



INDEPENDENT
Evaluation Office

United Nations Development Programme

SUMMARY:

EVALUATION

OF UNDP SUPPORT TO
CONFLICT-AFFECTED
COUNTRIES





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FOREWORD



This evaluation was conducted at a time when programme countries are grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, which is threatening to reverse decades of development gains. In conflict-affected countries, this pandemic is likely to pose further challenges to the efforts to address multiple crises, including the rise of violent conflict, increase in forced displacement, climate impacts and disasters. The socioeconomic impact of multiple crises further compounds the risks in conflict settings. Given this context, the momentum generated by the Sustainable Development Goals, and the United Nations emphasis on a new way of working within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, take on further significance.



There is increased urgency to improve the resilience of the 1.8 billion people living in 34 conflict contexts. Addressing the drivers of conflict and violence has been a strategic priority of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. In conflict-affected countries, UNDP has made important contributions to stabilize, build and strengthen institutions, enable economic revitalization, and create peace. Engaging in efforts to address the most intractable challenges in conflict-affected countries, UNDP strategies and approaches have taken a more holistic perspective. Partnerships have expanded the reach and contribution of UNDP to achieve outcomes in reconstruction and service provision.

This evaluation points out that the pandemic gives added impetus to the need for comprehensive strategies to address the drivers of conflict. It notes some shortcomings in UNDP efforts to address cross-cutting and intersecting elements, and urges a response at multiple levels, combining short-term support and greater attention to improving governance to promote peace, stability and inclusive growth.

The humanitarian-development-peace nexus provided a much-needed common direction in conflict contexts, as a framework for international and national stakeholders to collectively work towards outcomes based on comparative advantage over multi-year timelines. While there are good examples of joint efforts and programme synergies among agencies, there is a lack of a committed collective impetus to enhance peace and development outcomes.

There is considerable scope for UNDP to show leadership in facilitating and promoting the humanitarian-development-peace nexus agenda. UNDP should prioritize its support to conflict prevention, further develop its prevention offer with a focus on facilitating long-term structural change, and be a champion for generational transformation in conflict-affected countries. I hope this evaluation will serve to inform UNDP corporate conflict prevention and response strategies, and debates on strengthening the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



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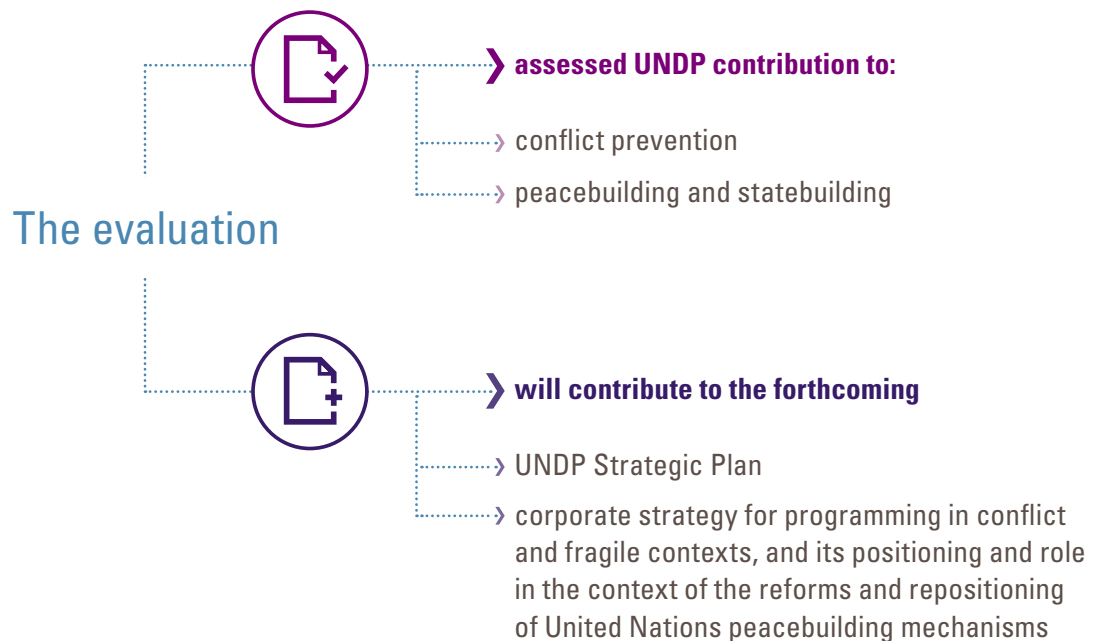
BACKGROUND

Over the last decade, increased conflict, violence and natural resource and climate-related tensions have caused overwhelming human, social and economic costs. It is hard to quantify the enormous human suffering. By 2030, an estimated two-thirds of the world's extreme poor are expected to live in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Conflict also creates a major obstacle in our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UNDP supports countries affected by conflict in their efforts towards conflict prevention, recovery and stabilization, and transition to development. During the two strategic plan periods assessed, UNDP has been supporting interrelated interventions pertaining to response, recovery and prevention efforts in a range of conflict and post-conflict contexts.

UNDP emphasises strengthening national crisis prevention capacities and resilience-building through a dedicated signature solution. The current Strategic Plan 2018-21 considers conflict-affected countries as one of three development settings for UNDP work, while the previous Strategic Plan 2014-17 outlined conflict prevention and response as an expected outcome of UNDP contributions to poverty reduction. Programme expenditure in 34 conflict-affected countries for the period 2014-2019 accounted for more than half (51 percent) of total programme expenditure, amounting to approximately US\$ 13 billion.

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the UNDP carried out an Evaluation of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries.



WHAT WE EVALUATED

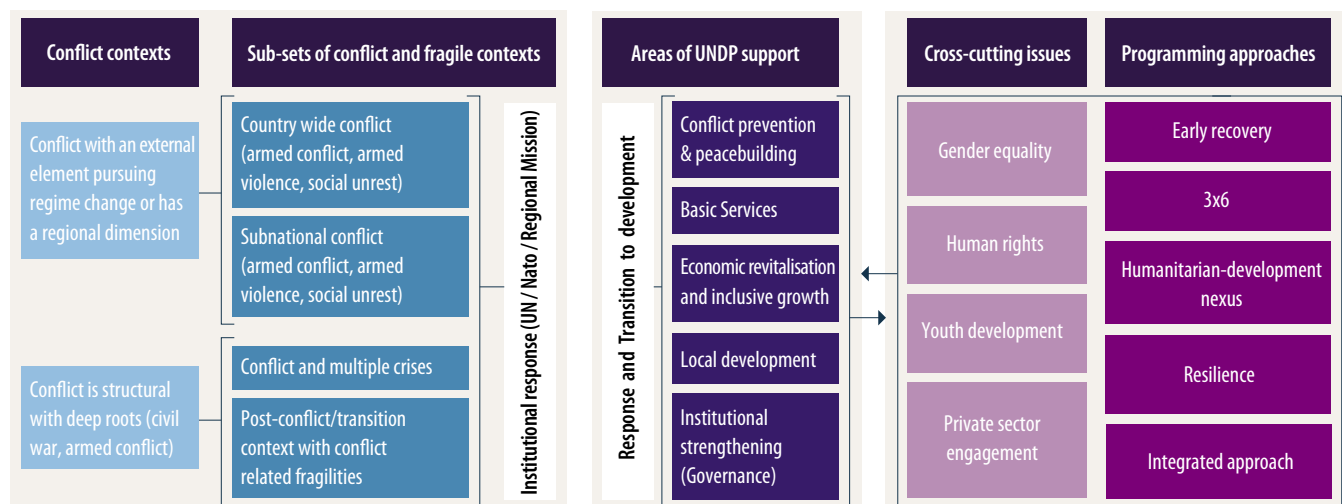
This comprehensive assessment of UNDP support to conflict-affected countries is of particular significance at this time, as programme countries grapple with a rise in violent conflict, increased displacement, climate impacts, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic which threatens to reverse decades of development gains. The evaluation assessed the UNDP role and contributions in 34 conflict-affected countries in the key areas of crisis prevention, response (including early recovery and stabilization), peacebuilding and statebuilding for the transition to medium- to long-term development. The key streams of UNDP programme support are conflict prevention and peacebuilding, basic services, economic revitalization and inclusive growth, local economic development, institutional strengthening (public administration capacity, democratic processes and rule of law), and gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE).

