. UNDP should reposition itself as a lead agency on inclusive economic development. Through joint initiatives at local level, it should develop integrated and inclusive sustainable development initiatives to further promote resilience and sustainable livelihoods that address the most pressing needs of women and youth in terms of inequality and poverty.

RECOMMENDATION 4. UNDP should expand its institutional strengthening support to justice entities with a comprehensive rule-of-law approach as an enabler of good governance. To improve citizen security and social cohesion results, it should provide significant capacity-development to the justice system for a more coherent response to the country's violence and insecurity challenges through a rule-of-law approach.

RECOMMENDATION 5. UNDP should ensure that organizational learning and risk management take place at all levels. It should move away from a compliance-focused approach, without appropriate knowledge management, and implement the recommendations of previous evaluations that remain valid and unimplemented, including those from the 2011 Assessment of Development Results that were not fully addressed.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) in the Republic of El Salvador in 2019. An ICPE is an independent evaluation carried out 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. This evaluation had two main objectives:

• Support the development of the next UNDP country programme in El Salvador, to be implemented starting in 2021, based on evaluative evidence of past performance; and

• Strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders and the Executive Board.

The ICPE was undertaken because the country programme is due to end in 2020. This is the second country-level evaluation conducted by UNDP in El Salvador; the first was an Assessment of Development Results (ADR) carried out in 2011.[1] This ICPE covers the period from 2016 to October 2019, covering most of the 2016–2020 programme cycle. The cycle has spanned two national governments, two UNDP Strategic Plans and two UNDP Resident Representatives. The previous country programme period was also considered during the evaluation when relevant to assess sustainability of results.

Primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP El Salvador country office (CO), the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC), the UNDP Executive Board and the Government of El Salvador.

BOX 1. Main 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?

1.2. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was guided by the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards[2] and the ethical Code of Conduct.[3] It was carried out within the overall provisions of the UNDP Evaluation Policy.[4] In accordance with the terms of reference (Annex 1), the evaluation was guided by three main evaluation questions (Box 1).

The evaluation mostly relied on qualitative methods. Data and information collected from various sources and means were triangulated to ensure the validity of findings. Primary and secondary data were collected using various methods, including:

i. A portfolio analysis and desk review of all programme documents; project progress reports; information from UNDP corporate, CO monitoring and reporting systems, self-assessment reports (such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports [ROARs]), project evaluations, audit reports, financial data, gender analytics and other available background documents on the national context, among others (Annex 6 lists all the documents consulted and Annex 7 outlines output and outcome indicators);

ii. Consultations were held with a total of 177 key informants using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, both in San Salvador and at project sites. Among the key informants were representatives of government counterparts,

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[1] See: https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/4381.

[2] See: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914.

[3] See: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100.

[4] See: UNDP Evaluation Policy: http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml.

civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, UN agencies, bilateral donors, UNDP staff at the CO and RBLAC, and communities participating in the projects (see Annex 5 for a full list of the people consulted). The interviews were used to collect data; assess stakeholders' views on the scope, contributions and performance of UNDP programme interventions; and determine the constraints encountered in implementing the programme and the strengths and weaknesses of UNDP in El Salvador.

iii. Project activities were observed in five locations (Jiquilisco, Chalatenango, San Martín, Zacatecoluca and Guazapa), allowing the evaluation team to see first-hand the achievements of some key projects. These projects and locations were selected through a review of project documents and in discussions with programme managers. This ensured coverage of interventions in diverse geographical locations and thematic areas (i.e. citizen insecurity, natural resources management and employment creation).

iv. Two pre-mission self-assessment questionnaires were completed by the CO, addressing key issues covered by the evaluation. The first, conducted in March 2019 prior to the remote government interviews, was focused on programme results; the second, conducted in September 2019 prior to the main field mission, focused on the CO internal management.

v. Preliminary findings were presented to the CO staff at the end of the data collection mission to validate initial findings and clarify where additional evidence was needed.

The effectiveness of UNDP's country programme was analysed through an assessment of progress made towards achievement of the expected outputs over the review period and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the intended country programme outcomes. A multi-stakeholder approach was followed, collecting views from a diverse range of stakeholders on UNDP's performance and contributions at the national level. This process supported consideration of both positive and negative, direct and indirect and unintended results.

To better understand UNDP's performance and the potential for sustainability of results, the evaluation examined the specific factors that have influenced or hindered results. In assessing the evolution of the country programme, UNDP's capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to national development needs and priorities was also examined. The utilization of resources to deliver results (including managerial practices) was assessed, along with the extent to which the CO fostered partnerships and synergies with other actors. Joint programmes were assessed considering the scope and level of UNDP's contribution towards planned outputs and outcomes.

A theory of change was reconstructed by the evaluation team to map causal linkages between planned activities, results achieved, outcomes and goals of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), as well as to interpret findings (Annex 8). The evaluation also followed up on implementation of the 2011 ADR recommendations.

The evaluation integrated a gender-responsive approach to data collection. To assess gender across the portfolio, the review considered the UNDP gender marker[5] and IEO's gender results effectiveness scale (GRES, Figure 1). The GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive, gender transformative.

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[5] A corporate tool to sensitize programme managers in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It assigns ratings to projects during their design phase to indicate the level of expected contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment. It can also be used to track planned programme expenditures on this issue (not actual expenditures).

FIGURE 1: IEO gender results effectiveness scale

Gender Negative	Gender Blind	Gender Targeted	Gender Responsive	Gender Transformative
Result had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced existing gender inequalities and norms.	Result had no attention to gender, failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys or marginalized populations.	Result focused on numerical equity (50/50) of women, men and marginalized populations that were targeted.	Result addressed differential needs of men and women and equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights but did not address root causes of inequalities in their lives.	Result contributes to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations.

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

The main limitations faced in conducting this evaluation included the lack of outcome evaluations during the evaluation period, the change in government and, as reported by the CO, the sensitive political situation in the country, which impeded wide consultation and the dissemination of the report among external partners. The team mitigated these limitations by conducting the evaluation in two phases, to capture performance and lessons from the previous Government through remote interviews in March, and with face-to-face interviews with the new Government in October. The team also used secondary information sources such as project evaluations conducted during the evaluation period, and extended the consultation process with the CO and RBLAC.

The evaluation started in December 2018 with drafting of the terms of reference, and external consultants were recruited in January 2019. Presidential elections took place in early February 2019 and the new Government took office on 1 June 2019. Therefore, the desk review was conducted in February 2019 to summarize initial evaluative evidence on results, and key informant interviews with government counterparts were carried out by telephone and Skype in March 2019. A second, shorter desk review was conducted in September 2019.

The data collection mission took place between 7 and 22 October 2019. It included an internal debriefing with the CO staff to present preliminary findings and areas for recommendations. Outcome analysis papers were prepared and synthesized into a draft report in November 2019, which was submitted for IEO peer review and review by one of IEO's Evaluation Advisory Panel members in December 2019. The revised draft was shared with the CO and RBLAC for several rounds of comments. Given the concerns expressed by the CO and RBLAC about sharing the report with external partners, a final internal stakeholder debriefing was delivered via videoconference at the end of March 2020.

1.3. Overview of the national development context

The Republic of El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in Central America. It has a population of 6.4 million[6] and an additional 2.5 million people living abroad, most of them in the United States. Since the end of the civil war and the peace agreements in 1992, the country has embarked on six different electoral processes. The 2019 presidential election was won by a candidate from outside the

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[6] World Bank data.

two political parties that have dominated El Salvador since 1992, but political polarization has continued to characterize the country.

El Salvador suffers from important threats in terms of violence, citizen insecurity and impunity. The country has one of the highest homicide rates in the world outside war zones, particularly among youth. It suffers from persistent low levels of growth, and underemployment is at 60 percent.[7] Extortion and violence have depressed economic investments and led to the closure of small businesses, further limiting economic opportunities for the population. In 2017, the economic cost of violence was calculated as 49 percent of GDP.[8] This has been an important driver of displacement and migration and has curtailed development. The government's security response has emphasized repression. More recently, a more holistic response to citizen security has been designed with the development of the Plan El Salvador Seguro. It focuses on preventing violence, a priority recognized by the current administration, along with reconstruction of the social fabric. However, implementation has been inadequate, and the Plan has not been complemented with a focus on social reintegration and justice strengthening.

El Salvador is a lower-middle-income country. Over the past decades positive trends have been seen in life expectancy, schooling and health. This is despite GDP growth that is lower than the global average for the country's income group and a significant decline in official development assistance, from $302 million in 2010 to $90 million in 2015.[9] The country's Human Development Index ranking is 124 out of 189 countries.[10] When adjusted for inequality, the HDI value falls from 0.667 to 0.521; and when disaggregated by gender, the female HDI falls to 0.654.

People's limited access to basic goods and services has led to significant social exclusion, vulnerability and inequality, with wide gaps in terms of sex, age and geography. The incidence of multidimensional poverty was 35.2 percent in 2017, and in rural areas it was 58.5 percent.[11] Yet strong inflows of remittances have built an informal social protection system and contributed to falling poverty rates.[12] It is estimated that 64 percent of the Salvadoran population is under 30.[13] However, youth face important challenges: 6 out of 10 students entering the education system do not finish high school;[14] 19,190 pregnancies among girls and teenagers were reported in 2017;[15] job opportunities are limited; 28 percent of young people are neither studying nor working;[16] and 44.3 percent of murder victims are in the age group 18 to 29.[17]

Gender equality remains a very important challenge, as the country ranks 91 out of 160 countries on the gender inequality index. Only 47 percent of women participate in the labour force, compared to 79 percent of men.[18] Although a Special Comprehensive Law for a Life Free of Violence for Women was approved in 2011, the country still suffers from high rates of violence against women and femicide, including domestic violence and gang-related femicide. The country has an absolute prohibition on abortion, which can lead to a homicide conviction, regardless of the circumstances, even if the woman's life is at risk or if she has suffered a miscarriage or sexual violence.[19] Impunity for gender violence remains common. Women's participation in political life is

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[7] MAPS mission report.

[8] Institute for Economics & Peace, 'The Economic Value of Peace 2018: Measuring the Global Economic Impact of Violence and Conflict', Sydney, October 2018. Available at http://economicsandpeace.org/reports/.

[9] OECD International Development Statistics. See: stats.oecd.org.

[10] See UNDP Human Development Report 2019. For more information, see Annex 2.

[11] Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency (STPP) and General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses (MINEC- General Directorate of Statistics and Census), 'Multidimensional poverty measurement El Salvador 2015', El Salvador, 2015. pp. 15-16.

[12] Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), Panorama Social de América Latina, 2019 (LC/PUB.2019/22-P/Re v.1), Santiago, 2019. p. 206. See: https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/44969/5/S1901133_es.pdf.

[13] MAPS mission report.

[14] MAPS mission report.

[15] UNFPA, 'Mapa de embarazos en niñas y adolescentes', El Salvador 2017.

[16] MAPS mission report.

[17] USAID–UNDP. INFOSEGURA 2019 Data. http://infosegura.org/seccion/el-salvador/.

[18] UNDP, Human Development Report 2019.

[19] https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/12/639642-un-rights-office-urges-el-salvador-reform-draconian-abortion-laws.

very low; only 31 percent of the seats in the national parliament were held by women in 2018.[20]

The country is also very vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly earthquakes, volcanoes, floods and droughts. However, it has not yet transitioned from emergency response to disaster risk reduction (DRR). The impacts of climate change represent an important threat to 90 percent of the territory and 95 percent of the population.[21] Although El Salvador has a great diversity of ecosystems, it faces significant risks in terms of deforestation, land erosion, water pollution, poor waste management and desertification.

1.4. The UNDP programme in El Salvador

Relations between the Government of El Salvador and UNDP were formalized in 1975 with the signature of the Standard Basic Agreement. Over the last four years, UNDP's strategy has been guided by the 2016–2020 country programme document (CPD), which was structured around four outcomes (Figure 2): (i) universal and equitable access to and coverage of basic goods and services; (ii) decent work and sustainable livelihoods; (iii) basic consensus that guarantees people´s full exercise of their rights; and (iv) human resilience to natural events. The CPD is aligned with the 2014–2019 national five-year Development Plan; the 2016–2020 UNDAF for El Salvador, developed in line with the 'Delivering as One' approach;[22] and UNDP's 2014–2017 Strategic Plan. The CPD outputs were reviewed in 2018 to align the CO results framework with UNDP's 2018–2021 Strategic Plan.

FIGURE 2: El Salvador country programme document outcomes

OUTCOME 1 The population enjoys a better coverage and universal and equitable access to goods and basic services of quality	OUTCOME 2 The population enjoys greater opportunities for access to a decent employment and sustainable livelihoods, contributing to the productive and inclusive growth	OUTCOME 3 El Salvador enjoys new essential country agreements that enabled the population and the people in vulnerable situations and excluded, to enjoy the full exercise of their rights	OUTCOME 4 The population and those who are most vulnerable and excluded have increased their resilient capacities to face disasters, environmental degradation and the negative effects of climate change
Selected public institutions improve their public investment planning and implementation capacities at the national and local	Targeted territories reactivated with the implementation of public policies and economic initiatives	Participatory, effective and transparent dialogue mechanisms and processes established for national and local priorities	Targeted municipalities and local actors improve their post-disaster recovery capacities
Targeted public institutions with effective, efficient and transparent management tools	Productive units and businesses improve their market access, favouring the inclusion of women and youth	Mechanisms established to generate and share knowledge regarding development solutions	Institutional capacities have been developed to advance resilience in cities and communities
Institutions of security and criminal justice sector with improved capacities to articulate an effective evidence-based response to violence	Improving productive capacities, applying sustainable technologies and generating livelihoods for women and youth	The lead electoral management entity has improved capacities to guarantee fair and free elections	Created cross-sector partnerships at the national and local levels to strengthen climate change adaptation and DRR
Population in priority municipalities with institutional violence prevention mechanisms and a system to care and protect victims	Conditions for the economic empowerment of women have been promoted	Women have increased participation spaces in politics and in the public sphere	Targeted institutions have quality information for decision-making concerning climate change, DRR and local development
Victims of violence with institutional tools to secure access to justice	Systems of national accounts revealing unpaid productive work	Platform enabled for the development of integrated solutions for the implementation of the SDGs	Targeted institutions have increased their capacities to access climate financing
	Measures have been taken for reliable, sustainable and efficient energy use		
	Developed solutions for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services maintenance		
	Key areas in the country have increased their capacities to access climate funding		

■ Outputs that were deleted at midterm
■ Outputs that were added at midterm

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[20] UNDP, Human Development Report 2019.

[21] El Salvador National Environment Policy, 2012. See: http://www.marn.gob.sv/descargas/politica-nacional-del-medio-ambiente-2012/.

[22] See: https://www.unsystem.org/content/standard-operating-procedures-countries-wishing-adopt-delivering-one-approach. El Salvador adopted the Delivering as One approach in 2014.

In its CPD, UNDP estimated that $256 million would be required to implement its five-year programme. Resources received for this programme period through July 2019 totalled $111 million and expenditures totalled $66 million, representing a 59 percent execution rate. The CO mobilized some non-core resources from vertical trust funds: $1.9 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), $2.3 million from the Peacebuilding Fund and $53 million in government cost-financing. As in most middle-income countries, core resources are minimal, representing 1.4 percent of the budget and 2.1 percent of the expenditures. Bilateral/multilateral resources represent 13 percent of the budget; the biggest donor is the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with $3.2 million. Annual spending decreased sharply over the programme period, from $27 million in 2016 to $18 million in 2018, due to the closure of infrastructure projects (see evidence on Finding 3).[23] According to the CO, the decreasing financial execution rate for 2019 resulted from the change of government.

As of July 2019, there were 30 active projects. As most take place at central level within government institutions, they have not been particularly affected by the high levels of violence in the country. Most resources have been concentrated on the first outcome, on access to basic services, which includes 24 of the 60 projects in this programme cycle, and specifically on health projects (Figure 3). Expenditures on outcome 2 are mainly related to implementation of two rural development projects by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and one GEF project. One UNDAF outcome addressed the "creation of secure environment and coexistence", but UNDP did not identify it as one of the outcomes selected for this CPD. UNDP decided instead to include its significant work on citizen insecurity and violence prevention as an output under the access to basic services outcome (see findings 7 and 19; and Annexes 3 and 4 for more detailed information on the country programme.)

