



INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION ARGENTINA



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INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: ARGENTINA

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Acknowledgements

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

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

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

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Other stakeholders and partners:

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation for Argentina. This is the second country-level assessment conducted by the Independent Evaluation Office for the country. The evaluation covers the programme period 2016 through early 2019.

Over the last four decades, Argentina's economic performance has remained volatile, experiencing rapid growth and sharp contractions. Following the 2001-2002 economic crisis, the country registered one of the highest growth rates in the region, achieving significant reductions in poverty and income inequality, yet economic volatility has continued, and is one of Argentina's main development challenges.

During the three-year period under review, UNDP implemented 107 projects with an approximate budget of US\$925 million and a disbursement of \$474 million, achieving a 51 percent execution rate. The low execution rate was due in part to institutional changes at government level, currency devaluation and austerity measures implemented in response to economic crisis.

Among other findings and conclusions, the evaluation notes that the UNDP programme in Argentina has particularly focused on social protection and universal access to services, which has enabled increased efficiency for the government and





improved services to the general public. UNDP's institutional strengthening efforts have been well executed and produced positive results, although broader institutional reforms will be necessary for some capacity-building efforts to achieve intended outcomes. The evaluation recommends that UNDP seeks to expand its collaborative partnerships and programming at sub-national level, and especially in the northern region, with the aim of helping sub-national governments reduce poverty and inequality, improve municipal services and adapt to the changing climate.

I would like to thank the Government of Argentina, national and local stakeholders, and colleagues at the UNDP Argentina Office for their support throughout the evaluation. I trust this report will be of use to readers seeking to achieve a better understanding of the extensive support that UNDP has provided in the country, including what has worked and what has not, and in prompting discussions on how UNDP may be best positioned to contribute to sustainable development in Argentina in the future.



Oscar A. Garcia,
Director,
Independent Evaluation Office

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADR	Assessment of Development Results
CNCPS	National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies
CPD	Country programme document
CSOs	Civil society organizations
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
ICPE	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office
ILO	International Labour Organization
INAM	National Women Institute
INDEC	National Statistics and Census Institute
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NIM	National Implementation Modality
PENIA	National Plan for the Prevention and Reduction of Teenage Unintended Pregnancy
RBM	Results-based management
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGP	Small Grants Programme
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SSC	South-South Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN-REDD	United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
USUBI	Sustainable use of biodiversity

Evaluation Brief: Argentina

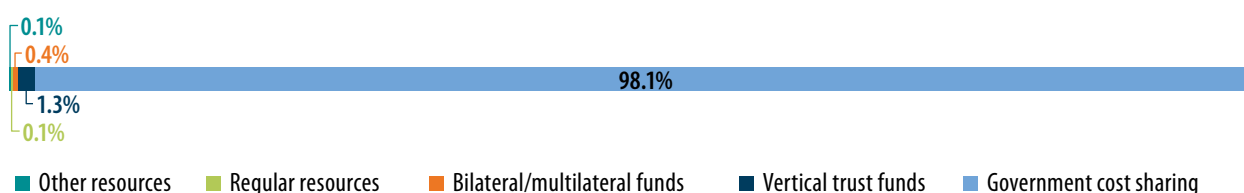
This evaluation covers the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Argentina during the period 2016–2019. UNDP's country programme in Argentina over this period has been the organization's third largest globally, based on financial delivery, and the largest in Latin America and the Caribbean. The country programme is guided by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016–2020, and UNDP's 2014–2017 Strategic Plan. The programme encompasses four outcome areas: 1) inclusive and sustainable economic development; 2) social protection and inclusion policies; 3) citizenship and human rights; and 4) environment and climate change. Each is considered in turn in this evaluation report, in addition to several cross-cutting issues, with the resulting findings leading to a set of conclusions on UNDP's results during this period and recommendations for UNDP's future work in the country.

CONCLUSIONS

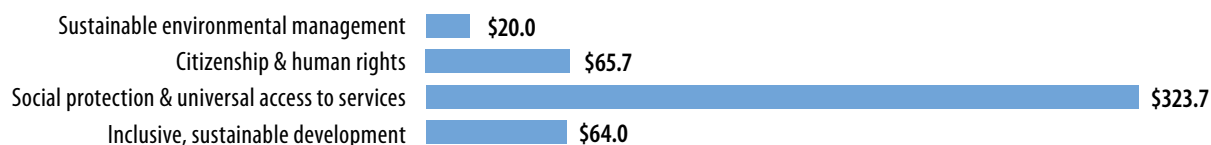
UNDP is a preferred partner to the Government of Argentina, which provides 98 percent of the UNDP budget for work in the country and is recognized by government counterparts for administrative agility, for the competitive cost of services and for contributions to ensuring transparency and credibility in the management of funds.

The UNDP programme in Argentina is especially focused towards social protection and universal access to services. Government counterparts acknowledge that this work enables increased efficiency for the Government and improved services to the general public. UNDP institutional strengthening efforts have been well executed and produced positive results, although broader institutional reforms will be necessary for some capacity-building efforts to achieve intended outcomes.

Country programme funding sources, 2016 – 2018



Programme expenditure by thematic area, 2016–2018 (million US\$)



UNDP has contributed to improved provincial and local government services through various interventions, including the improvement and modernization of health services, the promotion of information technologies and open government, youth employment policies and access to justice. The evaluation notes that programming in the northern provinces, which have the highest poverty levels, has been modest, because of limited financial resources, as well as a lack of specific, long-term interventions aimed at comprehensive countrywide development support.

The country programme includes important advisory services in the area of citizenship and human rights. In particular, UNDP has promoted greater access to justice in Argentina, helping to improve coverage and quality within the justice system, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including victims of gender-based violence.

UNDP's support to Argentina in the area of environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management has shown a positive shift and expansion in focus from an environmental protection vision to a broader, more multidimensional approach

to sustainable development. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and environmental strategies at subnational level remain a challenge.

The evaluation includes attention to cross-cutting aspects of the work of UNDP in Argentina. UNDP is recognized for its technical expertise and its strong advocacy of gender mainstreaming across its programmes. Contributions have been made to promoting women's political participation, their economic empowerment and the reduction of gender-based violence. Expanding the integration of a gender perspective and rights-based approach across all sectors of intervention remains a challenge, nevertheless.

With respect to internal operational issues, the evaluation indicates that results-based management (RBM) practices lack explicit and holistic theories of change with adequate systems thinking and appropriate knowledge transfer strategies. Coupled with a very limited use of evaluations, these shortcomings are hampering UNDP's development effectiveness, including the sustainability of results.

Recommendations

UNDP should make a concerted effort to expand its strategic technical contributions in Argentina, aimed at addressing structural institutional weaknesses and development challenges. UNDP should define key areas in which it can provide substantive value added to the national government and maximize the use of its global network and expertise to foster innovative solutions to advance the SDGs.

UNDP should explore opportunities for strategically expanding collaborative partnerships and programming at

the provincial level, especially in the northern region, with the aim of helping subnational governments reduce poverty and inequality, improve municipal services and adapt to a changing climate.

UNDP should strive to refine its RBM approach in Argentina, placing greater emphasis on programmatic integration and synergies, the adoption of knowledge transfer strategies and the use of evaluations for learning, including the implementation of recommendations, to inform programmatic decision-making and improvement.

With a view to enhancing its contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment, UNDP should strengthen its gender mainstreaming and advocacy work across all programme areas. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring the adequate integration of a gender dimension and rights-based approach in the implementation of all policies and strategies at the subnational level, including local pilot initiatives.

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

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

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The first chapter of the report provides background on the evaluation and how it has been conducted. It proceeds to a brief contextual discussion on the development challenges facing Argentina and then sets out the UNDP programme in the country, including its scope and evolution.

1.1 Objective of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of its strategies in facilitating and leveraging national efforts to advance development. These evaluations have two main objectives:

- i) support the development of the next UNDP country programme; and
- ii) strengthen the accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders and the Executive Board.

The first independent country level evaluation, known as the Assessment of Development Results (ADR), of the UNDP programme in Argentina was carried out in 2009¹ by the IEO. In 2019, UNDP Argentina was selected for a second ICPE, as its programme cycle ends in 2020. This ICPE covers the 2016 to early-2019 period of the 2016–2020 programme cycle and aims to provide key inputs for the development of the new country programme, to be implemented from 2021 onwards by the country office and national stakeholders. The main audiences for the evaluation

are UNDP Argentina, the Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC), the UNDP Executive Board and the Government of Argentina.

1.2 Evaluation methodology

In accordance with the evaluation's terms of reference (Annex 1), the evaluation was guided by three main evaluation questions, shown in Box 1. The evaluation methodology adhered to the principles of the UNDP Evaluation Policy² and the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards³ and Ethical Code of Conduct.⁴

To answer these questions, the evaluation collected and triangulated data from primary and secondary sources and relied mostly on qualitative methods and tools, including:

- A portfolio analysis and desk review of programme documents, evaluations commissioned by the country office, self-assessment reports such as the yearly UNDP Results Oriented Annual Reports, progress reports, financial data from the UNDP financial system known as Atlas, gender analytics and background documents on the national context, among others (Annex 6 lists all the documents consulted);

BOX 1. Main evaluation questions

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

¹ <http://web.undp.org/execbrd/pdf/ADR-Argentina.pdf>.

² http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2016/Evaluation_policy_EN_2016.pdf.

³ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>.

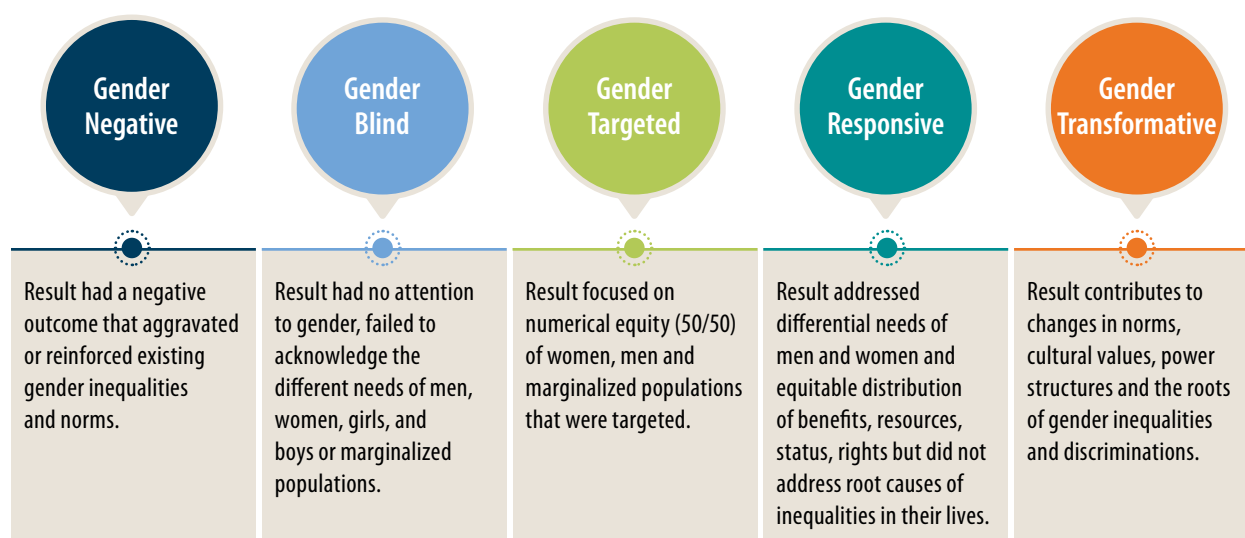
⁴ <http://www.uneval.org/>.

- Key informant interviews and focus group discussions with 142 UNDP partners in the City of Buenos Aires and the Provinces of Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Jujuy and San Juan. Interviews were carried out with government representatives, UNDP staff in the country and the Regional Bureau, staff from other United Nations agencies, international financial institutions, donors, private sector representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) (Annex 5 lists the interviewees);
- Visits to the provinces and UNDP-supported projects selected based on the size of financial disbursements during the evaluation period; diversity of national implementing partners; geographical coverage; and thematic area;
- A pre-mission questionnaire completed by the country office, as a self-assessment and reflection tool covering key issues assessed by the evaluation;
- A presentation of preliminary findings at the end of the data collection mission in the country to validate initial findings with UNDP staff and collect any additional information.

Special attention was given to the integration of gender considerations into the evaluation methods, through the inclusion of specific gender-related questions, the participation of women in interviews and a detailed gender analysis. The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) developed by the IEO, corporate gender marker data⁵ and gender parity statistics were used for the formulation of this report.

Process. Following the development of the Terms of Reference for the ICPE (Annex 1) in November 2018, the IEO recruited three national experts to support outcome assessments. A three-week data collection mission took place between 11 and 29 March 2019. Preliminary findings and results were shared with the country office for joint reflections at the end of the mission. Subsequently, the team drafted separate outcome reports which served as input

FIGURE 1. Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES)



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

⁵ A corporate monitoring tool used to assign a rating score to project outputs during their design phase and track planned expenditure towards outputs that may include advances or contributions to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The gender marker does not reflect the actual expenditures assigned to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE). As the gender marker is assigned by project output and not project ID, a project might have several outputs with different gender markers.

for this final ICPE report. The draft ICPE report was submitted to the IEO for internal review, as well as to an external expert (a member of the IEO Evaluation Advisory Panel), then to the country office and Regional Bureau, and finally to the Government and other national partners for comments. A videoconference workshop will be held to discuss the draft final evaluation report, bringing together key stakeholders and providing an additional opportunity to discuss results and recommendations, obtain feedback and receive clarifications on the ICPE report before finalization.

Limitations. The evaluation found a limited availability of project level evaluations and data to support the quantitative assessment of results. Of the 107 implemented projects, evaluations were only available for four projects and two outcome evaluations were underway.

1.3 National development context

Argentina is a federal republic, with an estimated population of 44.5 million, 92 percent of whom live in urban areas.⁶ With a gross national income per capita of US\$11,200 in 2019, Argentina is categorized as an upper middle-income economy,⁷ and in the very high human development category (ranked 48th out of 189 countries in 2018).⁸ In addition, Argentina is a G-20 major economy and an Official Development Assistance (ODA) recipient, mainly from European Union Institutions, Germany and France.⁹

Socioeconomic scenario. Over the last four decades, Argentina's economic performance has remained volatile, with periods of rapid growth and sharp contraction. Following the 2001-2002 economic crisis, the worst in Argentina's modern history, the country registered one of the highest growth rates in the region, achieving significant reduction in poverty and income inequality because of greater consumption and investment.¹⁰ However, economic volatility continues to be one of Argentina's main development challenges (Figure 2). The Government has been implementing an ambitious reform agenda to correct some of the country's main macroeconomic imbalances,¹¹ but the reforms have not led to economic stability.

In 2016-2018, Argentina faced two economic crises, characterized by a major currency devaluation and high inflation. In 2016 annual inflation reached 37.5 percent; in 2018 it rose to 47.6 percent.¹² After the Government negotiated a \$57.1 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund to alleviate the economic contraction,¹³ the peso fell substantially, closing at AR\$40.60 per US\$ by the end of September 2018.¹⁴ The national economy is currently in the midst of a prolonged recession that has caused an increase in poverty levels¹⁵ and unemployment, the closure of businesses, and a fall in GDP, consumption and production.

⁶ 2017 *Sinopsis Estadística de la República Argentina*, Datos Julio 2018: https://www.indec.gob.ar/ftp/cuadros/publicaciones/sinopsis_indec_2017.pdf.

⁷ World Bank, Country classification by income, 1 July 2019: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>.

⁸ UNDP, Human Development Report, 2019, Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century, Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report, Argentina: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/ARG.pdf.

⁹ OECD data as of 8 October 2018: From 2001 to 2017, Argentina received a total of \$320.52 million from EU Institutions, \$281.93 million from Germany, and \$195.29 million from France.

¹⁰ Documento de Trabajo n° 1: Crecimiento, PTF y PIB Potencial en Argentina (Junio 2018): <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/hacienda/politicaeconomica/macroeconomica/estudioeconomicos>.

¹¹ The World Bank, COVID-19 Response in Argentina, Overview, April 2020: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/argentina/overview>.

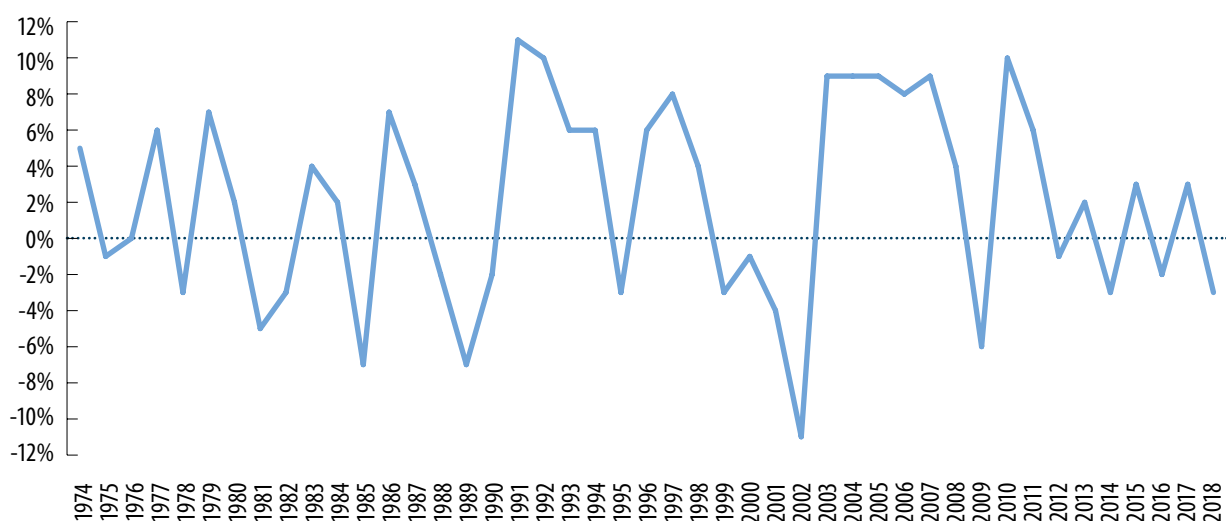
¹² INDEC: based on the Consumer Price Index. <https://www.indec.gob.ar/>.