The evaluation covered programmes active between 2014 and 2020, covering the current and previous strategic plans, and builds on IEO thematic evaluations in conflict-affected countries. Specific attention was paid to the concepts and approaches used by UNDP, and its global advocacy role in promoting the humanitarian, peace and development nexus (HDPN) and resilience.

The main objectives of the evaluation were to:

- Assess the role and contribution of UNDP to peacebuilding and statebuilding in conflict-affected countries and those with conflict-related fragilities.
- Assess the extent to which UNDP promoted integrated humanitarian, development and peace nexus approaches in its support to recovery and stabilization.
- Identify the factors that have impacted on the UNDP contribution.
- Identify lessons for the UNDP programme in conflict contexts and global advocacy.

Scope of the evaluation



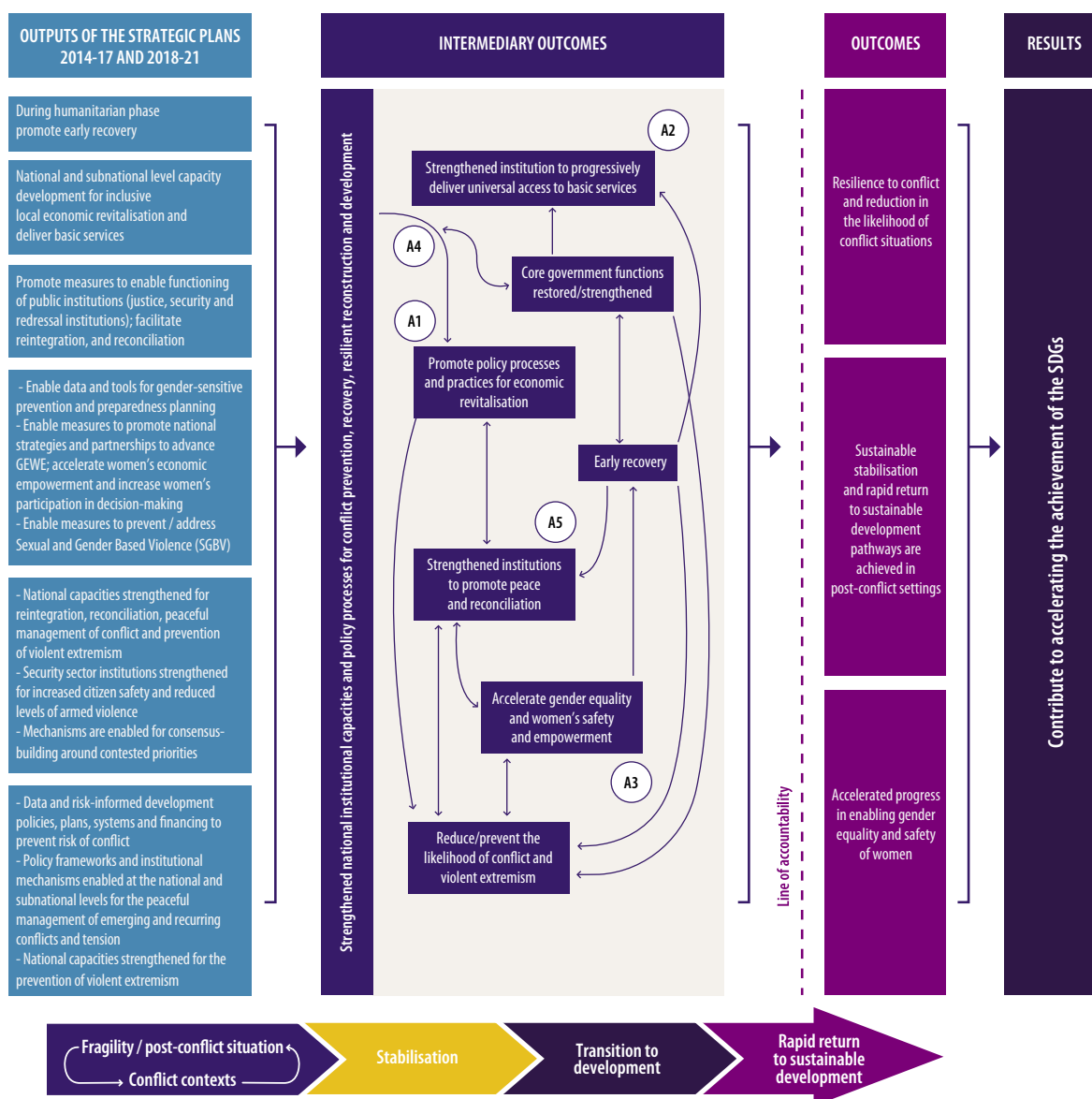
Source: IEO

METHODS USED

This evaluation established an aggregated theory of change to assess the UNDP role and contribution in conflict-affected countries, giving a framework to assess contributions across seven programme areas and the outcomes outlined in the two strategic plans to understand the:

- Extent of UNDP programme support given a particular conflict context (what UNDP did).
- Approach of the contribution (whether UNDP programmes were appropriate for the diversity of conflict contexts).
- Process of contribution (how the contribution occurred).
- Significance of the contribution (what the contribution was and whether UNDP accomplished its intended objectives).