FIGURE 3: Evolution of programme expenditure by outcome, 2016–2018
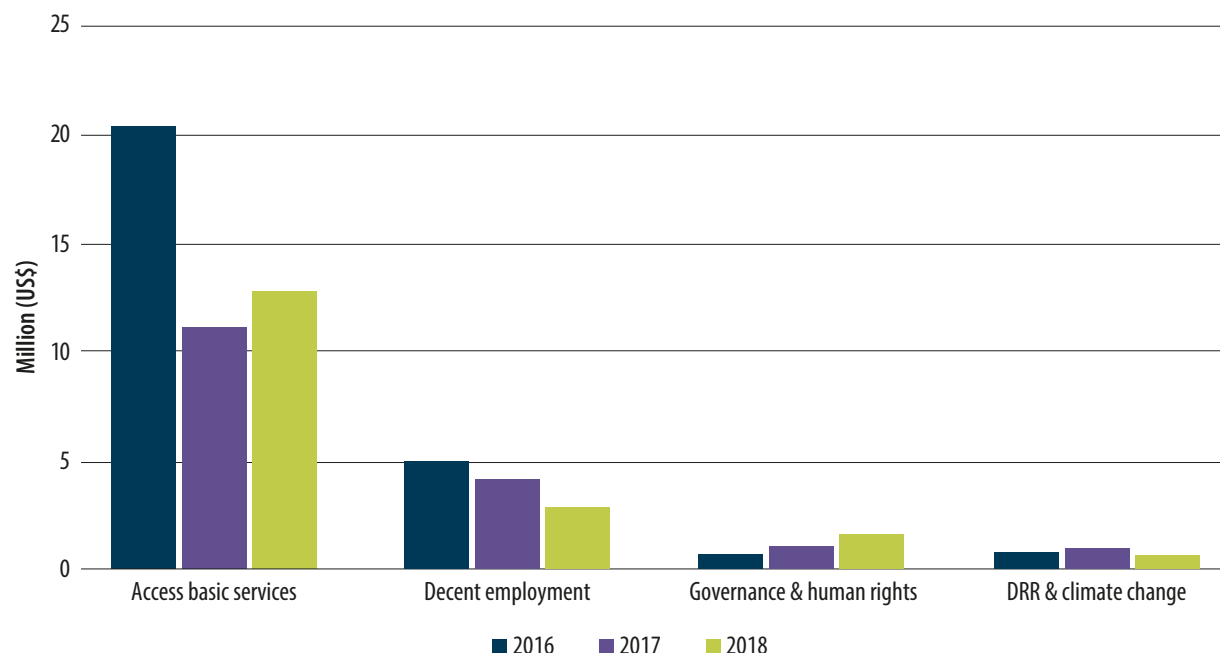
Source: UNDP Atlas, 15 July 2019.

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[23] The decrease is related to project 59394, Revitalization of Local Economies, with the Ministry of Public Works, Transport, Housing and Urban Development.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS

2.1. Overall programme implementation

Finding 1: Strategic positioning: UNDP has positioned itself as a reliable partner in providing administrative support services to the Government and other UN agencies, and as a credible and trusted actor to convene dialogue among the Government, the private sector and civil society. Its policy and technical advice skills have been supported by a strong capacity to generate knowledge and data.

The CO has developed a wide programme portfolio in key strategic areas to respond to some of the country's most pressing development concerns. This has emphasized citizen security, resilience and climate change, and promotion of dialogue. Some of these areas, such as violence prevention and environment, have been pillars of UNDP's engagement in the country for almost 15 years. In addition to supporting national priorities, UNDP has (i) put on the agenda an integrated approach to security focused on prevention, (ii) elevated environmental issues as critical concerns for the country, and (iii) opened a door to work on internal police controls.

However, UNDP's value proposition has not been as clear and well defined in relation to the country's other key priorities, such as economic growth, poverty reduction, justice, DRR and gender. This is illustrated by the results of three UNDP partnership surveys over six years (Figure 4) and detailed in findings 7, 11, 12, 13, 17 and 18.

FIGURE 4: UNDP partnership surveys, 2012–2017
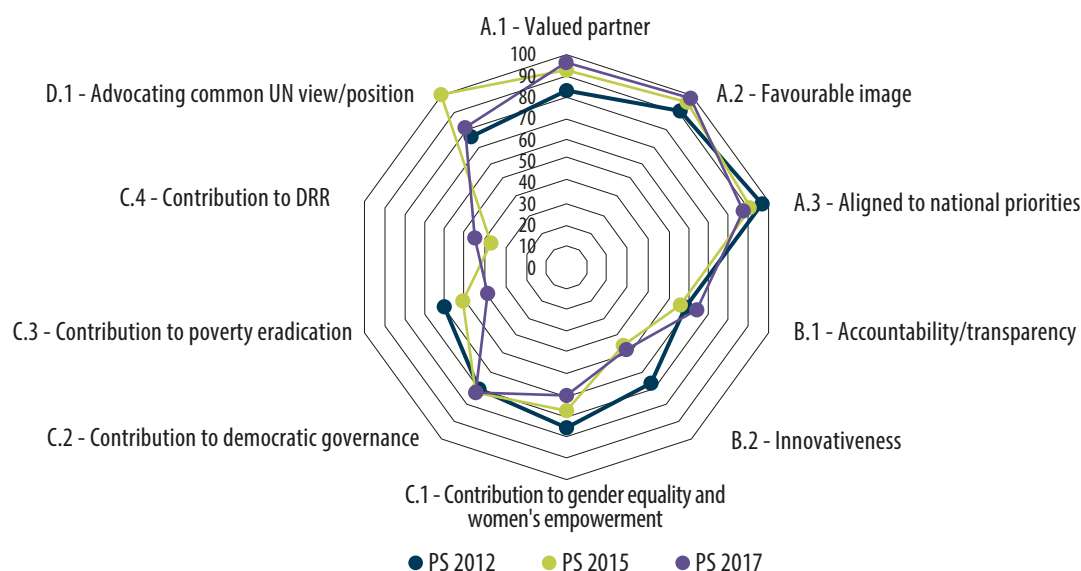
Source: UNDP Atlas, 15 July 2019.

UNDP's long reputation as an impartial partner has allowed it to be an important convener, facilitating dialogue among government counterparts, the private sector and civil society. This credibility and legitimacy were already recognized in the 2011 ADR as UNDP's most important comparative advantages for the 2002–2011 period. In this programme cycle, the CO has continued to position itself as a key builder of bridges in a politically polarized context through three National Councils, on security, education and environment. This has allowed the CO to maintain a close relationship with the Government, something particularly appreciated by all donors interviewed.

This relationship has also been strengthened by UNDP's significant efforts on knowledge generation, which have translated into the production of numerous datasets, studies and analyses. These include the work

on the National Human Development Report on youth in 2018; collection of data on security and violence through Infosegura; and production of analysis and studies on climate change issues through the Climate Change National Communication, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) readiness work and the national protected areas project. This work has been key for policy and technical advisory support and has strengthened government planning, particularly in the development of the El Salvador National Security Plan, El Salvador Educated Plan and El Salvador Sustainable Plan.

UNDP's capacity to support the procurement of goods and services was also highlighted as a significant added value by most of the government and UN partners interviewed. The CO has provided procurement support to the Government for health materials and passports for over 15 years and in the administrative management of IFAD projects for over 10 years. UNDP administrative and operational support facilitated agile procurement and recruitment processes, ensuring transparency and flexible solutions. Although these services are important and demanded by the Government, they have not been coupled with a capacity development strategy (see for example evidence on findings 5 and 6). This is key for building on UNDP's added value as a substantive technical partner and for ensuring sustainability, as noted in the 2011 ADR.

Finding 2: Partnerships: UNDP's positioning in the country has not been coupled with the development of strategic partnerships with civil society and the private sector, diminishing its capacity to leverage synergies. Also lacking has been an emphasis on South-South and triangular cooperation, tapping into UNDP's global network. This has reduced UNDP's ability to adapt and position itself to respond to government needs with more state-of-the-art, innovative solutions, particularly given the change in government.

There is scope for building on current partnerships to expand UNDP's engagement, which would increase the impact of its interventions. For example, the work

on citizen security focused only on some government institutions. An integrated and coherent approach would have benefited from strengthened work with, for example, the judiciary. Despite UNDP's focus on the production of knowledge and information, there have not been initiatives to work closely with academia or think tanks in this programme period. The one exception was engagement on citizen security issues with the Red De Conocimiento Sobre Seguridad Ciudadana (CONOSE), the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), the Fundación Dr. Guillermo Manuel Ungo (FUNDAUNGO) and the Universidad Centroamericana. As in the previous programme cycles, the CO work with civil society has continued to be limited to promoting its participation in dialogue, as opposed to wider collaboration as an implementing partner. This collaboration has been long-standing, as noted in previous evaluations.

UNDP has collaborated with the private sector around the National Councils, the Provider Development Programme (PDP), Gender Equality Seals project, SDGs[24] and, to a lesser extent, on protected areas through the GEF project. Despite government reluctance to engage with the private sector in recent years, there is opportunity to scale up this collaboration to strategically engage with the private sector in specific areas.

With the arrival of a new government focused on immediacy and local level results, and UNDP's delinking with the Resident Coordinator Office,[25] UNDP engaged in discussions with several ministries to advocate for and ensure buy-in on the projects being implemented and adapt them to new government priorities as needed. In terms of innovations, UNDP also presented the SIGOB instrument to manage government projects, whose implementation had already begun at the time of this report writing. During the evaluation discussions, while the Government was in the process of defining its strategies, UNDP had an opportunity to further use the broad range of data and information from its knowledge generation work at national level

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[24] UNDP collaborated with the Business Foundation for Social Action on the SDGs and corporate social responsibility. UNDP is part of the local branch of the Global Compact Network.

[25] This was based on a mandate from the UN General Assembly to make the resident coordinator system independent from specific agencies and more accountable to Member States.

and its capacity to bring experiences from other countries to propose new and innovative projects. The CO experience on South-South and triangular cooperation was discontinued in this programme cycle, partially due to changes in the Government and the need for UNDP's limited staff to focus on key priority areas. However, it offers the opportunity to use UNDP's well-recognized integrator role to promote a cooperation strategy and make it a well-defined comparative advantage at national level.

At local level, UNDP spread its programmatic activities across regions without an integrated approach or leveraging of synergies with other partners. Though El Salvador is a Delivering as One country, joint projects with other UN agencies remained limited. Although there are some joint programmes with shared objectives and activities, such as the Peacebuilding Fund projects, Spotlight, Pionero and INFORM, it has not been possible to overcome the 'agency logic', with separate actions under ad hoc theories of change. This remains an area for strategic interventions. They can be undertaken through innovative and integrated approaches based on UNDP's human development expertise, using an area-based development approach[26] to tackle complex development issues in specific locations based on the evidence produced.

Finding 3: Financial resources and pipeline development: UNDP El Salvador uses a business model common to the operational environment of middle-income countries, but it has not positioned itself strategically with some key donors during the programme period. As the programme portfolio has declined over the years, the CO has remained dependent on providing administrative support services to the Government for procurement of health products (and infrastructure until 2016) and implementation of grants and procurement processes for IFAD. This dependence on government funding deserves more attention to avoid potential reputational risks.

As in most middle-income countries, UNDP has increasingly relied on the government cost-financing model to finance the office and remain present in the country, an approach that highlights government trust of UNDP. The decline of UNDP core resources, reduction of development cooperation,[27] changes in practices of some traditional donors (e.g. the European Union) and the increased capacity of El Salvador to finance its own development needs have changed UNDP's business model and increased the share of government resources in UNDP's portfolio. Over the evaluation period, government financing[28] has represented up to 80 percent of the total programme expenditure, making the CO's financial sustainability reliant on one main source of funding.

The CO has continuously faced challenges in diversifying its funding sources. It experienced some success in the environment portfolio with access to GEF and, more recently, to the Adaptation Fund; and in the governance portfolio with access to USAID and Peacebuilding Fund resources. These represented 11 percent of the total expenditure over the programme period. Yet in recent years other agencies have been able to position themselves as technical partners in the country, such as UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration on migration issues, with funding by the United States. Although UNDP has managed to mobilize $3.2 million from USAID, this represents only 1.6 percent of the total $204 million disbursed by USAID in El Salvador from 2016 to 2018.[29] Additionally, UNDP was not able to position itself strategically to become an implementer of the GCF financing in El Salvador (see Finding 16), an area of strategic importance to increase the pipeline of projects.

Since 2016, the number of active projects has systematically decreased across all four outcomes (Figure 5 and Finding 4). In mid-2019, there were 30 active projects, of which only 9 remained so after the end of 2019. These correspond to three procurement-focused projects on the social investment portfolio;

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[26] Area-based development approach refers to the targeting of specific geographical areas in a country through an integrated, inclusive, participatory and flexible approach. It tries to address area-specific problems in a holistic manner, taking into account the interplay between actors and factors, and moving away from financing and managing detached projects. See: UNDP ABD Toolkit, 2012.

[27] Official development assistance fell from $300 million in 2010 to $90 million in 2015 and then increased to $151 million in 2017. Source: OECD.

[28] For UNDP, government financing refers to development projects, programmes and services that are fully or partially funded by governments and implemented with UNDP's advice and assistance. Government cost-sharing refers to government resources, either from the government's own revenues or from loans from international financial institutions, that contribute to a national or local project in the country.

[29] Source: USAID. https://results.usaid.gov/results/country/el-salvador?fiscalYear=2018.

four on the citizen insecurity portfolio, of which two will end in mid-2020; and two global projects on the environment portfolio linked to the country's international environmental commitments.

FIGURE 5: Active projects by outcome area and year, 2016–2019
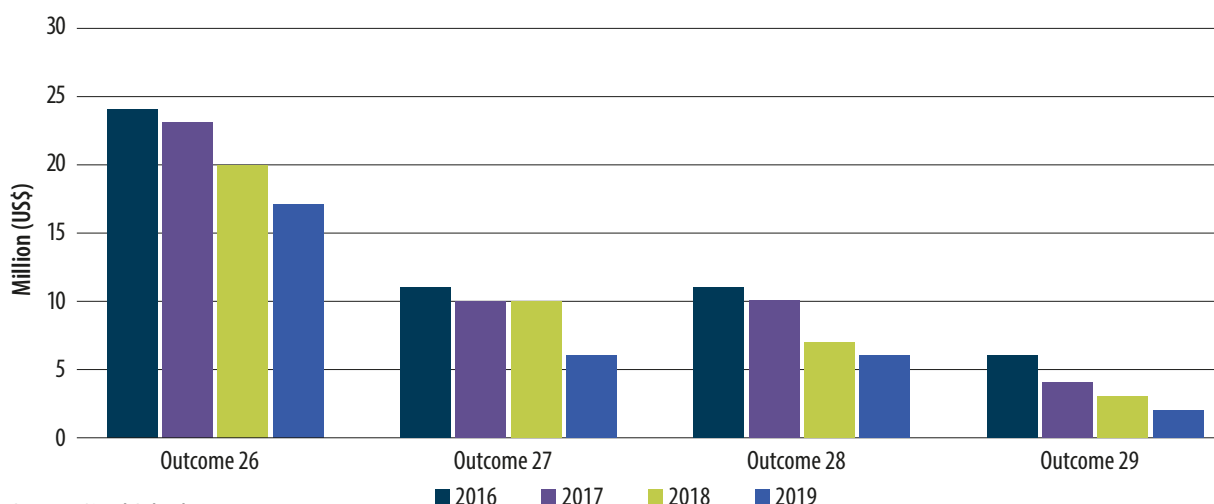
Source: ICPE El Salvador.

At the time of the evaluation, the future programme pipeline included three projects under the resilience portfolio (funded by GEF, Adaptation Fund and Germany); one under the livelihoods and decent employment area (IFAD); two small ones under the governance portfolio (UNDP and Germany); two health procurement-related projects under the access to basic services area; and one on violence against women in public transportation (Peacebuilding Fund).

However, only three projects, the one from IFAD and two health procurement-based projects, represent 73 percent of the total planned pipeline. Although the environment pipeline is expected to grow, the CO remains financially dependent on government financing for the procurement of medicines and the management of IFAD grants, two areas that may be at risk (see evidence on Findings 6 and 13 respectively). At the time of the evaluation, there was no clarity on how the CO will continue to engage on rule-of-law issues.

The results of UNDP's Partnership Survey (Figure 4) show a favourable image among most of its partners. Yet UNDP's dependence on government funds to ensure the office's financial sustainability, along with its closeness to the Government and limited engagement with civil society and academia, has raised concerns among some UN and civil society partners about UNDP's engagement in some sensitive areas such as human rights. This could represent a risk to UNDP's image (see evidence on Finding 8).[30]

Finding 4: Office structure: The decreasing resources led to a realignment of the office structure in 2016 to ensure financial sustainability for a medium-size office. This process did not significantly impact UNDP's strategic positioning, but the office has found it difficult to deliver substantive programmatic results and develop a programmatic pipeline in areas where UNDP has comparative advantages (see findings 1, 2 and 3).

UNDP's increasing level of financial delivery between 2010 and 2014 was linked to large infrastructure projects that closed in 2016. This led to a significant reduction in CO resources and the need for an organizational change management exercise to ensure the office's financial sustainability (Figure 6). This process resulted in a significant reduction of UNDP programme and operations staff across all areas, leaving a substantive senior management structure in place.

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[30] However, this was not highlighted on the evaluation of UNDP's contribution to dialogue.