¹³ IMF Country Focus, Argentina's Economic Recovery, July 2018: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/06/29/na062918-argentinaseconomic-recovery-8-answers-to-explain-the-plan>.

¹⁴ Banco Central República Argentina, Informe Monetario Diario, August 2020: <http://www.bcra.gob.ar/Pdfs/PublicacionesEstadisticas/infomondiae.pdf>.

¹⁵ Government of Argentina, National Statistics and Census Institute (INDEC), 2019: https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprerensa/eph_pobreza_02_18.pdf.

FIGURE 2. Volatile GDP growth in Argentina, 1974-2018 (in percentage)



Source: Human Development Index 2017, UNDP Argentina

Political and Institutional system. As a federal state, the country has a three-tiered system consisting of the national government, 23 provinces and the autonomous government of the city of Buenos Aires, and 2,284 local governments.¹⁶ In 2015, after the 12-year rule of the Kirchner governments, the political party in power changed with the election of President Macri. As part of a strategy to reduce the fiscal deficit, the government has reduced investments in infrastructure, restructured public institutions (merging several ministries), and has limited subsidies to the public administration.

Overall, social trust in public institutions is low. The Government Trust Index was 1.60 points in March 2019,¹⁷ the lowest score since the current administration took office. Despite recent improvement, the perception of corruption remains high.¹⁸

Argentina ranked 66 out of 180 countries in the Transparency International Index ranking in 2019 and has been improving very slowly over recent years.¹⁹ Strengthening state capacities to ensure effective, transparent and accountable public institutions remains a main challenge for good governance.²⁰

Poverty and inequality. Despite its sizeable economy and the government's considerable investment in social security, Argentina's development is still affected by entrenched inequalities and regional disparities. Poverty levels increased in the last quarter of 2018, with 32 percent of the urban population under the national poverty line, compared with 30.3 percent in 2016 and 25.7 percent in 2017. Around 65 percent of the poor are children and adults under 30 years of age, and 6.7 percent of the poor live in extreme poverty.²¹ Children under

¹⁶ 2017 *Sinopsis Estadística de la República Argentina*, Datos Julio 2018: https://www.indec.gob.ar/ftp/cuadros/publicaciones/sinopsis_indec_2017.pdf.

¹⁷ Developed and published by the Torcuato Di Tella University, scale 0 to 5: https://www.utdt.edu/ver_contenido.php?id_contenido=1351&id_item_menu=2970.

¹⁸ OECD, OECD Economic Surveys, Argentina, Overview, March 2019: <http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Argentina-2019-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>.

¹⁹ Corruption Perception Index 2019. Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi>.

²⁰ UNDP, Country Programme Action Plan, 2016: <http://www.ar.undp.org/content/dam/argentina/Publications/PNUD%20Argentina%20acuerdos/CPAP20162020/PNUDArgent-CPAP-20162020.pdf>.

²¹ INDEC, Poverty and Indigence incidence in 31 urban conglomerates, 2018: https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/eph_pobreza_02_18.pdf.

the age of 15 represent 47.9 percent of the chronic poor in the country.²² This population is also greatly affected by food insecurity or insufficient access to food. In 2017–2018 the number of children and adolescents that were food insecure increased from 21.7 percent to 29.3 percent.²³ The country's unemployment rate also increased from 8.7 percent in 2017 to 9.6 percent in the second quarter of 2018.²⁴ Of the economically active population, around 45 percent is in the informal market or unemployed.

Argentina exhibits one of the highest rates of inequality in income distribution amongst countries with very high human development (25.8 percent).²⁵ Poverty levels and inequalities are higher in the northeastern provinces, such as Corrientes (49.3 percent), Entre Rios (41.9 percent) and Chaco (41.4 percent).²⁶ In absolute terms, however, the number of poor people is greatest in the Province of Buenos Aires, which contains 39 percent of the total population and has a 35.9 percent poverty level.

Social Protection. According to Argentina's 2018 national budget,²⁷ government investments have focused on social security, including the national pension system and the Family Income Policy (57.3 percent of budget), followed by education (8.2 percent), transportation (5.6 percent), energy (5.0 percent), health (4.3 percent),²⁸ security (2.9 percent), social development (2.3 percent), defence (2.1 percent) and other public policies (10.3 percent).

Since August 2016, Argentina has been implementing a Universal Health Care Plan aimed at improving the quality of health care services, developing the integrated health care networks and promoting preventive health care. This plan, which is funded by the World Bank, promotes equal access to health services for the most vulnerable population.²⁹ In addition, the National School Health Plan (PROSANE) has been established as an integrated policy for children and adolescents. Its mission is to develop and strengthen integrated care policies between health and education, respond to children and adolescent care needs and strengthen the links between the Ministries of Health and Education. Another initiative is the Programa de Respaldo a Estudiantes de Argentina (PROGRESAR) which financially assists national universities and invests in infrastructure and equipment at all educational levels.

Gender. Argentina's gender inequality index (GII) was 0.358 in 2018, ranking it 81st out of 160 countries³⁰ and positioning it as the lowest performer in terms of GII compared to other countries with very high human development. The country scored 44.7 out of 100 on the Political Parity Index,³¹ mainly because of the low presence of women in the ministerial cabinet or in high-ranking positions in the public administration. The gender gap is even greater in the private sector, where women only hold 25 percent of the high-ranking positions.³² Employment rates for

²² CIPPEC, UNDP and CEDLAS, The challenge of poverty in Argentina, 2018: <https://www.cippec.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/El-desafio-de-la-pobreza-en-Argentina.pdf>.

²³ Catholic University of Argentina, Observatory for Social Debt, 2018: <http://wadmin.uca.edu.ar/public/ckeditor/Observatorio%20Deuda%20Social/Documentos/2019/2019-BDSI-DOC-EST-INFANCIAS-PROGRESOS-RETROCESOS.pdf>.

²⁴ Government of Argentina, National Statistics and Census Institute (INDEC): <https://www.indec.gob.ar/>.

²⁵ UNDP, Human Development Indices and Indicators, Statistical Update 2018: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-indices-indicators-2018-statistical-update>.

²⁶ Government of Argentina, National Statistics and Census Institute, 2018. Poverty and Indigence Incidence in 31 urban conglomerates, 2018: https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/eph_pobreza_02_18.pdf.

²⁷ Ministerio de Hacienda Presidencia de la Nación, Presupuesto Ciudadano, 2018: <https://www.minhacienda.gob.ar/onp/presupuesto-ciudadano/archivos/pc2018.pdf>.

²⁸ Estimated at US\$ 149.69 million for 2019.

²⁹ Programa Sumar from the World Bank.

³⁰ UNDP, HDR, Gender Inequality Index, 2018: <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>.

³¹ Part of the Atenea Project, implemented in the country since 2016 by UNDP, UNWOMEN and IDEA International. <https://ateneasparidad.com/indice-de-paridad-politica/que-es-el-indice-de-paridad-politica/>.

³² UNDP, 2014: Género en el trabajo: Brechas en el Acceso a Puestos de Decisión, 2014: http://www.ar.undp.org/content/argentina/es/home/library/human_development/Aportes8.html.

women are 20 percent below men.³³ A major issue in the country has been persistent gender-based violence. The number of femicides increased from 225 in 2014 to 251 in 2017.³⁴ The National Plan of Action for Prevention, Assistance and Eradication of Violence against Women (2017–2019), is a priority for the Government. This plan establishes standards of protection, which are intended to guarantee access to quality care services to all women.³⁵ The Government has focused on eradicating discrimination against women as well as combatting gender inequality and ensuring full enjoyment of women's human rights and autonomy.

Environment and Climate Change. Environmental protection is one of the country's main challenges. Argentina has extensive fertile lands and natural resources that are key for agricultural and energy production. Deforestation and pollution continue to be the main threats to Argentina's biodiversity and landscapes. The 1914 census reported that Argentina had approximately 105 million ha of forest.³⁶ Yet today, Argentina's forests cover approximately 28 to 45 million ha.³⁷ In addition, Argentina is a leading food producer with large-scale agricultural and livestock industries representing over 6 percent of its GDP and a \$32 billion industry³⁸ in 2018. Agriculture is susceptible to climate change effects such as water shortages, flooding and extreme droughts. Argentina has been an active party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since its ratification on 11 March 1994, and the Kyoto Protocol on 28 September 2001. Argentina submitted its First National Communication in July 1997, and a revised communication in October 1999. The Second National Communication was

submitted in December 2007 and the Third National Communication and the First Biennial Update Report were both submitted in December 2015. The Second Biennial Update Report was submitted in 2017. In its Third Communication, Argentina announced its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent by 2030, with actions focused on the promotion of sustainable forest management, energy efficiency, biofuels, nuclear power, renewable energy and sustainable transportation.³⁹

National development agenda and priorities. By the end of 2015, the government of Argentina had established eight national objectives and 100 priorities aligned to the 2030 Agenda, within the framework of the Government's National Objectives 2015–2019 and the National Public Administration modification process. These objectives include macroeconomic stability, a national productive agreement, infrastructure development, sustainable human development, the fight against drug trafficking and improvement in security, institutional strengthening, modernization of the state, and strategic insertion into the world.⁴⁰

1.4 UNDP programme in Argentina

UNDP's work in Argentina has been guided by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the 2016–2020 period, and UNDP's 2014–2017 Strategic Plan. For UNDP, Argentina represents the third largest programme globally, based on financial delivery, and the largest in the Latin America and Caribbean region. UNDP's Country programme document (CPD) 2016–2020 focused on four outcome areas (Figure 3).

³³ In 2018 Q2, the employment rate for women was 43.3 percent and 63.5 percent for men. Source: EPH, INDEC 2017–2018.

³⁴ Observatorio Nacional de Violencia contra las Mujeres. Fuente: Informe Registros Femicidios Corte Suprema Justicia, 2017.

³⁵ Consejo Nacional de las Mujeres, Plan Nacional de Acción para la Prevención, Asistencia y Erradicación de la Violencia contra las Mujeres: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/plannacionaldeaccion_2017_2019ult.pdf.

³⁶ República Argentina, 3er Censo Nacional, June 1914: <http://www.estadistica.ec.gba.gov.ar/dpe/Estadistica/censos/C1914-T1.pdf>.

³⁷ World Wide Fund for Nature, 2020: http://wwf.panda.org/wwf_offices/argentina/environmental_problems_argentina/.

³⁸ World Bank Data. Agriculture, forestry and fishing value added in current US\$ and as % of GDP.

³⁹ Fundación de Investigaciones Económicas Latinoamericanas, Argentina, May 2017: <https://www.oecd.org/environment/cc/g20-climate/collapsecontents/Fiel-argentina-growth-and-low-carbon-transition.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Objetivos de Gobierno de la Argentina (2015–2019): <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/es/planes/objetivos-de-gobierno-de-la-argentina-2015-2019>.

FIGURE 3. UNDP Argentina programme, main CPD outcomes and areas of engagement

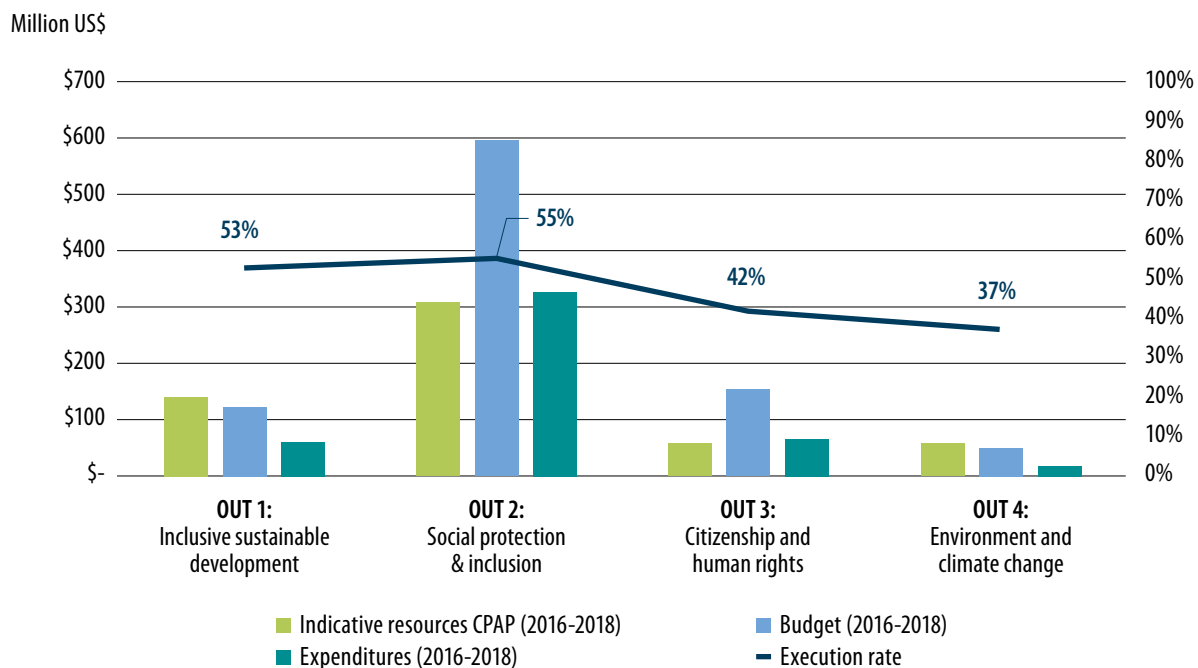


For the five-year programming cycle, UNDP envisaged \$1 billion in planned resources⁴¹ for programme implementation. In the 2016–2018 period, the country office implemented 107 projects with an approximate budget of \$925 million and a disbursement of \$474 million, achieving a 51 percent execution rate. Social protection and inclusion is the largest outcome area in terms of expenditures (\$323 million), followed by citizenship and human rights (\$65 million), inclusive and sustainable economic development (\$64 million) and sustainable management of natural resources (\$20 million). As shown in Figure 4, the country office has success

fully mobilized resources for outcomes 2 and 3, going beyond the indicative resources planned in the Country Programme Action Plan for the 2016–2018 period. The low execution rate experienced by the programme, however, was partly the result of institutional changes at government level, the large currency devaluation and the recent austerity measures implemented by the Government in response to its economic crisis. The portfolio was mostly nationally implemented, with 101 projects that used the National Implementation Modality (NIM) and only six projects with the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM).

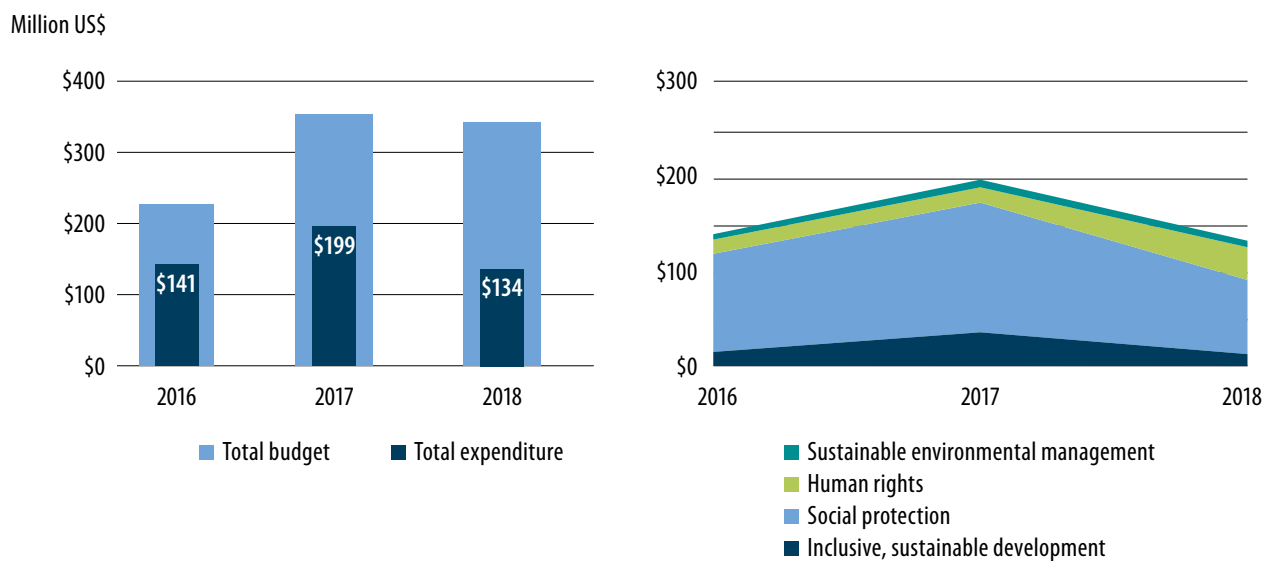
⁴¹ Data from Country Programme Action Plan, 2016–2020, planned resources per outcome.

