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United Nations Development Project in Moldova

Final Evaluation Report

Mid-term Outcome Evaluation

Inclusive Growth Pillar

UNDP Moldova

February 2021

Name of the Thematic area: **“Inclusive Growth”**

Implementation period: **2018 – 2020**

Project country: **Republic of Moldova**

Name of the organization commissioning the evaluation: **UNDP Moldova**

Timeframe of the evaluation: **September 2020 – February 2021**

Inception Report submitted at: **26 October 2020**

Evaluation Report submitted at: **22 February 2021**

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report is the result of the evaluation process conducted by one international and one national external and independent consultant. The consultants express their thanks to all who contributed directly or indirectly with their time, information, and inputs during the interviews and consultations carried out during the evaluation process. Special thanks are addressed to the whole Cluster Team, for flexibility and for providing fast and reliable information, substituting the field visit that had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AR	--	Annual Report
ATU Gagauzia	--	Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia
AWP	--	Annual Workplan
CIS	--	Commonwealth of Independent States
Covid-19	--	Coronavirus Disease
CPD	--	Country Project Document
DCFTA	--	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EUD	--	Delegation of the European Union
GIZ	--	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
HTA	--	Hometown Associations ("Asociații de Băştinași")
LED	--	Local Economic Development
MTE	--	Mid-Term Evaluation
NGO	--	Non-Governmental Organization
ODA	--	Official Development Assistance
OECD	--	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ProDoc	--	Project Document
RBM	--	Results-Based Management
SME(s)	--	Small and Medium Enterprise(s)
ToR	--	Terms of Reference (of the Evaluation)
UNDP	--	United Nations Development Project
UNDAF	--	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNEG	--	United Nations Evaluation Group
WB	--	World Bank

Executive Summary

In line with the programmatic documents and policies and procedures, UNDP Moldova Country Office (UNDP CO) implements a mid-term outcome evaluation to assess the impact of UNDP's development assistance in the Practice Area of Inclusive Growth (hereinafter IG). Outcome evaluations intend to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level.

The *purpose* of this outcome-level mid-term evaluation is twofold: accountability and learning. Its overall objective is to provide an independent assessment of how UNDP in Moldova supports processes and builds capacities in the country. Furthermore, the evaluation seeks to reveal whether and to what extent, the planned Outcome 2 of CPD (aligned to the UNDAF) has been or is being achieved as a result of UNDP's work done in the area of Inclusive Growth in 2018-2020. The evaluation serves as a means of quality assurance for UNDP interventions at the country level, and contribute to learning at corporate, regional and country levels.

The *scope* of the evaluation covers three outputs under the Outcome and activities of six projects coordinated and implemented by the IG Cluster Team between 2018 and 2020, with due regard to the stated objectives and indicators of achievement. The primary users of the evaluation will be the IG Cluster Team and UNDP Moldova's Senior Management.

Derived from the Country Programme's Document, the Inclusive Growth Cluster's portfolio has been properly designed, addressing well-documented and analyzed country needs and built up on previously implemented projects and lessons learnt. Moreover, due to the socio-economic developments in the country (especially the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic), the needs are still present or even emerging, making overall the portfolio's relevance *Highly Satisfactory*.

The implementation of the Cluster's portfolio is following the plan, and the progress in achieving the objectives is good. The Covid-19 pandemic challenged the Cluster team with rapid reaction in reshuffling activities and adapt them to the new realities, but the slight delays will not impact the overall attainment of the goals. An objective assessment of the progress is difficult to be made at the point of evaluation, as statistic data is not available yet. Overall, the effectiveness is rated as *Satisfactory*.

The Cluster's programme has a sound management structure and policies, reflected in a good financial management of the available funds, and involves beneficiaries' and partner's co-financing participation. The reporting and M&E frameworks are adequate. The stakeholder engagement is well established both with central and local administration and includes good cooperation with the de-facto administration in Transnistrian region. The coordination with other donors is good at technical and policy levels and could be scaled up through higher-level dialogue and conditionalities. Accordingly, the efficiency is *Satisfactory*.

In most of the projects, the sustainability is addressed from the design stage, by building capacities, involving and fostering cooperation between central government, local administration, communities and beneficiaries. The cross-river cooperation along the Nistru river is the main driver in establishing long-lasting cooperation models. Due to the thorough planning with an outlook for sustainability, and the constant measures and efforts in implementation across all activities in the portfolio, the general assessment for sustainability is "*Likely*".

All projects state that gender mainstreaming and human rights-based approach is a key principle and method of implementation; however, not all projects fully describe how these principles will actually be implemented. The action plans describe specific measures aimed mostly at women and young people (e.g., providing grants, training, coaching and consultancy), with weak clarification as to how the equality perspectives will be implemented. The risk that the equality approach will stay limited to only those special measures is possible.

Based on the review of the programme and the lessons learned, the following recommendations are proposed:

R1. Strengthen coordination with other UN agencies and other donors. UNDP plays a strategic role with the established partnerships, both at central level and in all regions of the Republic of Moldova, a role many other international organizations don't have. A more coherent donor coordination platform is desired, also including a high-level political dialogue. The recently revived Sectoral Councils in the field of external assistance for the sectors coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure are a good platform where UNDP could bring forward the advantages of coordination among donors.

R1.1. Clarify topics that can be handled together with other UN agencies to achieve synergies. The effectiveness of the role UNDP plays in promoting gender-balance and women empowerment topics can be increased by collaborating closer with UN. UNIDO has an agenda in promoting innovation in industries that can be tapped by UNDP. On greening economy, the UNEP has a good expertise, but are not present in Moldova with own representation. On regulatory, procedural, and non-tariff barriers to trade for companies from Transnistria, the UNECE performed very good and useful studies and offer technical assistance, while the International Trade Center supports SMEs to increase their exporting capacities.

R2. Multiplication: upscale and replicate successful approaches and results. Many components of the portfolio are successful activities demonstrating good results, but with a limited impact due to their size. For activities targeting economic development, size is critical in order to foster change. In order to increase the impact at national level, these successes need to be communicated, adapted and implemented in more regions. The Team already cooperates with CALM, State Chancellery and development partners when it comes to scaling up, either through continuing development support (until the initiative reaches maturity) combined with nationalizing the piloted approaches through normative and legal basis (such as the DAR 1+3 Programme, LEADER programme), in order to secure ownership and sustainability.

R2.1. Demonstrate the positive results also on the left bank of Nistru river, and continue implementing projects through partnerships of businesses, associations and communities form both banks. The graduality principle is very good and should be continued.

R3. Explore possibilities to involve the private sector in delivering public services. Considering the financing gap in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (see the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, containing measures to finance sustainable development, transform the global economy and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals), the role of the private sector in delivering public services will increase. UNDP tests already this involvement (e.g., UNDP Uzbekistan).

R4. Increase focus on digitalization. The changes inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic will trigger or accelerate wide changes in education, economy, and public administration. UNDP has the capacity to forecast most of the changes and create a holistic approach in addressing both the *supply side* (infrastructure, access to networks, endowment with equipment) and the *demand side*

(increase digital literacy, business and education adaptation to knowledge-based economy and the fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0)¹. Given the rising importance of digitalization in administration, education and economy, the gender perspective could be pragmatically addressed by focusing on involving women in IT&C-related (higher)education and fostering start-ups managed by women.

R5. Deepen the work on understanding migration and its effects, as the phenomena gains increasing importance in the Republic of Moldova and worldwide. Besides strengthening partnership with IOM, also increase support offered to Hometown Associations, as they represent both local communities and the migrants. This collaboration opens opportunities for a deeper involvement of diaspora in local development initiatives of their place of origin. Additionally, continue analyzing the mutations in the status and mindset of long-term migrants, as their relation and behavior towards their community of origin changes in time.

R6. Formalize lessons learnt in the interim reports. Lessons learnt from previous programmes and projects have been consistently considered in designing subsequent activities. At corporate level, lessons learnt are reported through the Results Oriented Annual Report. A formalization of LL in the interim reports will support the staff in structuring the ideas, improve their daily job, will provide reliable information for the final evaluations, and will ease the work for the ROAR reporting.

R7. UNDP should promote the usage of the existing taxonomy² of vulnerable groups, to better address inequalities, marginalization and exclusion from the development process across its portfolio. This will enable the project teams to have a more precise understanding as to how the perspectives of these groups can be addressed in any given project proposal.

R8. Strengthen the equality perspective within the projects and increase personal skills of the staff. A systematic way to achieve this is to consider the following: (i) establish long term, external support via a focal point that each program can reach out to for limited number of days; the role of the help desk is to provide support and not to do the mainstreaming for the project teams; (ii) facilitate peer learning among the projects via annual themed workshops that can result in internal case studies, or practical “how to” models.

Besides the strategic and operational recommendations, the evaluation identified a set of topics with continued relevance and new topics with high potential for the Inclusive Growth Cluster, to be further considered and analyzed for the coming programming period:

¹ UNDP starts by the time of evaluation a project in GTU focusing on e-learning, addressing both supply and demand sides.

² https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/inclusive_growth/rezumat-al-studiului-asupra-vulnerabilitii-taxonomia-i-posibile.html

Areas of continued interest and new areas for potential focus	
Migration	(e-)Learning
<p>- Migration and demographics: due to its relevancy, the topic was introduced in the National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030”. Continued, demand-based support should be provided to increasing capacities of the National Agency for Employment and of the “Home-Town Associations”. The strategic partnership with IOM should bring added value in this direction.</p>	<p>-The e-learning approach is more and more relevant, not only with the new challenges generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In e-learning, both the supply-side (train teachers, update curricula), but also the demand side (digital literacy programmes for the population, access to infrastructure) are to be regarded.</p> <p>-Education: whereas the Vocational Education and Training (VET) is already an established concept and relevant for the current dynamic of the labor market, two new closely-related concepts emerge: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) concept, and Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) concept. The STEAM Education is an approach that uses the enumerated subjects as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. These two approaches should be addressed at national level (policy), regional/local, including across the Nistru banks.</p>
Youth	Economy & Governance
<p>-To address the needs of the youth not in education, employment or training (NEET), three levels have to be considered: macro-economic, strategic and practice. Some of the recommended approaches include increased flexibility, personalization, and to involve employers from the local labor market. If feasible, adopt a ‘whole-area’ approach to planning and delivery, backed by political commitment. Some studies suggest that, to reduce the NEET rate by at least one percent, significant efforts are needed, and punctual measures can’t have measurable effects at national level. On the other hand, a study from United Kingdom calculated that the cost of being NEET between the ages of 16 to 18 is estimated to be around £56,000 in public finance costs and £104,000 in resource costs (lost labor market potential), over the working lifetime of each person who has been NEET at this age, a relevant approximation to justify tackling NEET. UNDP Moldova supported the analysis of the phenomenon in 2017 through a sociological study, where the NEET was categorized in “Unskilled” NEET youth, “Low/medium” qualified NEET youth, “Highly qualified” NEET youth, and “Volunteers/opportunists” NEET youth, and proposes realistic measures for reintegration in education or the labor market, including barriers to be overcome;</p>	<p>- Increase labor productivity and move producers higher in the added-value chain. This approach might foresee governmental aid (policy, grants), and could capitalize the know-how of the returning migrants.</p> <p>- Infrastructure upgrade – energy, transport, digital infrastructure needs upgrade both for the basic functions and for becoming more efficient and “green”. This modernization could support the digitalization of public services & governance, and facilitate environmental protection measures;</p> <p>- Explore possibilities and added-value of involving private sector in delivering public services (see the UNDP Uzbekistan project ““Improved Public Service Delivery and Enhanced Governance in Rural Uzbekistan”;</p> <p>- Business Incubators should be continued, backed up by training focusing on entrepreneurship skills, digital economy/Industrial Revolution 4.0.</p> <p>At policy level, entrepreneurs should be aided with</p> <p>- Public administration, decentralization and territorial administrative reform should be considered, with special consideration for the two special cases – Gagauz Territorial Unit and Transnistria region. Policy influencing and/policy support could be provided in order to adjust the administrative set-up, by providing more decision</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve youth in planning and budgeting, including through Hometown Associations. For this, civic education programmes for youth are necessary. 	<p>in design and implementation of policies, and financial empowerment to regional and local administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - define a new indicator/index to measure the (relative) deprivation of regions, replacing the SADI index (see the effectiveness Chapter).
<p style="text-align: center;">Cross-cutting themes and other themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Domestic violence gains traction in being recognized as a societal problem all over the world, and it has been mentioned as being increasing relevant in Moldova too. The IG Cluster could consider addressing the economic causes for domestic and gender-based violence (including by facilitating economic empowerment of women). Other approach might be strengthening CSOs in increasing awareness and reporting on Human Rights, combatting domestic violence and human trafficking; - Health infrastructure and services need an upgrade: hospitals and other medical facilities are old buildings that need renovation; the endowment of hospitals is low or very old; the personnel are understaffed and need training on modern services; - Green transformation at local is an important area, particularly in the COVID19 aftermath and broadly accepted build back greener principle. The IC could consider incorporating and mainstreaming green transformation/elements in local development processes (both in terms of local services and economic development), across all regions of the country. The approach could involve all local stakeholders – local public authorities, private sector, CSOs, migrants and diaspora, vulnerable groups, etc. 	

Chapter 1: Introduction and Evaluation Methodology

In line with the programmatic documents and policies and procedures, UNDP Moldova Country Office (UNDP CO) implements a mid-term outcome evaluation to assess the impact of UNDP's development assistance in the Practice Area of Inclusive Growth (hereinafter IG). Outcome evaluations intend to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level.

UNDP's contribution under the IG Pillar is focused on sustainable, inclusive and green jobs creation; integrity-based business development; transparent, accountable, efficient and inclusive service provision; and equal and equitable access to economic opportunities. IG Pillar contributes to the achievement of Outcome 2 of the Country Programme Document (CPD) and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF): "The people of Moldova, especially most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities, decent work and productive employment, generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth".

The three outputs under the second Outcome are:

- Output 2.1: Public institutions and private entities have improved capacities to design and implement innovative policies for inclusive, resilient economic growth (with three indicators);
- Output 2.2: Women, youth and people from regions with special status benefit from better skills, access to resources and sustainable jobs and livelihoods (with two indicators); and
- Output 2.3: Improved local public services and upgraded infrastructure to enhance accessibility to and boost resilient local economic development, including in regions with special status and across the conflict divide (with three indicators).

The *purpose* of this outcome-level mid-term evaluation is twofold: accountability and learning. Its overall objective is to provide an independent assessment of how UNDP in Moldova supports processes and builds capacities in the country. Furthermore, the evaluation seeks to reveal whether and to what extent, the planned Outcome 2 of CPD (aligned to the UNDAF) has been or is being achieved as a result of UNDP's work done in the area of Inclusive Growth in 2018-2020. The evaluation serves as a means of quality assurance for UNDP interventions at the country level, and contribute to learning at corporate, regional and country levels.

The independent evaluation provides evidence for results achieved and challenges faced during the implementation period, and help the partners to reflect and improve for future efforts. Also, the mid-term evaluation intends to help the country office to understand whether the intended outcome is still relevant or needs an update (to be incorporated in the next programming period). The findings and recommendations generated by the evaluation should identify which of the UNDP approaches are effective and which have faced challenges, and to use lessons learnt to

improve future initiatives and generate knowledge for wider use. UNDP will incorporate the findings of the evaluation while preparing the new Country Programme Document. This evaluation is also expected to bring recommendations regarding partnership strategies and to help better understanding of the impact that the portfolio creates.

Considering the implications of the COVID-19 crisis, the evaluation provides recommendations for strengthening the Inclusive Growth-related portfolio of projects through the recovery lenses, which will be used by UNDP CO to better respond to the crisis.

The *scope* of the evaluation covers three outputs under the Outcome and activities of six projects coordinated and implemented by the IG Cluster Team between 2018 and 2020, with due regard to the stated objectives and indicators of achievement. The primary users of the evaluation will be the IG Cluster Team and UNDP Moldova's Senior Management.

Additional to the evaluation questions as defined in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the evaluation focused on following topics, as highlighted by the UNDP staff:

- the degree of innovation included in the design and implementation of the portfolio;
- the cross-cutting themes (human rights, gender equality, conflict sensitiveness and environmental sustainability);
- the potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the portfolio's results, as well as on the Moldovan society;
- recommendations for future programming responding to the rapidly-changing context, trends and new realities related to digitalization and knowledge-based society.;

Based on the above dimensions of the assessment, the evaluation synthesizes conclusions and lessons learned and generates recommendations addressed to the UNDP leadership in Moldova. They will be used to strengthen future UNDP projects in various regions of the country.

The duration of the evaluation is 20 working days for the national evaluator and 15 working days for the international evaluator. The evaluation commenced on October 2nd, 2020 and was concluded by the end of December 2020. The breakdown of the activities can be found in the Evaluation Schedule (further below).

The evaluation activity was performed by two evaluators, independent evaluation specialists with socio-economic background, having expertise in implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international development projects and programmes, and specific experience with evaluating implemented programmes in socio-economic topics in the Eastern European and CIS context.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation methodology, approach and research methods were agreed between the consultants and the Cluster team prior to the start of data collection and are described in detail in the inception report. The conceptual framework of the evaluation is consistent with OECD evaluation principles, drawing also on Results-Based Management (RBM) principles, and

addresses the evaluating criteria proposed specified in the ToR – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and effects of the Covid-19 pandemic (See Annex 1).

In order to achieve its objectives, the evaluation used the following multi-phase approach, tools, and steps:

1. Inception Phase (October 2020)

- Desk review of relevant documents (national strategy papers, the Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018–2022, Country Programme Document), UNDP Moldova website, documented output of the activities and monitoring reports, as well as other relevant statistics and reports;
- Exploratory interview with the key cluster team members in Chisinau (conducted online on October 2nd).