FIGURE 6: Evolution of budget and expenditure, 2012–2019
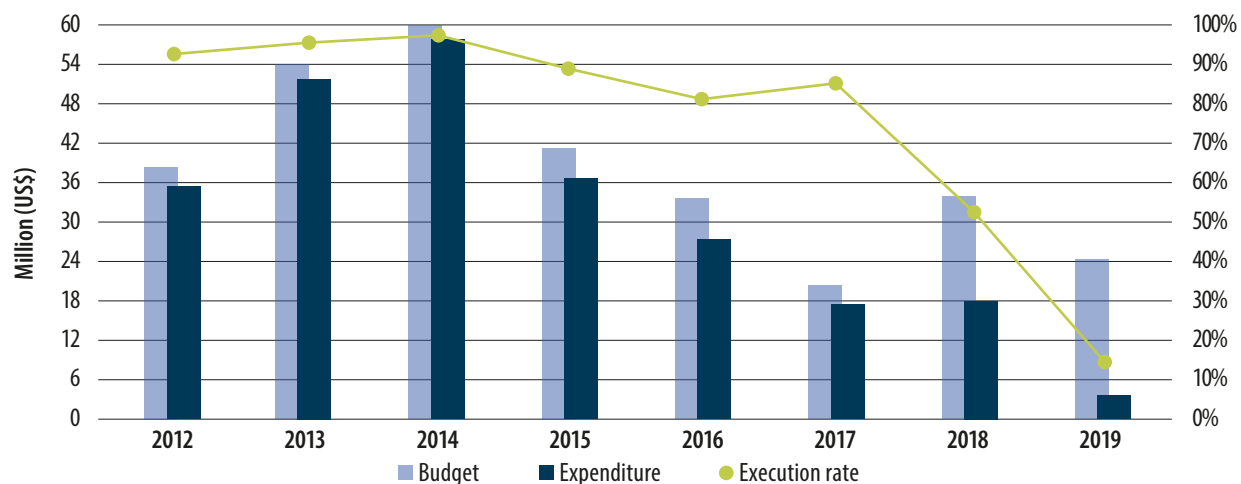
Source: UNDP Atlas (as of 15 July 2019).

Although all interviewees noted the strong commitment of UNDP personnel to move forward with the work, the decrease in the workforce created strong pressures on the CO staff. As noted in the 2019 audit report, the lack of sufficient operational support for programme implementation has increased the burden of administrative and operational tasks on programme staff. Additionally, the restructure was not followed by a strategic reflection to reduce the programmatic areas of engagement or increase efforts and senior management support to the development of substantive areas of work in line with the country's most pressing needs and UNDP mandate.

For example, in areas such as environment and livelihoods, the team was reduced to only one person, who had responsibility for project implementation, pipeline development, innovation and strategy. In this area, the CO lost opportunities with the GCF (see Finding 16), advancing with a high-risk project that was impossible to implement, as UNDP did not have corporate GCF accreditation and was not able to engage significantly and early enough with RBLAC on these technical issues. This was evidenced in the areas of economic development, livelihoods and DRR (see Findings 12, 13 and 17).

In areas such as governance and security, the CO was engaged in politically sensitive areas with important

reputational risks at play (see Finding 7). The work on dialogue and mediation required significant efforts and time from CO staff. The evaluation team observed that these investments, which are key to positioning UNDP and providing substantial added value, may have hampered more comprehensive engagement in other areas. The slim operational structure in the office weakened more comprehensive contributions in some areas of work, such as justice and citizenship participation (see Findings 7, 9 and 10). At the time of the evaluation, there was no evidence available of a strong pipeline of projects being developed in this area outside elections support and the global Spotlight initiative.

In areas such as access to basic services, the CO team was not able to deliver substantive programmatic results in capacity development (see Findings 5 and 6). Procurement remained a substantive part of the work despite a significant reduction of the operations team, with some procurement responsibilities divided between programme and operations. Yet the country programme expenditure breakdown highlights a substantial increase in the share of project supplies/expenses[31] as part of the total CO programme resources, from 20 percent of the total in 2015 up to 60 percent in 2017 and 2018 (Figure 7). As such, expenditures related to CO administrative support services represented an average of 70 to 80 percent of total CO expenditures for the period evaluated.

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[31] Materials and goods represent $42.5 million (for procurement of medicines) and grants represent $27.3 million (for management of IFAD grants).

FIGURE 7: Programme expenditure breakdown, 2012–2019
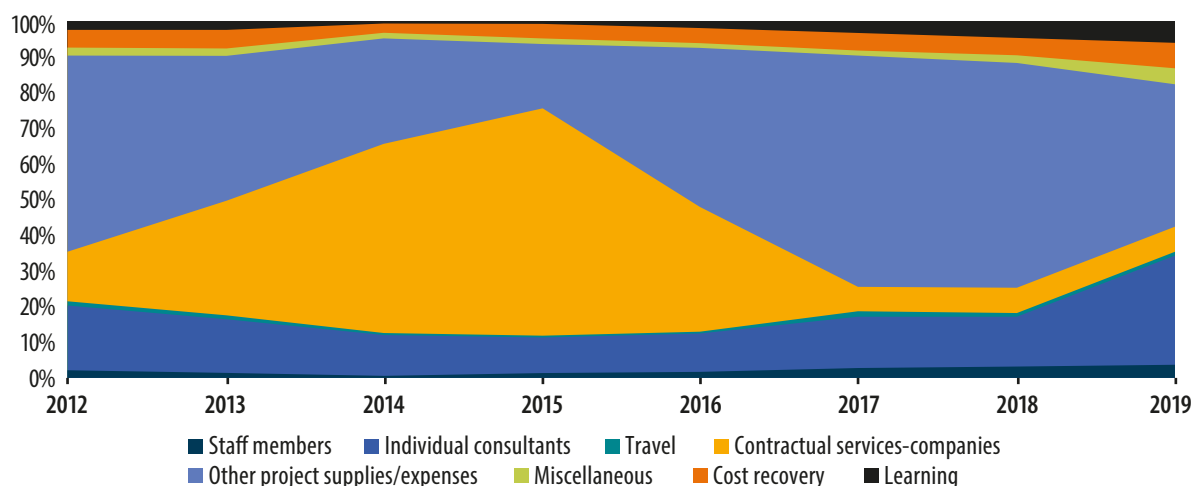
Source: UNDP Atlas (as of 15 July 2019).

Despite the CO's significant procurement volume, the operations manager position has been frozen for two years, and a procurement analyst has taken on its functions in the interim. The lack of an operations manager has increased the burden on some staff. This may represent challenges in ensuring proper oversight and implementation of UNDP's internal control framework.

With the delinking of UNDP and the Resident Coordinator Office and the current level of resources in the CO, the office structure deserves further attention, based on the primary country needs and priorities. It is not clear how some roles and responsibilities are defined or operationalized. This is particularly the case for the senior management structure, which consists of the Resident Representative, Deputy Resident Representative, associate Deputy Resident Representative for programme and the Operations Manager 'function', to ensure adequate oversight of operations and strategic programmatic support to programme managers leading the substantive areas.

During the staff interviews the evaluation team also observed opportunities for further clarifying some other functions, such as the role of the gender specialist in programme design, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) function in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) work and the policy specialist function in terms of economic analysis and

prospective scenarios. The CO has also not explored opportunities to expand collaboration with United Nations Volunteers; currently there is only one.

2.2. Coverage and universal and equitable access to goods and basic services of quality

The Government prioritized safety and productive development as key pillars of the National Development Plan. Aligned to these national priorities, the UNDAF focused on strengthening access to basic goods and services (outcome 1) as well as safe environments and social cohesion (outcome 5). Within this area, UNDP's programme strategy focused on:

i. Improving public investment planning and implementation capacities and management tools (outputs 1 and 2), including (a) improving access to health care; (b) bringing basic services closer to the population; (c) developing the capacities of government institutions; and (d) improving the policy framework;

ii. Strengthening effective evidence-based response to violence from institutions of the security and criminal justice sector (output 3), including strengthening violence prevention mechanisms and systems to protect victims and to secure

access to justice at national and local levels (outputs 4 and 5).

The outcome on universal and equitable access to goods and basic services envisaged $188.7 million in resources from the Government, the Peacebuilding Fund, USAID, the Governments of Luxembourg and the Netherlands, and UNDP core funds. Between 2016 and July 2019, 24 projects were implemented, expending $46.5 million, reaching a 55 percent financial execution rate. This represented 71 percent of the total CO expenditure for the period.

Interventions primarily targeted government institutions: Ministry of Justice and Public Security; National Police; Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency; Secretariat of Governance; Ministry of Governance; Ministry of Health; Salvadoran Institute of Welfare; Salvadoran Institute of Social Security; Directorate of Migration and Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Public Works, Transport, Housing and Urban Development; and the Autonomous Executive Port Commission. Several other UN entities were also expected to contribute to this outcome, including UNOPS, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN-Women, WHO, FAO and UNODC.

Finding 5: Public and social investments: Despite the reduction in operational capacity, UNDP has ensured transparency and efficiency in the management of government funds for public investment in strategic assets (infrastructure and passport procurement). However, there is no evidence of progress towards implementation of an exit strategy through institutional capacity development for planning and executing public investments.

UNDP planned to strengthen the national capacities to plan, finance and execute public investments. It also aimed to develop tools for effective, efficient and transparent management and monitoring of public investments. This was to be done by introducing

indicators at the municipal and regional levels; bringing basic services closer to citizens at local level through social infrastructure projects; and improving the policy framework to increase competitiveness and public investments to ensure sustainability. This represented six projects and $21.3 million of funding. UNDP initiatives focused on infrastructure work and procurement of goods (e.g. passports), two areas oriented to the provision of services in the short term. Although the project documents described activities to transfer capacities to the Government, there is no evidence of work in this area or of "learning by doing / participating" as noted by the CO in the pre-mission questionnaire.[32] Interviews with government partners stressed that some of them perceived UNDP only as a project implementer.

For example, since 2012, the CO has supported the national port authority, CEPA, to develop a competitive logistics platform and become a model of logistics services management, with the goal of transforming El Salvador into a regional logistics centre and improving productive development in the country.[33] Despite the reduction in the CO operational team, the work was delivered in a timely and efficient manner, as observed in the modernization of the airport infrastructure.[34] This helped to generate important savings, which are being invested in preparing three feasibility studies for the La Union port, to enable its economic reactivation. This is an area in which UNDP could position itself to promote poverty reduction. However, there was no evidence that UNDP provided its technical support to strengthen CEPA's capacities, training plans or strategies,[35] and the institution still expects to receive UNDP's technical support to identify and design projects with development impact.

Similarly, UNDP has supported the General Directorate for Migration since 2008 with the procurement of passports and some equipment and goods.[36] However, there have been only a few ad hoc activities to strengthen the administrative capacities

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[32] Pre-mission questionnaire 2, p. 20.

[33] UNDP project document, 'Modernización y gestión de los activos estratégicos de CEPA' and 'Modernización de CEPA Fase II'.

[34] UNDP project document and revision n. 1, 'Programa modernización y gestión de activos estratégicos de CEPA Fase II'.

[35] UNDP project focument, 'Modernización y gestión de los activos estratégicos de CEPA' (p. 7), Final Report 2016, and 'Reporte de lecciones aprendidas de Proyecto PNUD-CEPA 00084021'.

[36] UNDP project focument, 'Proyecto apoyo a la Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería', annual reports from 2011 to 2018 and revisions 1 to 8.

of the institution in line with the planned output on improving public social investments. Although UNDP ensures transparency in the management of government funds and generates some savings, there is no clear evidence of the need for continued UNDP support in this area.[37] The CPD included a reference to migration-affected communities where public social investments could be directed, but there is very limited evidence of significant contributions to address migration issues or their root causes.[38]

While results were achieved, the initiatives with CEPA and the General Directorate for Migration did not contribute to the intended outcome of bringing basic services closer to citizens in areas traditionally excluded, such as rural and marginalized communities in urban areas. Nor did it help to reduce gaps in coverage, specifically for women and youth,[39] as these government institutions are not engaged in responding to the needs and priorities of the population in marginalized areas.

Over the period 2010–2018, UNDP delivered 30 infrastructure projects on behalf of the Ministry of Public Works. In coordination with the Ministry of Finance, it took responsibility for the identification, selection, design and payment of the projects, many of which were a response to the damages inflicted on the country by Hurricane Ida in 2009. UNDP originally intended to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Public Works to prioritize and implement these interventions so they would contribute to poverty reduction and achievement of the SDGs.[40]

During the implementation period prior to the cycle under review, UNDP indeed supported the development of the Institutional Policy of Gender Equality and Equity[41] and the Mobility and Logistics Policy.[42] However, stakeholders interviewed for the evaluation highlighted that, especially during the period under review, UNDP's contribution was limited to managing funds, implementing selected projects and developing impact studies. There is no evidence of long-term capacity-building efforts to reorient public investments and ensure handover. The Government is currently planning to manage new infrastructure projects either directly or through the Inter-American Development Bank and its delivery options. However, UNDP could not position itself as a strategic development services partner of the Bank's infrastructure projects due to administrative requirements UNDP does not meet.[43]

Although some of the expected results have been partially achieved, the lack of exit strategies and strengthening of national capacities hinders the sustainability of the results achieved. There is also no evidence of UNDP's contributions to improve public investment and competitiveness policies, though they are important in ensuring the interventions in this area are sustained. Joint initiatives were also identified in the country programme action plan (CPAP)[44] with the Ministry of Economy and the Commission for the Monitoring of Public Investments to promote the efficient and transparent management of government investments to bring basic goods and services closer to the population. These too did not take place, although they would have been of strategic importance.

Synergies between this area of work and other programmatic areas have not been explored enough. UNDP has not yet reviewed its public and social investments strategy to better position itself to add value, such as by engaging in discussions with the new government on innovative projects directed

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[37] A number of key informants noted that the relevant authorities have sufficient capacity to handle these processes.

[38] The UNDP Infosegura project developed some workshops and data on the linkages between security and migration. See: https://www.infosegura.org/2019/04/13/el-salvador-implementa-el-analisis-territorial-a-la-migracion-y-la-seguridad-ciudadana/ and https://www.infosegura.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Migraci%C3%B3n-personas-retornadas-y-solicitantes-de-asilos-_logo-USAID.pdf. UNDP support to the joint programme 'Peace and Reintegration of Migrant Persons in their Return Home' was focused on police internal controls and improving dialogue through the National Councils.

[39] UNDP CPAP, p. 7/47, paragraph 2.12.

[40] UNDP project document, 'Dinamización de economías locales mediante el desarrollo y la reconstrucción de la infraestructura pública', 2010.

[41] Government of El Salvador, Ministry of Public Works, Transport, Housing and Urban Development, 2014, 'Politica de Igualdad y Equidad de Genero del Ministerio de Obras Publicas, Transporte, Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano'.

[42] The role of UNDP in supporting the Ministry of Public Works in the development of a climate change policy is discussed under Finding 15.

[43] According to UNDP El Salvador CO.

[44] UNDP CPAP, p. 11/47, paragraph 5.3.

towards local development objectives, generation of livelihoods, violence prevention and, ultimately, poverty reduction in excluded areas and those with a vulnerable population.

Finding 6: Health: UNDP has efficiently and effectively facilitated access to international markets for the Ministry of Health, Salvadoran Social Security Institute and Salvadoran Institute for Teachers' Health for the acquisition of medicines, supplies and equipment. This has allowed for economies of scale, acquisition of high-quality products and diversification of suppliers, but capacity development support has been very limited.

As part of UNDP's support to expand access to universal coverage of basic services, UNDP aimed to support decentralization of services and implementation of community responses for disease prevention and treatment. UNDP worked with four national institutions: the Ministry of Health (MINSAL), Salvadoran Social Security Institute (ISSS), Fund for the Protection of Disabled Veterans (FOPROLYD) and Salvadoran Institute for Teachers' Health (ISBM). These projects targeted specific beneficiaries, particularly tuberculosis patients (MINSAL); HIV patients (ISSS); people disabled due to the armed conflict (FOPROLYD); and teachers and their families (ISBM). Interventions focused mainly on procurement of medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and not on support at the local level or decentralization, as initially planned in the CPD.

In previous programme periods UNDP transferred responsibility for managing grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to national organizations. However, UNDP's historical role as principal recipient allowed it to leverage this experience to position itself as a key partner for highly specialized procurement of health products and equipment. These partnerships with national institutions amounted to more than $40 million of government resources, representing seven UNDP projects and 30 percent of the total UNDP programme delivery for this period.

These health-related procurement services covered procurement of equipment and materials such as vehicles, mobile x-ray service and laboratory equipment for MINSAL; supply of antiretroviral treatments, hard-to-acquire medicines and laboratory reagents for ISSS; supply of medicines and computer and medical equipment (i.e. computers, x-ray, ultrasonic devices and dental instruments) for ISBM; and supply of orthopaedic mechanical devices and components for FOPROLYD.

In the case of the MINSAL (the largest health institution in the country, covering 72 percent of the population)[45] UNDP's work has been limited to the National Programme on Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases. This has involved procuring supplies for incarcerated people, improving diagnostic times and identifying 2,006 new tuberculosis cases in 2018.[46] This support was very relevant given the increasing number of cases among the population deprived of liberty since 2014, a situation the Government has now planned to address more integrally.

UNDP has long-term agreements with international manufacturers and suppliers, allowing it to access regional and international markets, securing best value for money and ensuring medicines are available in a timely fashion. UNDP's expertise on international procurement ensured confidence and trust from providers. This supported the Government in ensuring a timely, cost-effective and continuous supply of high-quality medicines and technological equipment, partially thanks to the diversification of providers. It involved significant efficiency gains and savings: Between 2011 and 2018, ISBM reported savings from economies of scale of $30 million and a reduction from eight months to five months in the time needed to procure medicines.[47] These savings could potentially be reinvested by the Government to increase coverage or strengthen national supply-chain systems.