FIGURE 4. Country programme indicative resources, budget and expenditures, 2016-2018



Sources: UNDP Argentina Country Programme Action Plan and Atlas.

FIGURE 5. Programme budget and expenditure 2016-2018, and evolution of expenditure by thematic area



Source: UNDP Atlas

Given Argentina's upper-middle income status, donor contributions are limited, challenging the diversification of funding sources for UNDP. Similarly, the allocation of UNDP core resources for countries in Argentina's economic category is limited. Financial data show that core resources for programme implementation represented 0.2 percent of programme expenditures and decreased from \$410,724 in 2016 to \$150,000⁴² in 2018. These figures underscore the fact that in Argentina UNDP is reliant on government cost-sharing and continued access to vertical funds—the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) in particular—to carry out its work.

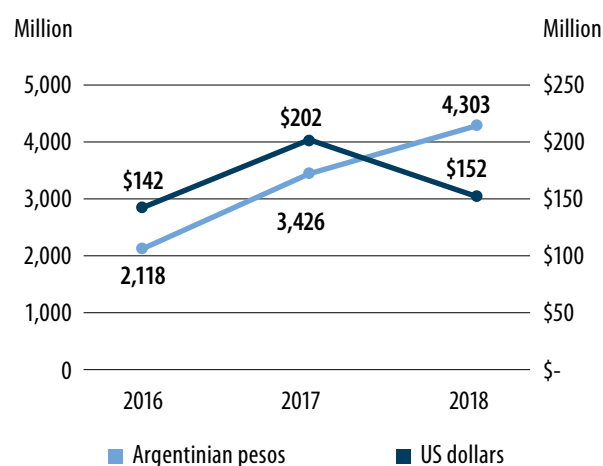
The Government of Argentina covers 98 percent of UNDP programme expenditures. Overall, expenditures from non-core resources increased from \$142 million in 2016 to \$202 million for 2017. For 2018, despite the increased expenditures in local currency, expenditures in US dollars declined because of the currency devaluation (Figure 6). This had an effect on some aspects of service delivery, for instance on the importation of items like medicine. It also constrained the purchasing power of several projects that already had approved procurement plans.

Besides government cost-sharing, UNDP has mobilized vertical funds, namely from the GEF, representing 1.2 percent of programme expenditures, the Montreal Protocol for its environmental portfolio and the European Union for its Spotlight Initiative,⁴³ representing 0.2 percent of programme expenditures. UNDP has also had some initial success tapping into corporate innovation funding, including \$480,000 from the Country Investment

Facility (CIF)⁴⁴ to support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) financing and \$250,000 from the TRAC-2 Funding Window⁴⁵ to establish a collaborative platform on sustainable urban development and big data for SDGs. In countries like Argentina, where national capacities in certain thematic areas are high, promoting innovation is of great importance and a niche area where UNDP could better position itself.

The country office's resource mobilization strategy and cost recovery⁴⁶ practices, have contributed to a strong current financial standing for UNDP in Argentina (despite some downside risks related to the prolonged economic crisis in the country) and to the continuing interest of the national government in having multilateral institutions such as UNDP play significant roles in government service delivery. More detailed information on the country office is found in Annex 3.

FIGURE 6. UNDP Argentina expenditures



Source: UNDP Argentina Country Office

⁴² Source: Executive Snapshot figures.

⁴³ The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. <https://spotlightinitiative.org/>.

⁴⁴ In 2018, the UNDP Administrator established a \$20 million CIF fund to enable innovation at country level. Countries submitted proposals, and in total 52 proposals were approved, including one for Argentina.

⁴⁵ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/funding/funding-windows/allocations.html>.

⁴⁶ Based on an analysis of cost recovery figures from General Management Support (GMS), Direct Project Costs (DPC) and inter-agency services, triangulated with interviews with UNDP staff.



CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS

DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP
sustainability MANAGING FOR RESULTS responsiveness COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT responsiveness
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Based on an extensive document review, stakeholder interviews and project site observations, the findings of the evaluation team are presented in this chapter of the report, set out by outcome area, and including findings on important cross-cutting issues. Lists of people and documents consulted are provided in Annexes 5 and 6.⁴⁷

2.1 Inclusive and sustainable development

Outcome 1: By 2020 the country will have implemented strategies to increase the productivity and diversity of its economy, generating added value and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources, by bringing in science and technology, and reinforcing new productive developments such as the cultural industries.

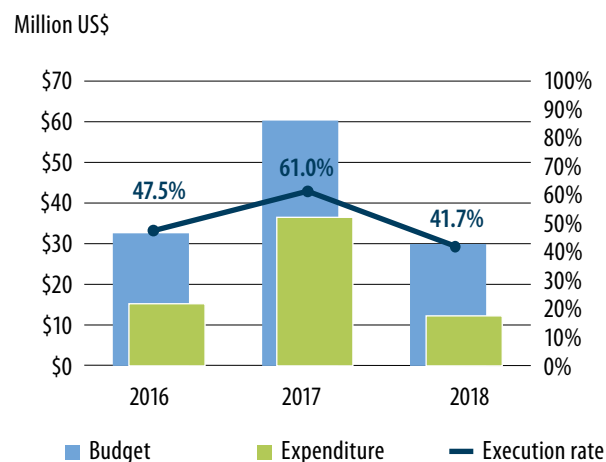
UNDP committed to contributing to outcome 1 through the following:

- i. Strategies implemented by national and subnational institutions for developing a sustainable productive infrastructure and local and regional value chains;
- ii. An increase in good quality employment opportunities and a decline in the informal economy, in child labour and in unregistered work through people's participation in employment, education and training programmes for decent work, encompassing a gender perspective;
- iii. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals included in the public agenda at national and subnational levels.

Thirty-two projects were implemented, under this outcome, with \$121.6 million in planned budget from four main sources: the Government of Argentina; the

GEF; UNDP; and the private sector. Expenditures between 2016 and end-2018 were \$64.0 million, reaching a total 52.7 percent execution rate for the three-year period. Main implementing partners included the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security and the Ministry of Industry (both now part of the Ministry of Production and Labour), the Investment Agency of the Province of San Juan, the National Council for the Coordination of Social Policies (CNCPS), and the Province of Salta.

FIGURE 7. Expenditure and budget—outcome 1



Source: UNDP Atlas

Finding 1. UNDP's contributions in the area of entrepreneurship and productive capacities have been significant, offering positive results at local level. Through its advisory and management services for project design and implementation UNDP supported the implementation of the National Entrepreneurship Plan as well as productive and entrepreneurial initiatives at national and subnational levels. Challenges remain in terms of setting strategic, long-term results for these initiatives.

⁴⁷ Annexes are available online at <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9894>.

UNDP has been supporting the Ministry of Production and Labour (previously the Ministry of Industry) since 2012 in its efforts to increase productivity, economic diversification and decent employment opportunities for the population. To this end, six projects were implemented with the aim of enhancing local productive capacities by supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to provide decent employment, developing the entrepreneurship ecosystem through the promotion of an entrepreneurship culture and promoting the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for greater digital inclusion.

UNDP's programme effectively contributed to the development of the national entrepreneurial ecosystem through technical and administrative assistance for the establishment of 198 learning centres, known as CEAs,⁴⁸ and 46 functioning entrepreneurship clubs across the country. These centres, which are managed by local NGOs, provide a space for the development of entrepreneurship capacities and co-creation of new business models. Capacity development workshops were also organized for young entrepreneurs to enhance their management and innovation capacities. No detailed analysis of the achievements of these capacity development initiatives has taken place, although the Ministry of Production and Labour has indicated its interest in evaluating the long-term impact of its public policies.

The Ministry of Production and Labour plans to support the established CEAs and entrepreneurship clubs for a two-year period to ensure their consolidation. The sustainability of this entrepreneurial ecosystem, after the two-year support from the Government, will rely on the availability of financial resources to continue developing the capacities of existing and new entrepreneurs. Without medium-term financial and advisory support, the likelihood of sustaining these centres is at risk, given the current

volatile economic context. Moreover, there is an inherent risk in entrepreneurship, as typically only 20 percent of new enterprises become economically viable.⁴⁹ With a view to increasing sustainability, measures have been taken by the Ministry of Production and Labour to link the CEAs, entrepreneurship clubs and SMEs to the municipal and provincial governments and support them in accessing finance. The system in place is expected to help entrepreneurs succeed or fail and learn from those experiences, so their businesses become more resilient. Despite the challenging context within the field of entrepreneurship, SMEs represent an important pillar for the creation of new employment opportunities and the economic development of the country.

At the subnational level, UNDP has supported the Province of San Juan since 2007 in its efforts to boost local production and employment by providing access to credit and technical support to SMEs.⁵⁰ During this time, UNDP helped San Juan's Productive Development Agency with diagnostic study, government awareness-raising, strategic planning and implementation of 15 plans to improve the competitive capacity of the main productive chains for the socioeconomic development of the Province. According to government and UNDP reports, in quantitative terms, 1,062 sub-loans were granted to farming SMEs and over 50,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MiPyMEs) were strengthened through different support instruments such as capacity development and technical assistance to promote new productive entrepreneurs. According to an impact study conducted by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in 2016 for the 2007–2014 period, the programme had a positive effect in terms of increased sales (14.8 percent increase in sales as compared with non-project beneficiaries), improved employment opportunities (13 percent increase in the number of workers), and enhanced productivity of SMEs (6.4 percent increase

⁴⁸ Centros de Enseñanza y Acceso Informático.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Production, Argentina, *Todo sobre la Ley de Emprendedores*, 2016: <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/produccion>.

⁵⁰ Projects include Productive Development and employment in San Juan (San Juan I, 2007-2016 and San Juan II, 2014-2020) projects, financed by the Interamerican Development Bank.

in productivity compared with non-beneficiaries).⁵¹ This positive contribution was confirmed by the evaluation through interviews with the San Juan Investment Agency and programme beneficiaries, who reported having expanded their business lines and increased employment opportunities thanks to the instruments provided by the programme.

Overall, UNDP's contribution in terms of administrative services, technical assistance and facilitation of expertise has been positive for the achievement of social results and progress towards the planned CPD output: Strategies implemented by national and subnational institutions for developing the sustainable productive fabric and local and regional value chains. However, the medium- and long-term results of these interventions, with the exception of the San Juan case, have not been systematically assessed. This is a missed opportunity, considering the interest of the Ministry of Production and Labour in enhancing the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of its public policy instruments.

Finding 2. UNDP made valuable contributions to the implementation of youth employment policies at the subnational level by supporting the expansion of employment offices and organizing job fairs and capacity development initiatives for young people to facilitate their access to decent work opportunities. Measures and adequate follow-up to ensure the successful inclusion of youth in the formal labour market have not been established.

In 2011-2015, UNDP supported the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (part of the Ministry of Production and Labour as of August 2018) in expanding the coverage of its public employment services network, through strengthening new employment offices. These offices, which were equipped with information technology through

UNDP-supported projects, serve as a vehicle for the implementation of the different policies aimed at increasing employability at the regional level. In total, the Employment Secretariat reported having established 640 employment offices by 2015.

Building on this experience, the Employment Secretariat developed a tailored programme to support unemployed teenagers and young people between the ages of 16 and 24 years in their abilities and skills to obtain decent employment. UNDP, together with the International Labour Organization (ILO), helped expand the coverage of the youth employment programmes and develop the Continuous Training System to improve their professional development. To this end, eight job fairs were reportedly organized, reaching approximately 10,000 young people.⁵² Capacity development activities were also carried out with the employment offices that implement youth programmes, to strengthen the public employment services network. According to data reported by the Ministry of Production and Labour, 14 professional training institutions were certified to enhance employment services, 116 Employment Offices increased orientation actions and 88,950 people participated in employment and professional training workshops. The adaptation of professional training programmes to local conditions and demands still needs to be improved and it is intended that this will be undertaken in the future.

In the Province of San Juan, UNDP also supported the organization of youth job fairs, in coordination with the national Ministry of Production and Labour and financed jointly with San Juan's Productive Development Agency. The Province of San Juan is also piloting the triple impact investment approach, promoted by UNDP nationally,⁵³ aimed at enabling access to finance for SMEs which have a business

⁵¹ Bueso-Merriam, Jaqueline, Francisco Demichelis, María Carmen Fernández Díez, David Giuliodori, Alejandro Rodríguez, Rodolfo Stucchi "El impacto del Programa de Crédito para el Desarrollo de la Producción y el Empleo en la Provincia de San Juan", Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, Universidad de Córdoba, Universidad de Talca, Documento para Discusión N° IDB-DP-485, noviembre 2016: <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/spanish/document/El-impacto-del-Programa-de-Crédito-para-el-Desarrollo-de-la-Producción-y-el-Empleo-en-la-Provincia-de-San-Juan.pdf>.

⁵² Ministry of Production and Labour data, as reported in their progress reports.

⁵³ Since 2016, UNDP has incubated/provided technical leadership for the creation of the Secretariat of Entrepreneurship (later subsumed in the SME and Entrepreneurship Secretariat), incorporating activities with value chains with environmental and social impact. For example, in the *Emprende Conciencia* initiative, the country office worked with dynamic triple-impact entrepreneurs incubated with INVAP and with productive sectors of the popular and solidarity economy that involved environmental issues (i.e. afforestation).

model that is sensitive to the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic; social; and environmental. As a relatively new initiative, the participation of entrepreneurs and SMEs is still at an early stage.

In its Argentina country programme, UNDP has sought to reduce poverty through local development and entrepreneurship. Although the scale of its efforts is not extensive enough to offer measurable relief to the high level of economic stress the country is facing, UNDP has provided important support to the creation of the Secretariat of Entrepreneurship (later subsumed into the SME and Entrepreneurship Secretariat), which has spearheaded job creation activities with substantial environmental and social impact.

While there has been a reported increase in youth and women's participation in the job fairs, a key challenge for these employment initiatives continues to be that of ensuring adequate follow-up on whether the persons trained are employable and being employed. As with the entrepreneurship initiatives, there is a need to measure and assess the medium and long-term results of such programmes. Moreover, these employment initiatives have not been integrated with sectoral policies, thus limiting their potential impact.

Partnerships with the Ministry of Education have not been established, representing a missed opportunity for enhancing the sustainability of such interventions. Joint initiatives with the Ministry of Education to design new and sustainable employment strategies could be useful, for instance, to address the asymmetry between labour supply and demand. Similarly, potential synergies with ILO and its work with the Ministry of Education in the field of professional education for employability have yet to be explored.

Overall, despite the important contributions made by UNDP in support of youth employment policies, the objective of increasing youth employability has not been achieved, largely due to the economic contraction. According to the National Statistics and Census

Institute (INDEC), nearly two out of ten people aged 14-29 were unemployed in the last trimester of 2018 (19.3 percent), while the unemployment rate of the overall active population was 7.4 percent.⁵⁴

Finding 3. UNDP is a key partner to the government in its 2030 Agenda adaptation and implementation process. Key contributions include the facilitation of public-private partnerships for greater private sector engagement and technical support in the prioritization and harmonization process of the SDGs. UNDP's in-country network and potential role as an integrator to build alliances between the CNCPS, trades unions, the United Nations and NGOs has not been sufficiently leveraged. UNDP's work on innovation, while promising given some initial success mobilizing corporate funding, will need more time to develop before evaluative judgments can be made.

UNDP's support for the implementation of the SDGs has focused first on assisting the government in aligning its public policies and programmes to the SDGs, and second, on managing government-funded projects as a means for their accomplishment. The key partner for this work has been the CNCPS, as the entity responsible for coordinating the SDG implementation process in the country. UNDP has accompanied the CNCPS at different stages, namely in the identification of key priority areas for the SDG roadmap with different stakeholders, the prioritization of SDGs and the relevant indicators, including those related to gender, in the mainstreaming and adaptation of the SDGs to the national context (harmonization process), and in raising awareness through advocacy and partnerships.

Building on its network with a wide array of partners, UNDP has made important contributions in terms of advocacy and partnership building for SDG fulfilment. Through its projects with subnational governments, UNDP has helped raise awareness for the integration of the SDGs into provincial strategies and programmes, an important step for SDG localization. Examples are: the assistance provided to both the Province and the City of Buenos Aires

⁵⁴ <https://www.cippec.org/textual/la-argentina-es-el-pais-con-mayor-desempleo-juvenil-de-la-region/>.

for the adaptation of the SDGs at subnational level with a focus on open government, transparency and active citizen participation; and the work with the Judicial Branch for the implementation of SDG16.

In addition, UNDP has played an important bridging role by fostering public-private partnerships for SDG implementation. Linkages between the CNCPS and the Global Compact were established with the aim of increasing the private sector's engagement with and ownership of the SDGs. Several events and meetings were organized to raise awareness of the private sector role in SDG implementation and to gather views and feedback for the development of the National Voluntary Review 2017—supported by UNDP. Private sector entities within the Global Compact constitute a key partner and vehicle to connect the private sector to the 2030 Agenda. This advocacy and partnering support has not only been crucial to enhance private sector engagement, but also to improve inter-institutional coordination.