2. Data Collection Phase (October - November 2020)

- Structured/semi-structured interviews were the main data collection instrument and were used to gather primary data from key informants. The evaluators carried 22 interviews with:
 - Inclusive growth Cluster Team;
 - Project managers of the projects coordinated by the IG Pillar;
 - Main beneficiaries (counterpart institutions – e.g., Ministries, local public administration representatives);
 - Representatives of the other international organizations (EU Delegation, IOM, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Swedish Embassy);
 - Other relevant partners – private sector representatives, civil society actors;

The interviews had an average of 60 minutes in duration and a semi-structured discussion guide was used to guide the interviews. In an ideal scenario, the key interviews would have taken place face-to-face through a field visit. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible for this evaluation and all interviews were conducted through online platforms and tools (Microsoft Teams and Zoom). This limitation was partly overcome by using video-conferencing, rather than teleconferencing, thus allowing the evaluators to observe non-verbal communication cues and create a trustful atmosphere.

3. Data collection tools

- Documents review – besides the general documents mentioned for the inception phase, documents, reports, technical papers related to the projects coordinated by the IG Cluster were reviewed. For purpose of triangulation, reports from other international organizations active in Moldova on the inclusive growth topics, as well as general statistic data available from Moldovan statistical service were used;
- In-depth interviews carried with project staff, government structures, international organizations active in the Republic of Moldova, partnering institutions and beneficiaries, civil society organizations served for the data collection purpose and for the triangulation,

to offer impartial views on relevant topics (the extensive list of consulted stakeholders is presented as Annex 4);

- For the six projects implemented by the Cluster, on-site visits would have been beneficial. This was not possible due to travel limitation imposed by the pandemic evolution in November and December 2020. To compensate this limitation, the evaluation team complemented the interviews with stakeholders with extended online research. The media platforms (newspapers, TV Channels, YouTube) have plenty news bulletins, reports, presentations of local communities, events fairs, and other achievements that illustrate and ease the understanding of UNDP's work in the country.

The schedule of meetings was proposed and drafted together with the Cluster Team, and was appropriately designed considering the variety of stakeholders, content and time distribution. The list of meetings, interviewees and contact details is attached as Annex 4.

Evaluation Criteria

In accordance with UNDP's Evaluation Guidelines and the above-mentioned OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria, and given the typology of the services provided by UNDP, four evaluation criteria were used in order to assess the success of the project and to indicate lessons learned:

1. Relevance: the extent to which the programme's activities are suited to the priorities and policies of Moldova and UNDP at the time of formulation?
2. Effectiveness: the extent to which the programme's outcomes (as outlined in the CPD and logical framework) contribute to attainment of objectives of the Outcome 2—have the right things been done?
3. Efficiency: measurement of the outputs in relation to the inputs – have the things been done right?
4. Sustainability: will the benefits of the activities persist after their end?

Additionally, the Cluster Team expressed some additional ideas to be pursued by the evaluation exercise:

- test the validity of the programme approach and making recommendations for potential continuation, also thinking beyond the national context and the next planning phase;
- assess UNDP's contribution in building capacities of the national partner institutions;
- explore new areas suitable for potential intervention in the next programming period (e.g., address disruptions created by the Covid-19 pandemic, digitalization, innovation, green economy, conflict prevention, etc.).

Detailed evaluation questions for all of the above criteria were developed and agreed upon in the inception phase and are presented in the Annex 2.

Data Analysis, Synthesis and Reporting Phase (November 2020 - February 2021):

Following data collection, the consultants undertook categorization and qualitative analysis to sort the information according to the evaluating questions. This phase included identification and analysis of the intervention logic and established possible and probable causalities between intervention components and the achieved results, according to theory-based evaluation principles and drawing on elements of the Process Tracing methodology. The interviews also served the purpose of triangulation, cross-checking information presented in reports, on the projects' websites, delivered by UNDP staff and by other key informants. Where possible research findings were triangulated across multiple data sources, and corroborated using external, independent sources of information (e.g., media reports, government policy documents, press releases, and online tools).

During the analysis phase, the evaluators synthesized the results of all inputs (primary and secondary data) in a policy-oriented synthesis report, systematically covering the evaluation purpose, objectives, scope, and the specified criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability) and their subsequent questions. The aim is to produce valid conclusions and actionable recommendations for future programming (e.g., new areas of interventions to respond to the rapidly-changing context and new realities; Covid-19 impacts as per the UNDP-committed socio-economic impact assessment). The recommendations will be used by UNDP CO to improve the design and implementation of similar activities, to maximize the impact of Cluster's work and to set the further direction of work for similar sets of activities. The recommendations will open the possibility for further work of the new projects, new intervention areas, partnership mechanisms, resource mobilization strategies, monitoring and evaluation strategies, working methods, and management approaches.

In the assessment process, the evaluating criteria of the progress towards results were assessed according to the Terms of Reference and received one of the following ratings: Highly Satisfactory – Satisfactory – Moderately Satisfactory – Moderately Unsatisfactory – Unsatisfactory or Highly Unsatisfactory. For sustainability criteria, the rating scale follows the following scale: Likely – Moderately Likely – Moderately Unlikely – Unlikely.

Assumptions and Limitations

While the research approach was designed to provide both breadth and depth in its assessment of the project, as with all evaluations, some limitations exist which should be duly noted when considering the findings:

- *Inability to carry out in-country field visit:* In an ideal scenario, the key interviews would have taken place face-to-face through a field visit, together with site-visits of project results. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this was not possible for this evaluation and all interviews were conducted through online platforms and software. This limitation was partly overcome by using video-conferencing, rather than teleconferencing, thus allowing the evaluators to observe non-verbal communication cues.
- *In-country beneficiaries and stakeholders being unavailable for an interview:* Overall the number of beneficiary and stakeholder interviews is robust to allow detailed insights. It should be noted however that few stakeholders did not respond to the evaluation team's request for an interview. Due to staff turnover, there were also several persons who may have had additional insights who were no longer contactable due to moving to new

positions. The team is confident that this has not affected the quality of the evaluation in any substantial way.

Evaluation Schedule

The timetable and key outputs for the Evaluation are highlighted below:

TIMEFRAME	ACTIVITY
Inception Phase	
24 September 2020	Evaluator contracts signed and evaluation started
02 October 2020	Briefing meeting with UNDP IG Cluster Team
02 Oct – 13 Oct:	Review of key documents and drafting the working plan and the structure of the Inception Report
13 October: 22 October: 25 October:	Submission of Draft Inception Report Submission of comments on draft Inception report by UNDP CO Submission of Final Inception report
12 Oct - 26 Oct:	Desk study of relevant documents; preparation of questionnaire and interviews calendar
Data Collection and Analysis Phases	
02 November - 14 December:	Online interviews / calls with stakeholders and partners Preliminary analysis of findings Debrief meeting with the UNDP CO relevant staff through an online conference
01 - 20 December 21 December 28 January 2021	Drafting of the evaluation report by the evaluators Submission of the draft evaluation report to UNDP CO Review and comments on draft report by UNDP CO
22 February 2020	Submission of Final evaluation report to UNDP Moldova.

The overall evaluation exercise was subject to several risks that might have potentially arisen especially due to the extremely challenging timeframe. These risks were tackled by prompt reaction and the use of appropriate tools:

Risk	Impact	Probability	Mitigation
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Different expectations around comprehensiveness, depth and results of the final evaluation	Medium	Medium	In the inception phase, consultations with UNDP underlined the understanding and agreement on the expected results of the evaluation. The evaluation touches all key aspects sufficiently to support informed, fact-based findings and recommendations.
Limited availability/unreliability of statistical data at the regional/local administrative level	Medium	Medium	Available sources of information were identified (National Statistical Committee, Ministry of Economy, WB data, OECD Statistical Data).
The Covid-19 pandemic prevented the evaluators to perform the field visits.	High	Certain	Online video meetings were organized; the video component was important to observe non-verbal cues. Additional online research (media sites) was performed, to offer neutral information.
Possible defensiveness around the Evaluation and its findings	Medium	Medium	Pro-active transparency around the evaluation exercise: The evaluator provided appropriate information about the evaluation and its independent and impartial status, together with guarantees around the confidentiality of internal sources and inputs by interviewees.
Lack of follow-up and lasting benefit from the evaluation	High	Low	The evaluation focused on creating valid findings and reasonable recommendations that will be easily incorporated and monitored into the Management Response.

Chapter 2: Background Context and Intervention Description

Development context

The Republic of Moldova is a landlocked, low middle-income country situated in Eastern Europe. With a population of 2.6 million³ (down from 2.7 million in 2017), the country is undergoing rapid demographic transformation, characterized by low fertility rates, rather low life expectancy, high outward migration and aging population. A [World Bank assessment](#)⁴ concluded that demographic challenges of Moldova are far greater when compared to other countries in the region.

Moldova remains one of the poorest countries in Eastern Europe. Along with Armenia, in 2019, the Moldovan GDP per capita (measured by [World Bank in current dollars](#)) was just 13 percent of the average GDP per capita of European Union. Other countries comparable with Moldova had a higher GDP per capita – Albania (15 percent), Bosnia and Herzegovina (17 percent), Georgia (14 percent), Romania (37 percent), Serbia (21 percent). Only Ukraine had a smaller relative GDP per capita of 11 percent, explained by the fact that, since 2014, this country has been engaged in a protracted military conflict with severe economic contraction.

The transition to market economy has been slow due to challenges faced in the implementation of economic and social reforms, the collapse of the industrial sector, and political tensions following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Over the last decades, Moldova averaged a growth rate [of 4 percent on annual basis](#)⁵. The economy mainly increased thanks to consumption and fueled by remittances, making the Moldovan economy very vulnerable to external fluctuations. After a steady growth up to 2013, the economy contracted in the following years to -3.7 percent

³ National Statistical Databank, [https:// http://statbank.statistica.md/](https://http://statbank.statistica.md/) - last consulted in October 2020

⁴ Golden Aging: Prospects for Healthy, Active, and Prosperous Aging in Europe and Central Asia, World Bank, 2018

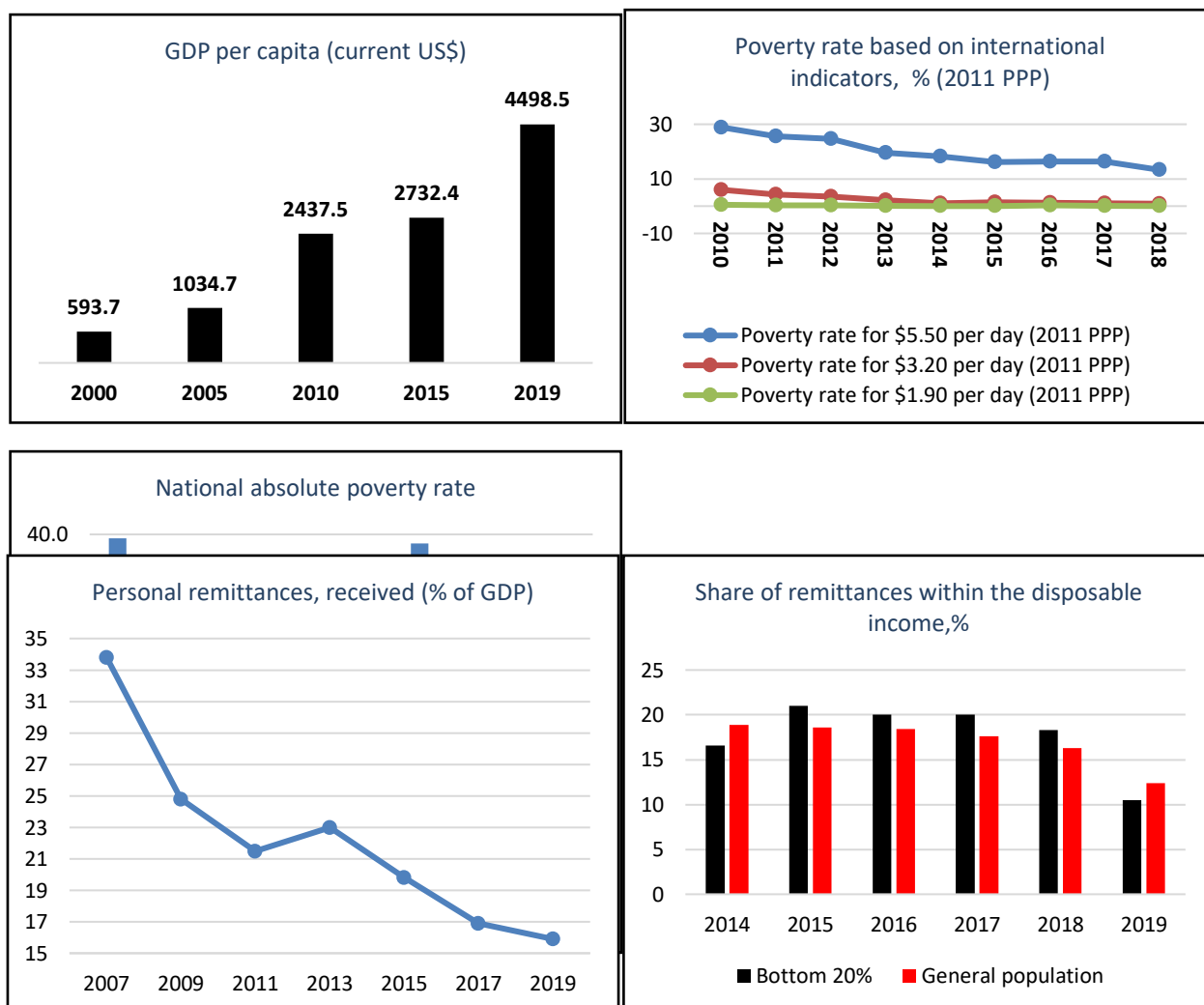
⁵ International Monetary Fund Country Report No. 20/76, March 2020

in the third quarter of 2015. Then, the economy dropped into recession due to a negative weather shock in agriculture, weak external flows, the repercussions of a large-scale bank fraud, and tight monetary policy.

Measured at purchasing power parity, the GDP per capita increased over the last years from USD [9,254 \(2015\) to USD 13,574 \(2019\)](#)⁶. The poverty rate registered a value of [12.8 percent at 5USD PPP](#) per day. The poverty gap measured at USD 3.20 a day (2011 PPP) decreased slightly between 2015 and 2018 from 0,2 percent to 0,1 percent.

From a combined GDP-employment perspective, Moldova is emerging as a service-focused economy, with half of the labor force employed in services, generating 71.4% of GDP. This is followed by industry, which employs 16.6% and contributes around 14% to GDP, while one third is employed in agriculture and contributes just 14% to GDP. The gap between employment and contribution to GDP suggests it is mainly subsistence activity.

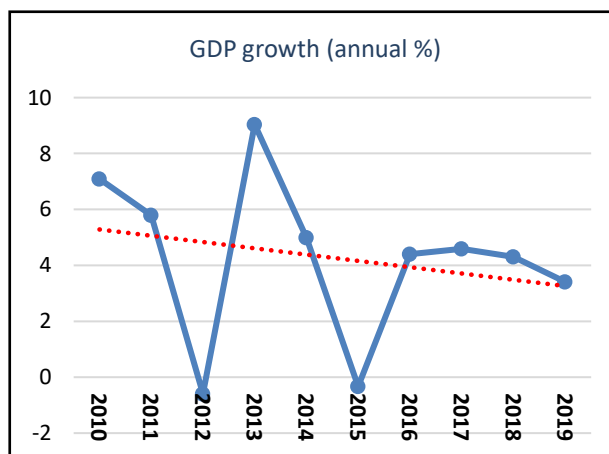
The country was heavily dependent on remittances. In the middle of 2000s, the country was one of the most vulnerable in the world, with more than a third of the GDP represented by remittances. The vulnerability is represented by the exposure to external shocks; any major fluctuation in the international prices of commodities, changes in the labor markets where Moldova citizens emigrated, or economic regional crisis also affect massively the Moldovan economy.



⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?end=2019&locations=MD&start=2015>

Figure 1: The Republic of Moldova, selected economic and development indicators. Sources: World Bank, National Bureau of Statistics

The economy has a normal distribution of the GDP components: the agriculture generates 9.86 percent from the GDP, decreasing from 11.51 percent in 2015; the industry – 22.8 percent, increasing from 22.69 in 2015; and services – 54.25 percent (increasing from 52.9 in 2015). The production value (works and services) increased by 22.6 percent between 2016 and 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics databank⁷).



According to OECD, the Small and Medium Enterprises represent 98 percent of the business sector in Moldova, while the micro-enterprises make up for 86.4 percent. SME's employed 66.4 percent of the working force, and generated 65.7 percent of the added-value in the Moldovan economy (2016 data).

The Republic of Moldova also suffers from migration movement; the National Bureau of Statistics registers high levels of outward migration, with one million Moldovans living abroad under various status (including around 350.000 short-term labor migrants).

Although economic growth in Moldova has been implemented pro-growth, it did not generate a significant number of jobs. The employment rate in Moldova is below 50 percent, with high labor inactivity rate among young people (especially young women). A high proportion of those employed are informal workers, working in low productivity and low skills jobs like in agriculture. Labor shortage has become a notable problem for employers as well. According to [World Bank Moldova](#)⁸, close to 25 percent of companies experienced labor shortages in the last 12 months, and 64 percent of these firms mentioned that a lack of qualified workers with necessary experience was a major reason for labor shortage.