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[45] PAHO/WHO, 'Country Report: El Salvador', see: https://www.paho.org/salud-en-las-americas-2017/?page_t_es=informespercent20depercent20pais/el-salvador&lang=es.

[46] Alberti, Jose Pedro. 'Evaluación de la contribución del PNUD a la generación capacidades de planificación y ejecución de la inversión pública a nivel nacional y local y su efecto en la cobertura y el acceso universal a los servicios básicos de salud', UNDP, El Salvador, July 2019.

[47] ISBM, 'Memoria de Labores', El Salvador, 2018, p. 6. See: http://www.isbm.gob.sv/index.php/institucion/marco-institucional/informes/memorias.html.

This partnership has also been accompanied by technical assistance in the case of ISSS. UNDP reinforced its capacities to prevent, monitor and recover employers' payments in arrears to the social security system by establishing a consulting service[48] on social security for employers, a department[49] for the preliminary recovery (before court action) of employers' social security payments in arrears, and a policy on recovery, which ISSS adopted. These mechanisms improved the effectiveness of the institution by 108 percent, doubling the amount of arrears recovered, from $6.7 million in 2015 to over $13.9 million in 2018.[50] Although UNDP's CPD indicator for these interventions was "selected public institutions improve their public investment planning and implementation capacities at the national and local levels", the evaluation team was not able to find evidence of provision of technical advice to other health institutions or additional support to this one.

The health system remains fragmented, and, as noted in the CO decentralized health evaluation, "the poor articulation of actors within the MINSAL system across management systems and levels, the absence of cascading supervision on the different levels of governance, the absence of a monitoring system as a result of the absence of planning and budgeting to achieve identified goals, as well as the lack of results and impact evaluation systems, all represent important deficiencies that must be addressed at some point to have a unique, comprehensive and strengthened management structure".[51]

These coordination and planning challenges represent a significant constraint on timely procurement requests and UNDP's response. As already identified in the 2011 ADR, "the challenge of cooperation in this area is to have government institutions overcoming bureaucratic limitations for the management and direct purchase of medicines".[52] A few government

partners told the evaluation team they had expected to receive planning and coordination support from UNDP. However, UNDP has not developed a more comprehensive approach to strengthening health institutions or its supply chain management system. There is a risk that UNDP could be perceived by some of these government partners only as a procurement entity. While this is clearly one of its added values, it is important for UNDP to also be viewed as a strategic partner for capacity development.[53]

More recently, UNDP's capacity to respond has been impacted by UNDP's Quality Assurance Policy for Health Products in both positive and negative ways.[54] It was established in mid-2018 to assure the safety of all health products procured by UNDP, in line with international best practice based on WHO norms and standards for medicines and other health products. This could potentially help the CO expand its procurement support to the Government with access to lower cost international manufacturers and suppliers through long-term agreements.

However, to abide by and implement the policy, the CO had to change some manufacturers and distributors and purchase through their international long-term agreements. In one specific case, this requirement, in addition to a lack of clarity on the specification and quantity of the products to be purchased, caused important procurement delays. It also prevented the timely purchase of some of the products through UNDP Geneva agreements at a lower cost than in the local market. At the time of the evaluation, several challenges remained to implementing UNDP's Quality Assurance Policy for Health Products in coordination with the UNDP Health Procurement Centre of Excellence.[55] If these are not resolved, the CO could face risks given potential procurement delays.

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[48] Oficina de Asesoría Técnica de Seguridad Social has been in place since November 2017.

[49] Departamento de Recuperación Prejudicial, ISSS.

[50] Default figures are from ISSS. 'Memoria de Labores', El Salvador, 2018.

[51] UNDP Health Portfolio Evaluation, p. 29, 2019.

[52] UNDP ADR 2011, p. 64.

[53] Partners' interviews.

[54] UNDP Quality Assurance Policy for Health Products, 2018. See: https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hiv-aids/undp-quality-assurance-policy-for-health-products.html.

[55] As per the Organizational Performance Group decision on 30 October 2019.

Finding 7: Citizen security: UNDP contributed significantly to establishing a comprehensive security approach in the national agenda based on human security. The CO provided technical assistance for the development of the country's security plan and strengthened integrated approaches on violence prevention and access to insecurity information and data. However, the limited work at local level and with justice institutions diminished UNDP's contribution to increased citizen access to security and justice services through a rule-of-law approach.

UNDP's work on citizen insecurity was included under a broader approach to improving public services, which was intended to help address security and criminal justice issues through a rights-based approach. Efforts focused on (i) ensuring an effective response to violence and insecurity from the criminal justice and security systems through evidence-based policies and programmes; and (ii) improving local responses to citizen insecurity. This was expected to be achieved through knowledge management and piloting good practices in violence prevention at the local level and the development of comprehensive protection policies for victims of violence, including mechanisms for women's access to justice. This represented 10 projects and $5.5 million.

Based on more than 15 years of engagement on citizen insecurity issues in El Salvador, UNDP contributed to incorporating comprehensive approaches on social violence prevention in the national security agenda through the development of the 2015–2020 El Salvador National Security Plan (PESS).[56] It is considered a national and regional reference for violence prevention strategies as it is the first public policy on citizen security framed around social prevention approaches, as opposed to policies focused on repression.[57] The PESS sought to tackle the structural roots of violence with the participation of all sectors, and it strengthened

cooperation between national and local governments. The PESS became a tool to align international development cooperation assistance. UNDP helped the Government in implementing the PESS in 50 municipalities through a study of risks, threats and vulnerabilities at local level[58] and on its monitoring through the development of a monitoring system used by the National Council on Citizen Security.

This system is still managed by UNDP; it has not yet been transferred to the Government.[59] The two monitoring reports developed by UNDP showed a 50 percent decrease in the homicides rate in three years, among other positive trends.[60] However, the data have not been used to adjust security policies, as initially planned. This is an area outside UNDP's control, but UNDP could have provided more support to ensure the monitoring, evaluation and review of the PESS to close the public policy life-cycle and ensure greater sustainability of results. Although the new Government has framed its citizen security strategies around the human security approach,[61] there is no indication that the PESS will continue to play a central role in defining public policy, as it was not institutionalized, which would have ensured its continuity and sustainability. Nor were other strategies pursued to ensure its social sustainability, such as communication for development to generate behavioural changes to support these approaches.

UNDP's work at local level included limited contributions to support communities, and there is no evidence of scaling up. UNDP supported the preparation of initial diagnostics and local security plans in 26 prioritized PESS municipalities and provided technical support to 10 of them for one year through the existing municipal violence prevention committees. Yet local security plans have not been updated due to the lack of funding, and there is no evidence of their monitoring and evaluation.

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[56] The PESS is based on National Development Plan 2014-2019; the National Justice, Security and Cohesion Policy; and the National Strategy for Violence Prevention. It has been developed with the Republic Presidency, the Presidency Governance Secretariat and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security.

[57] It is composed of five pillars: violence prevention; crime control and prosecution; rehabilitation and reintegration; protection and care for victims; and institutional strengthening.

[58] Infosegura-UNDP-USAID (2017), *'Índice de Priorización de Municipios. Herramientas para la priorización y focalización de políticas en materia de seguridad ciudadana'*, El Salvador Government, Executive Summary.

[59] National Citizen Security and Cohesion Council, PESS Monitoring System.

[60] National Citizen Security and Cohesion Council, 2018, 'Monitoring Report 2016-2017', PESS. The second monitoring report, from 2018, was not publicly available at the time of this evaluation.

[61] The Plan Control Territorial, put in place by the new government, has a second phase called 'Opportunities' focused on human security.

The CO also piloted a programme for the secondary and tertiary prevention of violence[62] among adolescents and youth at risk, or with a history of gang involvement, in five municipalities.[63] Despite some implementation problems, there were some positive results in terms of access to education and employment opportunities for youth and their families, according to interviewees. However, these two models have not been institutionalized and scaled up at national level. The *Pionero* pilot project represents a new opportunity to reposition issues on the reintegration of youth with a history of gang involvement in the national agenda. This would build on UNDP's past experience and reflect the different policy focus of the new Government. This could help to 'humanize' gang conflicts.

UNDP's efforts to generate information and data on citizen insecurity aimed to result in evidence-based policies. They represented important contributions to measuring progress against SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole (see also evidence on Finding 10). The information provided through Infosegura supported the development of the PESS and the 26 local security plans.

In partnership with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the CO developed tools to prioritize territories and schools as a way of targeting policies and interventions to locations with higher vulnerability and risks. The design and implementation of early warning systems with the police and the Ministry of Education (i.e. heat maps, SALVE[64]), based on real-time information, contributed to quicker responses from security institutions to problems in the municipalities and schools.

UNDP also supported the National Civil Police and the information and analysis department of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security by creating transparency portals and undertaking surveys to increase transparent access to credible information on violence and insecurity.[65] UNDP strengthened the analytical capacities of the department to assess the links between violence and other issues such as migration, although UNDP programmes have not sufficiently looked at those synergies.

UNDP could have played a stronger role in strengthening the care and protection of victims of social violence, a key pillar of the PESS and a CPD output.[66] This would have improved the effective access to security and justice services at local level. More recently, UNDP started to pilot the Spotlight joint initiative in three municipalities. It aims to improve access to justice for victims of violence against women and to data to improve decision-making on femicide.[67]

However, there have been very limited efforts to improve the criminal justice system and provide a more comprehensive and effective response to violence. Although these key government institutions were identified as implementing actors in the CPAP,[68] there have been only two efforts in this regard: the recent global Spotlight initiative and a one-off activity on strengthening the Attorney General's office on criminal public defense. The main focus has been on working with the executive branch, instead of working as well to strengthen the justice system to establish a comprehensive rule-of-law approach. This would allow a better balance between effective response and reduced impunity.

Finding 8: Human rights: UNDP developed specific interventions to respond to human rights abuses and violations in the country and participated in a UN country team consultative process to review the applicability of the Policy on Due Diligence on Human

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[62] Secondary prevention refers to interventions focused on at-risk youth, and tertiary to prevention of successive events after a crime has occurred.

[63] Sonsonate, Santa Ana and Colón through the regional project Seguridad Ciudadana Municipal en el Triángulo Norte de Centroamérica; Zacatecoluca and Ciudad Delgado through the regional project Seguridad Integral y Prevención de Violencia que afecta a NNAJ en los países del SICA.

[64] See: https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/Educacion-presenta-programa-SALVE-para-prevenir-violencia-20190830-0540.html and https://www.infosegura.org/2019/09/03/el-salvador-sistema-educativo-cuenta-con-alerta-de-violencia-salve/.

[65] For example, information on criminal activity, security, victimization, violence against women and sexual violence.

[66] For example, through support to tertiary violence prevention mechanisms such as the Local Attention Offices to victims of violence.

[67] San Salvador, San Martin and San Miguel.

[68] Judicial Authority, Office of the Attorney General and the Office for Human Rights Protection, UNDP CPAP, pp. 29-31.

Rights. However, actions were not timely, and they did not fully address the reputational risk of providing continued support to the National Security Plan and Council, based on the political and operational context in which this support was delivered.

The CO had identified the need to support the enforcement of social, economic, civil, political, cultural and environmental rights, making the human rights approach one of the pillars of its programme.[69] UNDP therefore intended to focus on the achievement of rights, and not only on the provision of services.

The PESS (see Finding 7) coexisted with other government security strategies, particularly the extraordinary measures enforced in jails (e.g. not allowing detainees access to natural light/regular open air, communication with lawyers or family visits under any circumstances) which were contrary to international human rights obligations,[70] and the practice of increasing extra-legal executions, coupled with cases of police abuse and lethal use of force in communities, as noted in the report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.[71] At the same time, plans had called for investing 74 percent of total resources received from a special tax to fund violence prevention on the PESS,[72] but it only received 15 percent of the budgeted amount (43 percent was invested in the Ministry of National Defense).[73] Resources received were gradually shifted to pay

bonuses and salary incentives for the National Civil Police, the Armed Forces and the Directorate of Penal Centres.[74] Thus, in practice, UNDP was unable to make the violence prevention approach a priority during implementation of the PESS.

Within the framework of the PESS, and as a response to a 2016 government request, UNDP started to work on strengthening internal control systems to reduce impunity in cases of possible violations of human rights by security forces.[75] The CO supported the modernization of the National Civil Police internal controls information systems, and supported the Government in creating a coordination mechanism for "strengthening internal controls of security institutions". The Government and the Office for Human Rights Protection were involved in this high-level initiative to analyse police and armed forces abuses. The aim was to propose specific actions, including legal reforms and evaluations of police performance. The evaluation team could not find any evidence of its objective being achieved. This mechanism, which was discontinued, did not result in specific proposals, nor was there evidence of increased attention to, or less impunity in, cases of possible abuses or violations of human rights by public security forces.[76]

Nor was UNDP's work expanded to the external control systems, specifically to the institutions of the criminal justice system and the Office for Human Rights Protection, although this was foreseen in the Joint

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[69] As noted in the CO pre-mission questionnaire.

[70] (i) Human Rights Committee, 'Observaciones finales sobre el séptimo informe periódico de El Salvador. Pacto Internacional de Derechos Civiles y Políticos CCPR/C/SLV/CO/7', 9 May 2018 (pp. 7-8, paragraph 29-30); (ii) Report from the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions on her mission to El Salvador (25 January-5 February 2018). A/HRC/38/44/Add.2 (p. 12, paragraph 59); (iii) Conclusions and observations from the mission of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to El Salvador (29 January 2018). See: https://www.oas.org/es/cidh/prensa/comunicados/2018/011A.asp; and (iv) Statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein at the end of his mission to El Salvador (17 November 2017). See: https://www.ohchr.org/SP/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22412&LangID=S.

[71] Report from the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial killings from her mission to El Salvador (25 January to 5 February 2018). A/HRC/38/44/Add.2. https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Executions/Pages/CountryVisits.aspx.

[72] PESS, National Citizen Security and Cohesion Council, 2015, p. 76.

[73] Resources are from the special contributions received for the 2016-2018 period according to FUNDE and CAID, 2018, 'El gasto público en el Plan El Salvador Seguro, período 2015–2018, Informe de investigación'.

[74] 'El Salvador's Politics of Perpetual Violence', report no. 64, 19 December 2017, p. 20: "Of the $93 million collected in 2017 from these special taxes, around 70 per cent went to financing the police and the armed forces." See: https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/central-america/el-salvador/64-el-salvadors-politics-perpetual-violence; and https://www.laprensagrafica.com/elsalvador/Consejo-reclama-al-Gobierno-por-uso-de-fondos-para-seguridad-20171011-0020.html. "El ministro de seguridad, Mauricio Ramírez Landaverde, explicó que entre enero y septiembre el Gobierno ha recaudado $93 millones a través de los impuestos para la seguridad. De eso se ha invertido $52 millones. La mayor parte del dinero ha sido destinado para pagar bonos a policías y militares."

[75] Pre-mission questionnaire 1., p. 4.

[76] The Special Rapporteur learned of a large number of alleged extrajudicial killings or deaths resulting from excessive use of force by security agents, facilitated by inadequate investigations and judicial responses. Official figures indicate an alarming increase in the number of persons – alleged gang-members - killed by security personnel. Internal disciplinary responses have also proven weak. Source: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on her mission to El Salvador. A/HRC/38/44/Add.2, pp. 9-10.

Programme on peace for post-conflict generation. This would have allowed UNDP to contribute to the reduction of impunity, linking institutions mandated with the promotion, guarantee and protection of human rights with a comprehensive rule-of-law approach to citizen security. Additionally, UNDP has not yet focused on establishing an institutional mechanism to strengthen social auditing to respond to this type of context.[77]

It was not until April 2018 that a framework for implementation of the Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights[78] was developed by the UN country team. As part of that process, it mapped the nature and scope of the support activities provided by UN entities to non-UN security forces and drew lessons learned. This exercise noted that the activities implemented by the UN "were mostly devoted to capacity-building in the form of training, specialized technical assistance, mentoring and advisory services related to international norms and standards of human rights, humanitarian law and criminal law; […] and the substantive areas of support included promoting the design and implementation of citizen security policies according to international human rights standards, enhancing the capacity of security forces to monitor abuses and to enforce internal and external controls". It concluded that if the Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights were applied in the strict sense of the word, the UN country team's cooperation with national security forces would not fall within its scope. This qualifies this cooperation as 'non-support', according to the definition of 'support' foreseen in the Policy.[79]

However, the Policy also states that "implementation of the human rights due diligence policy must take into account […] the nature and extent of the support, and the political and operational context in which it is delivered". The risk assessment included on the guidance note for the Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights focuses on measuring whether "there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of the intended recipient [of

support] committing grave violations of international humanitarian, human rights, or refugee law. Such 'grave violations' do not need to be committed as a result of the support provided".[80]

UNDP's continued role and participation in the National Security Council as its technical secretariat should have warranted a broader assessment of the risks associated with the provision of support beyond the strict sense of the word, in light of the political and operational context. Indeed, some civil society institutions raised concerns about it and withdrew from the Council, viewing it as a platform to legitimize the actions described above that were promoted by the Government and not in line with the PESS. This represented a reputational risk for UNDP.