While partners, in general, recognize and value UNDP's capacities and contributions for the implementation of the SDGs at national level, there are further opportunities to strengthen this engagement. UNDP's network and trusted relationship with diverse actors could be better leveraged for greater advocacy aligned with the SDGs. There is an opportunity, for instance, to link the CNCPS with subnational governments, the trades unions and different NGOs with which UNDP already has a relationship. Similarly, increased support would be useful at the subnational level to ensure the effective localization of the SDGs.⁵⁵

UNDP is developing new and innovative mechanisms to spur SDG achievement in Argentina.⁵⁶ The UNDP accelerator lab, which was being established at the

time of the evaluation, is a unique opportunity for UNDP given its stated objectives. The lab aims to provide governments with policy solutions, instruments and methodologies to measure and analyse different strategies and assess the different models before piloting them on the ground. With this instrument, UNDP may complement its support to the Ministry of Production and Labour and San Juan Province by helping develop a methodology to measure the results and impact of pilot entrepreneurship and employment initiatives.

Linked to its SDG support is also the knowledge work carried out by the UNDP Human Development and Policy Unit, which continues to be relevant and highly valued by stakeholders. The series of publications produced by this Unit serve as reference materials for a wide array of actors in the development field (such as academia, governments, the UN System, think tanks, NGOs, the media and the private sector), contributing to policy debates and discussions⁵⁷ and helping raise awareness among the public and decision makers. In recent years this Unit has focused on key thematic issues including gender,⁵⁸ health, national statistical capacities for the SDGs⁵⁹ and the economic dimensions of development. A major contribution in terms of policy tools has been the development of new multidimensional indexes such as the Sustainable Development Index at subnational level, which measures the extent of development based on three dimensions (social inclusion, economic growth and environmental sustainability). While this has been a useful tool to foster debate about public policies and raise awareness of the critical development gaps at the subnational level, it has not been adopted by the Government because of other priorities, such as enhancing the country's statistical database.

⁵⁵ The adaptation and implementation of the SDGs at the local level have been supported with direct technical assistance financed with UNDP funding in the following Provinces: Neuquén, La Rioja, Buenos Aires, San Juan and the Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires (2017) and Tucumán, Corrientes and Salta (2018) with special focus on mainstreaming the gender and human rights approach.

⁵⁶ New innovation initiatives include: the country investment facility project fostering impact investment in Argentina to advance the SDGs (\$480,00) and the UNDP accelerator lab.

⁵⁷ Interviews by the ICPE and media analysis carried out by the Human Development and Policy Unit.

⁵⁸ The publication *Gender in the Health Sector* in 2018, resulted in the development of a line of analysis in the Human Resources Observatory of the Ministry of Health. Legislative changes were discussed as a result of the recommendations and promoted the creation of the first Association of Women Surgeons.

⁵⁹ Strengthening the National Statistical System providing greater autonomy for INDEC as the governing body and better articulation with the subnational statistical offices.

2.2 Social protection and inclusion

Outcome 2: By 2020 the country will have designed and implemented social protection and inclusion policies aimed at a full enjoyment of social rights through universal access to essential good-quality services, from a gender perspective, and with special emphasis on the groups most discriminated against.

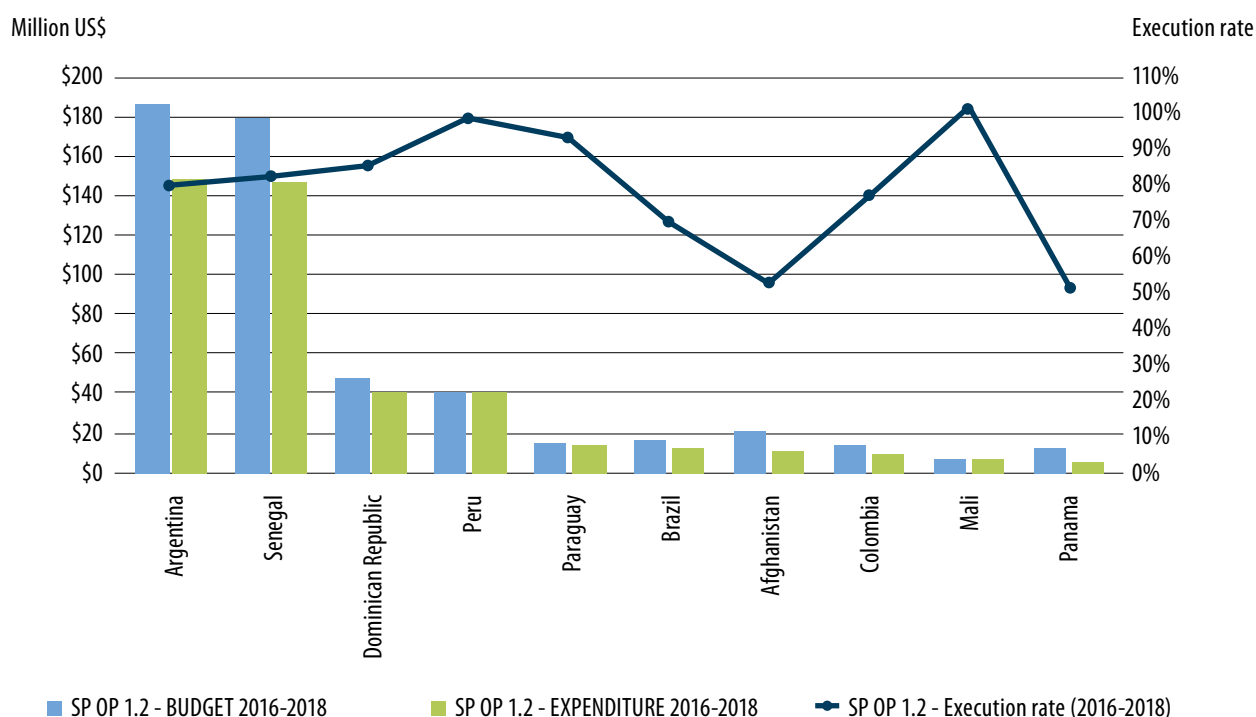
Social protection has been one of UNDP's key areas of engagement over recent years, as reflected in the Strategic Plan 2014–17. An analysis of UNDP's financial data⁶⁰ reveals that Argentina is the largest UNDP

programme contributing to the implementation of national social protection policies, (with almost \$150 million) followed by Senegal and the Dominican Republic (Figure 8).

The country office planned to contribute to **social protection and inclusion** through the following actions:

- Reduction of territorial and economic gaps in access to health, through national programmes aimed at reducing infant and maternal mortality rates and chronic diseases, with special emphasis on the most disadvantaged groups, strategically approaching health determinants from an intersectoral perspective;
- Food security guaranteed by national and subnational programmes; and
- Quality and coverage of social security system reinforced.

FIGURE 8. Top 10 country programmes contributing to social protection (Strategic Plan Output 1.2)



Source: UNDP Atlas

⁶⁰ Estimated based on Atlas data on global UNDP expenditures for the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan Output 1.2, Options enabled and facilitated for inclusive and sustainable social protection.

Interventions under this outcome focused on supporting the implementation of the Government's main social programmes in the health and food security sector. These aimed at contributing to the reduction of economic, social and territorial gaps impeding universal access to health, education and social protection services, with an emphasis on the groups most vulnerable and discriminated against. The main social programmes supported by UNDP and implementing partners include:

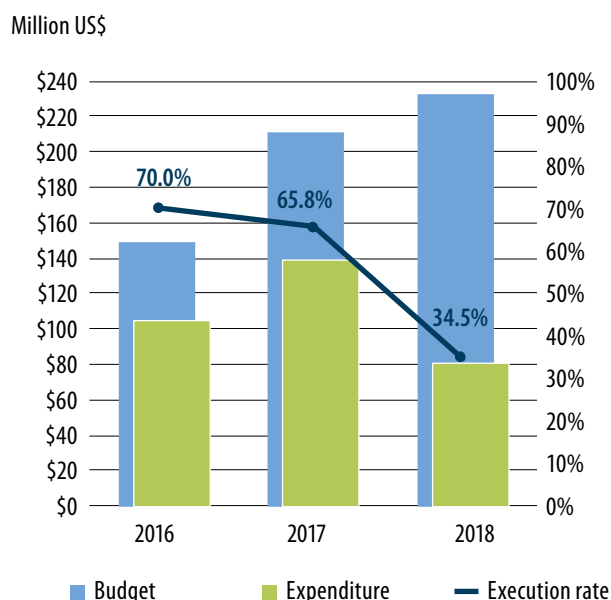
- i. The Remediar programme for the provision of basic medicines, and the Sumar Plan for the provision of health services to children, teenagers, women and men up to 64 years of age, with the National Ministry of Health;
- ii. The National Plan for the Prevention and Reduction of Teenage Unintended Pregnancy (PENIA), led by the CNCPS and implemented by the Secretariat of Minority and Family;
- iii. The National Food Security Plan and its Community Outreach component (community kitchens or *comedores comunitarios*), to provide two meals a day to the most vulnerable families in the country, led by the Sub-Secretariat for Food Policies of the Ministry of Social Development; and
- iv. The Essential Public Health Functions Programme with the Province of Buenos Aires.

The social protection and inclusion policies portfolio is the largest in the UNDP Argentina programme with 19 projects and \$323.7 million in expenditures for the 2015-2018 period. The planned budget for this outcome was \$592.8 million, achieving a 54.6 percent execution rate. Signature projects in terms of expenditure include the Food Policy Management II project⁶¹ with \$125 million, and the Consolidation of the IADB Portfolio project⁶² with \$110 million in expenditure. Those two projects alone represent 72 percent of the total outcome expenditure and almost 50 percent of the total CPD expenditure.

⁶¹ Project: Gestión de Políticas Alimentarias II.

⁶² Project: Consolidación de la Cartera del BID.

FIGURE 9. Expenditure and budget—outcome 2



Source: UNDP Atlas

Finding 4. UNDP contributed to the improvement of provincial health-care services by supporting the modernization of health systems and the interconnectedness of the health-care network. Its role in this area has been mostly operational, recruiting experts and advising on procurement of equipment and supplies.

UNDP has implemented 18 projects with national and provincial governments to help modernize health-care systems for improved quality of health services. Overall, UNDP's support in this area has focused on recruiting technical expertise and advising on requirements for purchase management and the acquisition of equipment and supplies.

During 2016 and 2017, UNDP provided technical assistance to the Provinces of Neuquén, Santiago del Estero and Buenos Aires. The assistance consisted of improving hemodialysis systems and providing assistance to the people of the Province of Neuquén in the design and organization of services for a new, highly complex, hospital. UNDP's assistance to the

Province of Buenos Aires⁶³ helped improve and modernize primary health-care information systems and procedures for enhanced health-care services, improving coordination levels within the system.⁶⁴ UNDP hired experts to: i) develop software that continuously updates sociodemographic, epidemiological, production and health-care resources data at the provincial level, providing unified up-to-date information on beneficiary profiles and intervention features; ii) update information systems for improved management; and iii) integrate the concept of networks between different levels of complexity⁶⁵ into the health system.

The technical assistance provided by UNDP to the Ministry of Health of the Province of Santiago del Estero, which lasted over 12 years, helped enhance the management and regulation of the pharmaceutical inventory, which was decentralized and unlinked and enabled big data classification of ten public hospitals (equivalent to 85 percent of the Province's hospital system), improving the interconnectedness of the health network. In this particular case, there has been a high level of ownership and adoption of UNDP's management mechanism by the Province, contributing to effective institutional strengthening and sustainability. The Province recently submitted a law to establish the project's implementation unit under the Ministry's official structure, not as part of the UNDP project, which is now closed. If the law is approved, the establishment of this unit should enable a transfer of knowledge and capacities to the Province.

At the national level, UNDP has provided long-standing management support⁶⁶ for the implementation of two key programmes: the Early Childhood Programme,⁶⁷ implemented by the National Ministry of Social Development since 2006, with the support of several ministries, the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and the Teenage Pregnancy Programme since 2018, led by CNCPS. UNDP's contributions in terms of administrative solutions for both programmes, which have complex implementation arrangements given their scale and work with provinces and community level organizations, were deemed relevant and effective by the stakeholders interviewed. They valued UNDP's agility in procuring services and processing payments for CSOs, the flexibility in carrying over unused funds to the next year (something not possible with national procedures), and the assurance brought by regular spot-checks (mini-audits) organized by UNDP. On the other hand, they highlighted the challenges faced in finding service providers at the local level that comply with UNDP's corporate procurement requirements.

Following the positive experience with different phases of the Early Childhood Programme, the government requested UNDP's support for the Teenage Pregnancy Programme. Given its recent start up (July 2018) and complex implementation scheme (12 provinces, almost 1,000 consultants in the field, coordination between the three relevant ministries (responsible for social development, health and education) and the Presidency etc.), it is too early to gauge achievements. Following first year efforts to strengthen the implementation structure and training administrative and technical officials in the pertinent procedures, technical support has been provided to:

- Design an attention and care device for underage victims of forced pregnancy;
- Provide free legal sponsorship for victims with the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights;

⁶³ Projects: Strengthening the Management of the Ministry of Health of the Province of Buenos Aires (2008-2017); Support for the Strengthening of the Primary Health Care Strategy of the Province of Buenos Aires (2011-2018).

⁶⁴ Preliminary findings of the UNDP Outcome assessment, July 2019, section 6.2.2.1.

⁶⁵ This concept entails connecting all hospitals and health centers, which are divided based on the level of complexity of the health cases they treat, under one interconnected network and database system. This network facilitates the transfer of patients between the network centers. See the provincial decree for the network: <https://aldiaargentina.microjuris.com/2018/10/16/se-crea-la-la-red-publica-de-salud-amba-en-la-provincia-de-buenos-aires/>.

⁶⁶ According to government partners, 80 percent of programme expenditures is for the recruitment of staff, and 20 percent for purchases.

⁶⁷ UNDP has supported three phases of the Early Childhood Programme: Phase I between 2006-2011, Phase II between 2012-2015 and Phase III between 2016-2020. For the evaluation period, the budget for the Phase II and III programmes amounted to \$16 million.

- Systematize the PENIA experience and its implementation model;
- Undertake communication and advocacy activities for the promotion of the Obstetrics Law promoted by PENIA.

Finding 5. UNDP has contributed to the implementation of the National Food Security Plan, by enabling an operational mechanism to work with community-based organizations that offer food services to vulnerable families and by providing administrative services to strengthen their management capabilities.

UNDP's support to the Ministry of Social Development, in particular to the Secretariat of Food Policies, for the implementation of the National Food Security Plan, while relevant, has been mostly administrative. Through the project Management of Food Policies—Community Approach Component—implemented between 2012 and 2020, UNDP helped improve food policy by supporting the adoption of a social, institutional and territorial integration perspective.⁶⁸ UNDP's work focused on building capacities at two levels: at the institutional federal level (with the Secretariat for Food Policies of the Ministry of Social Development); and at local level (with community-based organizations responsible for the community kitchens).

At the institutional level, UNDP supported the Ministry in overall project implementation and management, providing technical assistance for the development of annual workplans, identification of key goals and indicators, promoting gender mainstreaming and capacity-building activities for community-based organizations. Under this implementation model, UNDP has provided an operational mechanism that allows for the disbursement of funds to 1,160 community-based organizations that offer food services to vulnerable populations across the country through community kitchens. Indirectly, through its administrative support, UNDP has contributed to ensuring the food security of approximately 210,000 vulnerable Argentinians.

UNDP enabled the transparent and effective management of the community kitchens, by helping the Ministry strengthen management capabilities and the gender-based violence awareness of community-based organizations and by establishing a social supervision mechanism for accountability purposes. As stated by stakeholders, this long-standing relationship has been a “valuable learning process for both the government and UNDP in terms of how to best operate with community-based organizations”, leading to a proven standardized mechanism to work with community-based organizations.

Outcome 3: By 2020 the country will have reinforced full citizenship through the overarching protection and promotion of human rights and the design and implementation of mechanisms to access information, to ensure citizen participation and access to justice across the country, without any discrimination whatsoever.

2.3 Citizenship and human rights

The **citizenship and human rights** portfolio aims to strengthen institutional capacities for the rule of law and establish effective, transparent and inclusive institutions. The country office envisaged contributions to this CPD outcome through seven outputs:

- i. Institutional initiatives and mechanisms implemented to prevent, address and reduce inequalities as well as all discrimination and violence due to gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, nationality and disability;
- ii. Development of ICTs at national and subnational institutions to enhance and improve quality and coverage across the country;

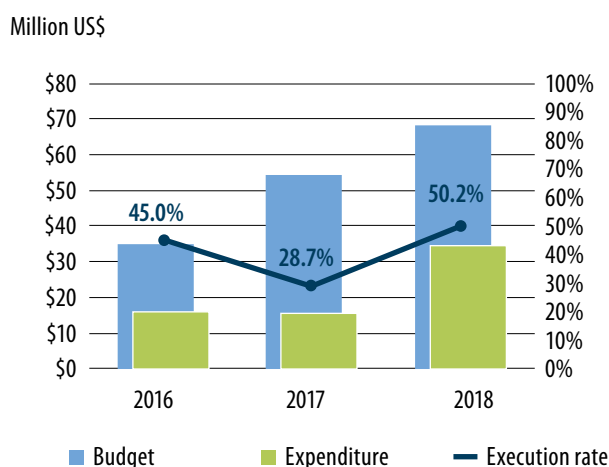
⁶⁸ UNDP Outcome assessment, 2019. unpublished draft version, section 6.2.2.3.