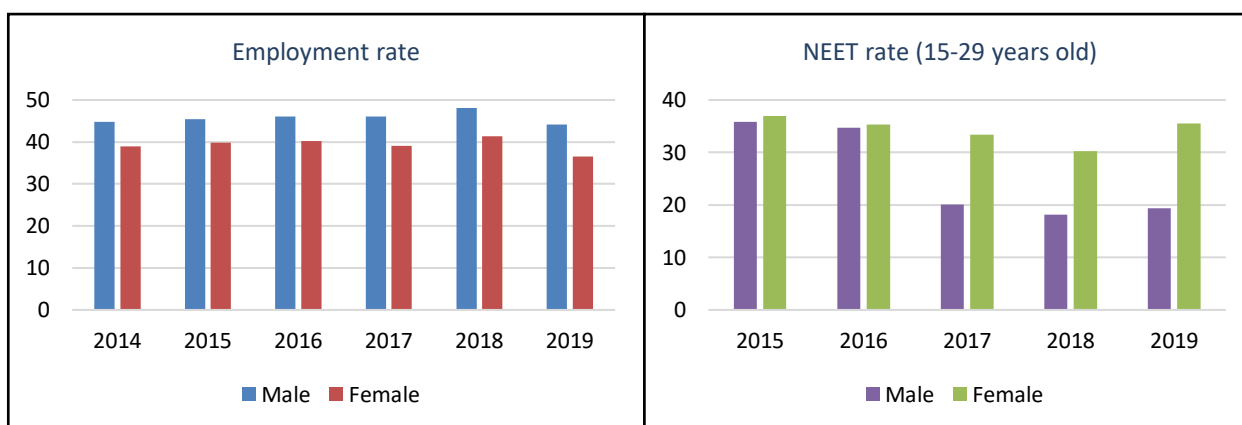


Figure 2: Employment and not in education, employment or training (NEET) rates for men and women in Moldova. Source: National Bureau of Statistics.

⁷ <https://statistica.gov.md/category.php?l=en&idc=191>

⁸ Supply of skills in Moldova - Findings from the Moldova Skills Measurement Survey (MSMS); World Bank and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, 2019.

The Human Development Index (HDI) had a positive evolution, slightly increasing from 0.703 in 2015 to 0.711 in 2018. The education indicators stagnated during this period, while the life expectancy increased slightly. The Gross National Income per capita (2011 PPP) increased by 13 percent, from 6,032 to 6,833 USD.

The Gini coefficient shows a decreasing trend in income inequality, from 27 in 2015 to 25,7 in 2018. Poverty and deprivation are concentrated mainly among rural residents, elderly, households with people living with disabilities, and Roma households. The Multidimensional Poverty Index has only been calculated for 2012 with a value of 0,9 percent (headcount). The correlated values indicate that individuals living above the income poverty line may still suffer deprivations in health, education and/or standard of living.

In terms of gender equality, Moldova has been progressing at a steady pace with an overall Gender Gap Index of 0.75 in 2019 (best scoring country is Sweden, at 0.82). Recent progress has been achieved with regards to more equal representation of men and women in politics, administration and business; the share of women elected at the national and local level increased due to recent legal provision, requiring that political parties put forward lists of candidates ensuring a minimum 40 percent gender quota with strict placement measures for each decile of the list. Gender inequalities in the labor market are notable and persistent (increasing gender pay gaps, significant gender segregation within the labor market, high inactivity rate among women, low levels of entrepreneurship).

Moldova is fragmented administratively, with more than 900 local administrative structures. On the other hand, the country is very centralized in decision making, with total financial dependency of the local communities. The small size of the administrative zones, low resources and the total dependency for financial resources from the central decision, weakens the capacity of the local administration to design new development plans, implement them and offer modern public services.

Adding to the socio-economic situation, the long-term conflict in the Transnistrian region exacerbates the regional dysfunctionalities. Transnistria remains isolated, weakened by outward migration, worsening economic conditions, political uncertainty and degrading quality of services. These issues contribute to a gradual erosion of social cohesion on both river-banks and impact on reconciliation efforts. The industrial output of Transnistrian region is mainly generated by metal, cement and electricity production and sale, while machinery, textiles, apparel and footwear have a lower contribution. Like their counterparts on the right bank of the Nistru river, local businesses try to shift to producing higher added value goods, and small locally-selling businesses try to explore the potential of export markets. The structural weaknesses of the economy of the left bank of the Nistru river is illustrated by the size of exports - the exports represent only 14,7 percent of the exports of the right bank (National Statistics Bureau). The biggest export markets are the EU and non-CIS states (77 percent) in 2019.

The Autonomous Territorial Unit (ATU) of Gagauzia is the least developed territory of Moldova, mainly agricultural and vulnerable to climate change and lack of water resources. It is populated mainly by ethnic Gagauz – a Turkish-speaking Christian-Orthodox minority, as well as other ethnic groups, and has an autonomous status since January 1995. The region received multiple support from UNDP in the last years.

COVID-19 pandemic exposed more of structural weaknesses in Moldovan economy (e.g., the cyclical nature of Moldovan economy, heavy dependency on remittances and climate shocks, high proportion of informal economy, low trust in institutions, weak fiscal stance). The policy response has been weak and short sighted; according to a recent analysis by the World Bank, the support offered to firms is one of the lowest in Europe and Central Asia, with only 6 percent of companies in Moldova having received or expect to receive governmental assistance. In comparison, in Georgia 51 percent of firms received a kind of support, and 48 percent in Albania. Due to the double shock in 2020 (COVID-19 pandemic and the drought), coupled with ineffective policy response, the risk the recovery will not happen fast enough is high.

Although the economy is expected to retake its growth in 2021, a rebound to 2019 levels is expected only in 2022. COVID-19 negatively affected most of the gains in terms of inclusion and the situation of vulnerable groups in Moldova. A recent comprehensive analysis by UNDP concluded that:

Due to drought and lower remittances, there is a risk that poverty rate will increase, especially in rural areas. The poverty rate is expected to increase by one percent in 2021, according to World Bank;

- Because of limited activity of schools and other education institutions, the care burden for women increased, thus enhancing the risk of further driving women out of the labor market. As such, gender gaps in employment and pay will increase;
- A prolonged period of non-schooling for poor and vulnerable children will compound the risk of academic fallout. It is less likely that poor households from rural areas use online education and home-schooling, as these households lack ITC equipment or reliable internet connection. During non-schooling period, children are possibly involved in household and agriculture chores rather any organized learning process;
- Employment prospects for young men and women affected as well. The most at risk are young people with low educational attainment, since they normally find jobs in sectors that are affected by the pandemic (retail, hospitality, constructions) or migrate in countries affected by Covid 19 pandemic themselves.

Chapter 3 – Intervention Description, facts and findings

The six projects designed to be implemented under the current period are:

*Project 1: “Support to confidence building across the Nistru river through **advanced cross-river capacities for trade**”, funded by Swedish Embassy in the Republic of Moldova and implemented between May 2019 and April 2022. The Project’s budget is envisaged at USD 2,200,979. The main objectives of the project are:*

- Output 1: Improved cross-river exchange of information, knowledge, experience, and understanding of the opportunities provided by Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA);
- Output 2: Increased export activity of the business community from the Transnistria region as a result of better export promotion capacities and access to cross-river export support opportunities;

- Output 3: Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises across the Nistru river, in particular those led by women and benefitting vulnerable groups, are enabled to produce more competitive products.

Findings (highlights):

- A very well-structured study has been performed by UNDP to analyze the exporting potential of the businesses in Transnistria. The analysis highlights the status of companies in Transnistria in 2019, and continues the work done with a previous study in 2017. The activities in the current project are evidence-based and capitalize on the knowledge generated by the previous study;
- The project works with three partnerships of business associations from both river banks, competitively selected, which are supported with grants (e.g., the biggest fruit processing companies from both regions). The selection criteria were financial viability, new jobs created, employment of people living with disabilities, returning migrants. Partnerships with NGOs helped with popularization of the contest. Additional to grants, the companies will receive support through coaching and mentoring programmes;
- An export accelerator has been started, including 24 businesses from both banks. They receive from UNDP support to strengthen sales and marketing capabilities (including e-commerce skills, very relevant in the current business conditions, influenced by the Covid-19 limitations). Additionally, for export, companies receive support for certification of goods and with building Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) data bases;
- The gender distribution among business managers in Transnistria was very unbalanced at the beginning of the project (only 16 percent of the responding managers were women). The situation is perceived by the project team as slightly improving, but no additional data is available at the time of evaluation;
- The support is mainly targeted to MSMEs, as they do not have the capacity to commission business support services from own resources. The consulting service mainly focus large companies, so the free market is not affected;
- For small agricultural producers, the Covid-19 pandemic was doubled by drought in the summer of 2020. Through the Project, UNDP provides support in form of a competition, whose winners will receive small grants;

Conclusion: the project is well designed with its three components, and the approach to bring together partners from both banks of the river creates beneficial link at societal level, although with limited impact due to the size. Compared to other international donors, UNDP has also a competitive advantage as having a high knowledge on the region, and an acceptance in implementing activities others do not have. The project team also reacted fast to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing – for instance – to e-commerce for producers in the region, or by including in the grants-awarding criteria the employment of returning migrants as a result of the pandemic. The responsiveness and adaptability are a major factor enabling effective results.

The project contributes to reaching Outputs 2.1 and 2.2 of the CPD through its business advisory support and partnerships fostered. While on achieving the partnerships target the progress is good, on business advisory support the target is very ambitious (300 companies, at least 30% led by women and 30% led by youth, 15% minority groups).

Recommendations:

- Towards the end of the project, the team should focus on multiplication effect, popularizing and copying good results and partnership mechanisms to other regions in the area. For projects with economic development goals, the size is critical in order to foster change;
- New areas of cooperation focus could be the digital infrastructure and e-business culture. There is a demand for e-commerce from the consumers, while the businesses did not focus yet on upgrading their activity towards e-platforms;
- UNDP should analyze and find the insights explaining how the labor productivity can be increased, besides going higher in the value-creation chain.

Project 2: “One UN Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova (Phase 3)” - is funded by the Embassy of Sweden and implemented between July 2019 and July 2022. The Project’s budget is envisaged at USD 2,668,760 USD (626,579 USD managed by UNDP, as lead agency). Implementing agencies in the “One UN Joint Action “are UNDP Moldova, OHCHR, UNAIDS Moldova, UNICEF Moldova, UNODC and IOM⁹. OSCE is an external partner, and the joint action shares information and coordinates activities, where appropriate and possible, with OSCE. The project aims to contribute to Outcomes 1 and 2 of the CPD, through its main objectives of the project:

- *Output 1:* Increased capacities of vulnerable rights holders to exercise their human rights
Objective 1.1. Enhanced human rights skills and knowledge of vulnerable rights holders.
- *Output 2:* Increased capacities of duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations
 - 2.1.1 Support the development of a human rights framework for the implementation of Thomas Hammarberg and other UN recommendations (2014, 2018).
 - 2.1.2 Support in developing CRPD compliant regional regulatory framework.
 - 2.1.3 Support in developing a human rights compliant HIV regulatory framework.
 - 2.1.4 Support in developing the regulatory framework tailored to the needs of children in contact with law.
 - 2.2.1 Capacity building to the institutionalized human rights authorities on performing their role to protect, monitor and promote human rights in the region.
 - 2.3.1 Capacity development of professionals working with children.
 - 2.3.2 Advancing multidisciplinary-policing approach while ensuring referral of PWUD and PLWH to harm reduction services on both banks.
- *Output 3:* Enhanced human rights culture in the Transnistrian region
 - 3.1.1 Human rights capacity building for media representatives from both bank of the Nistru river.
 - 3.2.1 Support in the development and implementation of an annual human rights awareness agenda in the Transnistrian region.
 - 3.2.2 Support for the development and the implementation of a behavior change communication campaign for people living and affected by HIV, health staff and general population.

⁹ OHCHR - Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; UNAIDS - Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund; UNODC - United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; IOM - International Organization for Migration.

Findings (highlights):

- The project builds on previous similar projects implemented in the region. The lessons learnt are clearly stated in the ProDoc and actively considered by the project team. The active focus – besides the three outputs – is on cross-themes of human-rights based approach, gender mainstreaming, confidence building, conflict sensitive approach. Due to the high-profile of the UN partners, the project cooperates both with the constitutional authorities and the de facto structures;
- In presenting the project logic, defining a Theory of Change not only for the whole project, but for each output is a distinctive advantage, as it explains in detail the interlinkages between the components and how they lead to the desired outcomes;
- The innovation brought by this project is the “community mobilization for empowerment” (CME) approach. It involves women and men from vulnerable groups as means for stimulating the emerging CSOs in the Transnistria region, empowering right holders to take action and be heard by public administration and by the community in addressing human rights violations. The project was given as an example of best practices during “The Donors Forum” organized in November 2020 by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), a forum with more than 100 representatives of development partners, civil society organizations, and initiative groups from both banks of the Nistru River;
- The project works to strengthen the civil society through the CSOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), the correct approach to ensure sustainability of results through increased capacities at grass-root level
- For the rights-holders, trainings on development institutional capacities of their organizations and initiative groups, as well as awareness raising activities, have been implemented, and shifted to online sessions after the Covid-19 pandemic started. The biggest challenge is to ensure appropriate level of interaction and networking, as the formal and informal communication miss in online format. After 10 introductory webinars, the project now implements the second stage – practical workshops;
- Due to the involvement in UNDP’s capacity building activities, a local NGO in Transnistria – “Women’s Initiatives” – expanded its services to more vulnerable groups, roma women and women with disabilities. This is one of the examples that illustrate very well the UNDP contribution and role in the project;
- The CSOs on the left bank needs support on delivering constructive public engagement and increase awareness on Human Rights. Combatting domestic violence and human trafficking needs special attention in the future, as the need was recently recognized and flagged in interviews;
- The activities dedicated to duty-bearers started in 2020 with support to people in detention in using HIV testing kits, while advocacy work will commence in 2021;
- The monitoring of the project is done through a common Monitoring and Evaluation framework but has been reduced in its monitoring field visits by the travel limitations. Among the UN agencies involved in the One UN Joint Action, UNICEF has a dedicated M&E staff among the UN agencies, ensuring quality reporting and progress tracking;
- For some social categories (roma people, people with mental intellectual and/or psycho-social disabilities) the work just commenced and needs longer involvement for sustainable results;
- The work focusing on women’s role in economy and society might overlap with UN Women’s mandate; a possible continuation should involve this agency too;

- UNDP is a strategic partner in the region for UN agencies without country presence, who wouldn't have had own resources to implement activities by themselves. OSCE also recognizes the strategic, high-profile role UNDP is playing in Transnistrian region.

Conclusion: The One-UN project is well designed and has a strong intervention logic. It might be seen as an embedding high complementarity with the CBM V, AdTrade and GBV projects, as this one is focusing on the human-rights topic, and the information exchange and synergy building are active among all projects. The coordination among donors is good and overlapping is avoided. Given the sensitive environment in which the project acts in Transnistria, open dialogue and transparency have a critical importance for successful results.

Recommendations:

- Based on the previous and current phases' results of the joint action, it is recommended to evaluate the possibility to extend the coverage of future interventions to new vulnerable groups, such as religious and sexual minorities;
- People with intellectual and psycho-social disabilities need more focused attention, especially the ones in the residential institutions, as pandemic showed that their rights are ignored in the times of crises;
- sustained efforts should be continued towards facilitating cooperation between organizations from the two banks of the Nistru River. This would be achieved by supporting joint initiatives involving organizations (public administration, NGOs) from both river banks. Interview findings suggests there is a risk of decreased intensity for this kind of cooperation especially during Covid-19 pandemic, situation that should be tackled;
- The area of institutional development proved to be particularly important for existing grass-roots organizations, as well as for the developing ones. They would need further support in order to have the full capacity to represent, advocate for and defend the rights of the most vulnerable groups;
- exchange experience due to the pandemic situation and when the situation will permit it is important to expose the representatives of the CSOs and in-field specialists from both banks to the best international practices in the area of human rights;
- New focus areas in the region would be combatting domestic violence and human trafficking.

Project 3: "EU4Moldova: Focal Regions" - is funded by the European Union and implemented between January 2020 and July 2022. The Project's budget is envisaged at EUR 23,300,000, and aims to contribute to achieving Outcome 2 of the CPD through its main objectives:

- *Objective 1:* To strengthen transparency, accountability of local public authorities and citizen participation in local governance processes in focal regions;
- *Objective 2:* To improve citizen's access to quality public services and utilities in the focal regions;
- *Objective 3:* To create employment opportunities for men and women in the focal regions and improve the attractiveness of the focal regions for investors and entrepreneurs;
- *Objective 4:* To promote the smart specialization of the economy of the focal regions through the development of the clustering and value chain approach in key economic sectors.

The focal regions are Ungheni and Cahul counties (“rayons”). They are the 2nd and the 4th most populous rayons of the country, with 124,6 and 117,4 thousand inhabitants. The “regions” are not functional regions, as the administrative roles are separate for the city and the neighboring communes. The choice for the two regions was based on multi-criteria analysis among 12 potential centers.