UNDP support to countries in conflict - A Theory of Change



Assumption 1 (A1): UNDP programmes are context-specific and fit for purpose

Assumption 2 (A2): UNDP exercises its mandate of promoting early recovery/stabilization within a sustainable development framework instead of getting co-opted into a humanitarian mode of support

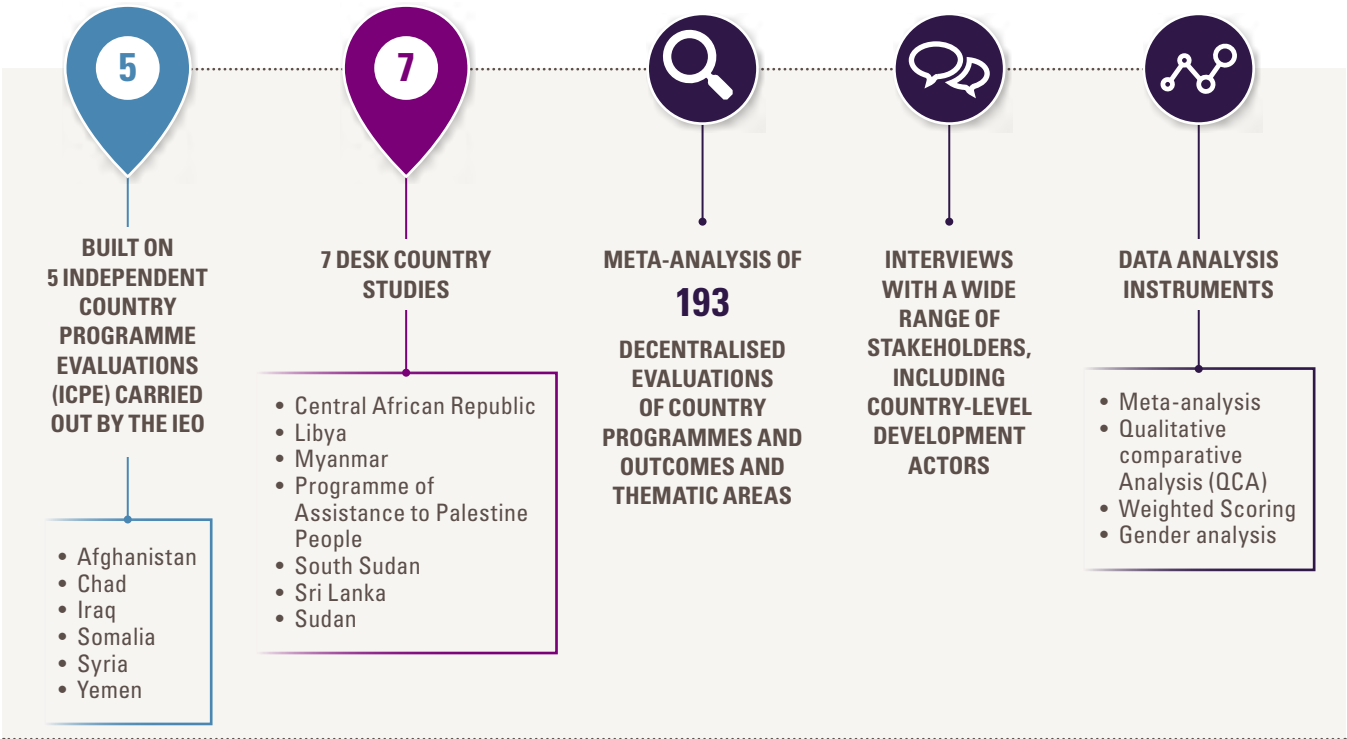
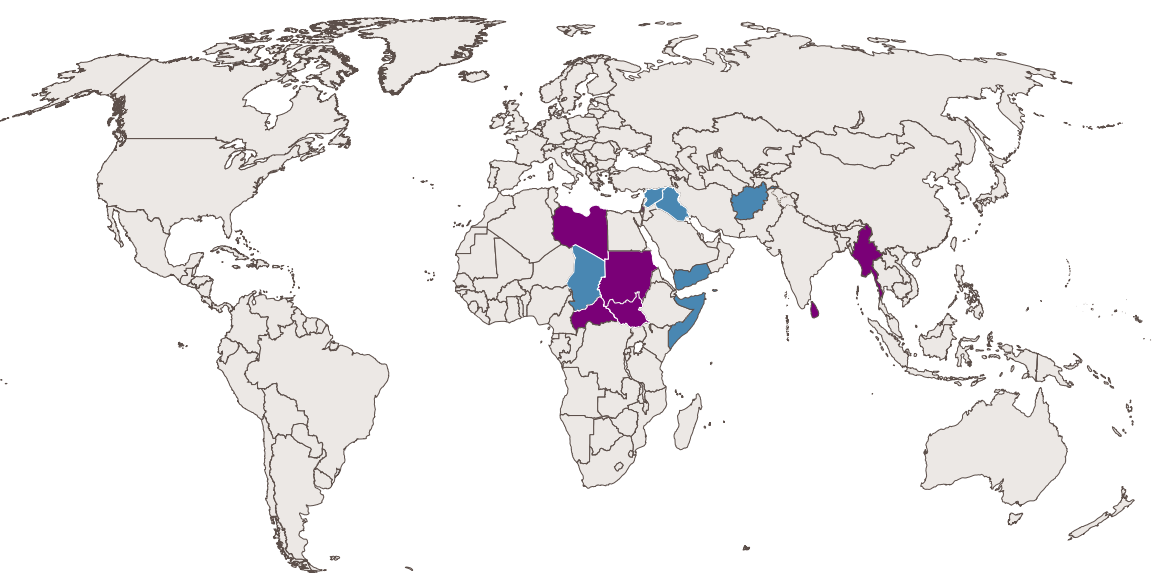
Assumption 3 (A3): The scope and scale of UNDP programmes are reasonably sufficient to contribute to intermediary outcomes

Assumption 4 (A4): UNDP used programme approaches and tools that would enhance the pace of peacebuilding and statebuilding

Assumption 5 (A5): UNDP forged programmatic partnerships for enabling resilience to conflict and accelerating sustainable development pathways

Data collection and analysis

The evaluation used mixed methods and took an iterative approach to gather varied perspectives on UNDP performance. Planned thematic country case studies were not carried out due to COVID-19, but this did not pose any major evaluative data limitations given the availability of substantive country programme evaluations in major conflict-affected countries.



WHAT WE FOUND

UNDP positioning and comparative advantage

1. UNDP programmes address some of the most intractable challenges in conflict-affected countries, demonstrating its value in enabling peace and accelerating development.
2. UNDP effectively implements programmes and enables technical expertise and has an important role to play connecting different actors to accelerate progress on peace, conflict-prevention and development.
3. UNDP has to navigate a neutral stance amidst the differing interests of governments and donors, and country teams need support to exercise diplomatic judgement and manage trade-offs.
4. The new Crisis Bureau has contributed to UNDP global positioning and supports country offices, and this could create greater policy coherence if well-used by regional bureaux and country offices.
5. The delinking of the Resident Coordinator and Representative roles from UNDP has been a challenge for its positioning in conflict-affected countries.

Global policy and advocacy

6. UNDP has made an important contribution to a positive global policy environment for the humanitarian-development-peace interface but could use its country-level experience and expertise to provide stronger leadership in this area.
7. Given the severity of the challenges for sustainable peace, security and development in the Sahel, UNDP needs to promote more strategic and concerted engagement in the region.

Economic revitalization and employment

8. UNDP has an array of adaptable approaches for economic revitalization in conflict contexts, but they are applied inconsistently, and more evidence is needed on how livelihoods can build household resilience to conflict.
9. Pursued simultaneously, humanitarian and development programmes have the potential to address significant drivers of economic revitalization and peace in conflict contexts.

Restoration and strengthening basic services

- 
- 10. The UNDP integrated approach to the restoration of basic services adds value by delivering functioning services and connecting reconstruction with recovery, development and peacebuilding.
 - 11. Partnerships expanded the reach and contribution of UNDP to sustainable outcomes in reconstruction and service provision.
 - 12. Community infrastructure and service projects helped to promote peace and strengthen community participation in the rebuilding and reconciliation of their communities.