- iii. Access to justice for the most disadvantaged segments of the population and citizen participation promoted by national and subnational initiatives;
- iv. Diversity of cultural expression, intercultural dialogue and equal access to cultural goods promoted through strategies particularly addressed to the most vulnerable groups, doing away with all forms of discrimination;
- v. Management capabilities increased through institutional strengthening to provide more efficient, effective and transparent services;
- vi. Triangular technical cooperation initiatives implemented at the subregional, regional and national levels;
- vii. Gender equality and the economic empowerment of women promoted through national and sub-national initiatives.

Over the programme cycle, the country office managed to improve financial performance, achieving a notable increase in both the estimated budget and expenditures. For 2018, the budget increased by approximately 26 percent and expenditures by 119 percent compared with 2017 (Figure 10). Despite this improvement, the execution rate remained low (41.7 percent). Thirty-four projects were implemented under this outcome.

UNDP worked with several actors, allowing coverage of diverse thematic areas under its governance portfolio. Support was given to the executive branch, namely the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, the Ministry of Modernization (now a Government Secretariat), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Culture (currently a Government Secretariat) and the Legislative and Judicial Branches, for the promotion of SDG16 on Peace and Justice. At the subnational level, projects were implemented with the Provinces of Cordoba and Buenos Aires, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires and the Province of Tierra del Fuego.

FIGURE 10. Expenditure and budget—outcome 3



Source: UNDP Atlas

A central focus under this outcome has been the promotion of innovative ICTs for public management, to improve the transparency of services and facilitate greater citizen participation. UNDP has supported open government strategies with the executive branch at the national and subnational levels. Based on the multidimensional approach to human development, the programme also promoted a human rights- and gender-based approach in the supported policies, with a focus on non-discrimination and on ensuring that the most vulnerable population (women, indigenous people, youth, and the elderly) have equal access to justice.

Finding 6. The work of UNDP on institutional strengthening in Argentina has included support for the implementation of government modernization programmes. Interventions were most effective when projects set out clear institutional strengthening objectives that focused on improving internal capacities and streamlining/modernizing processes.

UNDP's contribution to democratic governance in Argentina has focused on strengthening management capacities, as was also reported in the IEO 2009 ADR. This focus seeks to address perceived weaknesses in government management,

by helping to establish results-based planning, improve management and evaluation frameworks, and modernize administrative procedures.⁶⁹

UNDP's institutional strengthening interventions have been most effective in cases where projects were designed with a clear institutional strengthening objective, focused on improving internal capacities and streamlining/modernizing processes. In some long-standing projects, UNDP's support and operational framework have effectively contributed to the completion of technical programmes, and/or enabled more efficient and transparent services by government institutions. This is the case with the National Commission on the Exterior Limit for the Continental Platform—COPLA project,⁷⁰ hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through which UNDP helped Argentina complete a highly technical national endeavour, carrying out the demarcation of the outer limit of its continental platform. As an example, at the subnational level, UNDP provided knowledge management support and advisory services for the modernization of services provided by the Province of Cordoba to its citizens. Over ten citizen services were streamlined, including civil registration, property registration, and the process to establish joint-stock companies.⁷¹ The Cordoba project also instituted a "going paperless" initiative.

Institutional strengthening and sustainability of results has been limited in some projects by insufficient attention to knowledge transfer. This is exemplified by the existence of some projects operating for years without major substantive revisions to the transfer of knowledge and limited evidence of enhanced institutional capacities. Examples include projects implemented with the Ministry of Modernization (see Finding 8) and the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs,⁷² all with significant expenditures that are essentially administrative in nature, (*rueda de auxilio*).

Finding 7. UNDP has contributed to the Government's modernization efforts by promoting ICTs within open government initiatives, to improve the transparency and efficiency of public services and facilitate greater citizen participation. The most salient cases in terms of results were at the subnational level, with streamlined processes in the Province of Cordoba and the City of Buenos Aires.

Open Government platforms have been set up in Argentina to foster the accountability of the state, build citizen participation, and expand the use of new ICTs. UNDP has been an active partner in the establishment of Open Government platforms. For example, assistance was provided to the City of Buenos Aires for the development of its Open Government platform, which includes the Buenos Aires Elige portal for the submission of proposals for local development projects by citizens, and the BAObras portal, which is an accountability and transparency tool to show the status of public works, their budget and estimated completion date.

At the subnational level, UNDP has maintained a long-standing partnership with the Ministry of Finance of Cordoba Province. Since 2011, UNDP has supported the Province's modernization efforts,⁷³ focused on improving internal processes for enhanced citizen services. Main achievements reported by the Ministry as a result of this support include: establishing the Digital Citizen platform⁷⁴ for the Province; digitalizing 31 procedures that were previously done on-site with the Division of Inspection of Legal Persons; reducing the processing

⁶⁹ From multiple sources: UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (pages 4,5 and 9); document on Government Objectives, (Objective 9 on bureaucratization and facilitation of processes and Chapter VII on State Modernization); interview with stakeholders; and newspaper articles by Dr. Oscar Oszlak, public management specialist.

⁷⁰ COPLA was created in 1997 by Law No. 24,815, as the state body in charge of preparing the final presentation of the outer limit of the Argentine continental shelf, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and Law No. 23,968 on Maritime Spaces.

⁷¹ See Finding 7, results at subnational level in Cordoba Province.

⁷² For both the Ministry of Modernization and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, projects originated two programmatic cycles ago, and have continued, providing the same administrative support under a different project under this cycle.

⁷³ Projects include Quality Management of the Ministry of Finance implemented from 2011-2016 and the improvement of the Ministry of Finance's management capacities from 2016-2019.

⁷⁴ <https://ciudadanodigital.cba.gov.ar/en/>.

time for 15 public administration procedures to approximately 12 days through the introduction of the digital signature; reducing the civil registration process from 25 days to 10 days through digitalization; and improving 45 social programmes servicing 783,000 beneficiaries by digitalizing the registration of beneficiaries and by providing online information.

For all these processes, UNDP provided management services, including the hiring of ad hoc technical expertise (105 consultants) and procurement services to purchase the required software and hardware through its Long-Term Agreements. In addition, technical assistance was given at the project design phase and for substantive project revisions. Project implementation was challenged by the steep devaluation of the peso, which reduced the project's purchasing power. As a mitigation strategy, the country office facilitated the dollarization of some project funds, enabling the effective implementation of the procurement plans.

UNDP also supported the City of Buenos Aires in the SDG16 adaptation process. This support included adapting the globally agreed goals and priorities and revising the proposed indicators and sources of information to measure progress towards results. This process, which is the first case at the subnational level, is viewed by the government of the City as a successful experience for the promotion of a transparent open government, and an active citizen participation. At the same time, it is considered as an innovative public management tool.

For the central Government, UNDP's support efforts⁷⁵ focused on the procurement of software (human resources and cybersecurity) and equipment and the recruitment of consultants for the Secretariat of Modernization. Key contributions include support for the establishment of 400 mobile centres for knowledge access (*Nucleos de Acceso al Conocimiento*), as part of the Secretariat's digital inclusion policies, and the development of different systems for control panels shared between provinces

and municipalities. While relevant to the Secretariat, these projects did not have an explicit institutional strengthening strategy. Because of several changes in government structures over the years, project implementation suffered significant delays, which led to under-implementation.

Finding 8. UNDP has promoted greater access to justice in Argentina, helping to improve coverage and equality within the justice system, particularly for disadvantaged groups, including victims of gender-based violence. Sustainability of these services at the subnational level is uncertain and depends on provincial commitments and financing.

UNDP's access to justice workstream is framed under SDG16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. By supporting the Sub-Secretary on Access to Justice of the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, UNDP has contributed to the output: *Access to justice of the most disadvantaged segments of the population and citizen participation promoted by national and subnational initiatives*. Support was provided to expand access to justice centres that offer free legal and psychosocial services to citizens; 90 are now fully functional in the country. Partnerships with universities, bar associations and NGOs were established to train lawyers on gender-based violence and provide additional basic judicial support to the communities. In addition, a strategy was developed to extend legal and health services to the most vulnerable population located in the northern region of the country, including indigenous communities, through seven operating mobile units that circulate in small communities in the northwest provinces, later to be expanded also to the northeast region. This support has helped expand the coverage of justice services and improve access to justice for a previously underserved population. According to government statistics,⁷⁶ 345,000 inquiries were addressed by the centres between 2017 and 2018, of which 2,400 were in the North Andean corridor.

⁷⁵ These include Strengthening of the Cabinet Secretariat (2012-2019); Democratic access to ICTs (2014-2017); and Contribution to the design of bandwidth models (2016-2019).

⁷⁶ Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, inquiries for the justice centers: <http://datos.jus.gob.ar/dataset/consultas-efectuadas-en-los-centros-de-acceso-a-la-justicia/archivo/01e1f3f8-feb8-4bcc-9877-b6fbc28df7dc>.

UNDP also sought to increase access to justice for victims of gender-based violence by creating a free judicial sponsoring network. The network now has 1,675 registered lawyers, 556 of whom have received tailored training on gender-based violence. Eleven virtual training guidelines were developed for this purpose. Synergies were established with the UNDP Innovation Facility project to develop guidelines for cases of gender-based violence towards deaf- and hearing-impaired women, and to train mediators from this community to support victims. While small in scale, by strengthening institutional capacities for enhanced gender-sensitive services for the population, UNDP is contributing to closing the gender gap in access to justice through this project. The effectiveness of the network, however, needs to be further assessed to determine its impact on access to justice indicators and determine any necessary corrective measures.

The access to justice interventions faced significant recruitment and startup delays because of limitations imposed by the Secretariat of Modernization as part of the Government's austerity measures.⁷⁷ UNDP was able to provide support for the recruitment of professionals to coordinate the Access to Justice Centres at the federal level, by means of an agreement between UNDP and the Under-Secretariat of Access to Justice in December 2018, thus alleviating the limitation imposed. Likewise, in this context, UNDP aided with the recruitment of 15 lawyers specializing in gender violence to handle cases of sexual abuse of children and adolescents, with funding from UNICEF. The sustainability of the initiatives is at risk, given that these services are being provided through national government budgets. To upscale the initiative, efforts should be made to partner also with the justice branches of the provincial governments, to ensure their engagement and request their financial support.

Other initiatives have also been implemented with the Supreme Court of Justice, and the National Women Institute (INAM) to enhance justice services for women victims of gender-based violence. Together with INAM, the Women Office and the Office for the Attention of the Victims of Gender-Based Violence of the Supreme Court, UNDP provided technical assistance for training half the peace judges, court secretaries, and judicial staff in the provinces on gender mainstreaming, gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, domestic violence and due diligence processes. Moreover, UNDP provided advisory support for the development of a guide to establish Women's Offices at the provincial level. To date, 24 Women's Offices are reportedly operating. Technical assistance was also provided to INAM to improve the work of the 144-line team,⁷⁸ responsible for conducting consultations and taking account of allegations with respect to gender-based violence in the country. The diagnostic study and the reorganization of team tasks were seen as crucial to avoid team "burnout" and ensure proper attention and sensitivity to victims.

Work was carried out with the National Prison Attorney's Office to promote peaceful and inclusive societies by supporting persons held in custody in federal prisons.⁷⁹ While small in resources (\$18,400), this innovative project organized conflict resolution workshops in three detention centres (one for adult men, another one for young men and the third one for women) to promote peaceful cohabitation and collaboration amongst them and with the guards, and the development of life plans without violence and crime. An assessment of the initiative's effectiveness and impact on the reduction of violence and improved cohabitation should be carried out to determine whether it should be adapted and upscaled to other detention centres at the national and provincial level.

⁷⁷ Presidential Decree No. 632 of July 2018.

⁷⁸ A telephone hotline to report sexual and gender-based violence.

⁷⁹ UNDP's core resources (TRAC—Target for Resource Assignments from the Core) funded pilot project: Let's try Talking: Training for a collaborative cohabitation.

Finding 9. South-South Cooperation (SSC), which is a high priority for the government of Argentina, has been underemphasized by the programme. There is limited evidence of the systematization of experiences and documentation of lessons learned for knowledge sharing and management. Building from the government's interest and the recent BAPA+40 momentum, there is ample space to enhance the use of SSC modalities in the programme.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation is an area of great interest to the government of Argentina, as part of its priority to "Intelligently position itself in the world."⁸⁰ This is reflected in the country's willingness to host the BAPA+40 Conference.⁸¹ UNDP supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in this endeavour by providing logistical, planning and technical support for its successful completion. The event gathered representatives of 160 countries, including academia, the private sector and civil society.

UNDP's efforts in Argentina to promote South-South and Triangular cooperation have been limited across the CPD outcomes. There are a few cases in which SSC has been actively facilitated, such as the technical assistance received from Uruguayan experts on IT security for the Information Systems Agency of the City of Buenos Aires and on SDG16 adaptation processes and Open Government for the City of Buenos Aires. A GEF Sustainable Use of Biodiversity project (#85129) in Argentina included

a technical exchange with a similar project executed in the southern region of Brazil, also financed by the GEF. In addition, the Second Meeting of the Latin American Network, fostered by the Global Support programme of UNDP/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), convened 12 Latin American countries with their national Greenhouse Gases (GHG) experts to share experiences and strengthen technical capacities.

There is significant untapped potential for UNDP to support the government of Argentina in sharing good practices with other countries, leveraging UNDP's global network. Some examples of experiences that could be documented and shared include the COPLA project and the experience of the City of Buenos Aires and the Province of Cordoba with modernization and open government strategies.

Finding 10. Limited advances were made in UNDP's work on anti-corruption and the promotion of diversity and culture. Institutional changes and weak ownership by relevant government partners hindered the effectiveness of these initiatives

An analysis of the governance portfolio shows that most projects are mainly linked to two of the seven planned outputs: output 2 on the development of ICTs and output 5 on institutional strengthening for more efficient, effective and transparent services. These two priority outputs are closely related, as the development of ICTs contributes to the strengthening of institutions for more efficient, effective and transparent services.

⁸⁰ Government of Argentina, Government Objectives: <https://observatorioplanificacion.cepal.org/sites/default/files/plan/files/ArgentinaObjetivosdeGobierno.pdf>.

⁸¹ The Second High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation, Buenos Aires, March 2019.

TABLE 1. Distribution of projects per output—democratic governance

CPD output	No. Projects	Expenditure (million US\$)
3.1 Inequalities, discrimination and violence due to gender, ethnic group, age	3	45,519
3.2 Information and communication technologies	10	48,856,497
3.3 Access to justice and citizen participation	1	1,957,451
3.4 Cultural expressions, intercultural dialogue and access to cultural goods	1	2,204,676
3.5 Institutional strengthening for efficient, effective and transparent services	19	12,599,306
3.6 South-South or Triangular technical cooperation initiatives*	1	0
3.7 Gender equality and the economic empowerment of women	0	0
No relation to any of the CPD outputs	1	79,914
Total	36	65,742,771

* Disbursements for the BAPA+40 project not reflected as data were extracted from the system at the end of 2018. Project budget was approximately \$4 million.

Source: UNDP Atlas

Areas with more limited projects and contributions include UNDP's work on the promotion of diversity and culture. Only one project has been implemented, with the National Ministry of Culture (now the Secretariat of Culture), to promote access to different cultural expressions for vulnerable groups. This support focused on the provision of management services for the construction of the Culture House, the recruitment of consultants and purchase of equipment. While valued by the national counterpart, UNDP's contribution to output 3.4: *Diversity of cultural expressions, intercultural dialogue and equal access to cultural goods promoted through strategies particularly for the most vulnerable groups, doing away with all forms of discrimination* was primarily operational, with no capacity strengthening for the development or implementation of inclusive strategies for vulnerable groups.

To promote greater transparency and accountability, UNDP envisaged work with the National Anti-Corruption Office through two projects. The implementation of both projects has been hampered by government delays resulting from institutional changes and a perceived lack of national ownership for project implementation. The country office is weighing whether to close these two projects due to the lack of progress.

In the case of output 3.1. on inequalities, discrimination and violence, despite only having one direct contributing project, the country office implemented non-project initiatives that led to important contributions for non-discrimination and gender equality. These are presented in Finding 17 on gender.

2.4 Sustainable natural resources management

Outcome 4: By 2020, the country will have reinforced the sustainable management of natural resources and implemented adaptation and mitigation policies with respect to climate change and man-made damage, using a gender and intercultural approach.