2.3. Governance

El Salvador is characterized by high levels of political polarization, which impedes progress on public policies and governance.[81] In response, the UNDAF focused on creating national agreements to enable the population to fully exercise its rights (UNDAF outcome 3). Within this area, UNDP's programme strategy focused on (i) enhancing dialogue mechanisms and processes; (ii) improving electoral management capacities; (iii) increasing women's political and social participation; and (iv) social auditing.

The outcome on democratic governance and dialogue envisaged an investment of $10.3 million from the Government, USAID, the Peacebuilding Fund, Germany and UNDP core resources. Between 2016 and July 2019, 11 projects were implemented with $4.2 million in expenditures, reaching a 71 percent financial execution rate. This represented 6.4 percent of the total CO expenditure for the period.

Interventions targeted mostly government institutions: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretariat of Governance; Technical and Planning Secretariat of the Presidency; Supreme Electoral Court; and Parliamentary Women's

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[77] This is one of the expected activities in the UNDP CPD for the management-identified political risks.

[78] 'UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on Support for Non-United Nations Security Forces' General Assembly, Security Council, A/67/775–S/2013/110.

[79] Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights, paragraphs 8 and 9.

[80] Guidance Note for the Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights (2015, p. 15).

[81] UNDP CPD.

Group within the Legislative Assembly. UNDP did not plan to target civil society institutions as a main contributor to this outcome. Several other UN entities were also expected to contribute to this outcome, including UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO and FAO.

Finding 9: Promotion of dialogue: UNDP's historical credibility and neutrality allowed it to significantly contribute to the promotion of dialogue on national priorities and sensitive issues, leading to consensus on public policy agreements among different actors. Although results were out of UNDP's sphere of control, they were limited, as the approved public policies were only partially implemented and the dialogue processes were not institutionalized to ensure their sustainability.

To address the strong polarization in the country, which hinders consensus on national issues, UNDP planned to work on promoting spaces for dialogue (National Councils). These were to be based on the priorities identified[82] in consultations organized on the post-2015 agenda, for building consensus around national priorities. These mechanisms were expected to ensure participation by and representation of groups traditionally excluded, such as women and youth. To ensure sustainability, UNDP also planned to work on inter-party political dialogue processes, among other initiatives. The 2030 Agenda was viewed as a more medium-term area of work to complement the objectives of the Government.

Since 2006, UNDP has developed initiatives to promote political dialogue on key issues for the country, particularly concerning security and peace. This engagement had a similar strategy: facilitate opportunities for dialogue, provide technical support (in some cases as technical secretariat) and support the translation of results from the discussions into policy papers/proposals. The National Commission for Citizen Security and Social Peace in 2006 and the Social Economic Council in 2009 were the origin of this dialogue strategy. UNDP has continued to strengthen and support it in this period with the creation of a National Council on environmental

sustainability. These important efforts were already recognized and positively valued in the 2011 ADR.

The three National Councils led to public policy agreements addressing security, education and environmental sustainability issues, as evidenced in the development and implementation of three national plans around these issues: El Salvador Security Plan; El Salvador Educated Plan; and El Salvador Sustainable Plan. These national strategies helped to achieve consensus on shared objectives and ownership from the different participating actors. For example, the Education Council created a roadmap leading to allocation of 6 percent of GDP to education; the Security Council ensured that prevention of violence and attention to victims were key pillars of the security plan; and the Environment Council achieved an agreement to have both the private sector and NGOs prioritize environmental issues. UNDP played an important role in all three councils, although its influence and efforts were more significant in the Security Council (see evidence on Finding 7).

The three national councils were created as wide and plural spaces. They successfully ensured the participation of the private sector, civil society, academia, government institutions and the international development community. UNDP's recognized neutrality and credibility were essential in bringing together diverse actors on sensitive issues and building consensus among them. This role has enabled UNDP to strategically position itself in areas where it has clear comparative advantages as an integrator of actors, leading to the creation of multi-actor spaces for dialogue to generate consensus on key public policies.[83] Although the projects did not achieve the expected level of results, this area of work has been the most relevant and valued by all partners in UNDP's portfolio.

However, the national council mechanism proved to be cumbersome. The councils sought wide representation to increase their influence and achieve results, but this also had a negative side, limiting their agility and leading to lengthy processes, according to interviews.

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[82] Employment, public investments, productivity and environmental sustainability.

[83] Pre-mission questionnaire 1, p. 1.

The operating mechanism called for broad participation, making it challenging to reach agreements and ensure they were binding for decision-makers (see also evidence on Finding 14). Participation decreased over time, as noted in the Security Council, where the Legislative Assembly, the justice institutions and some civil society actors stopped participating (see Finding 8). This limited the effectiveness and sustainability of the work.

As a result, the councils had limited ability to influence strategic decisions.[84] The national plans have not been fully implemented to achieve transformative results (see Finding 7 for the results of the El Salvador Security Plan). In addition, there was not sufficient coordination with a parallel strategy led by the United Nations Department of Political Affairs on political inter-party dialogue, creating overlaps, limiting synergies and reducing interest and engagement from the partners.[85]

The evaluation noted that the promotion of these opportunities for dialogue and the related national plans was not institutionalized. These have been discontinued with the change in government, despite significant advocacy by UNDP and other international development actors. The minimal tangible intermediate results related to the plans and the lack of related legal reforms weakened the commitment of the participants, particularly in a context of the change in government. Therefore, the expected change, from a polarized political culture to a culture of consensus on State issues, was not achieved.

A parallel strategy to ensure the participation of traditionally excluded groups, which was not prioritized, could have ensured sustainability as a result of wide consensus and State agreements, beyond government strategies.[86] The 2011 ADR recommendations focused on increasing the capacities of civil society for participation in these dialogues, including the empowerment of actors with weak representation capacity, such as young people. However, this was not a priority in this programme period, and the

recommendation was not implemented. A new government provides an opportunity to review UNDP's strategy to generate consensus beyond the structure of the councils, working through multiple, more limited spaces or territorial mechanisms with clearly defined key priorities.

Finding 10: Promotion of citizen engagement: UNDP invested significant efforts to create spaces for dialogue and generate data and information. It provided targeted support to the 2018 and 2019 electoral processes, which helped to increase credibility and confidence in the elections by the public and the international community. However, efforts to promote citizen participation were limited and did not lead to comprehensive implementation of a rights-based approach, with an adequate balance between rights-holders and duty-bearers.

The CPD does not include explicit references to citizen engagement or a strategy to strengthen social participation. These topics are, however, reflected in different lines of work concerning elections with the strengthening of the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE), for which $1.76 million was allocated; women's political participation with improved normative frameworks, which received $20,000; and social auditing focused on access to public information, transparency, anti-corruption and accountability, with a rights-holders approach. These strategies are considered very relevant from a human-rights-based approach to close gaps between the State and citizens. The goal is to increase opportunities for citizenship participation to demand changes and implement social auditing through access to information.

In most cases, UNDP has viewed citizens as participants in its interventions, either through consultations or participation in institutional dialogues (see evidence on Finding 9). But they have not generally been seen as rights-holders with access to information and agents of change.

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[84] 'Informe Final Evaluación de la contribución del PNUD a la generación de políticas consensuadas a través de los procesos de diálogo' (julio 2019), PNUD El Salvador, pp. 75, 76 and 84, and evaluation interviews.

[85] 'Agenda Interpartidara para la Nación. Diálogo Político para la Generación de Acuerdos de Nación en El Salvador', Oficina de las Naciones Unidas para la Facilitación del Diálogo en El Salvador, 2019; and pre-mission questionnaire 1, p. 9.

[86] To achieve consensus, UNDP CPD refers to the need to go beyond participation of a small group in the spaces for dialogue, and the need to include groups traditionally excluded such as youth, women, indigenous people, LGBCTI groups and citizens (p. 4). See also: UNDP, 'Informe Final Evaluación de la contribución del PNUD a la generación de políticas consensuadas a través de los procesos de diálogo', July 2019, El Salvador, p. 84.

For example, UNDP work with CONOSE, FLACSO, FUNDAUNGO and the Universidad Centroamericana to promote research and generate discussions on citizen insecurity through Infosegura (see evidence on Findings 2 and 7) has not been directly connected to the spaces for dialogue created. Although some institutions have participated in the National Councils, there was no strategy to generate greater influence by academia and civil society in government decision-making processes on security issues. UNDP supported increased access to information and transparency on security issues through the creation of online platforms[87] and the generation of knowledge products,[88] an important intermediate result to contribute to broader consensus through more evidence-based information (see evidence on Finding 7).

UNDP strategy on the spaces for dialogue focused on promoting a national mechanism open to citizen participation to influence the design and monitoring of public policies.[89] But it was not oriented to generating and strengthening broad citizen participation platforms that could have supported sustainability. A strategy to strengthen civil society capacities and increase its participation in public policy could have further contributed to ensuring its stronger ownership of the agreements reached and the social sustainability of the processes (see evidence on Finding 9). Ensuring greater participation of civil society and academia on security and justice issues would also be very pertinent to promote social auditing exercises that would help to reduce reputational risks for UNDP.[90]

The evaluation team could not find any evidence of programme contributions to strengthen national anti-corruption capacities, except for specific actions to disseminate international and national legislation

in this area, as stated by the CO.[91] In 2017, the approval of the Administrative Procedures Law and the Contentious Administrative Jurisdiction Law — which UNDP supported in the previous programme period[92] and ensured dissemination of in this cycle — was an important milestone in terms of transparency.

There is also no evidence of work to build capacity in civil society and academia to monitor and follow up on transparency and anti-corruption policies, as foreseen in the CPD. Moving forward, there is interest from the new Government to further engage on anti-corruption issues with the institutions of the justice system. This is an area where UNDP could build upon its comparative advantages on the management of transparent procurement processes and its international technical experience to strategically engage on strengthening justice system institutions.

As a result of administrative problems in the implementation of the country's 2014 elections,[93] the TSE requested UN support to avoid a continued loss of confidence in the process. Based on a needs assessment report,[94] UNDP targeted its intervention to strengthen the capacities of the TSE to organize free and fair elections in 2018 and 2019. Combined with other initiatives by several institutions, this support was assessed as necessary by all stakeholders for improvement of the electoral process, and more importantly, its credibility. The indicator on trust in electoral processes developed by the Universidad Centroamerica improved from 5.56 in 2018 to 7.69 after the 2019 elections.[95]

The international community involvement in electoral assistance was a key factor in increasing public confidence in the elections, which were declared free

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[87] See for example https://desaparecidos.pnc.gob.sv/ and https://www.seguridad.gob.sv/dia/.

[88] National victimization survey reports.

[89] Pre-mission questionnaire 1, p. 13.

[90] The CPD (p. 8) identifies the promotion of wide citizenship participation and the active exercise of social auditing as a risk mitigation strategy for political polarization.

[91] According to UNDP, the CO disseminated international anti-corruption regulations applicable in El Salvador (Guatemala Declaration on Prevention and Fight against Corruption, signed by El Salvador in November 2006, United Nations Convention against Corruption and the Inter-American Convention of Fight Against Corruption), incorporating issues of open government; developed certifications on the new Law of Contentious Administrative Jurisdiction and the Law of Administrative Procedures for police personnel and the internal control systems. Pre-mission questionnaire 1. (p.6) and evaluation interview.

[92] Consultations and development of law proposals.

[93] See: https://www.elsalvador.com/noticias/nacional/los-cinco-pecados-del-tribunal-supremo-electoral/475621/2018/.

[94] Electoral Needs Assessment Commission, 'Report of the electoral needs assessment mission, El Salvador', 2016.

[95] See: http://www.uca.edu.sv/iudop/wp-content/uploads/BoletpercentC3percentADn-4_2018.pdf and http://www.uca.edu.sv/iudop/wp-content/uploads/BoletpercentC3percentADn-de-prensa_final-7-05-19.pdf.

and fair by international observers.[96] The problems encountered in 2014 were not repeated (e.g. need for multiple re-counts in some of the constituencies).

In this regard, the CO developed a virtual training platform for TSE temporary staff in charge of working at polling stations on election days. It was then expanded to include basic trainings open to the public[97] and facilitated discussions with the international community on the steps being taken to improve the electoral process. This advocacy strategy brought in additional funds to UNDP to support the TSE in recognition of the efforts being made; as funding became available, face-to-face trainings were developed.[98]

However, significant capacity-building challenges remained, preventing a more substantial result. The virtual platform turned out not to be effective in improving the capacities of staff working at polling stations as accreditations were only given to those participating in the face-to-face trainings. The Government does not have a clear medium- to long-term strategy to ensure the accreditation is valid from one election to the next, which is needed to avoid a large training process before each election. In view of the next electoral cycle UNDP is considering how to support the TSE with a wider discussion on reform of the electoral process.[99]

In the previous programme cycle, UNDP supported the introduction of a quota system for women candidates for public positions, by promoting legal reforms and public debate. Through its support to the TSE, UNDP contributed to the development of campaigns to encourage voting and expanded its support to the Gender Unit of the TSE. It developed two voluntary political agreements to guarantee women's rights among political parties, candidates and the electoral management body, with commitments to stop violence against women.[100]

There is no evidence of increase in the political representation of vulnerable groups (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) or women, and their participation in the elections remained almost the same (54.88 percent in 2015 vs. 55.09 percent in 2019). It is therefore not possible to establish a positive correlation between these results and the support provided to encourage participation in campaigns. However, there is evidence that the number of female candidates running and elected has increased.[101] While attribution or even contribution could not be established by the evaluation, this trend shows that interventions targeted at key concerns in the country are leading to initial results.

Finding 11: SDGs: UNDP support to national achievement of the SDGs has been diminishing during the period under evaluation and has been limited to ad hoc financial support of some activities. Though UNDP was identified by the UN as the agency expected to strategically engage on economic development, UNDP has not yet developed interventions in line with the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS) process of identifying priority areas for action at national level.

In December 2015, the Government of El Salvador and the UN signed a memorandum of understanding for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In 2016, UNDP supported the development of a national SDG monitoring and reporting system, to be updated regularly by the Government, to track 228 of the 232 international indicators.[102] Yet the evaluation found no evidence that the monitoring system is being used to develop public policies.

UNDP also helped to organize awareness-raising workshops and trainings on the 2030 Agenda with representatives from more than 70 national institutions. A MAPS mission, which took place with UNDP support in 2017, drafted a roadmap for achieving the SDGs in

[96] European Union: https://eeas.europa.eu/election-observation-missions/eom-el-salvador-2019/57680/preliminary-statement-salvadorans-break-historic-bipartisan-politics-credible-transparent-and_en and United States: https://sv.usembassy.gov/2019-presidential-elections-transparent-credible/.

[97] See: https://aulavirtual.tse.gob.sv/.

[98] Evaluation interviews and UNDP El Salvador (2018), 'Report on electoral support' to UN authorities; the Government of Germany and USAID contributed funds to the project. Source: UNDP Atlas system.

[99] TSE, 'Lineas Generales Sugeridas para el proceso de reforma electoral', TSE Reform Proposal no. 110719, 2019.

[100] Recognized by the Secretary General's report A/74/285, 'Strengthening the role of the United Nations in enhancing the effectiveness of the principle of periodic and genuine elections and the promotion of democratization', 2019.

[101] TES, 2019, 'Comparativos de Elecciones 2014-2015 y 2015-2019, voto desagregado por sexo.

[102] See https://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/presscenter/articles/2018/07/el-salvador-lanza-herramienta-para-monitorear-el-avance-en-objet.html.

El Salvador. It is still considered a draft document and was not finalized at the time of this evaluation. The roadmap identified nine key accelerators and different roles and responsibilities for UN agencies, and UNDP was assigned as the lead in the area of economic development. However, no interventions have so far been developed in that sector (see Finding 12), and UNDP's limited human resources were focused on the development of the National Human Development Report. In response to the prioritization process initiated by the MAPS mission, there is limited evidence of regular and systematic coordination among UN agencies[103] or of the development of new joint initiatives, except from the global Spotlight project.

The MAPS mission ensured the participation of representatives from the private sector, particularly the Business Foundation for Social Action, which manages the local secretariat of the UN Global Compact, which encourages corporate social responsibility.[104] UNDP has participated in several events to promote the SDGs and corporate responsibility consistent with the Global Compact, but there is no evidence of substantive contributions.

Although the MAPS process helped to start discussions at national level, the Government launched its own technical analysis, which confirmed some of the accelerators. UNDP supported the Government in 2018–2019 to align the security, education and environment national plans with the 2030 Agenda through a consultative process with government entities.[105] Additional support to localize the SDGs and accompany the Government in its preliminary work in 2018 to develop a toolbox and trainings for local governments was expected but not provided due to limited resources. Similarly, efforts to prepare the voluntary national review of progress towards the SDGs only received minimal financial support from UNDP and no technical advice. At the time of the evaluation, the Government was developing its workplan, but there was no SDG national coordination platform or focal point. Achieving the SDGs was not looked at as an opportunity to promote funding for specific areas.

2.4. Decent work, sustainable livelihoods and resilience

Aligned to the national priorities, the UNDAF focused on decent work and inclusive livelihoods (outcome 2) and resilience (outcome 4). Within these outcomes, UNDP's programmatic areas of work were linked, with some projects contributing to both outcomes through capacity-development and evidence-based discussions. The main strategies focused on (i) creating economic development opportunities for vulnerable and excluded populations; (ii) promoting productive value chains; (iii) prioritizing the conservation and management of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services; and (iv) providing policy advice and promoting dialogue for the achievement of national agreements on strategies that lead to decent employment and sustainable livelihoods.