Stabilization programmes

- 13. UNDP has a clear niche in complex post-conflict responses, through the management of large stabilization facilities and the restoration of services in highly-risky environments.

Strengthening institutional capacities and rule of law

- 14. UNDP contributed to the responsiveness and accountability of institutions in conflict-affected countries, but fundamental institutional change requires longer-term engagement.
- 15. UNDP contributed to electoral processes and the structured and transparent engagement of parliaments, and could promote democratic processes further with medium- to long-term support.
- 16. UNDP has built infrastructure and capacity for functioning police forces and courts and promoted access to justice for women, but struggles to demonstrate the strategic and long-term outcomes of this work.
- 17. UNDP support to police programmes in conflict-affected countries has enabled tangible outcomes, but is yet to incorporate strategic institutional capacity building.

Building national capacity for conflict prevention

- 18. UNDP prevention and peacebuilding work has been dominated by physical infrastructure and services, rather than governance, dialogue and conflict analysis.
- 19. UNDP has contributed to stabilization and peacebuilding through community development and livelihoods, promoting dialogue, reducing tensions and laying the foundations for trusted government and inclusive development.
- 20. UNDP needs to more coherently conceptualize its programme support for the prevention of violent extremism based on its added value, and clarify the links to conflict prevention.

Support to multi-donor programmes

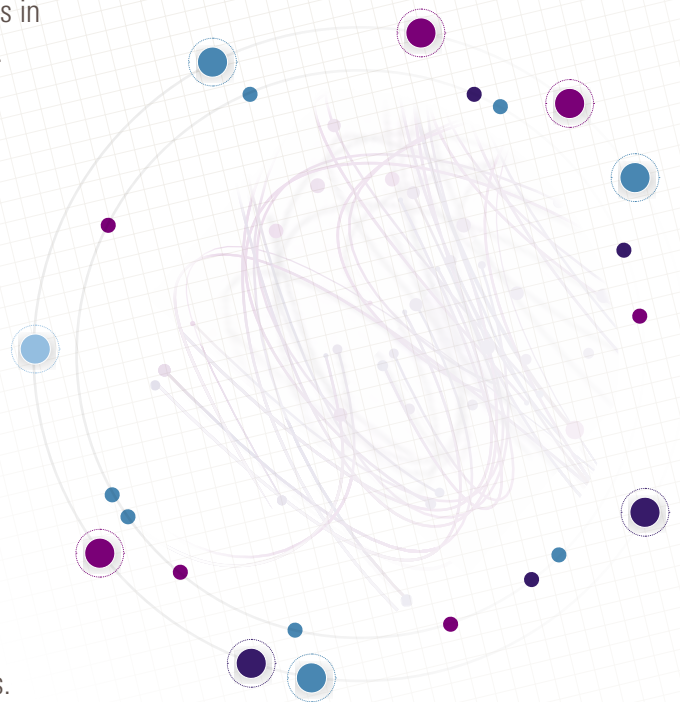
- 21.** UNDP has played an important role in managing large multi-donor programmes in conflict contexts, with a strategic impact on timely conflict responses.

Furthering gender equality and women's empowerment

- 22.** GEWE is a strategic priority for UNDP, but the guidance, tools and systems developed have not culminated in gender-responsive programming or gender-transformative results on the ground.
- 23.** At country level, UNDP has barely adopted an intersectional perspective and subsequently continues to reinforce deep-rooted inequalities, undermining efforts towards sustainable peace.

Cross-cutting themes

- 24.** The New Way of Working provided a common direction in conflict contexts, though overall there lacks a committed collective impetus to enhance peace and development outcomes.
- 25.** UNDP worked to develop synergies and sector-wide approaches for governance work, but often relied on compartmentalized and projectized responses on the ground, reducing its contribution.
- 26.** Although young people are included in many UNDP initiatives, this did not contribute to engaging youth as key actors in peace and development.
- 27.** UNDP is yet to prioritize private sector development in post-conflict programme support.
- 28.** Weak synergies between UNDP initiatives, and the lack of a well-conceptualized prevention programme, undermined efforts to address the interlinking dimensions of crises.
- 29.** There are ongoing efforts to infuse peace and institutional strengthening initiatives with innovative development solutions, but these lack momentum in conflict contexts.



SNAPSHOT

of OUR CONCLUSIONS

In conflict-affected countries:



1

UNDP has made important contributions to stabilizing, building and strengthening institutions, enabling processes for **STATEBUILDING AND PEACEBUILDING**.

2

To achieve sustainable outcomes, UNDP stabilization support must be anchored in peacebuilding and **INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING PROCESSES**.



3

UNDP had a stronger response in **RECOVERY AND STABILIZATION**, but its contribution to peace and development was reduced by the lack of a systematic approach to support integrated prevention.



4

UNDP programmes tend to be short-term, whereas post-conflict contexts require **SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT** to provide durable livelihood solutions and stronger governance processes.



5

COMPARTMENTALIZED RESPONSES to different crises in a country miss opportunities to address cross-cutting and intersecting elements, and in the Sahel specifically, multiple crises require comprehensive strategies.



6

The UNDP commitment to **YOUTH AS AGENTS OF PEACE** has been undermined by the lack of a multi-pronged programme and the small scope of its programmes.

7

Progress to engage the **PRIVATE SECTOR** has been slow, and UNDP has not adequately considered global partnerships for private sector development.



8

GEWE is not given enough priority, and this reduces the UNDP contribution, in particular to **WOMEN'S ROLES IN PEACEBUILDING** and addressing gender inequality.



9

The **CRISIS BUREAU** has provided an anchor for UNDP support and an impetus for consolidating programme responses at global and national levels.





Conclusion 1.

In conflict-affected countries, UNDP has made important contributions to stabilizing, building and strengthening institutions, as well as enabling processes for statebuilding and peacebuilding.

The evaluation period has been marked by major escalations of violent conflict in regions of great strategic geopolitical importance, escalations of both internationalized and localized conflicts, protracted armed conflicts, growing concerns about international violent extremism, the increasing intersection of climate change with conflict and displacement, and politically-sensitive peace processes. UNDP responded to this wide diversity of contexts and complex challenges with effective interventions supporting national and international partners, filling critical gaps across the spectrum of recovery and stabilization. UNDP has been responsive, facilitating core government functions, restoring services and providing temporary employment and livelihoods. Notwithstanding challenges in arriving at the right response in some cases, UNDP should be credited for its contributions to the progress made in conflict-affected countries.

While the programme areas UNDP has supported have remained consistent over the years, the contexts and scale of conflicts have varied, forcing UNDP to learn and adapt rapidly. UNDP has displayed agility in adapting to context, whether swiftly setting up a large stabilization facility in Iraq to deliver at scale, supporting peace processes in Colombia, or promoting resilience-based approaches in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

UNDP has the unique distinction of having operational and strategic capability to mobilize multi-sectoral, whole-of-government responses together with agency-specific expertise to promote peace and development in crisis-affected countries. In line with changing geostrategic trends, the UNDP focus has shifted from post-conflict peacebuilding and disarmament to stabilization and countering extremism across the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia.