Findings:

- The project aims to build on a previous work of UNDP at local level, which supported the local communities, among others, to create Local Development Strategies. In this stage, the approach is to support the communities in operationalizing the Strategies;
- The focus on improving services is set on developing the small-scale infrastructure for public services, business infrastructure, the business environment and to offer support to entrepreneurs;
- In the first component, local value-chains have been identified and will be used for the other support activities (e.g., cereals production in Ungheni, grapes production in Cahul area). In agriculture, the lack of irrigations system is a strong limitation in increasing productivity, especially considering the climate change effects in Moldova and the impact of droughts¹⁰;
- In the second component, the project creates in Ungheni new linkages between the center and the hinterland, on technical issues in the beginning (e.g., the water distribution system around Ungheni city, agreed through a Memorandum with 33 communes). The new linkages serve the purpose of demonstrating the advantages of “growth poles” in regional development. The project also supported planning and renewal of water distribution system in Ungheni, as a result of open consultative process;
- In Cahul, a “Single Window” is planned to be implemented, offering services of local nature (e.g., business permits, building permits), opposed to a “Multi-functional Center” opened in 2018, where services related to the national administration are offered;
- The fourth activity – the most progressive due to its innovative nature – will be implemented as of 2021, and will focus on value chains identified in the first component. The approach will be to create and support (up to eight) “clusters” of producers, and follow the value-creation from production through distribution and sale to the final consumer. The clusters will benefit of financing of up to 100.000 USD, and the beneficiaries will need to co-finance the projects;
- Another focus area in the fourth component is the “smart city”/ “smart regions” concept. They will include solutions to fostering green economy, resilient communities, delivering improved social services to vulnerable citizens, and others. As one of the first steps, UNDP asked the Ungheni city hall to create a zonal urban plan, helping in planning long term development;
- The Covid-19 pandemic brings a shift towards digital services, and UNDP is looking for ways to effectively support entrepreneurs in this area. The digitalization trend may consistently cover services offered by the public administration to the business sector (registration, licensing, certification and standardization), business streamlining processes, market e-research, digitalization of logistics (supply and distribution), FinTech solution payments, etc.;
- In Cahul, the European Union implements a complementary project “start-up city Cahul”, which aims at increasing the potential of the digital economy, enhancing regional competitiveness and its business and investment environment. UNDP carries close

¹⁰ http://drought.unccd.int/drought/main/Moldova_CountryReport.pdf

dialogue with the EU Delegation in Moldova, trying to identify synergies between the two projects;

- By the time the exchange of experience among the two regions was to expand, the pandemic-related travel restrictions occurred. The full potential for cooperation across the riverbanks is thus hindered, as highlighted in interviews. Once the travel limitations will be lifted, the in-person cooperation should be strengthened.

Conclusion: The project builds on results achieved during previous project; it differentiates between the two regions, focusing on the socio-economic strengths of Ungheni and tourism, culture and educational characteristics of Cahul. The innovative approach is having the Local Public Administration as partners, not as assisted beneficiaries, in operationalizing Local Development strategies previously developed. Besides supporting local administration and businesses in creating linkages and “clusters”, the project can also demonstrate the benefits brought by “growth poles” to the adjacent communities. Also, the “smart region” concept is new and has replicability potential after the results of the project will be achieved.

Recommendations:

- Provide learning opportunities to the Central Government of Moldova with fostering “growth poles”, and support research in defining other suitable regions in the country for replicating the working model, both in the Republic of Moldova and in the neighboring countries. The proved working models should only be adapted to the specificities of the new regions, in order to capitalize on the strengths of the new regions
- Increase communication and exchange experience among the two regions, as well as with other potentially interested regions by organizing (when allowed) field visits, (virtual) round-tables and through digital media.

Project 4: “Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme (V)” - is funded by the European Union and implemented between January 2019 and December 2021. The Project’s budget is envisaged at USD 10,693,971. The project aims to contribute to achieving Outcome 2 of the CPD through its main objectives:

Objective 1: To contribute to economic and social development by ensuring a more equal access to the opportunities provided by the Association Agreement (AA) and it Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and integration between the two banks of the Nistru River;

Objective 2: To tackle the growing disparity between the Transnistrian Region and the rest of the country by supporting local development and CSOs;

Objective 3: To continue supporting the sectoral rapprochement in pilot sectors (i.e., culture and others) and to progressively include Transnistria in Moldovan-wide development initiatives in order to facilitate the future reintegration while limiting the development gap between both banks;

Objective 4: To support the activities of media on both banks of Nistru river through common media production.

Findings:

- The current stage of the project builds on the previous project implemented between 2015 and 2018, a project that faced some challenges. The lessons learnt in the previous stage have been considered in the design phase of the current project. Additionally, examples of achievements in implementing SARD project in GTU are also given as examples in this project. Up to the evaluation, the Project implemented activities in all four action areas;
- the project supports SMEs on both banks of Nistru river with 26 grants, based on criteria like effect on building confidence measures, financial sustainability, involvement of young and women entrepreneurs, jobs preservation and measures mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic);
- Together with ODIMM, the project provided business guidance, organized a “Hackathon” to identify business ideas for young entrepreneurs and provides “business vouchers” for selected proposals. The activity addresses business entrepreneurs on both banks of the river;
- The project supports “cross-river business platforms”, fostering partnerships from both sides for business associations, NGOs, and small producers (for instance, lavender-oil and honey-producers);
- An important component is the cooperation in sports and culture, topics potentially less controversial than others. A call for ideas has been organized, with over 150 proposals being submitted, and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research is very committed to support projects. However, attention has to be paid in properly involving communities in maintaining results, and to “manipulated” cultural stories, especially related to history, ethnicity and language;
- Other topics are free of any bias, such as health, sport, education, culture, and environmental protection. The cooperation platforms on enumerated topics were created in the previous CBM phase and continue to work on joint collaborative solutions. These are sometimes the only communication vehicle between communities on both banks of the river;
- On the sustainability side, a good approach is to involve SMEs supported in previous SCBM project to act as mentors for newly established SMEs;
- A new collaboration topic for communities on both river banks is the health system, as a right people demand from the duty-bearers. Its significance increases during and post-Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusion: CBM is the most important cooperation platform and confidence building among the population on both river banks. At community level, people interact normally and remember well previous cooperation, the only major barrier being funding common activities. Women involvement is very good (with preliminary indicator of over 40 percent). UNDP employs the right approach in this project, increasing the intensity of activities gradually. The lessons learnt from previous stages (implement activities gradually, shift focus from infrastructure rehabilitation to business development, now to involving communities) are well considered and applied.

Recommendation:

- Continue and expand the cross-river cooperation platforms, with social and economic topics, also in order to ensure sustainability and lasting impacts.

Project 5: “Migration and Local Development (phase 2)” (MiDL) - is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented between January 2019 and December 2022. The Project’s budget is envisaged at USD 6,400,000. A strategic UN partner in this project is the

International Organization for Migration (IOM). The project aims to contribute to achieving Outcomes 1 and 2 of the CPD through its main objectives:

Objective 1: Moldovan labor, potential, actual and returning migrants benefit from the comprehensive employment support services;

Objective 2: Community members, including migrants are meaningfully engaged in the local development process.

The project benefits from an extensive Theory of Change, detailed for each of the two outcomes. The partnership is broad: State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, National Employment Agency, central and local public authorities, civil society, private sector and local community including the migrants from partner localities; Congress of Local Authorities.

Findings:

- The project builds on the results achieved in a previous project implemented till 2018 (focused on policy development, including a policy document adopted in 2017, provisioning the creation of migrant's associations). As a positive sustainable result of the previous project, the national programme „DAR 1+3”¹¹ was started in 2018 based on the approaches tested by the MIDL project and now constitutes a well-working mechanism;
- There is a distinction between the diaspora (migrants settled abroad) and returning migrants (with several migration waves). Each of them has different behavior and motivations, and support their communities of origin through expertise, charity or remittances. The projects address them with different approaches, and UNDP wants to demonstrate diaspora how they can contribute to the local development in their country of origin;
- 33 communities are currently involved (38 in the initial stage) in reintegrating potential and returning migrants and involving migrants in local development. With UNDPs support, the local government started to identify migrants, created databases and migration profiles, performed needs assessments of public services in communities and involved the communities in finding solutions to identified problems. After prioritization through participatory process, diaspora was involved through (crowd) funding, donations and expertise;
- The project also supported the MHLSP in upgrading the legal framework on legal migration and work abroad (via private recruitment agencies), and is currently assisting the Government (BRD) in drafting a new reintegration program for returned migrants;
- The project currently supports the National Employment Agency in focusing not only the returning migrants, but also support emigrants in finding better jobs abroad. The support includes also redesign of the building of the agency in Chisinau according to open-space standards and adapted for people with disabilities;
- The project also pilots a new local economic development methodology. There are 50 start-ups and 50 businesses supported as of 2020 benefiting of 25 Local Economic Development (LED) projects. In four of those 25 LED projects (in Ceadăr-Lunga, Cimișlia, Strășeni, and Edineț), MiDL offers support to developing technical capacities of the business support infrastructure (Business Incubators, Accelerators, Business Centers and Industrial Parks);

¹¹ <https://brd.gov.md/ro/content/diaspora-acasa-reuseste-dar-13>

- A new integrated approach is piloted currently: not only to involve the local community and (returning) migrants, but also the business sector in the same project;
- UNDP is recognized as an effective partner, with well-established partnerships, relationships and drive for change, employing best-practices and high expertise. On the other hand, in spite of established policies and procedures, UNDP is capable to be more flexible than other international organizations, responding fast to needs and requests from partners and stakeholders (characteristic highlighted by almost all interviewees);
- The MiDL project offers a comprehensive (institutional management) capacity development support to LPAs and HTA from the very early stage (the intention to engage migrants) to more advanced stages (project implementation). That applies to all communities where the project works. Most of the HTAs receive guidance and consultancy from CALM, as project partner, or from the MiDL project itself. There are a host of knowledge products (guidelines, trainings) made available to the HTA and new initiative groups, explaining in every detail each step of the way in creating and functioning of the HTA and engaging migrants. At the same time, all HTA apply the principles of transparency in their activity, reporting publicly (on social media most often) on the use of the funds collected for projects, as well as in planning and reporting their activities on a regular basis (usually during the Diaspora days).

Conclusion: The Project is properly designed to continue the remaining results of the previous activities. The integrated support offered to local administration and communities has a strong logic and creates the premises for a high sustainability. The demonstrational effect becomes critical considering the rising importance of the migration (also considered in the next National Strategy Paper till 2030, "Moldova 2030"). The private sector involvement in offering community services is focusing mainly in creating a more enabling local business environment and enhance economic development.

Recommendations:

- To achieve a higher impact, the positive results (cooperation model) should be replicated in other communities across Moldova. The Program "DAR 1+3" is a good example of initiative adapted and adopted to country level by the central administration, following successful initiatives piloted locally or regionally;
- Continue analyzing the mutations in the status and mindset of long-term migrants, as their relation and behavior towards their community of origin changes in time. They might become less involved in the community, but could be involved as "promoting agents" for Moldovan products abroad;
- Further capitalize on the achievements with the tourism and culture promotion cross-themes in the existing initiatives; half of the 25 LED projects are focused on local tourism promotion, and some of them include "green" elements;
- Include other cross-themes in the existing initiatives: environmental protection (in cooperation with the UNDP Energy and Environment Cluster), resilience, digitalization (see the "Digital Platform to Engage Diaspora Members in Development" of IOM launched in 2018).

Project 6: "Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions" - is implemented between January 2019 and December 2020. The Project's budget is envisaged at USD 515,000 and is implemented in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of

Gagauzia. The project aims to contribute to achieving Outcome 4 of the UNDAF through its three objectives:

Objective 1: Approaches for reducing GBV using evidence are documented, tested and integrated in selected country initiatives;

Objective 2: Decision makers are equipped with and use enhanced policy recommendations to reduce GBV;

Objective 3: Local partners have new knowledge, skills and tools to reduce GBV.

Findings:

- Multi-Disciplinary Task Force on Counteracting Gender-based-violence was established, and has approved job descriptions and regulations;
- A situational-analysis report, was elaborated, containing proposals of interventions and connections between SDGs and local targets;
- Chirsova community has developed and implemented - jointly with the community members and with support from the project - a Local Action Plan for combating gender-based violence;
- The renovation of the first regional center for assisting survivors of gender-based violence in the region was finalized. Over 200 people donated US\$ 3970 through a fundraising campaign to renovate the center; a significant contribution was provided by regional authorities, which indicates clear interest and commitment;
- An extensive communication campaign on the consequences of the violence was carried out in Chirsova village and in other localities in the region;
- Within the economic component, 16 women and 4 men from Chirsova village participated in trainings on economic empowerment. Subsequently, most of them developed business plans and participated in a grant competition for opening their own businesses and creating new jobs.

Conclusion: the project has a clear focus, both thematically as well as geographically. The approach of performing a situational study, establish the Task Force and then to involve the local community in combatting GBV is excellent, with sustainability potential. The activities are relevant not only for the Gagauzian province, but for the entire country, and the potential success of the project should be given as an example and popularized across the country. The "Planning and Paying" approach, bringing together diverse community stakeholders, is innovative and the results will be monitored to assess its scaling up suitability.

Additional to the six projects implemented during the current programming phase, results of a previously implemented project have been reviewed: "Support for agriculture and rural development in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district" (SARD), implemented between 2016 and December 2018, with a total budget of USD 7,142,857. The objectives of the project were

- To enhance dialogue and community empowerment;
- To support for local entrepreneurship initiatives and SMEs' development;
- To support in infrastructure refurbishment and promotion of inter-municipal cooperation.

Through this project, 41 local public authorities (LPAs) received support for capacity development, community mobilization and institutional development, local socio-economic development strategies for 2017-2022 were developed and ten strategies were updated. Additionally, 30 start-ups received grants and coaching support, two cross-sectorial business associations were

established (Association of Business People of Gagauzia NEXT, and the Taraclia Business Association), 41 infrastructure projects have been implemented (renovated local roads, schools, kindergartens, sports facilities, cultural and social centers, street lighting, waste management and water supply and sanitation systems). The first eight Local Action Groups (LAGs) from Moldova were established and formalized, and they implemented in their turn 108 projects (protection of cultural heritage, better local services, development of local business and of rural tourism).

Chapter 4 – Evaluation Criteria

3.1 Relevance

The vision for sustainable development in the Republic of Moldova is coined in the National Development Strategy – “Moldova 2020”. It focuses on seven priority areas for economic growth and poverty reduction, including topics such as fostering businesses, access to finance, education and justice. At the time of evaluation, the subsequent Strategy – Moldova 2030 – was under approval process. The Concept Note¹² analyzes the stringent problems the country faces, and identifies ten priorities, mostly regarding social-economic aspects, with new additions – migration and demographic problems, governance, health, technology and climate change. For the future, migration, governance, education, technology and innovation could constitute focus areas for UNDP.

Based on thorough analysis, the fundamental working document for UN agencies in Moldova – the “Republic of Moldova–United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018–2022” – formulates four Priority Areas, to align and coordinate the support in achieving strategic country objectives:

Priority Area 1: Governance, Human Rights and Gender Equality

Priority Area 2: Sustainable, Inclusive and Equitable Economic Growth

Priority Area 3: Environmental Sustainability and Resilience

Priority Area 4: Inclusive and Equitable Social Development

Stemming from the UNDAF priorities, the UNDP’s Country Programme Document (CPD) for the Republic of Moldova (2018-2022) was approved in June 2017. The programme is built on broad consultations with various stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. Additionally, lessons learnt in the previous programmes have been considered. The CPD details the context analysis and justifies the objectives chosen to be pursued for the programming period, defining three implementation pillars:

Pillar 1. Governance, human rights and gender equality

Pillar 2. Sustainable and inclusive growth

Pillar 3. Climate change, environment and energy

¹² https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/nota_de_concept.pdf - last accessed in December 2020

As defined in the CPD, the second pillar aims to contribute through its objectives at achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 16.

The sustainable and inclusive growth Pillar defined its ways of contributing to the second UNDAF Outcome by implementing and achieving three Outputs:

- 2.1 Public institutions and private entities have improved capacities to design and implement innovative policies for inclusive, resilient economic growth;
- 2.2 Women, youth and people from regions with special status benefit from better skills, access to resources and sustainable jobs and livelihoods;
- 2.3 Improved local public services and upgraded infrastructure to enhance accessibility to and boost resilient local economic development, including in regions with special status and across the conflict divide.

After thorough analysis and dialogue with national partners, UNDP defined and proposed a set of projects aiming at contributing to achieving the three Outputs, and the fourth UNDAF Outcome:

- The project “Advanced cross-river capacities for trade” contributes to achieving Outcome 2;
- The “Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova (Phase 3)” contributes to achieving Outcomes 1 and 2;
- The project “EU4Moldova: Focal Regions” contributes to achieving Outcome 2;
- The Project “Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme (V)” contributes to achieving Outcome 2;
- The project “Migration and Local Development (phase 2)” contributes to achieving Outcomes 1 and 2;
- The project “Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions” contributes to achieving to 4th UNDAF Outcome.

Additionally, results of an additional project started during the previous country programming period were assessed: “Support for agriculture and rural development in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district” (SARD)”, implemented between 2016 and December 2018.

The specific objectives and intervention logic are detailed in the next chapter – 3.2 Effectiveness. The projects cover systematically the CPD objectives and address problems identified in the CPD analysis.

The analysis and commitments within the CPD 2018-2022 indicate a high level of equality relevance. The CPD signals high inequalities in terms of employment and entrepreneurship (women, men and women with disability, young, elderly women), significant marginalization and exclusion from education and employment (roma men and women, people living with disabilities), unequal representation, participation and voice to shape local and national policies (for all groups). The CPD also recognizes that there is a concrete need to support the Human Rights reform agenda in order to make sure that Moldovan authorities deliver on their policy commitments in terms of gender equality, inclusion of persons with disabilities, empowering roma men and women, and supporting young people to fulfill their potential.

An additional question not present in the ToR was pursued during the evaluation: whether the objectives of the Cluster’s Programme are still relevant at the time of evaluation (midway in implementation). Both the interviews (at the national, regional, and local levels) and the statistics

at mezzo- and macroeconomic levels relevant for the country, confirm the continuous high relevance (see also Chapter 2 for relevant indicators related to the socio-economic current status).

The interviews carried with other international donor organizations confirmed the validity of the chosen objectives, as their country programmes cover broadly the same or adjacent topics.