The outcome on decent employment and sustainable livelihoods envisaged $50.96 million in resources from the GEF, the Government of El Salvador, the Montreal Protocol, the Government of Luxembourg and UNDP core resources. The funds were to be spent on projects to promote value chains, conservation and management of natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystem goods and services. Between 2016 and July 2019, 11 projects were implemented with $12.7 million in expenditures, reaching a 71 percent financial execution rate. This represented 19 percent of the total CO expenditure for the period.

The outcome on resilience envisaged $10.3 million from GEF, the Government, UNOCHA, the European Union, Germany and UNDP core resources. It was to be spent on projects promoting sustainable urban development models and ensuring DRR, as well as on climate change governance and post-disaster recovery. Between 2016 and July 2019, six projects were implemented with $2.4 million in expenditures, reaching a 75 percent financial execution rate. This represented 3.7 percent of the total CO expenditure for the period.

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[103] Despite some UNDP attempts to align the inter-agency working groups with the MAPS accelerators, evaluation interviews highlighted that no regular meetings took place and no coordination structure is in place. One of the consequences of this is the limited development of joint programmes.

[104] See for example: https://fundemas.org/noticias-y-publicaciones/noticias-de-socios/851-fundemas-centrara-su-agenda-2019-en-cambio-climatico-y-empleo.

[105] See: https://www.transparenciaactiva.gob.sv/el-salvador-ha-cumplido-con-mas-del-40-de-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible.

Interventions targeted government institutions (Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, National Energy Council, Secretariat for Vulnerability Issues, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare), local governments, the rural population and the private sector. Several other UN entities were also expected to contribute to these outcomes, including WFP, FAO, UNICEF, WHO, UNIDO and ILO.

Finding 12: Poverty reduction: Though poverty reduction is UNDP's core mandate, the organization's programmes in El Salvador did not directly tackle the issues of poverty, inequality and exclusion through a coherent, sustainable development strategy. UNDP institutional support for poverty reduction was discontinued during the period under evaluation, and its local-level project support was limited to the administration of funds.

In the previous cycle, UNDP's institutional capacity-building efforts helped the country to adopt a multidimensional approach to poverty measurement. The General Directorate of Statistics and Census, part of the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency, institutionalized the measurement of multidimensional poverty in its multi-purpose household surveys, a key methodology to address structural poverty and inequality. The monitoring system is still in use and data are available on a yearly basis.[106] Yet, the evaluation team could not find evidence of specific UNDP interventions or government programmes that were developed as a result of the data generated by the system.

During the period under review, the support to the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency was discontinued due to limited staff capacity and lack of funding.[107] The indicators framework has not yet been revised and/or updated to ensure measurements are made not only at regional level but also at municipal level, so it can become an effective tool to guide local development policies. This additional level of analysis would permit social policies to be localized, highlighting urban-rural differences and more adequately localizing the SDGs.

The partnership survey results (Figure 4) highlight partner views of UNDP's engagement on poverty reduction. Positive responses decreased substantially between 2012 and 2017, and this was an area in which respondents saw the lowest levels of added value. UNDP was assigned by the MAPS process to lead the economic development area among all the UN agencies (as a result of the prioritization of accelerators, see Finding 11) in support of SDG implementation in the country. However, the evaluation team could not find evidence that UNDP technical support during the period under evaluation has led to poverty reduction or creation of sustainable livelihoods.

In the CPD, UNDP planned to focus efforts on "expanding opportunities for women and youth who are living in poverty, excluded or with unstable jobs." However, its support in the area of rural development was limited to implementation of an IFAD national implementation modality project through the efficient administration of funds.[108] Other interventions during the period under evaluation focused on establishing a methodology to strengthen the development of value chains, through the Provider Development Programme project, but there is no evidence that this led to the creation of decent employment or sustainable livelihoods (see evidence on Finding 13). Although the corporate CPD indicators focused on the multidimensional poverty rate and the decent employment rate, the linkage between the progress of those indicators and UNDP projects could not be established.

Finding 13: Rural development and decent employment: UNDP's economic development initiatives were not adequately geared towards creation of decent employment. UNDP's contributions to rural development were limited to a fiduciary role for IFAD projects and, in the area of women's economic empowerment, efforts are at initial stage.

UNDP interventions are aligned with the National Development Plan 2015–2019, and more particularly with its objective 1, on making the national economy

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[106] See: http://www.digestyc.gob.sv/.

[107] Evaluation interviews. The lack of funding was related to the change in the type of development cooperation under the aid effectiveness agenda. Donors engaged with the Government using the direct budget support mechanism.

[108] Based on evaluation interviews and IFAD evaluation (2019) of the PRODEMOR intervention.

more dynamic through an equitable and inclusive economic growth approach based on generating decent employment. UNDP supported the design of models and pilots for income generation aimed at enhancing employability, entrepreneurship and productive chains in various sectors, concentrated on people who do not have access to decent employment. Yet the evaluation team could not determine whether the economic development interventions piloted contributed to the promotion of decent employment because, in the absence of a monitoring system, no official data have been collected.

For example, the Provider Development Programme (PDP) methodology adapted and implemented between 2008 and 2015 aimed to support small and medium-sized businesses. These businesses account for the majority of the jobs in El Salvador and are usually informal with low productivity. The PDP's objective is to strengthen their competitiveness. The CO capacity development support did not manage to institutionalize the PDP in the Ministry of Economy or the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. But it was successfully institutionalized in the National Commission of Micro and Small Business and became the programme 'Growing with your business,'[109] which supported the growth and value chain linkages of small businesses and entrepreneurs.

However, the lack of a monitoring system meant there was no concrete information on the impact of this work in terms of jobs created or improvements in work conditions. The support provided to the government programme 'Youth with everything' was limited to inputs to its initial design. There was no collaboration during its implementation to aid in generating livelihoods for youth, despite government openness to this effort.

UNDP's engagement on rural development focused on the administrative management of several IFAD projects over 12 years.[110] UNDP's fiduciary role was key to ensuring the effective and transparent implementation of these projects, which aimed to strengthen the capacities of small producers and promote productive value chains.[111] UNDP's

contributions to these initiatives and economic development processes remained at the fiduciary level. It did not provide substantive technical support to improve the productive capacities of the targeted units or generate livelihoods for women and youth (planned output). Nor did it achieve greater opportunities for access to decent employment (planned outcome).

Although UNDP has planned to play a technical role in the new IFAD project, which was signed at the time of this evaluation, this increased engagement did not consider the CO's human capacities. The CO planned to recruit a project implementation team at local level but, at the time of the evaluation, the substantive technical role planned at project design was limited to one person in the CO (see evidence on Finding 3). This may represent a risk for the adequate implementation and development of the CO environment and livelihoods portfolio.

Through these projects, UNDP did not address the root causes of the country's economic situation or the generation of decent work, although there is an expected indirect causal effect between promoting economic development processes and creating decent jobs. The planned targeted support to indigenous populations and migration-affected communities did not materialize as no interventions were designed in this area.

The pilot Gender Equality Seal programme focused on eliminating gender inequality and discriminatory practices in the workplace. It initiated a process to incorporate positive actions in the institutions such as by creating gender business committees (see evidence on Finding 18). However, these initial efforts were not continued and thus did not achieve significant results in terms of decent employment (outcome) or economic empowerment of women (planned output).

Finding 14: Biodiversity and environmental sustainability: UNDP's efforts have raised attention about environmental sustainability at national level, through the creation of a multi-partner space for

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[109] See: https://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/library/poverty/creciendo-con-su-negocio-metodologia-para-la-formacion.html.

[110] UNDP PRODEMOR project document, 2007.

[111] Based on evaluation interviews.

dialogue and policy discussions. At local level, UNDP has contributed to the expansion of protected wetlands through the establishment of institutional frameworks for biodiversity and environmental protection. However, the sustainability and effectiveness of this initiative is challenged by a limited focus on developing alternative sustainable livelihoods through an integrated sustainable development approach.

In alignment with the 2013 national biodiversity strategy, UNDP planned to work at the policy and local level on the "conservation and management of natural resources, biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services […] for reducing socioeconomic and environmental vulnerability", as stated in the CPD. For this, UNDP focused on (i) providing technical support for policy dialogue; (ii) promoting models for the creation of natural protected areas and the sustainable use of biodiversity at local level; and (iii) support to national knowledge management efforts and preparation of the Sixth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in response to the country's international commitments.

UNDP contributed to the creation, implementation and technical monitoring of the National Council for Environmental Sustainability and Vulnerability (CONASAV), a space for dialogue to develop public policies with an integrated approach (see Finding 9). UNDP's credibility and comparative advantage as an integrator of actors helped to facilitate discussions and bring together multiple actors through its role as the technical secretariat. This resulted in the formulation of the El Salvador Sustainable Plan and other agreements.[112]

UNDP's coordination and operational support was recognized by interviewed parties and highlighted

in the CO decentralized evaluation on dialogue processes. Through the establishment of CONASAV, UNDP's policy advice and efforts to promote dialogue helped to elevate environmental sustainability issues by putting them on the national agenda at a level similar to education and security. This also promoted an enabling environment for public-private dialogue on environmental sustainability issues, which in turn encouraged social corporate responsibility initiatives in the private sector. For example, the private sector and the National Environment Investment Fund partnered to launch the *Plantatón,* which planted 13 million trees between 2017 and 2019.[113]

However, the CONASAV agreements were not implemented, and its sustainability is at risk. No agreed legislative agenda resulted from the CONASAV dialogues, so the effort did not ensure political-legislative coordination between CONASAV, the Government and the Legislative Assembly. This was affected by the closing of the inter-party table (see evidence on Finding 9) and the fact that the political sectors represented in the Legislative Assembly did not participate in the CONASAV meetings. Such participation could have helped to decrease political polarization through consensus on State issues (see evidence on Finding 9).[114]

The CO strengthened the coordination of local actors[115] to ensure the sustainable management and protection of wetlands in Jiquilisco Bay, Fonseca Gulf Island and the El Jocotal and Olomega lagoons.[116] UNDP started the process to improve the governance and institutional structures through the creation of nine environmental units at municipal level, along with management plans and internal regulations,[117] a wetlands unit within the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the first steps for formalizing

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[112] It includes 28 agreements and 131 goals, around 4 strategic pillars: (i) Comprehensive risk management for disaster reduction and climate change, (ii) generation of knowledge and a culture of sustainability, (iii) promotion of productive transformation and (iv) strengthening of public institutions. CONASAV also presented proposals to decrease air pollution (See: http://www.marn.gob.sv/conasav-propone-a-asamblea-legislativa-reformas-a-la-ley-de-transporte-terrestre/).

[113] Based on UNDP ROAR and data shared by National Environment Investment Fund. However, online sources present different data, see: https://plantaton.org/ and http://www.marn.gob.sv/plantaton-reforesto-390-sitios-con-mas-de-16-6-millones-de-plantas/.

[114] Fernández, G. M., 2019, Final evaluation report, 'Evaluación de la contribución del PNUD a la generación de políticas consensuadas a través de los procesos de diálogo en El Salvador', Santiago de Chile, UNDP.

[115] Board of Directors of the National Biosphere Reserve Committee and Local RAMSAR Committees of the lagoons Olomega, Jocotal, Bahía de Jiquilisco and Jaltepeque.

[116] This represents 1,857 km² or 88 percent of the protected wetlands with international relevance (Ramsar).

[117] E.g. management and administrative regulations for human activities within the wetlands, participatory plans for the conservation and sustainable use of mangroves, diagnostic instruments and protocols to reduce threats to biodiversity.

the protected natural areas. This was complemented by some knowledge products, such as an updated inventory of wetlands in El Salvador.[118] However, the participation of relevant local actors was limited, and few initiatives were developed to help communities perceive the natural protected area as a source of socioeconomic benefits.[119]

At the time of the evaluation, a monitoring system was being developed to collect data on the status and management of biodiversity in the protected areas. But the process implemented and the technology used were located at the central level, and there was not yet clarity on how it could be effectively implemented, considering the operational challenges faced at local level, such as lack of access to the Internet to upload data. This necessary improvement was already noted in the 2019 GEF midterm project evaluation but was not yet addressed. That evaluation highlighted the fact that "the project includes constant monitoring but is limited by information gaps, which relate to communication weaknesses between institutions (municipalities, CENDEPESCA,[120] etc.) and the environmental information system, which does not include monitoring of key species or coverage and composition of mangroves." Therefore, no evidence yet exists that the additional hectares under protection are being effectively managed and the state of biodiversity and ecosystems is improving.

Not enough investment was made in the institutional framework for the management of the protected areas to develop alternative sustainable livelihoods through an integrated approach. The CO supported the development of several business plans to promote local economic development. Although these are needed to ensure that environmental management contributes to poverty reduction, the small scale of the plans precludes giving adequate attention to the trade-offs between biodiversity and human livelihood objectives. Despite some planned sensitization activities, the business plans' effectiveness and sustainability remain at risk as the

development of alternative, sustainable community livelihoods initiatives were limited and insufficient to achieve lasting results. There was limited evidence of efforts to engage with the private sector to develop biodiversity-friendly activities.

Finding 15: Knowledge management on climate change: UNDP's support to knowledge management on climate change issues has been crucial for El Salvador to comply with its international reporting requirements and better understand its vulnerabilities. The preparation of technical studies led to the adoption of relevant policies, but it was not accompanied by strengthening national capacities for handover, and there has been insufficient dissemination/use of the studies produced. In addition, these efforts were not sufficiently linked with more integrated responses to development issues.

UNDP planned to help strengthen climate change governance in El Salvador through knowledge management and institutional capacity-building strategies. Although it planned to engage on climate change adaptation in national and local development plans to promote and strengthen the climate change architecture, there is no evidence of work in this regard or implementation of models at the local level for scale up.

UNDP positioned itself as an important knowledge management agency on climate change issues through its support to several knowledge products (see output indicator in Annex 7). In partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the CO contributed to preparation of the Third National Communication on Climate Change, which provides a comprehensive overview of the country's climate situation and vulnerabilities.[121] The technical studies carried out for preparation of this communication provide (i) scenarios on the effects of climate change up to 2100, as requested by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; (ii) an evaluation of vulnerability and adaptation to climate change in

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[118] See: http://www.marn.gob.sv/descargas/inventario-de-humedales-2018/.

[119] UNDP midterm review, 'Conservation, Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and the Maintenance of the Ecosystem Services in Protected Wetlands of International Importance', March 2019.

[120] Centre for the Development of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

[121] See: http://cidoc.marn.gob.sv/documentos/tercera-comunicacion-nacional-de-cambio-climatico-y-primer-informe-bienal-de-actualizacion-el-salvador/.

urban and rural areas; and (iii) an evaluation of the technological, financial and capacity-development needs and challenges for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, among others.

These studies have provided technical inputs for the development of the National Climate Change Adaptation Plan[122] and for formulation of projects being submitted to international climate funds (see evidence on Finding 16). Although partners expressed support for this during interviews, they also noted that this work was not accompanied by a strengthening of national capacities for handover, such as through collaboration with academia.

Additionally, as part of the GCF readiness initiative, the CO supported the Government to implement an analysis of public finance architecture for climate change.[123] The purpose was to estimate the country's expenditures on and the financial impact of climate change adaptation, which represented 1 percent of GDP annually between 2011 and 2015 and 4.3 percent of the expenditure of the Government and public companies.[124] This is expected to enhance public investments on climate change at national level through the environmental and climatic classifiers designed.[125] The CO also supported the development of a climate change policy for public infrastructure in the Ministry of Public Works to ensure resilience and prevent and reduce vulnerabilities.

UNDP's contributions to technical studies on climate change were also important for ensuring that El Salvador complies with its international commitments on climate change. UNDP supported the preparation of national monitoring reports for the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the subsequent Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. It also supported the country in the phase-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons in response to its obligations under the Montreal Protocol and Vienna Convention, through the development of a national plan for their elimination. UNDP provided an initial diagnosis, capacity-building support to refrigeration

technicians and customs officers, some awareness-raising activities, and some small-scale destruction of ozone-depleting substances. This led to a reduction of more than 10 percent of hydrochlorofluorocarbons annually, allowing El Salvador to meet its international commitments to achieve a complete phase-out.

Nevertheless, the dissemination of the climate change studies has been limited. The reports have not been shared with academia or the private sector or used by CONASAV to inform policy design or implementation. There is also limited analysis or synergies between socioeconomic challenges, climate change issues and migration, an area for which UNDP could have provided more integrated responses by better aligning its projects on wetlands protection and development of livelihoods in rural areas.

Finding 16: Access to climate change financing: UNDP's support helped El Salvador to effectively access international climate funds. Nevertheless, UNDP was not able to further leverage direct access to funds or partnerships and become simply an implementer of GCF financing.

After mobilizing bilateral funds and building on its knowledge management experience on climate change, UNDP invested significant efforts to design four GCF readiness studies to allow El Salvador to access financing from the GCF. They include two proposals on climate resilience in the Dry Corridor, one for $127.7 million and one for $116 million; one proposal on climate resilience and ecosystem services in the coffee sector, for $100 million; and one proposal on climate resilience in the infrastructure sector.