UNDP made concerted efforts to strengthen partnerships with other United Nations agencies, particularly humanitarian agencies, and international financial institutions. This assumes significance given the corporate emphasis on furthering New Way of Working (NWoW) and HDPN. Although there is considerable scope for improvement, partnerships with United Nations agencies enhanced contributions to improving basic services and institutional capacities. Programmatic partnerships for consolidated engagement, in line with NWoW, are yet to be prioritized.

UNDP programme presence in all conflict contexts gives it the comparative advantage to contribute to global policy and advocacy on NWoW and the triple nexus. There is scope for improving its global and regional engagement by identifying areas for consistent participation and optimizing its regional presence. The broad, ad hoc nature of UNDP engagement has reduced its contribution to the global policy space and providing thought leadership to the HDPN agenda. At global level, there is a vacuum in leading the operationalization of HDPN and scope for UNDP to provide thought leadership in

translating the HDPN concept into a practical inter-agency approach. UNDP did not strengthen synergies between country programmes and global-level engagement to further consolidate its positioning in global policy discourse.

UNDP is yet to comprehensively address the challenge of the reduction in programme funding for longer-term livelihoods, employment and core governance support in conflict-affected countries, and the implications for the role it can play. Donor funding for these thematic areas has increased in recent years, but UNDP has not been able to tap into this funding. A significant component of the UNDP programme portfolio comprises fiduciary support, and funding for programme support is currently smaller. Although conflict-affected countries comprise a significant proportion of overall UNDP expenditure, actual resources are small. Considering that traditional donor contributions are the primary source of UNDP programme resources, there has been insufficient diversification of funding sources.



Conclusion 2.

UNDP made a significant contribution to stabilization efforts. Anchoring stabilization support in peacebuilding and institutional strengthening processes is essential for sustainable outcomes.

Stabilization support in protracted crises is a major component of the UNDP portfolio, laying the groundwork for peacebuilding and preventing the recurrence of violence.

UNDP has played a significant and constructive role in the establishment and successful management of large stabilization facilities and enabled the restoration of services in high-risk environments. As such, UNDP has served to create a clear niche in complex post-conflict responses. The Iraq experience has been successfully replicated, globally supporting infrastructure and other early recovery efforts in immediate post-conflict contexts.

UNDP programme frameworks recognize the importance of the stabilization-peace-development interface but, in practice, the approach to stabilization focused on immediate tasks to restore and rebuild social infrastructure. While there are tangible outcomes in terms of improved social services and the return of internally displaced persons, these were not anchored in local institutional processes and peace initiatives, reducing the sustainability of outcomes and opportunities to strengthen institutional capacities. The emphasis of stabilization programmes on the quick restoration of services widened the stabilization-peace-development divide. Treating stabilization programmes as means for quick rehabilitation and restoration of public infrastructure runs the risk of missed leveraging opportunities for peacebuilding and institutional strengthening.

Conflict-sensitive, inclusive processes would have further enhanced the UNDP contribution to stabilization programmes. UNDP is yet to clarify its value addition in stabilization programmes, irrespective of adaptation to different country contexts. In the absence of defined stabilization

principles, UNDP is predisposed to comply with different donor requirements, which often do not pay attention to institutional strengthening.



Conclusion 3.

Prevention, as an overall framework for UNDP work, is evolving. The UNDP programme response has been predominantly in conflict recovery and stabilization areas, and only a small proportion in conflict prevention. As the largest United Nations development agency, UNDP did not take a proactive approach to develop an integrated prevention offer at global and country levels. Lack of systematic effort to address prevention accelerators reduced the UNDP contribution to peace and development.

Underprioritization of conflict prevention is a common issue in international support, not just for UNDP. At corporate policy level, UNDP acknowledges the significance of conflict prevention for progress on the SDGs and is committed to enhancing synergies between development and peace interventions. But this commitment has not translated into concrete prevention programming support. In conflict and post-conflict contexts, UNDP sought to build institutional resilience through initiatives such as strengthening public administration, rule of law and the security sector, and community resilience through inclusive economic revitalization and addressing climate impacts. But such efforts were

short-term and did not always result in a coherent and critical mass to contribute to conflict prevention. UNDP is yet to clarify its conceptual approach to integrated prevention before, during and after a conflict, and how its conflict and development programming can be leveraged towards this.

Work on identifying the accelerators of prevention for more sustained engagement was limited. This gap is more evident in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, where prevention of violent conflict assumes significance given the interlinked security, humanitarian, political and climate risks. UNDP country and regional programmes have deprioritized systematic support to institutionalized prevention mechanisms. The increase in the climate-conflict interface required systematic efforts to address interlinked dimensions and prevent tensions and conflict. There is scope for further investment in youth as agents of peace and youth-led solutions to the prevention of conflict and violence, including violent extremism.



Conclusion 4.

In conflict-affected countries, UNDP programmes are predisposed towards short-term programming, reducing its contribution to accelerating peace and sustainable development. Important contributions were made in enabling temporary employment, infrastructure for basic services and core governance functionality, which form the basis for longer-term

efforts. Notwithstanding such contributions, post-conflict contexts require sustained engagement to provide durable livelihood solutions and stronger governance processes.

The rehabilitation of basic services infrastructure contributed to the stabilization of conflict-affected areas. Short-term local- and community-level recovery and rehabilitation efforts have been a useful strategy for restoring services, enabling the operation of public administration and generating temporary employment, encouraging the return of displaced populations. For this progress to be sustained, linkages between stabilization or early recovery programmes and peacebuilding and institutional strengthening are required, but UNDP was not always successful in enabling these linkages. Similarly, UNDP economic revitalization programme interventions, while appropriate for coping and recovery, fall short of addressing key constraints to durable solutions for employment and livelihoods and the necessary institutional processes. UNDP is yet to balance short-term interventions with medium- to long-term engagement to address key drivers of peace and development.

While UNDP adopted pertinent programme approaches for medium- to longer-term solutions, their application and implementation remain uneven, reducing its contribution to accelerating the transition to development. UNDP introduced sustainable livelihood practices through approaches such as 3X6 and Area-based Development. There were, however, challenges in

microfinance and the expansion of markets for the sustainable development of value chains. The concept of resilience is theoretically an improvement in the livelihoods approach, but in practice, did not provide a dynamic model for livelihood change processes at household, community and institutional levels. The Area-based Development approach has been promising in post-conflict contexts, but not consistently pursued.

UNDP has the distinction of supporting the functionality of institutions, responding to public administration needs and providing services. In post-conflict contexts and countries transitioning to development, functionality alone is not sufficient, and UNDP approaches to strengthen government institutions and governance processes are not fit for purpose.

Strengthening governance capacities requires sustained engagement, and there were missed opportunities to position governance as central to the conflict prevention agenda. UNDP, rightly, makes the case that its work on governance and institutional strengthening helps to prevent conflict and promote peace, but is yet to position its support as such. A lack of long-term focus and demonstration of technical domain expertise are factors undermining UNDP positioning as a key governance actor. Major donors are making extensive use of consultancy firms to implement governance programmes. UNDP did not reposition its governance support in tune with current public management practices and is yet to go beyond technical policy and the

substitution of functionality, to consistently pursue the institutional reform agenda. There are pockets of innovation in UNDP work in conflict-affected countries, but these are isolated and limited.