The Cluster's Programme aligned its objectives with the National Development Strategy, the UNDAF, and CPD, and considered the relevant needs of the country through relevant initial analysis. The goals set were and still are relevant at all levels. The Programme design included lessons learned during previously implemented country programme. With all these considerations, the evaluation rates the Inclusive Growth's Programme as *Highly Satisfactory*.

3.2 Effectiveness

In order to address the country programme objectives, the Inclusive Growth Cluster formulated the set of activities with participatory consultations with stakeholders from the public sector, civil society and international organizations active in the Republic of Moldova. Most of the projects are continuations of previously implemented activities, while some are newly introduced. One project – "Support for agriculture and rural development in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district" (SARD) - started in 2016 and has been finalized during the current programming period, and had inter-linkages with current projects.

As most of the current projects build on results achieved in previous programming periods, they build on legal frameworks created or strengthened, or on development plans designed in participatory ways. In this stage, projects focus on supporting the implementation of the plans, strengthening supply-side and demand-side in considering human rights, GBV and gender balance aspects in activities. Local communities (including HTAs) are empowered and capacitated to influence local development plans and involve migrants in communities.

The activities to design appropriate projects, set-up and start implementation started timely, and the implementation faced no major challenges up to the Covid-19 pandemic. The progress of implementation is appropriate, with many enabling elements achieved or about to be achieved, as outlined in the projects' description part (Chapter X).

The three Outputs in the CPD have a set of indicators that monitor the progress and – in the end – the success of the programme.

One proxy indicator for measuring success of the support offered to improve the business environment is the global competitiveness index (GCI), coined by the World Economic Forum and defined as a set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country, conditions of public institutions and technical factors. Moldova ranked in the last ten years between 82nd and 94th place, with a slight constant improvement from 89th to 86th between 2016 and 2019. Given the complexity of calculating the Index and multitude of determinants factored in, a correlation between UNDPs contribution and the GCI for the Republic of Moldova is not relevant with the available data.

The share of youth neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) in Moldova remained unchanged between 2013 and 2015 (28.8 and 28.9 per cent, respectively). The share among young women was higher than that of young men (34.8 and 23.2 per cent, respectively).

The latest data released by the Moldovan National Statistics Bureau¹³ on NEET value is for the third and fourth quarter of 2018, when the NEET value recorded 24.9, respectively 27.1 percent (values revolving around the programme's target value for 2022). The persistently high rate of young people not in employment, education or training might not reflect improved employment prospects, but a shrinking young population, limited readiness to work or a reliance on remittances. (source: European Training Foundation, "Moldova, Education, Training and Employment Developments 2018".) In order to target specifically the NEETs, strategies should be designed to address national, local or even school level specificities.

The Small Area Deprivation Index (SADI) has been defined and used by the Ministry of Economy, and accordingly by UNDP as performance indicator. The Index has been dropped by the Ministry of Economy, and data collection is unfeasible now for UNDP, hence the need to define a new indicator. How deprivation is measured has a great impact on its explanatory power with respect to all socio-economic aspects of people's life. Additionally, new dimensions – environment, resilience, - have been recently factored in, trying to capture a more complex image. The importance of such an indicator is that sometimes it is used by governments in an attempt to focus funding on the most disadvantaged communities.

Some countries use the concept of "Multiple Deprivation Measure", focusing on material deprivation (e.g., Scotland, Northern Ireland). Some other countries (e.g., Australia, Canada) factor in social deprivation (family relations, household type, demographic or ethnic characteristics of the community). The material deprivation measures (all or some) (un-)employment, material wealth (car ownership or income), indicators of socioeconomic position, particularly education and occupation, and housing conditions, such as overcrowding, home ownership or renting from a public authority. Additional factors might be geographic access or green space. It is important to consider that different aspects of socioeconomic deprivation may be important in rural and urban areas of Moldova. Besides the quantifiable indicators, the own-perceived position in the social ladder is used to operationalize a community's socioeconomic status.

An example of relevant measurement is the European Deprivation Index (EDI), created from a weighed sum of census indicators associated with an individual deprivation indicator and the weights assigned to those indicators were resulted from a multivariable regression model. The primary data is delivered by the latest national Census. Academic studies propose five stages in defining a small-area composite measures: selection of appropriate data and geographic area; selection of individual deprivation indicators; constructing the index: combining and weighting indicators; validation and sensitivity analysis; dealing with uncertainty. UNDP could take the lead in defining a new Moldovan index, coordinating with academia and national government.

The Country Program contributes through its second Outcome to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 4 (quality education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The nationalization of the SDG Indicators for the Republic of Moldova further details the indicators to make them relevant for the local context, and increase the reliability of correct data collection and reporting. Each of the relevant SDGs have defined sub-indicators. For instance, the SDG 17 has defined 10 indicators relevant for Moldova. The Cluster team monitors annually the performance

¹³ <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&id=6287&idc=168>

Data without Transnistrian region and Bender municipality.

against the Indicators, with declared good progress. The available data at the time of evaluation was for 2019, too soon after the programme's start in order to objectively assess the progress.

Due to the challenges posed by the Covid-19, UNDP reacted fast in two ways: it helped local partners, communities and beneficiaries with first aid equipment (face-masks, disinfectants, etc.), items unavailable otherwise so fast. Secondly, the reaction included quick analysis, a local-level needs assessment conducted in April-May 2020, and adaptive management decisions based on the analysis. Many of the events were moved to online platforms, with different execution philosophies and different behaviors from beneficiaries.

By slightly redesigning activities by moving them in online, two potential unintended results are emerging:

- Accelerated digitalization of public services is required. For this, the infrastructure needs upgrade, access to infrastructure needs to be eased (bots supply-side), and the final beneficiaries need increased digital literacy (demand side)¹⁴. The Focal Regions project currently tests such digitalization initiatives at regional and local levels. Based on this work, UNDP intends to support the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment with setting up regulatory norms and with development interventions.
- The environmental footprint might have been lower by moving activities in online. However, this theory is only a supposition, as the increased online usage is reflected in higher electricity consumption, both for the end-user devices, internet traffic as well as for cooling respective servers.

The implementation of the Cluster's projects is following the plan, and the progress in achieving the objectives is good. The Covid-19 pandemic challenged the Cluster team with rapid reaction in reshuffling activities and adapt them to the new realities, but the slight delays will not impact the overall attainment of objectives. An objective assessment of the progress is difficult to be made at the point of evaluation, as statistic data is not available yet. Overall, the effectiveness is rated as *Satisfactory*.

¹⁴ One innovation in the world of education is Tekwill: an ultra-modern IT hub created by the Moldovan Association of Information and Communications Technology Companies, with support from USAID and the government of Sweden. Tekwill offers office space, resources and education to the new generation of IT enthusiasts, professionals and entrepreneurs. Tekwill's new youth programme (TwentyTu) aims to deliver teacher training, equip schools with modern equipment and develop new educational programmes to teach emotional intelligence, entrepreneurship and digital literacy. <https://www.tekwill.md/about>

Project	Implementation Period	Objectives	Activities	Assessment
Advanced cross-river capacities for trade	2019 – 2022	<p>O1: Improved cross-river exchange of information, knowledge, experience, and understanding of the opportunities provided by Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)</p> <p>O2: Increased export activity of the business community from the Transnistria region as a result of better export promotion capacities and access to cross-river export support opportunities</p> <p>O3: Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises across the Nistru river, in particular those led by women and benefitting vulnerable groups, are enabled to produce more competitive products.</p>	<p>O1. Six Business Support Organizations (three in TN) are engaged in capacity building activities across the river;</p> <p>More than 50 companies in Transnistria have been informed on the opportunities provided by DCFTA and technical steps needed to access EU market through six master classes, four focus groups, and one press club;</p> <p>O2. 25 companies from Transnistria region received consultancy/certification support in certification standards, business model to export, research and selection of markets for export, export marketing and partner attraction, sales process organization and building relationships with customers, legal aspects and financing of export transactions,</p> <p>10 companies were selected for development of sales and marketing plans, and for the development of action plans for export development. The activities for identification of partners and export market are under way and envisage the targeted support for at least 7 companies.</p> <p>1337 jobs (63% women) are maintained during the pandemic for companies participating in the Export Accelerator Initiative by providing capacity building, e-commerce, certification support to individual companies and at least 17 (>70% women) new jobs were created as a result of the Small Business Support Programme implementation.</p> <p>A call for application for supporting agricultural producers and processors on both banks of the river willing to join their efforts to penetrate new export markets or to increase their presence on the domestic and foreign markets is launched by the end of 2020, resulting in the creation of at least 5 processing facilities</p> <p>The Annual Trade Forum 2020 was postponed for February 2021 due to pandemic situation. In addition, the partner search and organization of B2B meetings with distributor/retailers from the EU market with at least four domestic companies are under implementation and expected to be finalized by end of March 2021.</p>	<p>The activities follow the Work Plans, and the delays induced by Covid-19 pandemic are slight.</p> <p>The financial execution is at 99% by end of 2020 compared to the plan.</p> <p>Activity 2.5 will commence in 2021.</p>
Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the	2019 – 2022	<p>O1: Increased capacities of vulnerable rights holders to exercise their human rights;</p> <p>O2: Increased capacities of duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations;</p>	<p>Assessment of the institutional capacities of the Sustainable (Community) Development Platform's members concluded, and data on 30 individual organizations institutional capacities collected. The findings of the institutional capacity assessment formed the basis for the development of institutional capacities development plan. Institutional capacity development activities are initiated.</p> <p>350 articles related to human rights were published in the left bank media, with more than 300.000 people being informed about vulnerable groups and human rights. Additionally, the activity of the</p>	<p>The project is on track in spite of the Covid-19 limitations.</p> <p>The community mobilization for empowerment approach is a very good one, the results should be closely</p>

Republic of Moldova (Phase 3)		O3: Enhanced human rights culture in the Transnistrian region.	three thematic working groups with the Sustainable (Community) Development Platform was initiated and the first meetings organized.	monitored in case it will become a Best Practice.
EU4Moldova: Focal Regions	2019 – 2024	O1: To strengthen transparency, accountability of local public authorities and citizen participation in local governance processes in focal regions;	4 CSOs involved in joint actions with LPAs in the target regions (for rural development initiatives). 4 priority local development projects implemented (large-scale reconstruction/beautification of the urban centers). 30 % staff from local public authorities trained	Activities are implemented according to the plan.
		O2: To improve citizen's access to quality public services and utilities in the focal regions;	78,000 people benefit from improved public services and renovated infrastructure	
		O3: To create employment opportunities for men and women in the focal regions and improve the attractiveness of the focal regions for investors and entrepreneurs;	Local brand of two regions is developed 26 of business supported, including women Two social entrepreneurs supported, including women	The social entrepreneurship component is present. Strong women empowerment in business.
		Objective 4: To promote the smart specialization of the economy of the focal regions through the development of the clustering and value chain approach in key economic sectors.	Activities will commence in 2021.	This component contains an innovative approach, to be followed its effectiveness.
Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme (V)	2019 - 2021	O1: To contribute to economic and social development by ensuring a more equal access to the opportunities provided by the Association Agreement (AA) and its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area and integration between the two banks of the Nistru River;	- Cooperation with ODIMM is set up to provide the start-up and follow-up seminars-on-demand for beneficiaries who will start businesses on the left bank; - Four Cross-river Business Support Platforms (associations of Beekeepers, Fruit Growers and Essential Oil producers, Trade Chambers of Moldova and Transnistria) received grant support for joint development programmes over next 2 years. Over 1800 farmers and SMEs will benefit from training, mentoring, matchmaking and study visits support; - capacity built (through two one-week trainings conducted by joint team of experts from right and left bank) for 45 left-bank tourist industry representatives (from hotels, restaurants tourist agencies, guides and museum workers);	This component is sustainable, by creating cooperation platforms and providing support to business associations. The focus on cross-river partnerships and cooperation is the right approach to strengthen cooperation and trust building.
		Objective 2: To tackle the growing disparity between the Transnistrian Region and the rest of the country by supporting local development and CSOs;	- 14 communities benefit from infrastructure projects in various stages of implementation (Rezina-bridge lighting is completed). The projects include: renovation of 4 sport grounds, two culture houses, two kindergartens and two schools; one community center, one park, one street illumination and one waste management; - 20 NGOs and LPAs will have improved capacity to implement development projects; 20 NGOs and LPAs are improving their capacities through 10 EU funded Community support small grants; 609	

			<p>representatives of LPAs and NGOs from both banks of Nistru river improved their project writing capacities during four informative meetings and nine seminars;</p> <p>- Approx. 243 NGOs and Professionals are involved in development of five Cross -River Thematic Sectoral platforms, supported by EU CBM 5 grants; 10 Community development small grants are at various stages of implementation.</p>	
		<p>O3: To continue supporting the sectoral rapprochement in pilot sectors (i.e culture and others) and to progressively include Transnistria in Moldovan-wide development initiatives in order to facilitate the future reintegration while limiting the development gap between both banks;</p>	<p>- Implemented: two common cultural public events, one Music Festival (in Bender Fortress), eight Youth Orchestra concerts conducted. Around 2000 individuals participated.</p> <p>- two flagship projects and 10 cultural infrastructure projects are under various stages of development, with technical expertise completed and the tendering processes was launched, to complete the Master plan elaboration for Bender fortress.</p> <p>- Cultural Heritage fund Implementation Modality is developed to set up procedures to provide support to smaller scale Cultural heritage objects (including immaterial ones).</p>	<p>The cultural events are a risk-free activity to unite people from both banks.</p>
		<p>O4: To support the activities of media on both banks of Nistru river through common media production.</p>	<p>- formational seminar for 64 media and production houses professionals (18 – from the left bank) with networking opportunities was conducted with the goal to identify applicants for joint media projects/co-productions;</p> <p>- A study tour for up to 10 media and production houses representatives to learn from experience of multicultural/multi-ethnic/multilanguage TV station is under preparation;</p> <p>- An open-end call for proposals was developed, approved by the board and launched in October 2019 to identify applicants for joint media projects/co-productions.</p> <p>- a Needs Assessment study for media outlets and production houses was performed. The study results were used to develop open-end call for proposals to identify applicants for joint media projects/co-productions to be broadcasted on prime time of some supported media contents including the Transnistrian region. 14 Media coproduction projects are at various stages of implementation. Five co-productions were broadcasted or are in the process of broadcasting with airing on prime time.</p>	<p>Media cooperation is important as it may serve as platform of communication on various topics. It may serve the purpose of communicating common interest across the river banks.</p>
<p>Migration and Local Development (phase 2)</p>	<p>2019 - 2022</p>	<p>Objective 1: Moldovan labor, potential, actual and returning migrants benefit from the comprehensive employment support services.</p>	<p>- two legal documents (legislative amendments to the Law on employment, and to a Government Decision) were approved by the Moldovan Parliament, promulgated by the President of the Republic of Moldova and published in the Official Gazette. These amendments will enter into force in 2021;</p> <p>- 2369 migrants were assisted by private recruitment agencies to secure a job abroad in countries like Poland, Holland, Germany and others;</p> <p>- 94 local employment office staff (migration focal points from each territorial unit and central office of NEA) have improved capacity to engage online with beneficiaries and to provide employment reintegration support;</p>	<p>The project is important in valorizing the role played by the returning migrants and migrants supporting their local communities while being abroad. HTA's coagulate</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First upgraded local employment office from Chisinau municipality offers improved employment services to migrants at all stages of migration and all other categories of jobseekers, considering the specific needs of all categories of beneficiaries; - 4016 beneficiaries, incl. 52% women and 93 returned migrants, benefited from employment support of Chisinau employment office. 	the energies and resources, and UNDP's support is crucial both in establishing HTAs and in implementing projects.
		Objective 2: Community members, including migrants are meaningfully engaged in the local development process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 46 projects are initiated by Hometown Associations (HTA) in 41 communities in partnership with LPAS (as part of the HTA Incubator, HTA Accelerator 1+1, DAR 1+3, HTA junior grants programs) for local public service development; - 32 (out of 35 pre-selected) communities are promoting systemic local economic development and services improvement interventions, based on a broad Diaspora – engagement process; - 332 LPAs representatives and local actors from 83 partner communities improved knowledge on participatory local planning as result of the capacity building program organized in 2020; - 25 local economic development projects are initiated in 25 target communities; - LED projects are expected to benefit circa 200 000 beneficiaries from target communities, including 48 existing business to expand, 50 new start-ups and circa 1000 new jobs to be created Local public service development projects will enhance access to local services for a total number of 201 841 beneficiaries - Over 1,500 of local stakeholders were consulted on defining the economic proprieties to be supported by MiDL; 4200 community members, including migrants consulted on new local priorities to be solved in 2020 with their active participation. - 83 HTAs representatives (including over 50% women) fortified as local drivers liaising with the diaspora and local stakeholders in the community development process. - 39 new HTAs were established in 2020. 	
Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions	2019 - 2020	<p>Objective 1: Approaches for reducing GBV using evidence are documented, tested and integrated in selected country initiatives;</p> <p>Objective 2: Decision makers are equipped with and use enhanced policy recommendations to reduce GBV;</p> <p>Objective 3: Local partners have new knowledge, skills and tools to reduce GBV.</p>	<p>UNDP tests in Moldova the "Planning and Paying" approach, bringing together diverse community stakeholders. The project will be costed to assess value for money and estimate the cost of possible scale up, to reach a greater number of people. The United Nations University International Institute of Global Health (UNU-IIGH) will conduct this costing research.</p> <p>Created a multi-disciplinary task force on combating GBV and signed an MOU between the government and UNDP Moldova to establish a women's safe space, the first of its kind in the region of Gagauzia.</p> <p>Achieved: team and partner recruitment, situational analysis/formative research, nine capacity building activities, ongoing implementation of local planning and paying process, community crowdfunding campaign, theatre performances and community mobilization.</p>	Activities are implemented according to the plan.