These initial studies were further developed into GCF proposals, and some are being implemented by other international development actors (FAO, UNEP and the Inter-American Development Bank) as designated by the Government. The infrastructure proposal, the only one allocated to UNDP, could not be further developed or implemented as UNDP does

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[122] See: http://cidoc.marn.gob.sv/documentos/plan-nacional-de-cambio-climatico-tercera-edicion/ .

[123] Sánchez, A., 2018, 'Propuesta Conceptual de Clasificadores Presupuestarios, Ambientales y Climáticos', Quito, Ecuador, PNUD.

[124] Almeida Sánchez, R.B., 2018, 'Estudio de Análisis del Gasto Público y la Institucionalidad para el Cambio Climático', San Salvador, PNUD.

[125] Climate expenditure labelling is a budgetary instrument to monitor public spending relevant to climate change in national budget systems. It allows the government to make informed decisions, prioritize climate investments and incorporate climate considerations into project designs.

not have corporate level accreditation to the GCF to finance high-risk projects.[126] However, this was not identified as a risk by UNDP in its corporate risk log.

UNDP helped the Government to manage and navigate the long process to access international climate funds, a support valued by government counterparts even though it took more than four years. However, the CO did not position itself strategically with preparation of a proposal for which it could become an implementer of GCF financing at country level. This does not diminish the value of UNDP's contribution to the country's ability to access GCF funds. But doing so would have been of strategic benefit for an office desiring to develop a strong pipeline of projects (see Finding 4), and one that identifies climate change as a priority based on both the country's needs and UNDP's potential added value.

In cooperation with UNEP, UNDP also provided technical advice to enhance national entities' abilities to seek GCF accreditation. However, these capacities have been viewed as quite low, as illustrated by the GEF System for Transparent Allocation of Resources, which has only allocated $4 million to El Salvador. Despite this, and the complex and difficult nature of the GCF accreditation process, UNDP made three unsuccessful attempts with the El Salvador Environment Fund. These initiatives aimed to guarantee the country's ownership of climate finance, but they were not based on an adequate assessment of the country's realities.

As part of the readiness initiative, the CO then helped the Development Bank of El Salvador and the Social Investment Fund for Local Development of El Salvador to also seek accreditation with the GCF. At the time of this evaluation, the process had not yet been completed, although UNDP believes the Bank will be able to do so in 2020.

The CO was also engaged in two other very long processes to access international climate funds, through the Adaptation Fund and the GEF, both approved at the time of the evaluation (see evidence on Finding 3). However, the GEF project has suffered significant delays (three years) and its proposal has been substantially revised several times, evolving from a mitigation to an energy project. Interviewees stressed the lack of continuous engagement and clear communication from UNDP. Yet only one operational risk on limited access to information was registered in the CO risk log.

This GEF project focuses on development of the metropolitan area of San Salvador through reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and implementation of energy efficiency measures in municipal buildings and public transport. It allows UNDP to start re-engaging on its previous experiences on energy efficiency (from 2011) and on some of the government priorities targeting urban mobility and energy efficiency. This offers opportunities for UNDP to build upon its comparative advantages and work on the synergies among citizen insecurity, energy efficiency and gender issues on urban mobility projects. UNDP has not yet collaborated with the National Energy Council or engaged with other international development partners working on the same area (e.g. the Japan International Cooperation Agency, Korea International Cooperation Agency and German Agency for International Cooperation).

Finding 17: Disaster risk reduction: UNDP's initiatives on DRR were fragmented and limited. There was no evidence of results achieved to ensure sustainable development or resilience at national level, despite the strategic relevance of this area, given the vulnerability of the country.

El Salvador's high vulnerability to natural disasters has an important impact on its human and socioeconomic development. To lower the risk of natural disasters, UNDP planned in its CPD to work with municipalities to mainstream post-disaster recovery in their risk management and civil protection plans. The CO also aimed to provide institutional capacity-building for the design, implementation and execution of DRR plans and policies. As noted in the 2011 ADR, this work had begun in previous cycles, when UNDP focused on early warning equipment for floods and vulcanological observatories as well as municipal capacity-building on contingency plans.

In practice, the interventions have been limited and fragmented, with no clear strategy in place. There

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[126] UNDP CO internal memos on environmental safeguards.

is no evidence of work being done to promote cross-sector partnerships to strengthen DRR or to support the participation and leadership of rural and indigenous women in DRR policies, plans and actions.

The activities implemented tried to improve DRR governance through the transfer of specific tools and instruments, but these were never institutionalized or used, as government counterparts stressed during interviews. The exception was the INFORM system, which provides a detailed analysis of risks. Challenges to ensuring adequate institutionalization had been noted in the 2011 ADR but were not addressed.

At local level, UNDP joined an inter-agency Central Emergency Response Fund response in the Dry Corridor with the procurement of 300 water tanks for communities.[127] However, this was not implemented based on the post-disaster needs assessment methodology as initially planned, and there was no follow-up intervention to ensure sustainability or address issues such as early warning. Yet the risks of and mitigation strategies for implementing the projects were not identified in the CO risk log. This limited and fragmented engagement on DRR was also highlighted in the partnership survey (Figure 4), with respondents noting that UNDP is not recognized as a strategic partner in this area.

2.5. Cross-cutting issues

Finding 18: Youth and gender: The CO received a silver Gender Seal, which recognizes the efforts made to establish internal mechanisms to improve attention to gender equality and women's empowerment and to design targeted programmes for women. However, opportunities were not used to respond to their specific needs and interests and to further mainstream gender and youth beyond their participation in projects and data collection of disaggregated indicators. The programme is not sufficiently oriented to the particular challenges of a very young population.

Women and youth in El Salvador face exclusion and multiple vulnerabilities. In the CPD, they were identified as targeted groups across all outcomes (except that youth were not targeted in the resilience and DRR outcome).

In previous cycles, the CO implemented a few projects focused on violence prevention among youth, particularly to strengthen their entrepreneurship skills. This is also a key priority area at national level for the new Government. Although youth represent more than half of the country's population, they have very limited opportunities as they remain a highly stigmatized group, often associated with gang violence, instead of being viewed as potential agents of positive change.

The CO built on these past experiences, and some specific human development challenges highlighted in the 2013 National Human Development Report, to identify challenges and bottlenecks for youth in its 2018 National Human Development Report. Despite the report's valuable and relevant contributions to policy debate and awareness-raising, it has not yet been used as an instrument to initiate dialogue on these issues at national level and bring together diverse actors. Nor has this strategic analysis been used yet to better integrate youth issues across projects or develop new project proposals. The only exception is the Pionero project, which focuses on the reintegration of adolescents and young people who were involved in gangs. Though it was developed before the 2018 National Human Development Report, it represents a promising pilot (see evidence on Finding 7).

Based on IEO's GRES, UNDP initiatives were mostly gender targeted, centred on the inclusion of women in programmes and the collection of disaggregated data, as evidenced in the PDP project, the GEF project on natural protected areas and the work done with the PESS. Opportunities were missed to better mainstream gender in the projects and further develop gender strategies to address women's needs and priorities.

However, UNDP has been involved in several gender initiatives that have the potential to begin to address structural barriers affecting gender equality and women's empowerment. In the area of citizen insecurity, the recently developed Spotlight initiative, undertaken with UN-Women, UNICEF and UNFPA,

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[127] OXFAM-CORDES, 2016, 'Informe técnico final de intervención Respuesta a la Sequía para aliviar las necesidades de la población más vulnerable en El Salvador', San Salvador, PNUD.

stands out. It aims to make violence against women and girls, and especially femicide, a visible aspect of citizen insecurity. Some knowledge products have also been developed as part of the Infosegura initiative such us the report on acts of violence against women 2016–2017,[128] the maps of acts of violence against women in El Salvador of 2017 and the 2017 survey on violence against women.[129]

In UNDP's work to create spaces for dialogue, gender-specific actions were incorporated in the El Salvador Educated Plan and the PESS.[130] However, no specific references were found in the El Salvador Sustainable Plan. In terms of political participation, UNDP supported the TSE Gender Unit to promote women's political rights and the Salvadoran Institute for Women Development to identify obstacles and mechanisms to enhance women's political participation. In partnership with UN-Women, UNDP strengthened the leadership skills of 120 female political candidates for the 2018 elections to increase their political representation, although they only achieved 31 percent representation in the Legislative Assembly.[131]

In the area of economic empowerment, UNDP piloted two initiatives on the Gender Equality Seals, one with public institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Environment and National Commission of Micro and Small Business), and one with nine private companies. The aim was to close gender gaps in the workplace through a gender certification process with specific tools, guidance and assessment criteria. For participating organizations, this process has been an opportunity to increase their visibility and commitment on gender equality issues.

In 2018, four private companies achieved the first level of certification. But the programme ended in 2019 without finalizing the accreditation process or showing significant results, despite the demand for continued support from participating private organizations,

as observed by the evaluation team. However, the initiative has strong potential to achieve results in terms of increasing women's roles in decision-making and decreasing gender-based pay gaps, for example. Given the significant gender equality and women's empowerment challenges faced in El Salvador, the continuation and strengthening of this programme could support promotion of gender equality in the workplace, building on the companies' brand reputation.

In 2018, the CO received the corporate silver Gender Seal certification, which recognized its efforts to improve gender equality systems. These include a gender equality strategy and action plan, one gender specialist, training courses on gender, and increased investments in programmes and projects that promote gender equality and empowerment of women as reflected in the gender markers.[132] In terms of gender parity, the CO staff is 58 percent women (Annex 3).

Finding 19: Results-based management and knowledge management: The programme's theory of change lacked sufficient clarity of assumptions and causal pathways for integrated results. UNDP results-based management efforts were mostly oriented towards reporting and compliance. They did not use evaluations, risk assessments or information generation as a source of learning and knowledge management to improve programming, partnerships or public policies.

As part of the CPD preparation process, the CO developed a theory of change to map assumptions, intervention strategies, causal linkages and stakeholders.[133] Its intervention strategies were structured around three approaches: (i) strengthening capacities at multiple levels; (ii) dialogue and participation; and (iii) policy incidence and informed discussions. There is, however, a lack of clarity on the causal pathways. For example, the work on citizen insecurity, related to the UNDAF outcome

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[128] This involved the effort to collect and standardize information from 10 national institutions, https://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/library/womens_empowerment/informe-sobre-hechos-de-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-2016-2017.html.

[129] See: https://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/library/womens_empowerment/informe-sobre-hechos-de-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-2016-2017.html; and https://www.sv.undp.org/content/dam/el_salvador/docs/womempow/UNDP_SV_MapashechosVCM_2017.pdf; http://aplicaciones.digestyc.gob.sv/observatorio.genero/docs/ENVCMpercent2017.pdf.

[130] With 17 (16 percent) out of 104 actions considered gender-specific in the El Salvador Educated Plan; and in 4 (14 percent) out of 27 prioritized actions in the PESS. Source: UNDP ROAR 2016.

[131] See: https://data.ipu.org/content/el-salvador?chamber_id=13380.

132 https://www.sv.undp.org/content/el_salvador/es/home/presscenter/articles/2018/10/oficina-de-pnud-el-salvador-renueva-sello-de-plata-de-igualdad-d.html.

[133] UNDP CPD 2016–2020, National Steering Committee, April 2015.

"creation of secure environment and coexistence", was not identified as an outcome in the CPD or theory of change, despite its important contributions to this area (see Finding 7). Some important areas of work identified in the CPD and the theory of change were not substantially implemented during this programme period, such as DRR, the evaluation of public policies, transparency and anti-corruption, and the inclusion and participation of people suffering from exclusion.

The assumptions identified in the theory of change are contextual factors rather than assumptions that would have helped to hypothesize causal pathways. Additionally, most of them did not adequately identify the requirements for government upscaling; the scale of the intervention necessary to achieve results; the mechanisms required for use of the information and data to design and implement public policies; or the requirements for implementing and financing public policies at local level. The scale of the interventions limited the options for integration and synergies across programme areas. Although both the CPD and the theory of change include lists of counterparts, there is no mapping of their interests, availability or added value for specific areas of work or of how their integrated work would add value and accelerate sustainable results.

The results framework supporting the CPD is comprehensive, with 12 indicators at outcome level and 47 at output level. However, the quality and relevance of indicators is variable from one programme area to another, and the link between outcome indicators and outputs is not always clear. Some areas, such as social investment, present a weaker results framework, more focused on processes and activities. These weaknesses in project formulation, particularly in terms of M&E frameworks and theories of change, were echoed by the 2019 audit report.

The CO has developed a comprehensive evaluation plan and detailed its M&E framework for this programme period. However, it focused mostly on complying with corporate reporting requirements, such as the ROAR and monitoring exercises, rather than on learning from the data for course correction and improvements. In some cases, there was also an effort to ensure

adequate monitoring at project level. For example, the Peacebuilding Fund and Spotlight projects recruited a dedicated M&E staff member to track implementation, and Infosegura has a regional-level M&E function. However, monitoring responsibilities at the project level are not always clear,[134] and reflection on programme results was limited. Evaluation recommendations were not taken systematically into consideration, and it is not clear what level of learning the CO and its counterparts are drawing from these evaluations (see evidence on Finding 14). The use of findings and recommendations from past evaluations has been limited (Table 1). The evaluation team noted limited dissemination and sharing of some evaluations, such as the one related to the National Councils and the one related to the protected areas. This limits the uptake and potential to drive change.

For most of the projects, the CO has complied with the requirements for reporting on risks, but some of them do not include the corporate risk register. This is also highlighted in the 2019 audit report, which points out limited risk assessment or awareness and deficiencies in risk treatment for effective management. A review of the risk matrices showed that, in some cases, the management response is included several years later in the system. In many others it only points out that the risk has been overcome, but the responses do not include the specific mitigation strategies implemented. Some comments also relate to risks not being identified in the project document. This reinforces a focus on compliance, rather than on learning and adaptive management. Risk assessments have therefore been viewed and used more as a compliance tool, rather than a risk management tool for improved decision-making processes.

The CO strategy to ensure informed discussions was translated into significant efforts to support research, data collection and analysis, such as through Infosegura, the studies produced through the GEF protected areas project and the GCF readiness project. Yet this was not transformed into proactive use of knowledge for improved programme design, implementation and partnerships. This echoes the 2019 audit report findings, which stress that lessons learned on projects were not consistently captured.

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[134] See also UNDP 2019 Audit Report.

The CO also did not explore the potential to use all the information and data produced to develop partnerships with civil society, academia and think tanks to become a knowledge broker. The evaluation team noted that several studies and analyses remained internal and were not shared more broadly. UNDP has not effectively used all these data and studies to develop new projects and implement more evidence-based programming, or to foster communication for development and social change. The knowledge produced could also have been further communicated through innovative tools to engage with communities, for example to promote social auditing, based on a human-rights based approach (see also evidence on Findings 1, 2 and 10).

TABLE 1: Status of implementation of 2011 ADR recommendations

Recommendations for headquarters (1 and 2)	All recommendations remain valid • Despite the mandatory preparation of projected budget and delivery scenarios, the Integrated Work Plan, and recovery of costs with direct project costs, no additional steps have been put in place to develop prospective scenarios that would include assessments to balance sources of funding or identify financial sustainability risks that would compromise the continuity and sustainability of core programme staff, as materialized with the 2016 management consulting team transformation plan.
Recommendations on strategic positioning, business model and corporate issues (3 to 8)	All recommendations remain valid • Both the ADR and ICPE took place after a management consulting team mission and the arrival of a new resident representative, which provide opportunities to have strategic discussions on the CO's internal management, funding modalities and positioning at country level. However, these had not taken place by the time of the evaluation. For example, local development and decentralization still remain important issues on which UNDP has not yet engaged at the policy level as recommended. A more strategic engagement on gender only started more recently with Spotlight, but it continues to require strengthening. • In terms of programmatic strategies, South-South cooperation remains an area to be strengthened as a key cooperation mechanism and was not really explored in the programme cycle. Similarly, important gaps remain in terms of inter-agency work even though El Salvador is a Delivering as One country, and the specific criteria to be used on, for example, monitoring and design, were not implemented. • The CO had adequately implemented its evaluation plan, including one evaluation at outcome level as recommended. The monitoring system still requires better indicators, which would allow, for example, measurement of progress on capacity-development activities.
Recommendations on cross-cutting issues (9 and 10)	All recommendations remain valid • Environment, gender and local development issues have not been mainstreamed across interventions. Although there have been improvements in addressing gender issues, and the CO received a silver gender certification, there is still opportunity to better integrate gender and its focal point in programme design. • It remains very relevant to strengthen the CO's knowledge management as a key area of work, building on its potential without creating a specific unit for it.
Recommendations on thematic issues (11 to 14)	Many recommendations remain valid • Although significant investments were made in preparation of the National Human Development Report, fewer efforts were made on its dissemination than recommended. The CO does not yet have a clear strategy for poverty reduction and economic development. • Efforts have not focused on strengthening the capacities of civil society to engage on citizenship participation processes. Efforts with local governments are still needed to ensure sustainability. The CO still needs to prioritize its work with justice institutions, and consider issues related to organized crime in citizen insecurity work. • The CONASAV was created as a space for dialogue among multiple actors on public policies in the area of environment, climate change and DRR, but synergies across thematic areas were not explored and are still needed. • UNDP has successfully transferred the work on HIV to the Government.