Conclusion 5.

Compartmentalized responses to different crises at country level missed opportunities to address cross-cutting and intersecting elements. The cumulative impacts of multiple crises in the Sahel and Horn of Africa required comprehensive strategies.

The current COVID-19 pandemic notwithstanding, intertwined security, humanitarian and climate challenges in the Sahel and Horn of Africa demand a comprehensive approach. Several strategies adopted by regional institutions require operationalization. Response was needed at multiple levels, through a combination of short-term support and measures to address the strategic issues of institutions and governance to promote peace, stability and inclusive growth. While there have been isolated efforts, such as the Lake Chad Basin facility, the overall UNDP regional and country programmes did not demonstrate the urgency and intensity demanded by the Sahel and Horn of Africa situation. UNDP did not build on programme interventions addressing conflict and refugee crises, climate impacts and poverty reduction, to enable advocacy and coordinated engagement. A common issue in Africa and the Arab States is the lack of comprehensive regional programmes to develop well-tested

models to inform country programmes and regional discourse on prevention and response. Similar to other regions, NWoW is yet to manifest in practice in the Sahel. UNDP did not have much success in forging programme partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies in the Sahel for a consolidated response.



Conclusion 6.

UNDP commitment to strengthening the role of youth as agents of peace and change is undermined by the lack of a multi-pronged programme in select areas. Given the small scope of UNDP programmes in conflict-affected countries, mainstreaming youth development and extremism prevention has had limited outcomes.

UNDP corporate policies and strategies have consistently emphasized youth as agents for development and resolving and preventing conflict, and thus as key stakeholders in programme support. Youth development is considered a cross-sectoral priority, and addressed in various UNDP interventions, specifically in employment, prevention of violent extremism and social cohesion programmes. With some exceptions, youth programmes had micro-level success, but there is limited evidence of them addressing policy bottlenecks in youth employment and development. In the absence of targeted programmes and collaboration with agencies with large youth programmes to scale up, contributions have been minimal. Furthermore, UNDP is yet to

use programme tools such as Accelerator Labs to develop more sustainable solutions for youth development in conflict contexts.



Conclusion 7.

Conflict contexts present challenges and opportunities for private sector engagement. While the UNDP strategy for private sector engagement and development prioritizes conflict-affected countries, progress has been slow as concerted efforts are lacking at the programme level. UNDP has not adequately considered the area of global partnerships for private sector development in conflict-affected countries.

Private sector development in post-conflict contexts reflects both the complexity of this important area, as well as a lack of sustained UNDP engagement. With programmes in key areas of development, UNDP has opportunities for private sector engagement. There are examples where UNDP has demonstrated replicable and sustainable private sector models that could be adapted to other fragile and post-conflict contexts. In the sustainable energy sector in Sudan, for example, UNDP enabled private sector investments resulting in transformative agricultural livelihoods. Such successful examples, while important, are small in number, and private sector engagement was not consistently taken into account during reconstruction and redevelopment. Notwithstanding the enabling environment challenges posed by post-conflict and conflict contexts, opportunities were missed in leveraging UNDP programme areas for

private sector engagement. Economic revitalization, inclusive growth and jobs have been constrained by the absence of clearly prioritized and sequenced support for a focused medium- to long-term strategy for private sector engagement.

Stabilization and other early recovery efforts are yet to prioritize private sector development as a solution for financing and sustaining redevelopment. A lack of sustained attention undermined the promotion of the private sector as a legitimate driver of economic revitalization. To succeed, micro, small and medium enterprise initiatives require business support along the entire supply chain, suggesting that programmatic engagement in private sector development is now a necessity. Opportunities were missed, particularly in countries with localized conflict where engagement in more stable areas could be leveraged for engagement in affected areas. UNDP is in the process of testing various tools appropriate for adaptation to conflict contexts, such as the venture accelerator and micro, small and medium enterprise action platforms. Constraining such efforts is the lack of prioritization of private sector engagement as integral to UNDP programme support.

Examples of success show the importance of nurturing the enabling environment for private sector development and investment. Supporting the business environment is most challenging in conflict contexts, which therefore require a more collaborative approach. UNDP support to de-risking the policy and investment space has been sparse in conflict contexts and lacked

partnerships. Government policies can play an important part in providing a private-sector- friendly environment, but UNDP has not sufficiently used the evidence gathered through its support to business development to engage governments on policy reform.



Conclusion 8.

The UNDP contribution to enhancing women's roles in peacebuilding and addressing gender inequality remains weak. Low prioritization of GEWE is reducing the UNDP contribution to conflict-affected countries.

The UNDP approach to GEWE was not commensurate with the severity of challenges for women and gender inequalities perpetuated by multiple crises. While there has been progress on mainstreaming GEWE in UNDP programme support, targeted policy and advocacy contributions in conflict-affected countries are limited. Viewing women as beneficiaries, rather than supporting them as agents of change in areas of early recovery, peacebuilding and statebuilding, undermine transformative outcomes. UNDP support to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 has considerably reduced over the years, more so with the closure of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. A minimalist approach to GEWE in conflict responses has significantly undermined peace and security efforts. The consequences of this are more severe in the Sahel and Horn of Africa.

Although UNDP has prioritized GEWE as a strategic objective, and there is acknowledgement of the critical importance of support to women, peace and security, this is not reflected in resource allocations for GEWE-related programmes. UNDP was a pioneer in promoting programming solutions to advance GEWE in crisis contexts, such as the minimum 15 percent expenditure for GEWE initiatives which informed the United Nations system-wide policy. UNDP has not been successful in making the case for its potential strategic contribution through support to different thematic areas in conflict- affected countries. The potential of UNDP to strengthen GEWE is underutilized, in part because of the official development assistance trend for funding specialized agencies for gender-related programming.



Conclusion 9.

The reconstitution of the Crisis Bureau has provided a much-needed anchor for UNDP support to conflict-affected countries, and an impetus for consolidating programme responses at global and national levels, and is a significant step forward.

The reconstitution of the Crisis Bureau has been important in positioning UNDP in the evolving context of reforms of the United Nations Development System and peace and security architecture, and the emphasis of the Secretary-General on prevention for peace. Having a dedicated bureau focusing on crisis has improved the consolidation

of UNDP conflict-related support, streamlined technical support to country offices, rationalized programme approaches, and ensured steps were taken to move beyond immediate response-related programming towards a more substantive role in prevention. The Crisis Bureau has been successful in repositioning UNDP conflict programming, addressing disengagement issues since the closure of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, and enabling UNDP to engage in global debates on peace and security and policy discussions with the Secretariat. In line with NWoW and the HDPN agenda, there have been concerted efforts to strengthen global-level partnerships. There is scope for further deepening partnerships with other United Nations agencies such as FAO, ILO and UN Women, and for system-wide partnerships for comprehensive support in the Sahel.

The UNDP business model in conflict-affected countries has improved, in terms of programme management processes and instruments for greater efficiency of country programmes, with the streamlining of surge deployment, fast-track finance processes, and access to advisory services. The recently introduced Global Policy Network is being streamlined to improve technical support to country offices. Technical assistance from headquarter bureaux and regional offices add value to country programmes, and the distributed model of the Global Policy Network is a sensible way to tap UNDP-wide expertise. UNDP was able to respond quickly to the immediate needs of conflict-affected countries, though maintaining that level of response over the long

term was difficult. The current structure can promote efficient advisory and technical services, but this also requires investment in technical expertise to support priority areas of programme support.