Table 1: Projects implemented under the current Country Programme under the Inclusive Growth Pillar – results table

3.3 Project Implementation and Adaptive Management (Efficiency)

Management Arrangements

The projects follow the UNDP standard approach in setting up the management structure of projects, with Project Board, Senior Supplier – UNDP, Project assurance and the Project Team. The Project Steering Committee (PSC) comprises all critical stakeholders and has a steering role, reaching consensus-based decisions. The PSCs convened regularly for all projects, and no special issues have been signaled.

UNDP (through the project teams and with Country Office support) is responsible with implementation of project activities, procurement of goods and services, recruitment of personnel and external consultants, performs the monitoring function and provides continuous feedback and information sharing among stakeholders and to the public.

The management of the cluster activities is performed by a team composed of a Programme Specialist, Programme Analyst, Programme Officer (position filled in during the time of evaluation) and a Programme Associate. Considering the magnitude of activities, the team is overloaded with work, especially with a vacant position.

Finance and Co-Finance

UNDP relies mostly on extra-budgetary resources; hence all projects are implemented with funding from external partners: the European Union, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Swedish Embassy in the Republic of Moldova and others. The budget allocations have been negotiated with the donors in the design stage, and are commensurate to the magnitude of activities and extent of expected results.

The projects have been implemented according to the plan in 2019, with a percentage of 93.6 delivery related to the planned budget. The Covid-19 pandemic affected activities in 2020 through delays, still the activities could be adapted and implemented through reactive adaptive management, so the delivery versus total budget was 84.9 percent. The financial execution of the portfolio is used in this case as a proxy indicator, reflecting the capacity of the management to assess the changing environment, understand the risks and challenges, employ dialogue with stakeholders and take appropriate decisions to achieve the planned results.

The financial management is subject to the UNDP Moldova's Standard Operating Procedures and is performed through the UNDP Automatically Tuned Linear Algebra Software (ATLAS). The budgeting, payments and procurement follow the standard procedures, and the evaluation does not see any issues or potential improvements in this matter.

The projects involving the (returning) migrants used a co-financing approach (both from local authorities and returnees), stimulating the local communities and migrants to get involved financially, in order to co-interest the stakeholders, enhance the size of the activity and to serve as a model to be replicated.

Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The CPD dedicates a short chapter to Monitoring and Evaluation, referring to the indicators set for the outputs and outcomes, the collection of gender-disaggregated data and the need to strengthen the capacities of the National Bureau of Statistics. The indicators are SMART, have baseline values and realistic targets.

The project documents have more detailed Monitoring Plans, with monitoring activities, purpose of data collection, frequency, partners if applicable and cost. By the time of evaluation, only draft versions of progress reports were produced, with no issues signaled on the timing or quality of the reports.

One important by-product of the reporting system are lessons learnt in the course of implementation, for their role in adjusting on-going activities as they develop and the environment changes. Lessons Learnt were mentioned in interviews, but the only formalization mentioned so far is in the Results Oriented Annual Reports.

Due to its specificity, the One-UN projects has the most laborious Monitoring mechanism implemented through a singular methodology: One joint M&E framework, field visits (followed by Travel report); consultations and reviews with stakeholders; Joint annual (and quarterly) Programme Reports; and the Joint Annual Programme Review Report. It was mentioned in interviews that only UNICEF has a dedicated person for M&E activities.

As they are defined, the monitoring and reporting mechanisms are well set up and no shortcoming is expected. The output and outcome indicators are established with baselines and clear outputs, so a credible assessment of the performance at the end of the programme is highly probable.

Stakeholder engagement and Coordination

In order to maximize the positive effects and results of the programme (including by securing sustainability), a broad range of stakeholders have been involved in programme's design and implementation.

Government institutions – the collaboration continues with good results, building on the achievements of previous programmes. All interviews highlighted the continued relevance for cooperation, the open communication with UNDP, and the excellent support in building capacities. On the other hand, all project designs are based on stakeholder consultation and sound needs assessment, and the Steering Committees include all relevant partners in a consensus-achieving process.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), as the principal intergovernmental organization working in the field of migration, plays an ever-increasing role in supporting migration in Moldova. A joint letter from the senior management of IOM and UNDP has been released in October 2020, announcing the development of a joint action plan and community of practice to strengthen the cooperation, with particular focus on four areas:

- Strategic collaboration on the socio-economic response to COVID-19;
- Joint outreach and advice to country and regional offices;
- Rolling out joint fundraising and advocacy plans in selected programming areas and countries;
- Establish regular technical and strategic exchange and secondments.

One of the first concrete joint initiative is based on seed-funding, available to initiate “bold, innovative and people-centered solutions”¹⁵.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) launched a Country Programme (CP) covering the period from 2019 to 2023 to accelerate inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the country. UNIDO intends to increase industrial productivity, stimulate entrepreneurship and encourage knowledge and innovation, areas of interest also for UNDP. Additionally, considering the industrial profile of the Transnistrian region and the established relationships, UNDP can become a strategic partner for UNIDO in the Republic of Moldova.

An emerging player supporting the modernization of public services delivery is the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM). As a partner in the negotiations on decentralization, it provides support to local authorities and full participation in the network of local governments in Europe. The involvement of CALM is evidenced in the MiDL project, where CALM serves as a scale-up agent, multiplying the use of the UNDP-designed approach of involving migrants for development. The same aim has the inclusion of CALM in the Local Steering Committee of the Focal Regions project, which contributes to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach. Thanks to its expertise, CALM plays a key role in strengthening the project’s role in conceptualizing a network of HTAs, and to offer the support system to the HTAs in the future.

A Donor Coordination platform existed before 2017, where international organizations communicated and synchronized their approaches and areas of work. Currently, the coordination is only performed at technical level. For instance, for the EU4Environment programme, an Inter-ministerial Working Group on the promotion of Sustainable Development and Green Economy, is functional as of end of 2020. A revival of the previous Republic of Moldova – European Union Association Sub-Committee (SC) on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) might be useful also in the economic and social development, bringing stakeholders to dialogue and coordination. Another example of coordination at technical level is the Coordination Committee on the National Policy Dialogue on Integrated Water Resources Management, with a wide representation of the international organizations. As a result of the Governmental Decree 377/25.04.2018 (regarding the mechanism of coordination and management of the external assistance), Sectoral Councils in the field of external assistance for the sectors coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure will be started in February 2021. These Councils are a good communication and coordination platform, and they should include both policy and technical work in the relevant areas.

¹⁵ Joint Letter from the Director General of the International Organization for Migration and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, October 2020.

The European Commission granted a Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) programme of up to EUR 100 million in 2017, setting up a set of performance criteria (public governance, financial sector governance, energy sector reforms and tackling corruption). The last disbursement of 30 million Euro was approved in October 2020. This kind of large-scale financial instruments should be seconded by a strong set of conditionalities, but – most important – by a high-level political dialogue to facilitate reforms. Unfortunately, at this stage this dialogue is missing. UNDP could have had a prestigious voice in the dialogue, considering the good partnerships with stakeholders and the high profile. The contribution would entail formulation of conditionalities under the remit of the Inclusive Growth Pillar.

The Cluster's programme has a sound management structure and policies, reflected in a good financial management of the available funds, and manages to involve beneficiaries' and partner's co-financing. The reporting and M&E framework are adequate. The stakeholder engagement is well established both with central and local administration and includes good cooperation with the de-facto administration in Transnistrian region. The coordination is very good with other donors, and could be scaled up through higher-level dialogue and conditionalities. Accordingly, the efficiency is *Satisfactory*.

3.4 Sustainability

In the programmatic documents (UNDAF and CPD), the sustainability of the programmes is not explicitly addressed, but implied through elements contributing to sustainability. This approach is continued in most of the project documents in portfolio, where factors contributing to the sustainability of the projects (mostly through strengthening capacities of beneficiaries) are enumerated.

Each project has different prospects for sustainability:

1. *Advanced cross-river capacities for trade*: Given the DCFTA framework in which the project supports the business entities, the potential sustainability is ensured. However, the support given to entrepreneurs on enhancing their business and export depends on macroeconomic factors beyond the control of the project. support offered to business associations is durable enough to last beyond the end of project, being the foundation for ensuring continuity of provision of new or improved business services developed with the project support. The benefitting companies have improved their export capacities and will make use of these while exporting or performing cross-river trade, the main goal of the project. However, the economic fragility (caused by low capitalization of the economy and weak infrastructure, including of ICT infrastructure) are very strong risk factors for the sustainability likelihood;
2. *Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova*: the ProDoc has a paragraph dedicated to sustainability and scaling up, mentioning the partnerships and the role of CSOs in ensuring this concept. The project's sustainability is enhanced through the approach on establishing working groups with the Sustainable (Community) Development Platform. For example, the

- joint efforts and exchange of experience in the area of legal approximation have resulted in December 2020 with the adoption of the decision by the de facto structures to allow persons living with HIV to adopt children. Raising public awareness on human rights potentially contributes to the sustainability of the project by empowering people and communities in demanding their rights, the extent of the impact of these efforts will be measurable in the medium to long term;
3. EU4Moldova: Focal Regions – the description of action contains a separate chapter, analyzing three main factors ensuring project sustainability: (I) ownership and sustainability of partnerships, (II) institutional sustainability and strengthening of capacities, and (III) financial sustainability. The partnerships with regional and local administration and their continued ownership are underlined by a long-lasting cooperation; this project builds on a previous one, when the public administration received support to upgrade their Development Strategies. In the current formula, the institutions are not simply recipients of support, but partners in implementing activities, increasing the likelihood of sustainability
 4. Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme (V): this project has a very high sustainability probability in the components supporting business associations and creating cooperation platforms. The cultural cooperation components just started with a cross-river cooperation platform on culture, involving culture professionals, CSOs and local authorities from both banks. Additionally, a “Cultural Heritage Committee” has been established, consisting of cultural heritage professionals from both banks, endowed with small grants projects aiming to help these actors implement solutions, increasing the likelihood for sustainability of results. A good approach is to involve SMEs supported in previous SCBM project to act as mentors for newly established SMEs;
 5. Migration and Local Development (phase 2): most of the activities are implemented in partnership with newly established “Hometown Associations” (“Asociații de Băștinași”). The Associations comprise returned migrants, current migrants and people from the local community. This approach is ensuring the sustainability of the activities, especially as the people are involved in prioritizing and co-financing activities relevant for their communities. However, the success is depending on the capacities of HTAs to run efficiently and administer complex activities and funds;
 6. Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions: the sustainability is high due to the correct approach: performing a situational study, establish the Task Force and then to involve the local community in combatting GBV.

The completed project “Support for agriculture and rural development in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district” shows good sustainability evidence. During the interviews, examples of continuous functioning business entities have been given. The two established associations continue to provide services to their clients: the “Association of Business People of Gagauzia NEXT” and the “Taraclia Business Association”. Additionally, the support provided to the Local Action Groups continues to be effective in developing local businesses and rural tourism, and protecting cultural heritage.

The programmatic documents consistently mention and analyze the sustainability factors and components of projects in portfolio. Each of the projects have built-in sustainability elements,

such as building capacities of national, regional and local administration, involving community organizations, establishing cooperation platforms, and creating or further supporting business associations. The Cluster Team is well aware of the sustainability importance, and conveys the messages to partners and beneficiaries.

The activities with business development component are subject to macro-economic, sectoral and geopolitical variations, and have a higher vulnerability. Another risk is represented by the projects implemented with or for returning migrants to Moldova: their behavior is mostly unpredictable, subject to external variations. They might re-commence migration experiences after receiving support, endangering thus the sustainability.

On human rights, gender equality and gender-based violence, the sustainability is ensured by supporting associations and formal groups established by beneficiaries, or by CSOs supporting the vulnerable social categories.

So far, in the first part of the country programme implementation, UNDP Moldova is very capable in establishing cooperation mechanisms to ensure sustainability. The international partners confirmed through interviews, the alignment to UNDP's approach in ensuring sustainability of the activities, especially considering the new realities post Covid-19 pandemic. Same approach was confirmed by counterparts at national level. The partners plan to continue or enhance support offered to existing institutions and associations. A distinctive role is played by communities established at local level, especially "Hometown Associations" ("Asociațiile de Băştinași" in original). Their inclusive approach and the high ownership create the premises to achieve impactful and sustainable results in their communities.

The collaboration with CALM is also very good, ensuring continuation of the positive results, as CALM is offering a platform for conveying best practices among its members.

Among the lasting results of the projects that still produce effects are the Development Strategies for villages and rayons. Besides increasing the institutional capacities to design coherent plans, the Strategies offer the starting point for new approaches and sustainable results in their communities, as some interviewees stated.

In most of the projects, the sustainability is addressed by building capacities, involving and fostering cooperation between central government, local administration, communities and beneficiaries. The cross-river cooperation along the Nistru river is the main driver in establishing cooperation modals. Due to the thorough planning with an outlook for sustainability, and the constant measures and efforts in implementation across all activities in the portfolio, the general assessment for sustainability is "*Likely*".

3.5 Gender Equality Mainstreaming and Human Rights Based Approach

This evaluation defines *gender mainstreaming* as the process where gender equality perspective is analyzed and understood before any decisions are made and before any plans are outlined in order to influence and affect program interventions and work¹⁶. *Human rights-based approach* is defined as the process of applying the human rights values, principles, standards and goals in all stages of policy, program and project formulation¹⁷. Put in to practice in a consistent manner, these perspectives ensure the effective implementation of the *Leave No One Behind* principle.

In the context of the Inclusive Growth Cluster, the evaluation assessed how each of the following perspectives were considered and addressed throughout the program management cycle:

- Gender equality perspective
- The perspective of men and women living with disabilities
- The perspective of men and women at the bottom of income distribution
- The perspective of young men and women
- The perspective of elderly men and women
- The perspective of roma men and women

A starting point to consider how these perspectives were addressed within the cluster's portfolio is that the need for these perspectives is determined by the level of existing inequalities within the focus area of each of the individual projects. The *intensity* of the gender mainstreaming and Human Rights Based Approach is proportional to the level of existing inequalities. High inequalities create the need for greater effort, focus and resources to address them.

Equality relevancy	Gender mainstreaming
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicates how much we should care about gender inequality and inequality overall in our work• Is based on the level of existing inequality in the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indicates the level of effort, resurces and special attention one needs to put in order to address gender or other inequalities.• Should be proportional to the existing inequalities in the sector

Figure 3: How to decide on the intensity of Gender Mainstreaming and Human Rights Approach

¹⁶ Adapted from [Gender Equality in Practice – A manual for Sida](https://www.sida.se/contentassets/0c376ea02bfa471aa57caefbc5d2d12f/gender-equality-in-practice_298.pdf), available at https://www.sida.se/contentassets/0c376ea02bfa471aa57caefbc5d2d12f/gender-equality-in-practice_298.pdf - last consulted in December 2020

¹⁷ Adapted from [A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/a-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation.html), UNDP, 2015, available at <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/a-human-rights-based-approach-to-development-cooperation.html> - last consulted in December 2020

As stated in the chapter 3.1, the evaluation concludes that all projects within the cluster are relevant to gender equality perspective and the perspective of human rights. From development perspective, ignoring existing inequalities proves to be ineffective. In 2019, [UNDP concluded](#) that Moldova lost 10.4% of human development progress due to persisting inequalities¹⁸. A more [recent analysis](#)¹⁹ calculated that because of gender inequalities in terms of employment, hours worked and labor productivity, Moldova has missed close to 19% of GDP in 2019 alone. This shows that *Inclusive Development* is one of the most relevant ways to approach development.

The evaluation notes that UNDP Moldova is considered among its peers to be a champion of gender equality, with a consistent track record in promoting it. In the period of 2013-2014, after an extensive assessment process, UNDP in Moldova earned the [Silver Seal for Gender Equality](#). In 2017, UNDP Moldova was awarded the [Golden Gender Equality Seal](#), for substantial contribution to national gender equality goals.

In order to evaluate how the projects within the Cluster took in to account the Gender Equality perspective and Human Rights Based Approach, an equality mainstreaming scorecard²⁰ (Annex 5) was used. The scorecard is based on the three main program cycle components: problem definition, results framework and the implementation framework (see the table below). For each program cycle, a set of indicators with corresponding four benchmarks are defined. For each benchmark, a scoring is provided (from 0 – no mainstreaming to 4 – very strong level of mainstreaming).

Program cycle	Description
Problem definition	(1) Context and problem definition highlighted present inequalities. (2) Inequalities and inequality trends are measured and analyzed. (3) Root causes for gender and human rights inequalities are identified and analyzed.
Results Framework	(4) Program theory of change is gender and human-rights sensitive or transformative. (5) The results framework expresses changes from gender equality and human rights perspective. (6) The action plan specifies how gender equality and inclusion for the most vulnerable groups will be achieved.

¹⁸ <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2019/moldova-loses-of-its-human-development.html> - last consulted in December 2020

¹⁹ https://www.expert-grup.org/media/k2/attachments/Raport_Inegalitati_Gen_Final_Eng.pdf - last accessed in December 2020

²⁰ It is also important to note that three of the Cluster's projects assessed the gender equality perspective using [the Gender Marker](#), which defines basic gender standards for programs developed by UNDP, provides a comparative framework, and enables the organization to monitor its overall progress towards a sustainable institutionalization of gender equality.

	(7) The action plan provides for activities/initiatives focused on women or men from most vulnerable (special measures ²¹ and/or reasonable accommodation ²² is provided for).
Implementation framework	(8) There is a strong M&E framework focused on measuring and reporting progress on reducing gender and human rights inequalities. (9) There are specific financial provisions allocated to achieve gender equality and inclusion of the most vulnerable. (10) Program team has strong knowledge and expertise to achieve stated gender and human rights objectives and results.