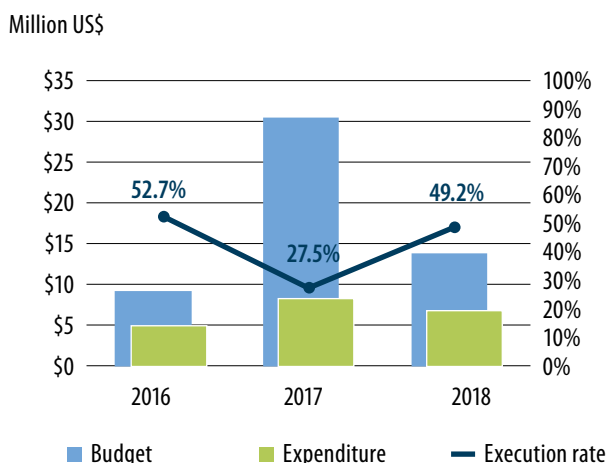
UNDP aimed to contribute to the environmental outcome through three outputs:

- Land-use strategies promoted for the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems;
- Mitigation and adaptation to climate change through strategies implemented at the national and subnational levels; and
- Environmental degradation and pollution reversed through schemes implemented at the national and subnational levels.

Projects under the **environmental portfolio** are designed to support the Government as it strengthens its environmental actions and oversight to reverse environmental damage, support evidence-based decision-making and develop tools for sustainable natural resources management.

The environment portfolio represents the smallest area in terms of expenditures. For the 2016–2018 period, the country office implemented 23 projects with \$20 million in expenditures, achieving a 37.5 percent execution rate. Between 2017 and 2018, the portfolio faced a decline in its budget and expenditures, because of externalities such as the local currency devaluation and the Government's deficit reduction measures, which affects government funding.

FIGURE 11. Expenditure and budget—outcome 4



Source: UNDP Atlas

UNDP's partnership with the national Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat has helped secure Government funding for this portfolio. Around 70 percent of expenditures are from Government cost-sharing. The remaining 30 percent of expenditures derive from vertical funds, mainly GEF, UN-REDD and the Montreal Protocol. UNDP's long-standing presence in the country, its experience implementing GEF projects and its global knowledge network have enabled it to leverage these funds strategically. At the time of the evaluation, UNDP had mobilized \$20 million from the GEF and around \$3 million from the Green Climate Fund.

Finding 11. The environment portfolio has shown a positive shift and expansion in focus from an environmental protection vision to a broader, more multidimensional approach to sustainable development.

The focus of the UNDP environment portfolio has shifted from environmental protection-centred projects to more comprehensive multidimensional approaches addressing other dimensions of sustainable development (i.e. productive and socioeconomic issues) related to environment and poverty reduction. To foster greater integration between the different dimensions, the country office grouped its production-related projects (with the Ministry of Production and Labour) under the

environment and sustainable development cluster. Similarly, there has been an expansion to new areas, such as energy and risk management. Production-related projects are now placing greater focus on environmental issues,⁸² and some environmental projects have increased their emphasis on income generation activities and productive capacities. So, for instance, the UNDP-GEF nature protection project (Uso sustentable de la biodiversidad), and Dry Areas of the Argentine Northwest Project (Manejo Sustentable de Tierras en las Zonas Secas del Noroeste Argentino), both include direct support to rural communities focusing on poverty and the environment. This shift in focus reflects the evolution of UNDP and GEF strategies towards more holistic environmental protection approaches that seek to address underlying root causes of degradation as well as UNDP Argentina's improved capacity to adapt to the country's changing context and needs. UNDP's move to a more comprehensive outlook and multidimensional approach to environment and natural resource issues, linking environmental

protection with development, has facilitated its positioning and contributed to the achievement of results.

Attention to equal access to services within the environmental portfolio is an area that has received insufficient attention. While a social equality approach is acknowledged in a few projects (notably those dealing with local communities in marginalized areas, and amongst the Small Grants Programmes (SGPs) in the northeast and northwest), attention to environment-related vulnerabilities faced by marginalized groups is mostly lacking.

The CPD indicates that climate change would be emphasized, yet an analysis of the portfolio indicates the output directly related to climate change mitigation and adaptation represents just 14 percent of the portfolio's expenditures, although it has the greatest number of projects under this outcome (11 projects)⁸³ (Table 2). Of the three main outputs under this portfolio, environmental degradation and pollution received the least attention in terms of funding and number of projects.⁸⁴

TABLE 2. Distribution of projects under the environment portfolio per CPD output

Outputs under outcome 4	# projects	Expenditure (2016-2018, US\$)
1. Land-use strategies promoted for the sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems	9	16,817,430
2. Mitigation and adaptation to climate change through strategies implemented at the national and subnational levels	11	2,983,448
3. Environmental degradation and pollution reversed through schemes implemented at the national and subnational levels	3	1,303,126
Total	23	21,104,004

Source: UNDP Atlas

⁸² See Finding 2 and the experience on the San Juan pilot of the triple impact approach.

⁸³ It is important to note the limitations of UNDP's system, as it only allows the linkage of a project to one CPD output. Consequently, there are projects that might contribute to two outputs, yet this is not captured by the system.

⁸⁴ It is recognized that many projects in the portfolio focused on other topics such as land degradation, biodiversity and pollution connect closely to climate change.

Finding 12. UNDP has contributed to capacity-building and institutional strengthening in environmental governance and management by supporting the Ministry of Security in the development of the National System for Integrated Disaster Risk Reduction and Civil Protection, and the National Environment and Sustainable Development Secretariat in environmental data generation with improved information systems. UNDP's work in support of sustainable development has shown only limited success in upscaling and replication.

UNDP has made progress towards the planned outputs under the environment portfolio. The results are mainly anchored in strengthening institutional capacities at different government levels (national and subnational) to better manage natural resources, as well as to implement climate-change related policies and plans. This entails supporting the national Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development and linking subnational governments through projects when they are localized in different regions. Several projects aim to support Argentina in meeting the country's international environmental commitments.

Upstream work has been especially significant under this portfolio, with UNDP playing an important role in strengthening legal and regulatory frameworks, policies, and central government institutions and enhancing environmental governance structures. Support was provided for the development of policies and governance instruments (plans, normative frameworks, manuals and systems) for environmental and natural resource planning, including those related to issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction and management. Key contributions include: i) the creation of a normative framework for compliance with the Nagoya Protocol on access to the benefits of genetic resources from

biodiversity and related capacity-building for its use; ii) implementation of the Forestry Law, by strengthening national norms on native forests and supporting the development of integrated community plans for native forests; iii) the development of the National Biodiversity Strategy 2016–2020;⁸⁵ iv) the creation of the National Climate Cabinet, as an interministerial mechanism responsible for climate change governance;⁸⁶ and v) the Interministerial Table on Chemical Substances and Products with representation from different government areas.

As a key partner with the Secretariat of Civil Protection of the Ministry of Security, UNDP provided strategic support for the establishment of the National System for Integrated Disaster Risk Management (SINAGIR) and Civil Protection,⁸⁷ in line with the Sendai Framework. Key contributions include advisory services and facilitation support for the development of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Plan 2018-2023⁸⁸ with a gender focus, a manual for the development of risk maps at the local level⁸⁹ and procuring equipment for the National Emergency Monitoring System. UNDP also played an important integrating role by promoting inter-sectorial coordination and dialogue between the Secretariat for Civil Protection and the Environment Secretariat, as well as other different line ministries (Ministry of Production and Labour and the Environment Secretariat), and between other non-state actors such as academia, NGOs and CSOs.

Positive results were achieved in strengthening knowledge and data generation capacities by improving information systems for environmental issues. UNDP helped the national Secretariat of Environment and Sustainable Development generate, collect and analyse information for the development of several State of the Environment reports, and submit its proposed forest reference

⁸⁵ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/ar/ar-nbsap-v2-es.pdf>.

⁸⁶ The Low Emission Capacity-Building programme (proj.# 64650) final report sets out the capacity-building work during 2012-2018 through the Government Committee on Climate Change (GCCC) to National Cabinet of Climate Change (GNCC) Annex II.

⁸⁷ Approved through law 27287.

⁸⁸ <http://www.ar.undp.org/content/dam/argentina/Publications/PNUDArgent-Plan%20Nacional%20de%20Reduccion%20de%20Riesgos%202018-2023.pdf>.

⁸⁹ <https://www.mininterior.gov.ar/planificacion/pdf/Manual-elaboracion-mapas-riesgo.pdf>.

level, based on assessments carried out through the UN-REDD project for Argentina. Similarly, UNDP contributed to the establishment of the Federal Environmental Monitoring Network,⁹⁰ an online platform, under the Government's open government policies, aimed at integrating different national and subnational environmental information systems. Some examples of knowledge products supported by UNDP include Argentina's Second Biannual Report on the United Nations Convention on Climate Change,⁹¹ its related National Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions in 2017,⁹² the Sixth National Report on Biodiversity,⁹³ the National Evaluation Report on national capacities for the implementation of the Minamata Convention, and the Provisional Implementation Report of the Nagoya Protocol.⁹⁴

At the local level, UNDP has supported the implementation of pilot projects that promote the sustainable use of natural resources. For instance, through the USUBI project,⁹⁵ pilot interventions for the development of markets and financial mechanisms to promote the sustainable use of non-wood products from native forests were implemented. The SGP also has a number of interventions where the sustainable use of natural resources for the development of local vulnerable communities in the northeast and northwest regions is promoted. The impact of these pilot interventions has not been fully assessed, either by the government or by UNDP.

Despite the high potential for upscaling and replication of results, limited UNDP contributions were found across the environmental portfolio. Weak linkages between projects hinders the replication or continuation of some supported initiatives when projects close. Tangible linkages between new climate change projects and those implemented in

previous cycles are limited. However there are some instances of continuity, for instance with the SINAGIR project drawing links to the risk management work in five municipalities of Entre Rios, providing the basis for adherence of the Entre Rios province to federal law 27287 and the design of the National Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The UNDP country office hosts the SGP, financed by the GEF and operated in association with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS). SGP has focused on facilitating capacity development to improve the livelihoods of communities. Actions and projects have been implemented in the northeast and northwest regions where greater territorial disparities and social vulnerabilities are evident, as indicated by developmental indicators, and which face challenges related to natural resources management, environment, and climate change impacts. Although ostensibly the SGP is expected to promote the construction of public policies that integrate the successful models supported and tested by the programme for their replication at national and intersectoral levels, there is little upscaling and uptake of the results at the policy level(s). These local initiatives, also, are not linked to other projects within the outcome that deal with the very same issues and approach, such as the USUBI project that also supports local productive initiatives.⁹⁶

2.5 Overall programme management and cross-cutting issues

Finding 13. UNDP is recognized by the government for its administrative agility, competitive service cost and contributions to ensuring transparency and credibility in the administration of government funds. Its long-standing country presence

⁹⁰ <https://redfema.ambiente.gob.ar/>.

⁹¹ http://euroclimaplus.org/intranet/documentos/repositorio/02%20Bial%20Convenci%C3%B3n%20ONU%20cambio%20clim%C3%A1tico_2017.pdf.

⁹² <https://inventariogei.ambiente.gob.ar/>.

⁹³ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/nr/nr-06/ar-nr-06-es.pdf>.

⁹⁴ <https://absch.cbd.int/countries/AR/NR>.

⁹⁵ Project: Incorporación Del Uso Sostenible De La Biodiversidad En Las Prácticas De Producción De Pequeños Productores Para Proteger La Biodiversidad En Los Bosques De Alto Valor De Conservación En Las Ecorregiones Bosque Atlántico, Yungas Y Chaco.

⁹⁶ During Operational Phase 6 (OP 6), the SGP received from the Global Manager of the GEF Grant Allocation Letters for Argentina for a total \$2,320,000 of which \$800,000 was from CORE sources and \$1,520,000 from STAR sources.

and partnership with different government entities has positioned UNDP in the government support framework, offering continuity in a context of periodic institutional instability. Despite its relationship of trust with the Government, UNDP has missed some opportunities to provide technical and strategic contributions to institutional strengthening of the public administration. UNDP's global network has been insufficiently leveraged to contribute with more state-of-the-art innovations.

UNDP provides an operational framework that facilitates rapid and transparent procurement and recruitment processes (compared with national procedures) for the implementation of national inter-sectoral programmes, at a competitive service cost. As public procurement is a typical high-risk area for corruption,⁹⁷ UNDP's administrative support and reputational seal are highly valued⁹⁸ and in demand by the Government as it "ensures transparency, credibility and efficiency in the process", while providing flexible and reliable means to overcome administrative constraints faced within government ministries.

UNDP is recognized for its convening power, its ability to foster dialogue among different sectors and actors, and its capacity to operate at the national and subnational level. UNDP, for instance, provides the Ministry of Social Development with an operational mechanism to transfer funds to community-based organizations at local level, enabling the implementation of social protection programmes, something that would be more cumbersome with government procedures. There have been occasions on which UNDP has successfully leveraged its partnerships with national and subnational governments to promote sectoral coordination amongst ministries, although this work has not been done systematically. Such is the case of the synergies fostered by UNDP between the Secretariat of Environment and the Ministry of Production and

Labour for the implementation of local initiatives linking environment priorities with the promotion of economic growth, and with the Ministry of Security for natural disaster early-warning systems, as part of disaster-management services .

Support for the design, implementation and monitoring of UNDP-related projects was also recognized as a key UNDP contribution. Several interviewed stakeholders highlighted its importance in helping them: to organize their programmes and reflect on the main goals to be achieved (using instruments such as theories of change, problem trees and log frames); to identify any bottlenecks and weaknesses in project implementation through regular spot-checks; to incorporate a gender perspective at project design phase; and to ensure the consideration of lessons learned from past projects in new initiatives.

UNDP has played a de facto role as an institutional memory for government agencies affected by high staff turnover and restructuring.⁹⁹ Its long-standing presence in the country and support for a wide cross section of government partners has created durable working relationships in many thematic areas. UNDP's collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure new project administration and coordination units are up-to-date, for instance, has been crucial in ensuring continuity in a context of institutional instability. In a few cases, however, there has been concern that UNDP has taken too much credit for project results, both in NIM projects and donor-funded initiatives (GEF), which national counterparts see as deterring the creation of strong partnerships and the development of national ownership.

⁹⁷ *OECD Economic Surveys, Argentina, Overview, March 2019*: <http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Argentina-2019-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>.

⁹⁸ Based on interviews and UNDP Partnership Survey 2017.

⁹⁹ In 2017, following Decree No. 945/17 of the Law No. 24.156, the management and implementation of externally funded bilateral and multilateral programmes was centralized into one Management/ Coordination Unit under each public administration entity (implementing partner for UNDP). This resulted in significant delays in the implementation of UNDP programmes.

Finding 14. UNDP's programme in Argentina has been relevant and responsive to national priorities and demands. Programme coherence and integration are challenged by the lack of an overarching strategic and policy-driven approach to addressing long-term development issues.

UNDP's programme in Argentina is closely aligned with national priorities and government demands, contributing to three of the eight national priorities, namely: national productive agreement, sustainable human development, state modernization, and to a lesser extent, contributing to strategic insertion in the world.¹⁰⁰ UNDP has implemented a demand-driven programme, characterized by responsiveness and adaptability, government institutional settings and funding opportunities. Programme coherence and integration have been hampered by several factors. The programme strategy, which is centered around institutional strengthening for an inclusive and balanced growth model,¹⁰¹ lacks an explicit theory of change that clearly outlines the key changes at different levels to which UNDP is expected to contribute, beyond administrative services, and the risks, assumptions and necessary conditions required to reach those outcomes. An effort was made in 2016 to develop a narrative for theories of change at outcome level, but this exercise was not completed. Not having explicit well-mapped theories of change with a systems thinking approach¹⁰² has affected programme synergies and UNDP's ability to address development issues in an integrated and holistic manner. This also constrains its ability to become a more supply/theory of change-based strategic partner offering innovative solutions, rather than a demand driven partner.

The country programme in Argentina is implemented through thematic cluster teams, mirroring the sectoral approach of government partners. While logical, this "silo" arrangement can limit opportunities for a more holistic approach to UNDP

programmatic support. Country office efforts to break silos and improve programmatic synergies have marginally improved integration. In 2018, a restructuring of the cluster teams took place to foster greater complementarity between thematic projects. As part of this restructuring, productive initiatives supporting SMEs were moved to the Environment Cluster to integrate them more closely with environmental protection initiatives.

Finding 15. UNDP has successfully leveraged partnerships for financing and programme implementation with a wide array of government entities at national and subnational level, as well as with the private sector. Partnerships with provinces in the northern region with the highest poverty levels, however, have been modest, because of limited financial resources, as well as a lack of specific, long-term interventions aimed at comprehensive development support across the regions. Collaborations with UN agencies and international financial institutions were not systematically pursued, limiting complementarity and synergies.

UNDP has maintained long-standing partnerships with Government partners. At central level, key partners include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development for the social protection programmes, the Ministry of Production and Labour for productive and employment projects, the Ministry of Environment for the environmental portfolio, and the CNCPS for SDG implementation. At subnational level, strong partnerships were sustained with those provinces with greater political/institutional resources, namely the Province of Buenos Aires on social protection and health, the Provinces of Cordoba and Buenos Aires on modernization and the Province of San Juan on economic development. There was also collaboration with the

¹⁰⁰ Government of Argentina, 2015: Government Objectives.

¹⁰¹ Country Programme Action Plan, page 5, paragraph 4.1.

¹⁰² Systems thinking is an approach to complex problem solving that views "problems" as part of a wider, dynamic system, and demands a deeper understanding of the linkages, relationships, interactions and behaviours among the elements that characterize the entire system. Source: World Health Organization 2009, *Systems Thinking for Health Systems Strengthening*: <https://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/resources/9789241563895/en/>.