The division of responsibilities between the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and the Crisis Bureau is evolving. Further clarity in the functioning of the two bureaux would avoid duplication and build on synergies and coordinated approaches for a more comprehensive response in post-conflict contexts. In prevention programming, where the overlap between the two policy bureaux is greatest, and particularly in inclusive growth and core governance functions, parallel the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support and Crisis Bureau programming could reduce the contribution of UNDP. Similarly, clarity of roles and responsibilities between policy and regional bureaux is fundamental to better leverage the various UNDP programme units, though there are areas yet to be clarified.

The delinking of the Resident Coordinator system from UNDP has provided an opportunity for the organization to strategically reposition its programmatic analytical, policy advisory and advocacy work at country level. In conflict contexts, this is particularly important in mission countries, where the change processes have impacted UNDP programmes. Identifying areas for repositioning and strengthening the UNDP response post-delinking is key to the continued contribution of UNDP in crisis-affected countries.

Recommendation

1

UNDP needs a well-focused corporate policy that responds to the Secretary-General's call for a coordinated and integrated approach to sustainable peace. UNDP should demonstrate global leadership in facilitating and promoting the HDPN agenda.

UNDP should prioritize its support and engagement in the United Nations peace reform agenda. Within UNCTs, UNDP should support joint analysis, planning and programming towards collective nexus outcomes in select sectors.

Given the favourable global policy environment, with the United Nations impetus for sustainable peace and NWoW for programme collaboration and the nexus approach, UNDP should identify areas where country offices will consistently contribute to HDPN policy and advocacy. At the country level, enable programming instruments for linking humanitarian, development and peace responses, that are anchored in development frameworks.

To unpack the complexity of HDPN programming, identify sectors where programme models can be developed to demonstrate development and peace outcomes to inform policy. Prioritize HDPN solutions at the local level in efforts to strengthen services and livelihoods. For policy lessons in nexus programming to strengthen pathways to peace and address drivers of conflict, implement well-tested signature programme models in a select area in all conflict-affected countries.

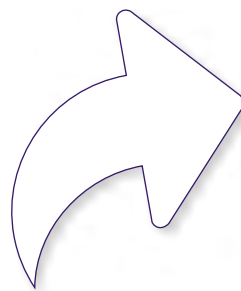
Management Response



UNDP accepts the recommendation and is developing a crisis and fragility framework which will align crisis prevention and response strategies with the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustaining Peace Agenda, and guide the strategies, programmes and operations for UNDP work in crisis/fragile contexts.

UNDP will enhance its learning to deliver on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in practice and channel this into upgraded nexus approaches, spanning both its programmatic role in terms of development effectiveness and delivering results, and its integrator role, globally and in country.

FORWARD



UNDP will leverage existing global joint programming engagements with the United Nations Secretariat, including the Joint UNDP-Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs (DPPA) Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and its extended capacity provided by peace and development advisers, the Global Focal Point on the Rule of Law and the United Nations Transitions Project, among others, to support the resident coordinator system to ensure cross-pillar coherence and promote joint analysis, planning and programming towards collective nexus outcomes.

Prioritize support to conflict prevention at global and country levels. UNDP should develop its prevention offer with a focus on facilitating long-term structural change and a generational transformation agenda in conflict-affected countries. Identify areas where there will be a sustained long-term focus. As part of the prevention offer, address the interlinked dimensions of climate and conflict.

The core added value of UNDP is its ability to work long-term with government institutions and communities to build effective and accountable governance and peace ecosystems. In line with the Secretary General's priorities, conflict prevention should become a central theme of country programmes in fragile contexts. Rather than automatically qualifying all institutional strengthening and economic growth as prevention interventions, UNDP should identify and pursue key accelerators of prevention. Focus on the drivers of conflict and related fragility to address risks early on, before they escalate to crisis. Anchor UNDP support at the local level to enable bottom-up change processes.

As UNDP develops its corporate strategy for support to fragile and conflict-affected countries, build on the organization's comparative strengths in multiple programme areas for system-wide engagement on key areas of conflict prevention and response.

2

Recommendation



Management Response



The evaluation recommends three areas for prioritizing prevention support. First, prevention of violent extremism (PVE) should be more explicitly brought within the conflict prevention fold, to ensure that this subset of conflict prevention is not ad hoc and disconnected. In a sustained manner, prioritize youth development as part of PVE. Collaborate and invest in integrated, multi-sectoral approaches to youth empowerment and to ensure that PVE National Action Plans and other national policy frameworks to build peace are both youth- inclusive and youth-focused. Second, given the extensive environment and crisis programme portfolios of UNDP, address interlinked dimensions of risk from multiple crises that exacerbate conflict. Identify UNDP programmes where the integration of a prevention dimension can add value. Lastly, consistently support local risk and tension monitoring /early warning systems as a signature offer of UNDP, separately or as part of ongoing data collection mechanisms. Collaborate with the United Nations and other agencies for collective efforts in data collection and the interpretation of risk.

UNDP accepts the recommendation and is developing a new prevention offer that covers multiple time frames: short-term, focusing on early warning and early preventive action; medium-term, focusing on building infrastructure for peace and capacities for dialogue, mediation and consensus-building; and long-term, addressing underlying and root developmental causes of conflict, including climate change, which require prioritization in UNDP country programmes. The offer will factor in risk-informed development and integrated approaches in complex crisis environments. Aligned to this, UNDP will develop a new methodology to assess its prevention impact.

As part of this prevention offer and strengthening links between early warning and early action, the work of UNDP on monitoring crisis risks will build on the organization's data strategy and related efforts to strengthen data collection, data literacy and data/evidence-based analysis and programming for scaled-up prevention work. It will feed into internal decision-making support mechanisms for regular horizon scanning to inform early prevention action, both within UNDP and at an inter-agency level through relevant forums (e.g., Inter-Agency Standing Committee and United Nations prevention architecture).

UNDP will further strengthen the links between its new prevention offer and prevention of violent extremism and the inclusion and engagement of youth in line with Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security across the five pillars.

UNDP management should ensure organization-wide policy coherence to address inconsistent conceptual and programmatic responses across regions. Address constraints that are limiting the substantive and long-term engagement of UNDP in core areas of support.

UNDP should ensure that there is policy coherence across its programme countries, putting corporate strategies and tools into practice. Predominantly generalist support can reduce the potential role of UNDP in post-conflict countries. Consistently prioritize long-term engagement in select areas with technical depth. Prioritize comprehensive global programmes on select themes to provide well-tested signature solutions to country offices, for conceptual coherence, and to facilitate UNDP engagement in global policy and advocacy on integrated responses to peace and development.

The regional bureaux and Crisis Bureau should enhance their coordination for conceptual and programmatic coherence. Take measures to ensure corporate strategies and guidance are used by country offices to stay ahead of the curve in responding to crises.