Table 2: Summary of program cycle indicators in the Equality Scorecard

Depending on the average score, a program can be considered to be *regressive*, *blind*, *sensitive* or *transformative* to the equality perspective. The scoring enables the evaluation to compare the strengths of the mainstreaming process across the portfolio, understand commonalities and spot out both individual and institutional gaps.

Based on the available data and analysis, the evaluation concludes that overall Inclusive Growth Portfolio is sensitive to the equality perspective, in particular to the gender equality perspective. The overall score across the portfolio is 2.9 (out of 4) with two transformative programs from equality perspective and four programs that are sensitive to equality perspective, in particular gender equality perspective (scoring for each project is provided in Annex 7).

Programs	Equality score	Level of integration	Designated gender marker
Advanced cross-river capacities for trade.	2.6	Sensitive	GEN2
Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova (Phase 3)	4	Transformative	N/A
EU4Moldova: Focal Regions	2.4	Sensitive	N/A
Migration and Local Development (phase 2)	2.3	Sensitive	GEN2
Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions	4	Transformative	N/A
Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme (V)	2.5	Sensitive	GEN2

Table 3: Equality Scores across projects belonging to Inclusive Growth Pillar

²¹ The concept of special measures is based on the principle that laws, policies and practices adopted and implemented in order to fulfil obligations under the Convention require supplementing, when circumstances warrant, by the adoption of temporary special measures designed to secure to disadvantaged groups the full and equal enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. See [General Recommendation No. 32 The meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)

²² Reasonable accommodation means necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities or other vulnerable and excluded groups the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and opportunities.

Based on the Equality Scorecard, the evaluation concludes the following:

- Gender equality mainstreaming is the most prominent of the equality perspectives within the four projects deemed to be sensitive to equality perspective. The other perspectives are addressed with the projects as addressing vulnerable groups, with the idea that individual project teams would make sure to precisely identify these groups, assess, and approach their needs within the project. Moreover, not all vulnerable groups can be approached within a project in a singular way. The reasons men and women living with disabilities do not benefit from certain services are different from the reasons why roma people are deprived of them. Different approaches require different level of expertise, costs and time frame.
- Not all projects analyzed fully the underlying root causes that lead to exclusion or inequality. Having such an understanding is the key to develop an effective and sustainable gender mainstreaming and Human Rights Based Approach.
- The Theory of Change within projects (Focal Regions, CBM, MiDL and Cross River Trade) focus on empowerment and mobilization of women and vulnerable groups which is a key precondition for any rights-based approach to programing. The projects contribute to ensuring public participation in the local decision making by working directly with LPAs; in the One Joint Action, the project collaborates with de-facto authorities of the Transnistrian region to enhance human rights. In addition, the portfolio indirectly focusses on duty bearers in the Transnistrian region through enhancing the advocacy capacity of the partnering NGO (CBM, HR in TN and AdTrade). This multi-faceted approach supports authorities to become more accountable for inclusion, transparent, to consult with men and women, including ones representing vulnerable groups, and to take in to account relevant inequalities when decisions, budgets and local priorities are decided upon.
- Although all projects state that gender mainstreaming and human rights-based approach is a key principle and method of implementation, not all projects fully describe how these principles will actually be implemented. The action plans describe specific measures aimed mostly at women and young people (e.g., providing grants, training, coaching and consultancy), with no clarification as to how the equality perspectives will be implemented. The risk that the equality approach will stay limited to only those special measures is possible.
- Some Results frameworks are missing equality perspectives for results (both outcomes and outputs). The most effective way to achieve this is to define specific indicators, baseline and targets. Some projects equated this with having targets disaggregated by gender, which is not the same thing.
- Examples of gender-sensitive activities: in SCBM project, grants for SMEs have been awarded focusing women entrepreneurs (up to 70 percent). In the “Advanced Trade” project, women involvement in business (either as owners or as employees) is a conditionality in awarding grants. In the EU4Moldova: Focal Regions project, the third component has a strong women empowerment in business.

Based on these observations, the evaluation suggests the following general recommendations:

- Make sure that all programs within the cluster undergo an ex-ante equality assessment. They can be based on the UNDP gender marker, but each project team needs to be encouraged to provide clear rationale for the final designated gender marker. These markers need to undergo a rigorous quality assurance by the gender focal point.
- UNDP uses its own taxonomy of vulnerable groups and how these are affected by the inequalities, marginalization and exclusion from the development process. The taxonomy should be more formalized when programs are developed and appraised internally. This will enable projects teams to have a more precise understanding as to how the perspectives of these groups can be addressed in any given project proposal.
- All project teams need specific support to both strengthen the equality perspective within the projects and increase their personal skills. One systematic way to do this is to consider the following: (i) provide for long term, external support via an *equality help desk* that each program can reach out to for limited number of days; the role of the help desk is to provide support and not to do the mainstreaming for the project teams; (ii) facilitate peer learning among the projects via annual themed workshops that can result in internal case studies, practical “how to” models, etc.
- Given the rising importance of digitalization in administration, education and economy, the gender perspective could be pragmatically addressed by focusing on involving women in IT&C-related (higher)education and fostering start-ups managed by women.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The UNDP Country Programme Document established three Outcomes addressing needs and problems to be resolved in the country between 2018 and 2022. In order to achieve the Outcomes, the Cluster designed and developed gradually a set of projects, based on assessment results of previous UNDP interventions. It is not a fixed set of solutions, and based on developments new adjustments are continuously made. The project’s objectives are fully aligned with the CPD and the UNDAF, thus their relevance is excellent. Furthermore, given the developments in the country and the socio-economic situation, the relevance continues to be very high for the coming years. New topics where support is needed emerge, notably the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Migration and associated socio-economic interactions appear for the first time in the National Development Strategy Moldova 2030 (in draft form at the time of evaluation). Other entry-points for UNDP might be increasing labor productivity, leveraging up the value chains where the Moldovan business is positioned, expansion of work at local level (including Local Economic Development), transparency and accountability of local authorities, especially in the most deprived regions, and citizen participation in decision making, with final goal to improve livelihoods.

The six projects (and the related but finished project SARD) are well designed, with extensive justification for implementation, sound Theories of Change, clear indicators, proper risk analysis and management arrangements. The indicators defined in the project documents are mostly clear and achievable, and the monitoring mechanism is established according to the UNDP standards.

The contribution to achievements of the second UNDAF Outcome is made by all projects. Additionally, to enhance synergies, two projects (the “Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova” and “Migration and Local Development) also contribute to the first Outcome of the UNDAF: “The people of Moldova, especially most vulnerable, demand and benefit from democratic, transparent and accountable governance, gender-sensitive, human rights- and evidence-based public policies, equitable services, and efficient, effective and responsive public institutions”.

One project – “Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions” – addresses the fourth UNDAF Outcome “The people of Moldova, in particular the most vulnerable, demand and benefit from gender-sensitive and human rights-based, inclusive, effective and equitable equality education, health and social policies and services. All the other projects also have coherent approaches of gender-sensitivity and human rights enhancement, thus the portfolio has a good thematic coverage.

Some components (especially the ones supporting economic development) have good results at microlevel. To create a measurable impact at national level, an upscaling of successfully piloted activities is necessary.

The efficiency across the portfolio raises no issue by the time of implementation. The Cluster might be slightly understaffed, but the projects are well endowed with qualified personnel. Both at Cluster level and at project’s levels, the adaptive management as a reaction to the changes inflicted by the Covid-19 pandemic was very good²³. This attitude trickled down to the projects, which exhibited a similar adaptability.

The coordination with other international organizations (donor dialogue) is very good at technical level on the areas relevant for the IG Cluster. A political dialogue at higher level (necessary to enforce conditionalities in case of macro-economic support instruments) is missing. In Transnistria, the UNDP has a very good, neutral position, and other partners need UNDP’s presence in order to implement their activities. In general, UNDP has the coverage other organizations (either national or international) don’t have, both geographic and thematic.

UNDP plays a leading role in coordinating the Task Team on Socio-Economic Impact, which aims to support the Government, donor community and wider audience in assessing the immediate and projecting the medium-term and long-term impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The sustainability has good prospects at portfolio level, as the work is being implemented together with national partners, local organizations, and CSOs. The projects have different

²³ Social and Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 in Republic of Moldova, July 2020

degrees of sustainability, depending on the thematic, implementation approach and the involved stakeholders.

The human rights and gender equality aspects were introduced gradually in the portfolio, and at this stage they gained a medium-high importance. One project is fully addressing this topic, while the others also have good ratings. For the next programming stage, the themes will gain an even higher importance and visibility.

In conclusion, the Inclusive Growth portfolio is very relevant, well designed and implemented, with good sustainability through its partnerships and involvement of stakeholders, and with a mixed approach in considering human rights and gender equality.

Lessons Learnt

UNDP has a very good position in reaching out to partners and regional and local communities. Its capacity of interaction ranges from policy support for central administration to micro-solution at local level. UNDP learned the right approach of working together with the central and local administration, keeping the balance between all stakeholders (see, for example, the excellent cooperation with the Bureau for Diaspora Relations, and with the local communities in the HTA support).

In order to respond effectively to the evolving needs of partners or beneficiaries, UNPD found the proper balance between following the corporate policies and procedures, and the adaptability and flexibility very much cherished by stakeholders. The fast response to the Covid-19 pandemic is appreciated, in supporting communities with necessary medical equipment.

Based on the comprehensive set of data and analysis, the evaluation identified a set of topics with continued relevance, and new topics with high potential for the Inclusive Growth Cluster, to be further considered and analyzed for the coming programming period:

Areas of continued interest and new areas for potential focus	
Migration	(e-)Learning
<p>- Migration and demographics: due to its relevancy, the topic was introduced in the National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030”. Continued, demand-based support should be provided to increasing capacities of the National Agency for Employment and of the “Home-Town Associations”. The strategic partnership with IOM should bring added-value in this direction.</p>	<p>-The e-learning approach is more and more relevant, not only with the new challenges generated by the Covid-19 pandemic. In e-learning, both the supply-side (train teachers, update curricula), but also the demand side (digital literacy programmes for the population, access to infrastructure) are to be regarded.</p> <p>-Education: whereas the Vocational Education and Training (VET) is already an established concept and relevant for the current dynamic of the labor market, two new closely-related concepts emerge: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) concept, and Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) concept. The STEAM Education is an approach that uses the enumerated subjects as access points for guiding student inquiry, dialogue, and critical thinking. These two approaches should be addressed at national level (policy), regional/local, including across the Nistru banks.</p>
Youth	Economy & Governance
<p>-To address the needs of the youth not in education, employment or training (NEET), three levels have to be considered: macro-economic, strategic and practice. Some of the recommended approaches include increased flexibility, personalization, and to involve employers from the local labor market. If feasible, adopt a ‘whole-area’ approach to planning and delivery, backed by political commitment. Some studies suggest that, to reduce the NEET rate by at least one percent, significant efforts are needed, and punctual measures can’t have measurable effects at national level. On the other hand, a study from United Kingdom calculated that the cost of being NEET between the ages of 16 to 18 is estimated to be around £56,000 in public finance costs and £104,000 in resource costs (lost labor market potential), over the working lifetime of each person who has been NEET at this age, a relevant approximation to justify tackling NEET. UNDP Moldova supported the analysis of the phenomenon in 2017 through a sociological study, where the NEET was categorized in “Unskilled” NEET youth, “Low/medium” qualified NEET youth, “Highly qualified” NEET youth, and “Volunteers/opportunists” NEET youth, and proposes realistic measures for reintegration in education or the labor market, including barriers to be overcome;</p> <p>- Involve youth in planning and budgeting, including through Hometown Associations. For this, civic education programmes for youth are necessary.</p>	<p>- Increase labor productivity and move producers higher in the added-value chain. This approach might foresee governmental aid (policy, grants), and could capitalize the know-how of the returning migrants.</p> <p>- Infrastructure upgrade – energy, transport, digital infrastructure needs upgrade both for the basic functions and for becoming more efficient and “green”. This modernization could support the digitalization of public services & governance, and facilitate environmental protection measures;</p> <p>- Explore possibilities and added-value of involving private sector in delivering public services (see the UNDP Uzbekistan project “Improved Public Service Delivery and Enhanced Governance in Rural Uzbekistan”;</p> <p>- Business Incubators should be continued, backed up by training focusing on entrepreneurship skills, digital economy/Industrial Revolution 4.0.</p> <p>At policy level, entrepreneurs should be aided with</p> <p>- Public administration, decentralization and territorial administrative reform should be considered, with special consideration for the two special cases – Gagauz Territorial Unit and Transnistria region. Policy influencing and/policy support could be provided in order to adjust the administrative set-up, by providing more decision in design and implementation of policies, and financial empowerment to regional and local administration.</p> <p>- define a new indicator/index to measure the (relative) deprivation of regions, replacing the SADI index (see the effectiveness Chapter).</p>

Cross-cutting themes and other themes

- Domestic violence gains traction in being recognized as a societal problem all over the world, and it has been mentioned as being increasingly relevant in Moldova too. The IG Cluster could consider addressing the economic causes for domestic and gender-based violence (including by facilitating economic empowerment of women). Other approach might be strengthening CSOs in increasing awareness and reporting on Human Rights, combatting domestic violence and human trafficking;
- Health infrastructure and services need an upgrade: hospitals and other medical facilities are old buildings that need renovation; the endowment of hospitals is low or very old; the personnel are understaffed and need training on modern services;
- Green transformation at local is an important area, particularly in the COVID19 aftermath and broadly accepted *build back greener* principle. The IC could consider incorporating and mainstreaming green transformation/elements in local development processes (both in terms of local services and economic development), across all regions of the country. The approach could involve all local stakeholders – local public authorities, private sector, CSOs, migrants and diaspora, vulnerable groups, etc.

Recommendations

Based on the review of the projects, lessons learned and emerging themes, the recommendations below are formulated:

R1. Strengthen coordination with other UN agencies and other donors. UNDP plays a strategic role with the established partnerships, both at central level and in all regions of the Republic of Moldova, a role many other international organizations don't have. A more coherent donor coordination platform is desired, also including a high-level political dialogue. The recently revived Sectoral Councils in the field of external assistance for the sectors coordinated by the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure are a good platform where UNDP could bring forward the advantages of coordination among donors.

R1.1. Clarify topics that can be handled together with other UN agencies to achieve synergies. The effectiveness of the role UNDP plays in promoting gender-balance and women empowerment topics can be increased by collaborating closer with UN. UNIDO has an agenda in promoting innovation in industries that can be tapped by UNDP. On greening economy, the UNEP has a good expertise, but are not present in Moldova with own representation. On regulatory, procedural, and non-tariff barriers to trade for companies from Transnistria, the UNECE performed very good and useful studies and offer technical assistance, while the International Trade Center supports SMEs to increase their exporting capacities.

R2. Multiplication: upscale and replicate successful approaches and results. Many components of the portfolio are successful activities demonstrating good results, but with a limited impact due to their size. For activities targeting economic development, size is critical in order to foster change. In order to increase the impact at national level, these successes need to be communicated, adapted and implemented in more regions. The Team already cooperates with CALM, State Chancellery and development partners when it comes to scaling up, either through continuing development support (until the initiative reaches maturity) combined with nationalizing the piloted approaches through normative and legal basis (such as the DAR 1+3 Programme, LEADER programme), in order to secure ownership and sustainability.

R2.1. Demonstrate the positive results also on the left bank of Nistru river, and continue implementing projects through partnerships of businesses, associations and communities from both banks. The graduality principle is very good and should be continued.

R3. Explore possibilities to involve the private sector in delivering public services. Considering the financing gap in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (see the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, containing measures to finance sustainable development, transform the global economy and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals), the role of the private sector in delivering public services will increase. UNDP tests already this involvement (e.g., UNDP Uzbekistan).

R4. Increase focus on digitalization. The changes inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic will trigger or accelerate wide changes in education, economy, and public administration. UNDP has the capacity to forecast most of the changes and create a holistic approach in addressing both the *supply side* (infrastructure, access to networks, endowment with equipment) and the *demand side* (increase digital literacy, business and education adaptation to knowledge-based economy and the fourth Industrial Revolution, or Industry 4.0)²⁴. Given the rising importance of digitalization in administration, education and economy, the gender perspective could be pragmatically addressed by focusing on involving women in IT&C-related (higher)education and fostering start-ups managed by women.

R5. Deepen the work on understanding migration and its effects, as the phenomena gains increasing importance in the Republic of Moldova and worldwide. Besides strengthening partnership with IOM, also increase support offered to Hometown Associations, as they represent both local communities and the migrants. This collaboration opens opportunities for a deeper involvement of diaspora in local development initiatives of their place of origin. Additionally, continue analyzing the mutations in the status and mindset of long-term migrants, as their relation and behavior towards their community of origin changes in time.

R6. Formalize lessons learnt in the interim reports. Lessons learnt from previous programmes and projects have been consistently considered in designing subsequent activities. At corporate level, lessons learnt are reported through the Results Oriented Annual Report. A formalization of LL in the interim reports will support the staff in structuring the ideas, improve their daily job, will provide reliable information for the final evaluations, and will ease the work for the ROAR reporting.

R7. UNDP should promote the usage of the existing taxonomy²⁵ of vulnerable groups, to better address inequalities, marginalization and exclusion from the development process across its portfolio. This will enable the project teams to have a more precise understanding as to how the perspectives of these groups can be addressed in any given project proposal.

R8. Strengthen the equality perspective within the projects and increase personal skills of the staff. A systematic way to achieve this is to consider the following: (i) establish long term, external support via a focal point that each program can reach out to for limited number of days; the role of the help desk is to provide support and not to do the mainstreaming for the project teams; (ii) facilitate peer learning among the projects via annual themed workshops that can result in internal case studies, or practical “how to” models.