Provinces of Neuquén, Santiago del Estero and Tierra del Fuego for the implementation of socioeconomic, health and governance projects, respectively.

The 2009 ADR recognized UNDP's positive shift towards "deepening a territorial presence particularly in those provinces and municipalities with the lowest HDIs and greater disparities", which are in the northern region. Several of the provinces in the northern region have the highest poverty levels¹⁰³ and face significant disparities. The evaluation found that UNDP's collaboration with those provinces has been modest during this evaluation period, with a few, mostly small-scale, interventions. A long-term project was implemented with the Province of Santiago del Estero (funded through government cost-sharing), and pilot initiatives with the Provinces of Salta and Entre Ríos (with UNDP resources). Some UNDP-supported projects with national governments have led to ad hoc provincial initiatives in the northern region. However, these are not specific long-term interventions aimed at providing comprehensive development support.

Several factors deter UNDP's further engagement in the northern region. In particular, financial constraints faced by the federal government and northern provincial governments are prime factors. Also, there are challenges to extending institutional progress due to variable commitment levels across the provinces.¹⁰⁴ A more inclusive and proactive approach to partnerships has yet to be developed, and long-term alliances with subnational governments in the region are not in place. UNDP has taken an important step in drawing the attention of policy-makers and the public, in general, to the challenges faced by these provinces through the publication of the Sustainable Development Provincial Index.¹⁰⁵ Strengthening of programmatic focus and support in the region is pending, as are results from

the CPD-indicated expectation of fostering greater collaboration between provinces for the implementation of innovative solutions and lessons learned.¹⁰⁶

During the past decade, strategic partnerships were fostered with the private sector for the SDG implementation process. Since 2009, UNDP has been supporting the Global Compact as a key partner, and more recently it has provided technical assistance for the adoption of the SDGs by its members. In the framework of this work, UNDP has advocated for the integration of human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability issues into private sector agendas. UNDP is generally perceived by private sector partners as a valued and trusted facilitator for public-private partnerships, (i.e. with the CNCPS). There has also been a high level of engagement with small producers from the private sector, under the environment portfolio. Engagement with many private sector actors, especially within the traditional industry sectors (large companies, associations of key productive sectors, etc.), is still incipient.

Cooperation with other United Nations agencies and international financial institutions varies across sectors and could be further strengthened to facilitate better coordination and complementarity. UNDP has engaged with the IADB in the framework of the Energy Scenarios Platform and with the World Bank as the implementing agency for several of its government loans, including the Forest and Communities Project with the Ministry of Environment. Delays and management issues were faced in this specific project.

With respect to the United Nations agencies' joint efforts, the previous section of the report, on gender, highlights successful examples of inter-agency collaboration. There are other good examples of well-coordinated joint implementation between agencies, for instance the Partnership for Action on Green Economy with ILO, and the work on gender,

¹⁰³ INDEC, 2018: Poverty incidence in 31 urban conglomerates: https://www.indec.gob.ar/uploads/informesdeprensa/eph_pobreza_02_18.pdf.

¹⁰⁴ OECD, 2019: Economic Survey Overview *OECD Economic Surveys, Argentina*, Overview, March 2019: <http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/Argentina-2019-OECD-economic-survey-overview.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ UNDP, Human Development Report, pg. 48, 2017: Information for sustainable development: Argentina and the 2030 Agenda.

¹⁰⁶ UNDP, Country Programme Document 2016-2020, pg. 4, par. 10.

human rights and AIDS with UNFPA. Collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNDP and UNEP under the UN-REDD programme was carried out as expected for this global joint initiative, with lead agency management of the county programme alternating each year, plus online monthly meetings and annual steering committee meetings. Yet there have been missed opportunities in terms of collaboration with other agencies working in similar thematic areas, for example:

- UNICEF on poverty: exploring synergies between UNDP's work on multidimensional poverty and recent economic studies with UNICEF's work on childhood poverty and the economic state of childhood and youth; and
- ILO on employment: integrating UNDP's support on entrepreneurship, SMEs and employment offices with ILO's work on technical education for employability.

Finding 16. The country office has effectively implemented a risk-based management approach for its projects, conducting regular spot checks on them, which are highly valued by government partners. Knowledge management for programmatic decision-making and improvement is not well developed; and there is insufficient evidence of an evaluation culture, reflected in the small number of evaluations, and the limited progress and follow-up in the implementation of the 2009 ADR recommendations.

Following an audit of the country programme in 2017, the country office fully adopted the mandatory Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT) and strengthened its risk management instruments.¹⁰⁷ As part of this approach, ex ante risk assessments and regular spot checks of projects are carried out, based on the assigned risk rating by the country office, to

ensure readiness and compliance with implementation norms and standards. Government partners valued these exercises highly as they provide a report on implementation status and help them identify strengths, weaknesses and any bottlenecks for implementation. The project spot checks serve as a compliance instrument rather than a tool for learning and results monitoring.

Insufficient attention has been given to the use of evaluations and results-based data, including knowledge management, to inform programmatic decision-making. In the current cycle, only six evaluations were completed;¹⁰⁸ four were mandatory GEF project evaluations, and two outcome evaluations.¹⁰⁹ The quality of the final project evaluations was rated by the IEO as being low.¹¹⁰ Despite being on track with the implementation of the office's evaluation plan, the small number of project evaluations (four), compared to the total number of projects implemented (107) during the cycle reflects a weak evaluation culture. This is also manifest in the quality of progress reports submitted by some implementing partners,¹¹¹ which were found to have insufficient or poor data on results, to be lacking attention to contributing/hindering factors to results and not to be identifying and elaborating on corrective strategies.

A poor evaluation culture is reflected in the limited progress made by the country office in the implementation of the 2009 ADR recommendations (Annex 8) and the weak follow-up to the implementation of such recommendations by HQ (Bureau for Policy and Programme Support) and the Regional Bureau.¹¹² Positive advances were seen in three of the seven recommendations, namely: supporting dialogue and deliberative mechanisms among different levels of government and society; developing and fostering intersectoral initiatives; and ensuring UNDP's capacity to respond to emerging issues by

¹⁰⁷ Recommendation 4 of the Audit of UNDP Country Office in Argentina, Report No.1756, August 2017 recommended that UNDP fully adopt the HACT in 2017 by completing the pending activities, such as micro-assessments and spot checks.

¹⁰⁸ The evaluation process of its largest project, related to Food Policy Management, started in 2020 and it was not considered.

¹⁰⁹ Covering 82 percent of programme expenditures.

¹¹⁰ The final GEF evaluations received a rating of "Moderately unsatisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory", pointing out weaknesses in terms of quality.

¹¹¹ Projects include 68663, 71769, 68910, 98805, 101622, 68863, 96954, 97278.

¹¹² In the Evaluation Resource Center (ERC) system, all ADR 2009 recommendations are of "Overdue-Initiated" status.

adopting a more flexible approach to programming. Conversely, limited or no progress was made in four recommendations: supporting institutional capacity development with a long-term perspective of recovering UNDP's strategic role; boosting UNDP's policy advice and technical cooperation role, particularly in the social protection, inclusive sustainable development and democratic governance areas; improving the sustainability of results by properly considering exit strategies; and promoting the documentation of lessons learned from good practices and the use of SSC modalities. In this sense, the current oversight and follow-up mechanisms have been insufficient to ensure that evaluation recommendations are taken seriously, responded to, and acted on.

The country office has reportedly faced challenges in persuading some national implementing partners to conduct evaluations of UNDP-supported projects, as there seems to be little desire to allocate resources for this purpose. Interviews during the evaluation suggest there is growing interest by some ministries, which have explicitly expressed interest in receiving UNDP's support in evaluating the intermediate and long-term results of its programmes. The country office could benefit from looking at UNDP Panama's experience in effectively advocating for an assigned evaluation budget at the design stage of government-funded projects, by incorporating this requirement into its 2016 Guideline for Project Design and Approval.

In terms of operations, given the prevalence of NIM projects, the country office has invested substantial time in adapting UNDP's NIM guidance to the Argentina context and developing the capacities of national implementing units for its use. Due to high institutional instability and frequent changes of government personnel, there is a continual need for capacity development in implementing units. Interviewed partners also expressed an interest in UNDP modernizing its own procedures, for instance, by accepting the government's electronic signature system for the approval of disbursements. Some government partners also asked for UNDP to adopt more flexible procurement processes, easing the

compliance requirements somewhat, so that more local services providers can comply and do business with UNDP.

Finding 17. The country office has made a long-standing commitment to gender equality. It has reinforced gender mainstreaming in its supported projects through advocacy and capacity development initiatives with government partners. Achievements in gender mainstreaming across the programmes has varied, with greater results in the areas of inclusive development and democratic governance and less so in environment. The use of indicators for intermediate and long-term gender equality and women's empowerment results has been inconsistent.

The UNDP Argentina office has maintained its Gold seal certification since 2012, reflecting its commitment to gender equality. A key success factor has been the dedicated gender unit, which reports directly to the Deputy Resident Representative and is composed of a full-time Gender Analyst and a Gender Associate. This unit leads the implementation of the country office gender workplans and provides technical support for gender mainstreaming across the programmatic areas. Seventy-five per cent of the total UNDP staff are women and they represent two-thirds of all the National Officers of the country office.

For the current programme cycle, the unit has developed three Annual Gender Work Plans, funded through extrabudgetary resources. Around \$30,000-\$50,000 is spent each year for the implementation of such plans. The country office's gender strategy has focused on three levels of intervention, namely:

- a) External: Mainstreaming gender equality across the CPD outcomes;
- b) Internal: Improving institutional effectiveness for mainstreaming a gender perspective in planning and M&E processes, and promoting gender equality within the organization;
- c) Inter-agency: Promoting and strengthening coordination on gender equality.

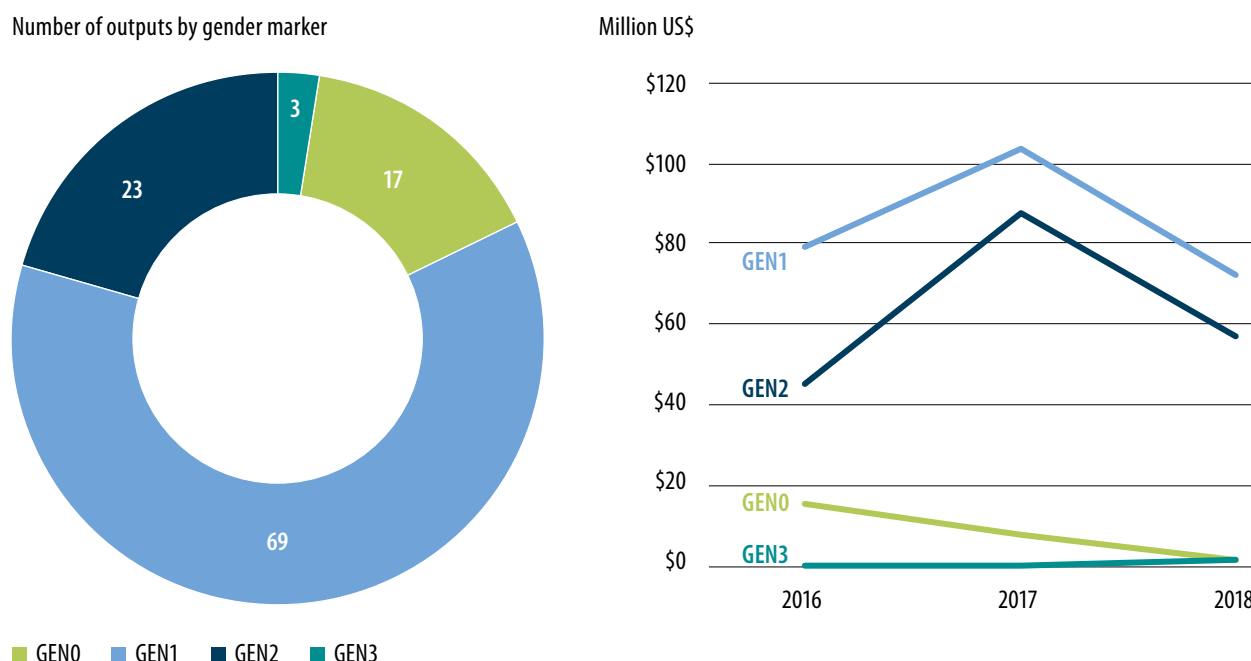
Overall, the country office has been successful in mainstreaming gender equality in project design and implementation, despite this not being reflected by the gender marker. An analysis of the gender marker indicates that a significant portion of programme expenditures (60 percent) does not contribute to gender equality (GEN0) or contributes to gender equality in a limited way (GEN1). The remaining 40 percent is for project outputs that contribute significantly to gender equality outcomes (GEN2). Programme expenditure by gender marker shows a similar progression for GEN1 and GEN2 over time and an opposite one for markers GEN0 (declining) and GEN3 (slight increase). Expenditure on GEN3 project outputs was only recorded in 2018.

Based on the Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES), results achieved by the programme under the **Social Protection and Inclusive Sustainable Development** portfolios are gender-targeted and responsive. Partners recognized UNDP's gender

capacity and proactiveness in promoting and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the supported national programmes and policies. Such is the case in the community approach of the food policy,¹¹³ the approach to early childhood and co-responsibility of care under the Early Childhood National Programme,¹¹⁴ in participatory projects to raise awareness on issues related to women's rights in Sexual and Reproductive Health, and in the National Entrepreneurship Plan and employment initiatives.

Gender mainstreaming in the Food Policy Programme is of great importance given the high number of women that visit and manage the community kitchens. According to interviewed stakeholders, approximately 80 percent of the community kitchens are managed by women, although the persons who signed the management agreements to run the kitchens are mostly men. UNDP supported capacity development initiatives for

FIGURE 12. Number of projects and expenditure by gender marker and year



Source: UNDP Atlas, 2018

¹¹³ Project: Abordaje Comunitario del Plan Nacional de Seguridad Alimentaria (ID# 66602).

¹¹⁴ Project: Primeros Años. Acompañando la crianza. Apoyo al Plan Nacional de Primera Infancia (ID# 97461).

government staff on gender issues, including on women's economic empowerment opportunities and their role in care policies; it also promoted the integration of care policies in the daily work of these community organizations to ensure women's differential needs were addressed.

A key challenge for the employment initiatives has been to break gender stereotypes in favour of placing women in non-traditional productive activities and scientific, technological and innovation development projects. Through its collaboration with the Entrepreneurship Secretariat and the Centre for the Economic Development of Women (CEDEM), UNDP supported several capacity-building initiatives on entrepreneurship with a gender perspective in 2017 and 2018,¹¹⁵ to raise awareness of structural gender issues and promote women's autonomy through their active engagement in productive initiatives. Furthermore, in the Province of Salta, economic empowerment actions were linked with awareness-raising activities to prevent and eradicate gender violence at the local level.

Partnerships were also fostered with several actors to raise awareness and promote gender equality and women's empowerment actions. Jointly with the Global Compact in Argentina and the private sector (including 30 corporations), UNDP collaborated in the working group Companies for Equality, organizing meetings and workshops aimed at raising awareness on the importance of gender inequalities in the labour market, and promoting gender equality from a social responsibility perspective. Additionally, UNDP supported capacity-building initiatives on gender issues with the companies and promoted strategies for the implementation of Women's Empowerment Principles¹¹⁶ in the areas of human resources management, companies' marketing strategies and work with the value chain and the community, sustainable development, and guidelines to include critical roadmaps inside companies.

The **Human Rights and Citizen Participation** portfolio stands out for its gender-responsive contributions, with the potential of becoming transformative. Programme interventions have been well-oriented to reducing gender-based violence and improving access to justice for women. Results were found in terms of developing gender-sensitive capacities at government level through trainings and improving access to services for women by establishing care centres for victims of gender-based violence. These initiatives could lead to transformative results if they go beyond providing attention to victims and focus on addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and on promoting behavioural change. The Spotlight Initiative, which began in 2018 with the aim of reducing violence against women and girls and most importantly, its extreme manifestation—femicide, will continue to support this workstream. UNDP was central in bringing together actors working on gender issues (government, civil society, private sector) and ensuring their participation and commitment to the initiative. After a broad participatory exchange and consultation process, two main lines of work were proposed: i) transform cultural patterns, attitudes and behaviours favourable to gender equality; and ii) promote the availability, quality and accessibility of services for prevention, care and repair.

Important contributions were also made to the promotion of women's political participation through the joint programme, ATENEA, implemented between 2015-2018 by UNDP, UN Women and the NGO Idea International. Key outputs include an assessment of the Argentina situation with respect to women's political participation, the development of a gender parity index for the country and of the Gender Parity Law for electoral processes at national level and in some provinces.

¹¹⁵ Project: Programa de Fortalecimiento al Desarrollo de Condiciones Sistémicas Sociales y Culturales para el Emprendedurismo.

¹¹⁶ The seven agreed principles can be found in the publication: En la búsqueda de la equidad: buenas prácticas empresariales de empoderamiento de las mujeres, pg. 6: http://www.ar.undp.org/content/dam/argentina/Publications/Pacto%20Global/PNUDArgentina-Casosempresariales_equidadGenero_2017.pdf.