Source: Evaluation team.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

3.1. Conclusions

● **Conclusion 1: Risks of business model: To remain financially sustainable, UNDP has adapted its business model over the last 10 years to work increasingly with government cost-financing. This model in El Salvador combined UNDP's fiduciary role through the provision of administrative development services, mainly on procurement, with strategic technical advice on key national priorities. This allowed UNDP to remain strategically positioned and maintain a close partnership with the Government. Yet the reduction in office personnel in 2016 due to the decrease in infrastructure projects upset the balance between strategic technical support and provision of administrative operational development services.**

UNDP is valued as a reliable, credible and trusted actor that is well-positioned to address human development challenges. But it is highly reliant on government funding, which illustrates the trust of the Government but also represents important financial sustainability risks. The 2016 office restructuring, which followed a reduction in government cost-financing, was not accompanied by a reduction in the areas of expected engagement. This weakened the CO capacity to deliver technical support. Although the office structure includes senior level functions, there has been a decline in the programme pipeline, a fragmentation of some programmatic interventions (see conclusion 3), downsizing of the operations staff and weakened engagement on technical and policy advisory areas, which mostly continue through the engagement of a now-limited number of programme officers.

● **Conclusion 2: Partnerships, dialogue and knowledge management: Based on its credibility, UNDP has played an important role as an integrator of actors to promote dialogue on priority and sensitive issues and as a knowledge broker to increase access to data and information. Nevertheless, it does not have a partnerships strategy focused on right-holders or an effective institutional capacity development approach to achieve better results.**

UNDP has concentrated its efforts on working closely with the Government, mainly the executive branch. It has strengthened the availability of studies and data to inform public policies and achieve international commitments, facilitated public investments in strategic assets and enabled the creation of important spaces for dialogue. However, institutional capacity development strategies have not been systematically implemented to ensure exit strategies and sustainability for results. South-South and triangular cooperation have not been sufficiently explored to capture and help implement innovative development solutions. In specific areas, UNDP has promoted the participation of the private sector and civil society, but it has not pursued a knowledge-sharing approach to increase transparency and ensure citizen participation and social auditing with a right-holders approach to influence the implementation of public policies. This strategy deserves further attention as it could create reputational risks.[135]

● **Conclusion 3: Inclusive sustainable development: UNDP has successfully supported the country's environmental agenda, including by facilitating access to funds, compliance with international commitments and awareness-raising on environmental sustainability at national and local levels. However, the CO's limited engagement on economic development prevented it from addressing poverty, inequality, exclusion and decent employment issues through an integrated, inclusive sustainable development strategy to promote resilience and sustainable livelihoods. This prevented UNDP from helping to bridge inequality and poverty reduction gaps and tackle the local drivers of migration and the root causes of displacement. Its support to building resilience to disasters has also been limited.**

Interventions have been scattered, some focusing on overcoming unsustainable natural resource management practices; others on accessing information and funding for climate change; and others on promoting a methodology to improve

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[135] Linked with findings 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15 and 19.

value chains between producers. In others, UNDP's role was limited to fiduciary support. The CO engagement on the SDGs has been decreasing over the period and is limited to some ad hoc activities. Engagement on DRR has been minimal. Overall, efforts to increase the country's abilities to proactively manage risks and strengthen resilience to future crises have also been very limited. Despite the strong synergies among all these issues, UNDP's approach to inclusive sustainable development has been siloed and fragmented. This has precluded it from tackling barriers and vulnerabilities in an integrated way, to build resilience for vulnerable groups and redress widening inequalities.[136]

- **Conclusion 4: Rule of law, justice and human rights: UNDP promoted a more integrated approach to citizen security at national level, with a stronger focus on prevention of violence. However, it was not complemented by an adequate level of support to justice and human rights institutions to sustain a holistic rule-of-law approach. Synergies between citizen insecurity, gender and urban mobility issues were incipient, and absent from the areas of migration and poverty reduction.**

The CO prioritized efforts on violence prevention, managing to get it included in the national agenda and working closely with the Government to increase access to data and information and develop public policies. Although UNDP started to pilot social reintegration initiatives, all these efforts were not integrated in a holistic strategy for strengthening rule of law as an essential element for a multidimensional governance approach. Integrated investments with justice and human rights institutions and synergies with gender, urban mobility, migration and poverty were missing, but were needed if UNDP were to become an enabler for sustainable development. UNDP's continued support as technical secretariat of the country's Security Council was of concern to some partners. The CO's response to the evolving

country situation — with a limited expansion of programmatic strategies and, in light of the political and operational context, a late assessment of the risks associated with the provision of its support — represented a reputational risk that could impact UNDP's credibility and impartiality.[137]

- **Conclusion 5: M&E and learning: UNDP has not been effective in promoting a culture of learning and strategic knowledge management, focusing more on procedural compliance. Most of the factors affecting performance noted in this ICPE were highlighted in the 2011 ADR. They pointed at risks that have not been addressed and that now have materialized, such as UNDP's positioning in the area of human rights.**

Although the country context has changed, an assessment stressed that most of the 2011 ADR recommendations remain valid and unaddressed, in terms of UNDP's positioning, internal arrangement, business model, thematic work and cross-cutting issues. This is evidenced in the areas of gender, health and promotion of dialogue, among others. The use and dissemination of evaluations has been limited and did not lead to learning, significant course corrections or changes to the programme.[138]

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[136] Linked with findings 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.

[137] Linked with findings 7, 8, 9, 16 and 18.

[138] Linked with findings 3, 8 and 18.

3.2. Recommendations and management response

UNDP El Salvador – Management response overall comments: The country office welcomes the independent evaluation of the UNDP programme as an important tool to quality programming and to ensure good development results. We thank the office of IEO, RBLAC and all the staff involved in this thorough exercise. The evaluation report will be an important tool to the development of the next programming cycle and CPD.

Recommendation 1. ✅	**UNDP should review the office operational and programmatic structure to ensure it can effectively address the country's priorities in line with UNDP's mandate. The CO should adapt its way of working to proactively position itself strategically with the new Government, promoting more innovation and South-South cooperation.** In light of the UNDP-Resident Coordinator Office delinking and the arrival of a new Government and a new Resident Representative, it is important for the CO to seek a more coherent and efficient division of labour within the office, reassessing and adjusting the human capacities it has in place at all levels. This should enable the CO to deliver on the strategic, thematic and operational fronts with more efficiency, effectiveness and state-of-the-art innovative solutions to development. It would also require ensuring an improved balance between a substantive programmatic pipeline of work, to secure its positioning as a key technical and policy advisory partner at country level, and the provision of administrative services for the Government, with the adequate oversight and exit strategies to limit operational and reputational risks and ensure capacity development. At the time of the evaluation, while UNDP engaged in these discussions, the Government was in the process of defining its strategies. This meant there was an opportunity for UNDP to proactively use its broad range of data and information from its knowledge generation work at national level and its capacity to bring experiences from other countries to propose new and innovative projects reflecting the country's new priorities. The CO should position itself as a clear partner of choice and build upon its South-South and triangular cooperation capacities to respond to the emerging needs of the Government. It should also leverage staff ideas and pilots showing approaches that can be upscaled. UNDP should also urgently prioritize the development and implementation of a resource mobilization strategy to diversify its sources of funding and support the delivery of a coordinated programme.
Management Response: **Partially agreed** 💬	The CO implemented all the recommendations for staffing since the Transformation plan of 2016. However, it will adapt its structure to reflect the delinking from the Resident Coordinator's office, the arrival of a new government with different needs for support as well as to incorporate the recently approved Acceleration Labs. These efforts will foment innovation and leverage staff ideas.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)
1.1. The CO will reassess and adjust human capacities to be fit for purpose, in line with the NextGenUNDP strategy, as well as the new government priorities.	Dec 2020	RR

Recommendation 2.	**UNDP should review the underlying strategies and theories of change of its programme to enhance the effectiveness of the human-rights-based approach, institutional capacity development strategies and knowledge management.** To improve the relevance, coherence and sustainability of its interventions, the CO should promote adequate attention to: i. Pathways of change focused on right-holders and duty-bearers, strengthening citizenship participation and engagement in development processes; ii. Clear exit strategies for its work with the Government embedded within capacity-building activities, particularly regarding the generation of information and data, compliance with international standards and procurement of goods and assets; iii. Strategic partnerships to influence the design, implementation and M&E of public policies, ensuring transparency and social auditing through the dissemination and use of the information generated, expanding its collaboration with civil society and academia.
Management Response: **Partially agreed**	UNDP is a reference in the country and has led various processes of consensus building and the development of public policies, in matters of citizen security, education and environmental sustainability, in spaces for multi-actor dialogue. In these spaces, UNDP sought the inclusive participation of different sectors of society and the full promotion of human rights principles. UNDP promoted strategic alliances and disseminated knowledge in multi-actor dialogue spaces. UNDP will strengthen alliances with civil society and academia. With the change of government, and termination of the project that supported the National Councils, UNDP will continue to promote dialogue through new strategies and agreements with the new government. UNDP has contributed to the generation of evidence in the area of citizen security for decision-making; in the acquisition of health supplies and passports, among others. UNDP recognizes that it must strengthen the development approach in its support of acquisitions, particularly in the health area, and has already started doing so, since the visit of the evaluation team. Finally, the CO acknowledges that there is space for enhancing effectiveness of the human-rights based approach, and will strengthen in the upcoming CPD.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)
2.1. Promote the strengthening of the national health system, through enhanced data management and enhanced planning.	Nov 2021	RR, DRR, ARR, Official of Democratic Governance
2.2. Strengthen alliances with civil society, the private sector and academia especially in the construction of the response to the health, humanitarian and socioeconomic crises created by COVID-19.	Nov 2021	RR, DRR, ARR, Official of Democratic Governance

Recommendation 3.

UNDP should reposition itself as a lead agency on inclusive economic development. Through joint initiatives at the local level, it should develop integrated and inclusive sustainable development initiatives to further promote resilience and sustainable livelihoods that address the most pressing needs of women and youth in terms of inequality and poverty reduction.

Given UNDP's core mandate and considering it was identified as the agency to work on economic development accelerators by the MAPS, UNDP should strengthen its engagement on inclusive sustainable development through joint and cross-sectoral thematic initiatives, positioning itself as the lead UN agency with the new Government. This would require facilitating an area-based development approach in selected locations with other agencies, which would help to respond to the local drivers of migration and displacement. It would be key for UNDP to frame its environmental sustainability, natural resource management, climate change and DRR objectives and initiatives within a broader resilience strategy to address vulnerabilities and promote resilient livelihoods. The CO should also tackle the barriers for youth and women employment, building on local economic development objectives. The CO support to improved social public investments should focus on strategically targeting the most vulnerable places.

Management Response:
Partially agreed

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The country office partially accepts this recommendation. UNDP remains the leading agency on inclusive economic development, especially through the Human Development Reports (HDR) and the multidimensional poverty analysis. It is important to note that El Salvador's 2018 HDR focused on youth development and the most pressing needs of young people in economic, social, educational and political terms – the document became a national reference.

One of the main challenges to deepen studies in poverty and inclusive economic development is that there is no population and housing census since 2007, which makes difficult to explore subnational levels. Despite that, the multidimensional poverty measure was adopted by the country as a reference for public policy and was first published in 2015; three more measurements have been done since then. Focusing on 'local drivers of migration and displacement' is also a very limited approach to looking into the complex issues of multidimensional poverty in the country. With the opportunity of the roll-out of the UN framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19 at country level, the office is leading the UN effort in analyses and policy formulation.

UNDP has supported the country in making great advances in the environmental agenda. For example, it managed to promote an environmental sustainability plan agreed between the government, the private sector and civil society. The office supported large-scale reforestation projects, called attention to areas that had never been protected, developed sustainability plans for 7 RAMSAR areas with a special focus to the very fragile wetlands of the country via a GEF project, and also put Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) high in the government's agenda. Moving forward, the sustainable development portfolio will be strengthened with new climate change projects, for example the adaptation of one of the areas most affected by the dry corridor and poverty: Ahuachapán.

Also, UNDP has been working very closely with IFAD on rural development. The national office is an implementing partner of the Rural Adelante Programme, which is geographically focused in one of the areas with highest internal and external migration, and it promotes resilient livelihoods specially for rural youth and women.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)
3.1. UNDP as the technical leader in the socioeconomic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it will lead the UN efforts within the framework.	Nov 2021	RR and ARR
3.2. Develop the national Human Development Report, with economic analysis and dialogue for a new development model for the country.	Sep 2021	RR, ARR, Coordinator HDR
3.3. Implementation of the Rural Adelante Programme as well as the climate adaptation project, to promote early recovery in highly impacted areas.	Dec 2021	DRR, ARR, Official Sustainable Development

Recommendation 4.	UNDP should expand its institutional strengthening support to justice entities with a comprehensive rule-of-law approach as an enabler of good governance. To improve citizen security and social cohesion results, the CO should provide significant capacity-development to the justice system for a more coherent response to the country's violence and insecurity challenges through a rule-of-law approach.
	This would also require continuing to pilot models for scale-up at the local level, such as the Pionero initiative or restorative justice models, with cross-sectional thematic objectives such as social reintegration and inclusive economic development. It would be important that the CO maintains its support to internal controls and expands it to external controls to reduce impunity, along with clearly defined strategies and frameworks to mitigate any risks in line with the Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights and in partnership with human rights agencies.
Management Response: **Rejected**	UNDP has implemented initiatives that follow and promote an integral approach to effective governance. As thoroughly explained to the evaluation team, the country office has put the justice system and the rule-of-law approach in the centre of every one of citizen security and consensus-building initiatives as an integral approach to promote citizen security and effective governance.
	In 2015, UNDP successfully promoted the inclusion of the Judiciary and the Unidad Coordinadora del Sector Justicia (the coordinating body of six top justice system agencies and institutions) in the National Security Council, a multi-stakeholder council entrusted of monitoring the implementation of Plan El Salvador Seguro (PESS). UNDP also successfully promoted the inclusion of key judicial reforms in the PESS, along with planning tools to monitor progress. In addition, starting in 2016, the office mobilized funds (internally at UNDP, as well as from PBF) to work with police security forces to enhance their internal oversight mechanisms. In particular, UNDP assisted the National Civil Police organize the full history of their officers, including with digital profiles and mechanisms to track police abuses and disciplinary proceedings. Despite being a sensitive topic, UNDP invested time and effort in this key area that ensures transparency and the protection of human rights.
	Furthermore, UNDP coordinated in 2018 an internal analysis of the justice sector. A mission from HQ was requested to help identify entry points for rule-of-law and peacebuilding initiatives. UNDP mobilized funds to work with the Public Defense Office to enhance free legal aid services to reduce overcrowding in prisons and foster conditions for rehabilitation. Moreover, UNDP also designed the joint initiative Pionero, which will benefit the juvenile justice system and generate conditions for the national institution to draft a social reinsertion policy. And finally, UNDP designed and launched the Spotlight initiative, which seeks to impact the specialized jurisdiction of violence against women.

Key Actions	Time-frame	Responsible Unit(s)
4.1. Draft new proposals on social reinsertion, transitional justice and transparency/ anticorruption to mobilize new funds.	Dec 2021	RR and programme officers

4.2. Coordinate with RCO the update of the monitoring process of Due Diligence Policy on Human Rights with new authorities.	Dec 2021	RR and programme officers

Recommendation 5.

UNDP should ensure that organizational learning and risk management take place at all levels. It should move away from a compliance-focused approach without proper knowledge management and should implement the recommendations of previous evaluations that remain valid and unimplemented, including those from the 2011 Assessment of Development Results that were not fully addressed.

Some of the risks identified should be carefully mitigated, particularly:

i.   Coordination with the UNDP Health Procurement Centre of Excellence for the implementation of UNDP's Quality Assurance Policy for Health Products, including a health procurement review mission to provide support to the CO to quickly solve the situation and avoid financial and operational risks;

ii. The measures, frameworks and instruments put in place to maintain UNDP's credibility and neutrality, considering its high financial dependence on government resources, which can create reputational risks, particularly in sensitive areas such as security and justice.

Management Response: Rejected

- The CO fully complies with UNDP's Quality Assurance Policy for Health Products; there is no evidence of the contrary and therefore this point should not be an issue in this evaluation report. The CO reiterates that quality assurance is of outmost importance and a corporate priority. The CO requests advice from HIST regarding quality assurance for the procurement of medicines and maintains regular exchange. HIST provides recommendations, the CO takes note of such and acts accordingly.

- The CO rejects that the government cost-sharing model impacts on the impartiality and credibility of UNDP. The model of cost recovery and government cost sharing, on the contrary, attests of the good services and value of UNDP to the country.

- Moreover, the CO fully rejects Evaluation Finding #8. The CO has taken these affirmations seriously and, in order to take action, requested the evaluation team to provide concrete information in relation to the assertion related to violation of human rights, which were stated as based on 'perceptions'. None was provided. The Report demonstrates that Evaluation Team misunderstood the role of UNDP in the National Security Council and the context where the CO operates, and therefore a highly sensitive issue was addressed inappropriately. Furthermore, the CO provided ample evidence on the full compliance with the Policy on Due Diligence on Human Rights endorsed by the RC as well as the UNCT.

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/12271