²⁴ UNDP starts by the time of evaluation a project in GTU focusing on e-learning, addressing both supply and demand sides.

²⁵ https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/inclusive_growth/rezumato-al-studiului-asupra-vulnerabilitii-taxonomia-i-posibile.html

[Annex 1: Terms of Reference of the final evaluation](#)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Team of International and National Consultants to conduct Outcome Mid-term Evaluation of Inclusive Growth Pillar

Job title:	Team of 1 International and 1 National Consultants to undertake the Independent Outcome Mid-term Evaluation of Inclusive Growth Pillar
Contract type:	Individual Contract (IC)
Contract duration:	September - December 2020
Expected Workload:	International Consultant – 15 days of consultancy National Consultant – 18 days of consultancy



ToR -
IG_outcome_evaluatic

[Annex 2: Draft Discussion Guide](#)

Note: each discussion guide will be adapted to the respective interviewee with due regard to their areas of involvement and expertise.

Outcome Mid-term Evaluation Inclusive Growth Pillar – UNDP Moldova

Questions Guideline – Sept 28th, 2020

Note: Respondents will be assured of confidentiality and discretion. Respondents should also be asked for their consent to record the interview in order to alleviate note-taking burden.

Relevance

1. I want to begin by asking if you could briefly describe your role in the project and the tasks you were responsible for? Since when and for how long were you working on this programme of work?

- To what extent is UNDP support relevant to the country's current economic diversification objectives, Sustainable Development Goals, and Graduation process, as well as its sectoral programs of relevant line ministries?
- How did the IG portfolio promote the principles of gender equality, human rights-based approach, and conflict sensitivity?
- To what extent is program and project design relevant in addressing the identified priority needs in CPD 2018 - 2022?
- To what extent UNDP's outcome-level results are relevant to and consistent with the national agenda, including national priorities and obligations in line with international conventions?
- Which programme areas considering also the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, are the most relevant and strategic for UNDP going forward? What adjustments are needed for the Inclusive growth area to stay relevant?

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Efficiency

2. Were the actions to achieve the results **Efficient?** (*Have things been done right?*)

Probe for following details:

- How much time, resources and effort it takes to manage the IG portfolio? What could be improved and how UNDP practices, policies, decisions, constraints and capabilities affect the performance of the Portfolio?
- To what extent did monitoring systems provide data that allowed the programme to learn and adjust implementation accordingly?
- To what extent were partnership modalities conducive to the delivery of outputs? What have been roles, engagement and coordination among the stakeholders? Have UNDP succeeded in building synergies and leveraging with other programs and development agencies in the Country, including UNCT programming and implementation? To what extent has UNDP managed to establish viable and effective partnership strategies in relation to the achievement of the outcomes? What are the possible areas of partnerships with other national institutions, NGOs, UN Agencies, private sector and development partners?

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Effectiveness

3. Were the actions to achieve the results **Effective?** (*Have the right things been done?*)

- What has been the progress towards the achievement of the targets in the Outcome 2?
- To what extent has progress been made towards outcome achievement? What has been UNDP's contribution to change?
- What have been the key results and changes? How has delivery of outputs led to outcome level progress? Are there any unexpected outcomes being achieved beyond the planned outcome?

- To what extent has UNDP succeeded in national partners' capacity development, advocacy on inclusive growth and sustainable development goals?
- To what extent has UNDP succeeded in building partnership with civil society and local communities to promote inclusive growth?
- To what extent has the results at the outcome and outputs levels have benefitted women and men equitably and to what extent have marginalized groups benefited?

Probe specific objectives, depending on which aspects the interviewee was involved in and is aware of:

- Project 1 – Project 6; Project "SARD"

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Sustainability

4. Do you think the results of the activities are **sustainable and long-lasting**? Will the results lead to benefits beyond the life of the existing portfolio?
 - What indications are there that the outcomes will be sustained, e.g., through requisite capacities (e.g. systems, structures and staff)? To what extent do the UNDP established mechanisms ensure sustainability of the policymaking interventions?
 - To what extent has engagement in triangular and South-South Cooperation and knowledge management contributed to the sustainability of the programme?
 - How will concerns for gender equality, human rights and human development be taken forward by primary stakeholders, specifically in the post-COVID-19 crisis?

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Cross-cutting Themes

5. How did UNDP promote gender equality, human rights and human development in the delivery of outputs?
6. How were innovation, conflict sensitivity and environmental sustainability reflected in design, implementation and results?
7. How does the Covid-19 pandemic influence both the results, as well as the future prospects of the IG Pillar?

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Closing Questions and Final Remarks

8. What do you think should be the next steps for UNDP to sustain or further develop the achievements of this programme?
9. If you had the power to time-travel back to the start of the programme, is there anything you would do differently, knowing what you know now?
10. And finally, any other questions, which we didn't ask but should have?

If we have any follow up questions later in the research phase, may we contact you again, perhaps via email?

Thank and Close

Annex 3: List of Key Informants

- UNDP staff: (Senior Management; Cluster Team; Project Managers);
- State Chancellery and subordinated institutions
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection;
- Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment;
- Programme donors and other international organizations (EU Delegation; Embassy of Sweden; Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency); International Organization for Migration;
- Private sector representatives (Chamber of Commerce and Industry; ODIMM; business association in ATU Gagauzia);
- Civil sector organizations/NGOs (relevant for the programme).

Annex 4: Interviews Schedule Template

Outcome Mid-term Evaluation

Inclusive Growth Pillar

UNDP Moldova

Evaluation team: Alexei Buzu and Marius Birsan

Proposed Agenda of meetings (video-conferences)

*The times in the agenda reflect Republic of Moldova time

Date/Time	Institution/Who	Contacts	Venue / Online platform	Comments
United Nations Development Programme in Moldova				
Monday, 26 October 2020				
16:30	UNDP Moldova / Senior Management Team	UNDP DRR UNDP ARR	MS Teams	Confirmed
Monday, 16 November 2020				
14:30	UNDP Moldova / Cluster Team	Andrei Darie Olesea Cazacu	https://undp.zoom.us/j/83888347914?	Confirmed
Tuesday, 17 November 2020				
10:00	UNDP Project Manager OneUN – Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in Transnistria	Alexandru Stratulat	https://us04web.zoom.us/j/76464448857?pwd=RW5Pd1FMM0xEZTNjbXJSS1k5WHZ3dz09	Confirmed

11:00	UNDP Project Manager CBM Programme (V)	Anatolie Terzi	https://us04web.zoom.us/j/73738764440?pwd=bDRCVEpKVldXTzF1RDZnMEZvS3FuQT09	Confirmed
13:00	UNDP Project Manager Migration and Local Development	Zinaida Adam	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89440732884?pwd=L3RJd1hqBfg1YStmSmtPZlhqcS9tUT09	Confirmed
Thursday, 19 November 2020				
14:00	UNDP Project Manager EU4Moldova; Focal Regions	Alexandru Pelivan	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84074884706?pwd=TDYyZThiSU15aUFRZVpFbWdGVHdZUT09	Confirmed
International organizations and projects covering similar areas				
Monday, 23 November 2020				
11:00	Programme Officer Embassy of Sweden	Oxana Paierele	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87087876209?pwd=aXN6QlhnNQ09UYVIBTnlWYkFjQ1ZBUT09	Confirmed
15:00	EU Delegation	Christian Ballaro	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83226244886?pwd=NG44UVhkOFc1VEJWaoY1eHh1WWZkdz09	Confirmed
Wednesday, 25 November 2020				
14:00	Swiss Cooperation Office	Radu Danii	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82428234911?pwd=U3JHVjZMZF4NjA1WENveIFkOUNTZz09	Confirmed
15:30	UNDP Project Manager Advanced cross-river capacities for trade	Dumitru Udrea	https://undp.zoom.us/j/81556063200?pwd=WkNNVG1pOGhvQ0hYQzZVNvd4WUU2Zz09	Confirmed
Thursday, 26 November 2020				
10:00	OSCE Human Rights Programme Manager	David Gulette	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87257658198?pwd=MjlkcnhZdJlMmBGlVkoF6RHILUWFhQT09	Confirmed
14:00	IOM Mission in Moldova Labour Migration Program Coordinator	Ghenadie Cretu	https://teams.microsoft.com/j/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OTkxYjk2YzAtZmNiNS00OGQxLWJiInZlUzNjZlMTRhOTMxYWEz%40thread.v2/0?context=7b%22Tid%22%3a%221588262d-23fb-43b4-bd6e-bce49c8e6186%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22ce379ca6-91e2-437e-8766-6d017a51019a%22%7d	Confirmed
Friday, 27 November 2020				
11:00	Embassy of Sweden National Programme Officer	Daniela Vidaicu	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89113411862?pwd=MI1dElrcRhWjR4RTBPWjRreTnkUT09	Confirmed
Wednesday, 02 December 2020				
09:00	Primaria Selemet, Cimisilia	Tatiana Badan	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84692948541?pwd=ZWttSWdnVGereFBITDZRC0xXTTFyQT09	Confirmed
Thursday, 03 December 2020				
11:15	Reintegration Policies Bureau	Alin Gvidiani	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82258361454?pwd=anNTbUs4ampjdEl5Zk53aWhUOGg3dz09	Confirmed
12:00	ANOFM / Director	Raisa Dogaru	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86565350091?pwd=dGhLeVZjcWR2WXIENIMFFnY3krdz09	Confirmed
15:30	State Chancellery	Adrian Ermurachi	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89695707853?pwd=dWTlZcnFmZkFGK1BCT3VGQVFXMTR4dz09	Confirmed
16:30	ODIMM	Silvia Cangea Olesea Frunza	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87449663086?pwd=RFQrRUFaUmRhYlhGS3lxYkFwYjRmUT09	Confirmed
Friday, 04 December 2020				
11:00	Centre for Social and Legal Protection" Participation / Secretary	Svetlana Lopatina	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88217748659?pwd=UDk2TFhNQTVWZFRjaStUWxI1ak43UT09	Confirmed

Wednesday, 09 December 2020				
09:00	NGO “Women’s Initiatives”	Natalia Savchina	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81801325304?pwd=ZGJrOTBUYlBOWklExhTaXlrkzZaQT09	Confirmed
Friday, 11 December 2020				
11:00	Primaria Ungheni	Alexandru Ambros	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81895559542?pwd=VzI6T3NkUFlrRHczWjkzVUIMWTBMQT09	Confirmed
14:00	Business Association from Gagauzia	Vladimir Cara	https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82342144081?pwd=aVhOQ0tRemVSTTNxR3JhMTRaN1BJUT09	Confirmed

Annex 5: Equality Scorecard

I. Problem definition

Standard	Level of Integration			
	Incipient (0,5)	Intermediary (1) (1,5)	Consolidated (2) (2,5)	Advanced (3) (4)
(1) Context and problem definition were realized to spell out inequalities.	A generic problem description is provided.	Gender inequality is spelled out, not quite “visible”.	Gender inequalities are prominent in the problem description.	Gender and other inequalities (disability, income, and ethnicity) are prominent in the program document.
(2) Inequalities and inequality trends are measured and analyzed.	There is no gender or other type of disaggregated data.	Some of the inequalities are measured.	Majority of used indicators are disaggregated by gender.	Full gender segregation including by other relevant criteria: rural/urban, Roma, disability, income, etc.
(3) Root causes for the main gender and human rights inequalities are identified and analyzed.	No analysis present	Root causes were analyzed but in a generic manner (weak causal relationship is provided).	Most relevant root cause for gender inequalities were analyzed (clear casual logic)	Root causes of inequality for men and women representing various vulnerable groups were analyzed (clear casual logic)

II. Results Framework

Standard	Level of Integration			
	Incipient (0,5)	Intermediary (1) (1,5)	Consolidated (2) (2,5)	Advanced (3) (4)
(4) Program theory of change is gender and human rights sensitive or transformative.	It is not clear if the program implementation will lead to more equality. None of the root causes are addressed.	There is some underlying logic behind the theory of change in the way it will address root causes but in a limited way.	At least one root cause is addressed within the theory of change.	Most of the root cases are addressed by the theory of change in a comprehensive manner. The theory of change reflects empowerment, institutional reform and behavior change.
(5) The results framework expresses changes from gender equality and human rights perspective.	Program results are gender blind.	Results are gender sensitive at the output level. At the outcome level, results are still gender blind.	Results are gender sensitive.	Gender inequality reduction and inclusion is part of the overall results framework.

(6) The action plan specifies how gender equality and inclusion for the most vulnerable groups (focused on achieving equality) will be achieved.	There are no clear activities to achieve equality within the program.	There are a limited set of activities with marginal impact on achieving greater equality stated in the results framework.	Program action plan describes how gender equality will be achieved as stated in the results framework.	Program action plan fairly reflects the proposed equality (gender and other) perspective in the results framework.
(7) The action plan has specific activities focused on women or men from most vulnerable (special measures and/or reasonable accommodation).	N/A	There are some special measures with marginal and short-term impact.	There are special measures aiming at men/boys or women/girls within the program action plan.	There are special measures aiming at men/boys or women/girls representing various vulnerable groups.

III. Implementation framework

Standard	Level of Integration			
	Incipient (0,5)	Intermediary (1) (1,5)	Consolidated (2) (2,5)	Advanced (3) (4)
(8) There is a strong M&E framework mainstreamed from gender and rights perspective.	M&E framework does not measure progress in terms of gender and rights.	There is a general gender disaggregation of data with no strategic understanding if gender and rights results are achieved.	The M&E framework is pegged to gender equality results at all levels. There are baselines and targets to be achieved.	Indicators at all level of results are gender and rights desegregated. Gender and inclusion results are a key part of how overall performance is appraised.
(9) The project budget reflects the effective costs for gender equality and human rights.	There is no direct budget allocation to ensure equality.	About one third of equality costs are covered by the budget.	About 60% of equality costs are covered by the budget.	About 90% of equality costs are covered by the budget.
(10) Program team has strong knowledge and expertise to achieve stated gender and human rights objectives and results.	Program team has little relevant knowledge on GE and HR.	Basic trainings were organized for the project team on GE and HR.	Program team benefited from long term courses on GE and HR. There is strong willingness and opens for continuous learning.	Project team members are knowledge generators in GE and HR for the sector.

Annex 6: The different ways projects address mainstreaming

Adapted from WHO Gender Responsive Assessment Scale: criteria for assessing programs and policies²⁶

Type 1: Gender-unequal (0 scoring)

- Perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms, roles and relations
- Privileges men over women (or vice versa)

²⁶http://www.who.int/gender/mainstreaming/GMH_Participant_GenderAssessmentScale.pdf

- Often leads to one sex enjoying more rights or opportunities than the other

Type 2: Gender-blind (0- 0.5 scoring)

- Ignores gender norms, roles and relations
- Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination
- Ignores differences in opportunities and resource allocation for women and men
- Often constructed based on the principle of being “fair” by treating everyone the same

Type 3: Gender tokenism (0 – 1 scoring)

- Considers some of the gender norms, roles and relations
- Approaches gender mainstreaming in a superficial way (for the sake of donors or optics)
- Approaches gender mainstreaming at the activity or output level ignoring root causes of inequality.

Type4: Gender-sensitive (2-3 scoring)

- Gender inequalities are identified and root causes analyzed.
- Gender mainstreaming is strategic and aligned with the program theory of change and results framework.
- Consistent implementation, the budget allows for some special measures and reasonable accommodation.

Level 4: Gender-specific (3-4 scoring)

- Considers women’s and men’s specific needs
- Intentionally targets and benefits a specific group of women or men to achieve certain policy or program goals or meet certain needs.
- Makes it easier for women and men to fulfil duties that are ascribed to them based on their gender roles.

Level 5: Gender-transformative (4 scoring)

- Addresses the causes of gender-based inequities
- Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations
- Includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men

Annex 7: Equality Mainstreaming Scoring

Standards	Advanced cross-river capacities for trade	Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistrian Region of the Republic of Moldova (Phase 3)	EU4Moldova: Focal Regions	Migration and Local Development (phase 2)"	Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions	Support to Confidence Building Measures Programme (V)
(1) Context and problem definition was realized to spell out inequalities.	3	4	3	1.5	4	1.5
(2) Inequalities and inequality trends are measured and analyzed.	3	4	3	1.5	4	1.5
(3) Root causes for the main gender and human rights inequalities are identified and analyzed.	2	4	2.5	1.5	4	1.5
AVERAGE PROBLEM ANALYSIS	2.7	4.0	2.8	1.5	4.0	1.5
(4) Program theory of change is gender and human rights sensitive or transformative.	2.5	4	2.5	2	4	2
(5) The results framework expresses changes from gender equality and human rights perspective.	3	4	2.5	2.5	4	2.5
(6) The action plan specifies how gender equality and inclusion for the most vulnerable groups (focused on achieving equality) will be achieved.	2	4	2	2.5	4	3
(7) The action plan has specific activities focused on women or men from most vulnerable (special measures and/or reasonable accommodation).	3	4	2.5	2	4	2.5

AVERAGE RESULTS FRAMEWORK	2.6	4.0	2.4	2.3	4.0	2.5
(8) There is a strong M&E framework mainstreamed from gender and rights perspective.	2.5	4	2	2.5	4	2.5
(9) The project budget reflects the effective costs for gender equality and human rights.	3.5	4	2.5	3	4	3
(10) Program team has strong knowledge and expertise to achieve stated gender and human rights objectives and results.	2	4	2	2.5	4	2
AVERAGE IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK	2.7	4.0	2.2	2.7	4.0	2.5
AVERAGE PER PROGRAM	2.7	4.0	2.5	2.1	4.0	2.2