Building from the partnership with the Province of Cordoba and the ATENEA experience, UNDP engaged with the *Lideresas* initiative of the Province of Cordoba to promote gender parity in decision-making positions in the province, municipalities, justice sector and private sector. Although this was still an incipient initiative at the time of the evaluation, it is viewed as a strategic partnership, considering that Cordoba is one of the few provinces with a Gender Parity Law for its electoral processes and that the initiative benefits from a strong political champion and commitment. Greater political and citizen engagement across the province is not in place yet to achieve tangible results in terms of greater political participation of women. But if it proves successful, this unique initiative offers the possibility of replication in other regions in the country—an opportunity yet to be seized by UNDP.

Most of the results achieved by the programme under **Sustainable Environmental Management** are categorized as contributing to gender equality in a limited way (GEN1), with a few projects listed as GEN2, (contributing significantly to gender equality outcomes). This is the only outcome with none of its project outputs marked as GEN3 and almost no expenditures in the GEN2 category (\$0.6 million accounting for just 3 percent of the outcome expenditure). Although none of the projects were designed to have a major impact in terms of gender per se, gender issues have been incorporated in several projects, in particular the biodiversity-related initiatives. Gender training was included in the UNDP-GEF biodiversity project, USUBI, there have been gender training workshops in the UN-REDD

project, and gender training was provided to the staff of the National Environment Secretary. It is also clear that gender issues are better reflected in projects with directives to mainstream gender in donor guidelines, such as GEF.

The importance of gender awareness and gender perspective has been remarked in different trainings related to Disaster Risk Management and was incorporated into the National Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018–2023.¹¹⁷ In practice, however, it is clear that although a gender approach has been integrated in projects and plans, there is a lack of evidence pointing to its effective application in the implementation of the National Plan. This and other examples are indicative of weak uptake and/or resistance to incorporating gender by implementing partners.

Despite UNDP's increased efforts to ensure gender mainstreaming in its supported environmental initiatives, results are not always evident. In some cases, stakeholders reported that gender mainstreaming is still "a pending issue" and that the main obstacle for the achievement of results is a "certain cultural resistance." At times, gender equality was not well understood, or gender differentials were denied, leading often to the lack of a differentiated approach in the environmental projects. There is an opportunity to incorporate a differential gender approach to access to and use of environmental resources by both men and women, beginning from planning and decision-making and reaching the local and community level actions as well as the upstream policy levels.

¹¹⁷ See: <http://www.orsep.gob.ar/bank/data/afiches/PNRRD2018-2023.pdf>.



CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

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

This chapter presents the main conclusions about UNDP's performance and contributions to development results in the country and corresponding recommendations from the evaluation team.

3.1 Conclusions

- **Conclusion 1. UNDP is a preferred partner for the government of Argentina and is well-positioned to support the efficient and transparent implementation of national programmes. Its programme portfolio is especially focused towards operational support, in response to the wishes of the Government of Argentina, which provides 98 percent of the UNDP budget for work in the country. The preponderance of operational services overshadows an array of important policy and institutional advisory services that UNDP also provides.**¹¹⁸

UNDP's cooperation has allowed a more efficient, transparent and effective implementation of national programmes in the social protection, sustainable development and citizenship/human rights areas. Its operational contributions, via NIM projects, to the modernization of state services, for instance, have led to important improvements and efficiency gains for the government and public in general. However, its substantive and strategic expertise in areas such as social protection and sustainable development is underappreciated. UNDP is perceived more as an efficient administrator of government funds and provider of operational solutions than as a strategic development partner. This constrains its ability to leverage its global best practice knowledge and experience in support of the Government as it strives to overcome economic and social challenges.

- **Conclusion 2. UNDP's institutional strengthening efforts have led to positive results with respect to project execution, yet they lack the strategic positioning to foster broader institutional reforms.**¹¹⁹

As noted in the 2009 ADR, and through this study, much of UNDP's capacity-development work focused on strengthening government implementation capacities for UNDP projects. Trainings on operational and administrative procedures for project implementing units, and UNDP's support in project design and management, including for gender mainstreaming, were highlighted by national counterparts as key capacity-development contributions. UNDP has not yet been able to establish a strategic position allowing for the transfer of knowledge and institutional capacity-building in support of long-term institutional transformation.

- **Conclusion 3. UNDP's policy and management advisory support has been most prominent in its SDG work and through its sustainable development/environment portfolio. Implementation of SDGs and environmental strategies at subnational level remains a challenge.**¹²⁰

UNDP has been a pivotal partner for the Government in the SDG implementation process, contributing to the effective prioritization and adaptation of the SDGs at national and provincial level and fostering public-private partnerships for their implementation. In the environmental sector, UNDP contributed to enhanced regulatory frameworks and mechanisms for good environmental governance, including initial strengthening of the Government's environmental knowledge database to monitor and comply with international agreements, the development of important environmental strategies and plans, yet to be implemented at subnational level, and the establishment of the National System for Integrated

¹¹⁸ See Findings 4-8, 12 and 13.

¹¹⁹ See Findings 6 and 13.

¹²⁰ See Findings 3 and 12.

Disaster Risk Reduction and Civil Protection. In both areas, the adoption and implementation at subnational level has been uneven.

- **Conclusion 4. The territorial presence and engagement of UNDP in the northern region of Argentina and with the provinces that have the lowest human development indexes has been insufficient to address their most pressing development challenges.**¹²¹

Work with the northern provinces has been ad hoc, without any long-term strategy. Financial constraints, both within UNDP and at subnational level and variable interest and commitment by provinces have hindered UNDP's capacity to operate in this region. Long-standing interventions with these provinces, aimed at enhancing institutional capacities and reducing territorial disparities and poverty levels, have had a minimal effect on poverty reduction.

- **Conclusion 5. UNDP's RBM practices lack explicit and holistic theories of change with adequate systems thinking and appropriate knowledge transfer strategies. Coupled with a very limited use of evaluations, these shortcomings are hampering UNDP's development effectiveness, including the sustainability of results.**¹²²

Synergies and complementarities across programme areas have been hampered by the lack of explicit and holistic strategies that clearly map the interconnectedness between programme components. Programme learning for improvement, evidence-based decision-making, and the upscaling or sharing of successful initiatives have been limited by weak knowledge management

and an insufficiently strong evaluation culture at the country office. Of the 107 projects implemented during the evaluation period, only four were evaluated, all under the GEF. This is a missed opportunity, as the vast knowledge and experience produced by UNDP-supported projects are not being systematically documented, assessed and used to enhance contributions to results.

- **Conclusion 6. UNDP is recognized for its technical expertise and strong advocacy role for gender mainstreaming across its programme. Contributions have been made in promoting women's political participation, their economic empowerment and the reduction of gender-based violence. The integration of a gender perspective and rights-based approach across all sectors remains a challenge.**¹²³

Overall, UNDP's programme has made important contributions to gender mainstreaming and gender responsive results, particularly in the areas of governance, access to justice, political participation and social protection. Gender-related achievements under the environmental portfolio, however, are less evident. Despite the effective gender mainstreaming in UNDP's upstream environmental work, the uptake of a gender perspective in the implementation of the supported national strategies and plans remains weak. Furthermore, a rights-based approach has not been fully integrated into the environmental portfolio to address inequalities and vulnerabilities of the population in relation to the environment/poverty nexus, and to promote social and economic inclusion.

¹²¹ See Finding 15.

¹²² See Findings 5, 6, 14 and 16.

¹²³ See Finding 11 and 17.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

Based on the findings and conclusions set out in the previous chapters, the evaluation team has set forth four recommendations for consideration by UNDP and the Government of Argentina, as the next UNDP country programme is developed.

Recommendation 1.



UNDP should make a concerted effort to expand its strategic technical contributions in Argentina, aimed at addressing structural institutional weaknesses and development challenges. UNDP should define key areas in which it can provide substantive value added to the national government and maximize the use of its global network and expertise to foster innovative solutions to advance the SDGs.¹²⁴

While continuing to provide valued operational and procurement services, UNDP should work to further expand its strategic development services to the national government, building from existing work and successful experiences elsewhere. This may include broadening support to the Government on SSC, helping set national priorities for actions on the SDGs, providing practical solutions on social service/social protection reform and helping expand entrepreneurship and business creation to stimulate the economy. UNDP has the knowledge and experience to be a preferred provider of such strategic development advice to the Government of Argentina.

Management response:



The country office considers that many of the technical contributions made are of a strategic nature for the country, including both inputs to the design and implementation of strategic programmes and projects at the national and subnational levels. To the extent that there is national demand to deepen assistance in key areas, the office will continue to contribute and also act as a platform that brings together local and global resources and efforts to support the Government with a comprehensive approach, including economic, social and environmental dimensions, as well as innovation for the acceleration of the SDGs. In this regard, UNDP has provided technical leadership for the development of the COVID-19 Post-Pandemic Recovery Framework and will play a key role in its implementation.

¹²⁴ Linked to Conclusions 1 and 2.

Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 In the framework of the new CPD formulation, analyse potential Government demands in new key areas that may require UNDP contribution.	31-12-2020	Programme areas and M&E		
1.2 Define a strategy—including Policy Unit, accelerator lab, global experiences, resource mobilization and establishment of alliances—to contribute to the identified areas.	31-12-2021	Programme areas, accelerator lab, Policy unit and M&E		
1.3 Define proposals to contribute to socioeconomic reconstruction in the context of COVID-19.	31-12-2021	Programme areas		

Recommendation 2.



UNDP should explore opportunities for strategically expanding collaborative partnerships and programming at the provincial level, especially in the northern region, with the aim of helping subnational governments reduce poverty and inequality, improve municipal services and adapt to a changing climate.¹²⁵

In its next programme cycle, UNDP should strive to deepen its engagement in the northern provinces (i.e. Santiago del Estero, Chaco, Formosa, Salta, Corrientes and Jujuy, among others), in response to the development challenges these provinces face, even as it seeks to support government efforts to address the needs of the majority of the population below the poverty line concentrated in large urban areas such as in Buenos Aires and Cordoba. A more strategic, long-term approach coupled with a revised resource mobilization/partnership strategy, can help to broaden UNDP's substantive engagement at the subnational level, including innovative and integrated provincial and municipal services that improve financial management, spur entrepreneurship and job creation and anticipate changing climate conditions.

¹²⁵ Linked to Conclusions 3 and 4.

Management response:



The office has been supporting various initiatives in the northern region of the country, both directly and together with the subnational governments:

1. Fortalecimiento del Modelo de Gestión de Salud en la provincia de Santiago del Estero (#90371);
2. Programa de Robótica y Tecnología para Educar en la provincia de Salta (#121246);
3. Microempresas para mujeres jefas de hogar en la provincia de Salta (#112468);
4. Implementación de Sistemas de Control para la Producción Orgánica de Quinoa en Jujuy (#70262);
5. Aprovechamiento, transformación y comercialización de pieles con curtido ecológico en Yala, Jujuy (#113198);
6. Fortalecimiento de la Gestión Municipal y Generación de Proyectos de Infraestructura en la provincia de Corrientes (#61281);
7. Iniciativa Spotlight para eliminación del femicidio en las provincias de Salta y Jujuy (#117570).

Moreover, the country office indirectly supports through projects executed with the national government that have components implemented in the provinces:

1. Plan Nacional para la Prevención y Reducción del Embarazo No Intencional en la Adolescencia (#107433);
2. Plan Nacional de Primera Infancia (#97461);
3. Gestión de la Política Alimentaria (#66602);
4. Diseño de Redes de Banda Ancha (#97344);
5. Acceso a Justicia (#99891);
6. Sistemas Productivos Locales (#66509);
7. Programa de Emprendedorismo (#96925);
8. Uso sostenible de la Biodiversidad (#85129);
9. Manejo Sustentable de Tierras en las Zonas Secas del Noroeste (#80382);
10. Manejo Forestal Sostenible en el Gran Chaco Americano (#59495);
11. Implementación de la Ley de Bosques (#69288);
12. Bosques Nativos y Comunidad (#90603).

The office will continue to prioritize the northern region through the development of partnerships and resources mobilization, as in the current cycle.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Include the development of initiatives in the northern region as a priority of the 2021–25 programme cycle.	31-12-2021	Programme areas		

Recommendation 3.



UNDP should strive to refine its RBM approach in Argentina, placing greater emphasis on programmatic integration and synergies, the adoption of knowledge transfer strategies and the use of evaluations for learning, including the implementation of recommendations, to inform programmatic decision-making and improvement.¹²⁶

Fostering greater integration between projects within the UNDP Argentina programme and promoting synergies across clusters, can enhance UNDP's contributions from a multidimensional perspective. A dynamic systems approach would identify linkages and complementarities between different interventions. Establishing cross-sectoral teams within the office can dismantle programmatic silos and enable greater complementarity between interventions.

To promote learning and adaptive management, greater efforts should be placed on promoting an evaluation culture, including the implementation of evaluation recommendations and use of evaluative evidence and lessons, both within the office and with national partners, to improve results and evidence-based decision-making. Efforts should be made to convince government partners that evaluations of UNDP-managed projects are beneficial and funds need to be allocated for this purpose.¹²⁷ UNDP should strengthen its internal capacities in planning and evaluation, increasing its technical expertise and providing instruments and tools to measure effective capacity development and long-term results across thematic areas. Particular attention should be paid to assessing the effectiveness of pilot projects such as the collaborative cohabitation initiative with the National Prison Attorney's Office, as well as entrepreneurship and employment initiatives at local level.

Management response:



The country office has implemented the Evaluation Plan of the 2016-20 CPD in accordance with the Evaluation Guidelines in place until 2019. In line with this, two mid-term evaluations (Results 1 and 2) were carried out as planned and the specific project evaluations required by the donors. Since the new Evaluation Guidelines were approved and implemented in 2019, the office informed the Government Coordinating Agency and main counterparts of its compliance in all new projects.

When it comes to the RBM approach, during 2019 the office carried out a Training Plan on the subject for UNDP staff, the Government Coordinating Agency and our main counterparts, in order to strengthen their capacities on the RBM approach. Regarding synergies, the UNDP office makes efforts to guarantee the multidimensional perspective in all projects and initiatives, through formal instances of exchange and collaboration between the thematic areas during project formulation and implementation stages.

¹²⁶ Linked to Conclusion 5.

¹²⁷ The UNDP programme in Panama may be a useful example in this regard.

Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Define and implement the Evaluation Plan of the CPD 2021–25 according to the new Evaluation Guidelines, including the evaluation of strategic projects, and guaranteeing the effective implementation of the evaluation recommendations through project board meetings.	31-12-2021	Programme areas and M&E		
3.2 Continue to carry out training on RBM with counterparts and follow up on the use of evidence provided by monitoring instruments in decision-making.	31-12-2021	Programme areas and M&E		
3.3 Incorporate the multidimensional perspective in the formulation of the new CPD to enhance synergy and collaboration between UNDP programme areas and identify new opportunities for inter-cluster collaboration through workshops imparted by the accelerator lab.	31-12-2021	Programme areas, accelerator lab and M&E		

Recommendation 4.



With a view to enhancing its contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment, UNDP should strengthen its gender mainstreaming and advocacy work across all programme areas. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring the adequate integration of a gender dimension and rights-based approach in the implementation of all policies and strategies at the subnational level, including local pilot initiatives.¹²⁸

Building on its recognition in gender mainstreaming, UNDP should strengthen its technical advisory role and support towards achieving long-term gender results, with the aim of moving towards more gender-transformative results. At the same time, UNDP should sustain its strategic partnerships with the Government, private sector and civil society actors across all programmatic areas to enhance gender capacities at the institutional level, as a building block for long-term gender results. Especially with the private sector, it should expand its collaboration and advocacy role with a focus on reducing the existing gender gap in women's occupation of decision-making positions.

¹²⁸ Linked to conclusion 6.



Management response:



The office has placed this issue as a top priority during the implementation of the CPD and has a Gender Unit comprising a specialist and an associate dedicated exclusively to mainstreaming the gender equality approach in all projects, initiatives and activities carried out by the office, those implemented by counterparts and those directly executed by UNDP. Programme officers have also been trained to incorporate the gender perspective from the early stages, at the project formulation phase. Recommendations for incorporating the gender perspective are actively formulated, as are specific training and technical assistance activities.

In this regard, the office will continue to carry out activities to promote the sustainability of actions to promote gender equality in all programme initiatives at the national and subnational levels, ensuring that our partners implement all agreed recommendations.

Key action(s)	Completion date	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Continue making recommendations and providing technical assistance to mainstream the gender equality approach in all projects and initiatives of the programme.	31-12-2021	Gender unit and programme areas		
4.2 Require a specific allocation of resources for the promotion of gender equality in projects and initiatives.	31-12-2021	Gender unit and programme areas		
4.3 Follow up on the effective implementation of commitments and on the allocation of specific resources for the promotion of gender equality.	31-12-2021	Gender unit and programme areas		

* Status of implementation is tracked electronically in the ERC database.

Annexes



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/9894>

- Annex 1.** Terms of reference
- Annex 2.** Country at a glance
- Annex 3.** Country office at a glance
- Annex 4.** Project list
- Annex 5.** People consulted
- Annex 6.** Documents consulted
- Annex 7.** Outcome indicator matrix
- Annex 8.** Follow-up to 2009 ADR recommendations



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