UNDP accepts the recommendation noting it has designed the Global Policy Network (GPN) to bring together all UNDP bureaux to ensure coherence across its policy and programmatic approaches, and that globally distributed capacity and expertise are fully leveraged to achieve organizational objectives.

UNDP is preparing its crisis and fragility framework, which will guide its programmes and support to crisis-affected and fragile contexts, including: UNDP focus areas (identifying major risks and opportunities for transformative change in fragile contexts); UNDP actions (linking to its technical offers in areas such as prevention, peacebuilding, governance, rule of law and human rights, disaster risk reduction, human mobility and recovery); and ways of working (to ensure that UNDP is fit for purpose in complex and difficult operating environments). The framework will be accompanied by a new generation of global programmes on priority themes to provide tested and coherent signature solutions to country offices.

At the same time, UNDP is ensuring that it is “fit for fragility”, demonstrating sufficient agility and adaptability to operate in crisis and fragile environments. Revised and upgraded policies, procedures and capacities include: (a) Surge rosters and academy, which enable the right people with the right skills to be in the right place at the right time; (b) ensuring that TRAC3 funding is effectively invested in prevention, early recovery, nexus partnerships

3

Recommendation



Management Response





Recommendation

4

UNDP should emphasize medium- to long-term livelihood and employment support. It should take measures to put holistic employment and livelihood options into practice for wider use and replication in conflict and post-conflict contexts.

In conflict-affected countries, UNDP should seek opportunities for more substantive programmatic engagement on poverty reduction, developing more realistic medium- to long-term frameworks for livelihoods and employment. UNDP should emphasize employment and livelihood approaches that seek to address the structural underpinnings of poverty and fragility. Programme areas which enable structural transformation in income generation and employment, such as inclusive business and markets, need consistent engagement. Specific attention should be paid to the peace dividend as a way to address challenges for sustainable businesses and livelihoods. Likewise, ensure conflict-sensitivity in the design and implementation of livelihoods programmes.

Prioritize SDG-related analysis and planning support in conflict-affected countries, to keep the focus on sustainable development and peace. Consider strengthening the economist programme for more consistent support to policy analysis and planning.

Management Response



UNDP accepts the recommendation and will develop improved context and systems analysis to identify new options for sustainability of livelihoods and economic recovery in conflict and post-conflict settings to reduce economic instability, poverty and conflicts over time in fragile contexts. UNDP will identify common success elements from existing livelihoods and market-oriented initiatives and enhance support to country offices to strengthen integrated programming, better linking livelihoods/economic revitalization support, social cohesion, environmental management and governance, within the lenses of poverty reduction and the Sustainable Development Goals. These

evidence-based frameworks will be incorporated in the revision of the UNDP guide on livelihoods and economic recovery in conflict and post-conflict settings.

UNDP should make long-term governance intervention central to its agenda of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. UNDP governance programmes should invest in new public administration models, with emphasis on planning and analysis, digital technologies and private sector engagement.

An excessive focus on short-term support can be counterproductive to the role UNDP can play in addressing governance challenges. To stay relevant in the governance area, UNDP needs to engage in reform-oriented core governance support at national and local government levels. Identify select areas of core governance function for consistent, long-term engagement across conflict-affected countries.

There will inevitably be pressure from partner governments and donors alike to support a short-term technical facilitation or fiduciary role, and this may be to the financial benefit of UNDP. Too much focus on short-term technical facilitation support runs the risk that UNDP is not seen as an agency with governance expertise that can facilitate reform and an institutional strengthening agenda.

UNDP accepts the recommendation and will continue to support countries in developing accountable, responsive institutions at national and local levels focused on deepening social contracts, and support the creation of governance systems of the future, including through digitalization and social innovations, reflecting the shifting domain of governance work in fragile and non-fragile settings alike. Special focus will be given to understanding multi-level governance systems and continuing to examine how UNDP can strengthen the social contract in a comprehensive manner. UNDP has recognized the need for a more integrated governance offer that addresses the broader functioning of governance systems, including in managing complexity and multidimensional risk.

UNDP is undertaking broader reviews of its governance work, including its local governance offer, building on previous frameworks, lessons and evidence. UNDP has also embarked on a research agenda to continue to offer thought leadership as well as practical guidance in this area. Likewise, UNDP has started a process of elevating the work on prevention and peacebuilding including the role of governance institutions. UNDP continues its lead role in this area through partnerships across the United Nations system,

5

Recommendation



Management Response





Recommendation

6

The Sahel programme is considerably underfunded. UNDP should demonstrate the urgency and intensity of the response demanded by the situation in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, recognize the unique challenges faced by the Sahel and prioritise the regional programme to galvanise support. Prioritise partnerships for a coordinated and collective response.

Take measures to put NWoW into practice in the Sahel, forging partnerships with humanitarian and development agencies for a consolidated response. UNDP should pay specific attention to mobilizing resources for its programme in the Sahel, while at the same time taking concrete measures to enable financing. Consider developing a Sahel programme to address intersecting elements of security, climate and development challenges.

Management Response



UNDP accepts the recommendation, noting that the UNDP initiative on regenerating the Central Sahel is underpinned by three programmatic offers on governance, energy and youth empowerment, and will strengthen the coordination and delivery of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel. Building on this offer, UNDP will continue to play a convening role with stakeholders, including donors, in mobilizing resources to address the multidimensional crises in the region. The Sahel offer is accompanied by a workplan for partner engagement, communications and resource mobilization.

Likewise, through the UNDP corporate Level 3 response in the Sahel, significant investments are underway to strengthen UNDP capacities in the region, in order to scale up delivery and impact. In late 2020, UNDP adopted a similar approach in the Horn of Africa, which will be further elaborated in 2021 and beyond.

Recommendation

7

Stabilization programmes need further consolidation. Merely focusing on infrastructure rehabilitation and building will not produce the desired outcomes unless combined with capacity development of local institutions and peace initiatives. Building on lessons from ongoing stabilization programmes, anchor future programmes within a peace and development framework.

UNDP support to stabilization demonstrates the importance and unique value-proposition of its work in conflict and post-conflict countries. UNDP should ensure that its stabilization approaches are linked to institutional

strengthening, peacebuilding and other early recovery interventions. Provide a stabilization programme framework for country offices, with mandatory principles of linkages with peace and development efforts.

UNDP accepts the recommendation, acknowledging that stabilization programmes are by necessity context-specific, while informed by good practices from other countries and learning at global level. UNDP will continue to engage in dedicated learning and knowledge development based on its extensive stabilization engagements on the ground, including on links between stabilization and peacebuilding approaches, and strengthening the capacities of UNDP country offices to support these processes within a longer-term peacebuilding and development lens.

UNDP should further improve collaboration with United Nations agencies, the World Bank and bilateral donors for contributions to long-term outcomes in conflict-affected countries.

UNDP has embarked on a strong partnership with humanitarian and peace agencies and with the World Bank. Systematize and clarify expectations for more efficient collaboration to further HDPN at global and country levels. The delinking of the Resident Coordinator function from UNDP has consequences for UNDP programmes in mission countries. UNDP should strengthen partnerships with DPPA and DPO for engagement in the areas of rule of law, the security sector and elections. Instead of one-off project-based partnerships, identify areas of synergy for regular collaboration with FAO and ILO to strengthen value chain and employment interventions.

Leverage the UNDP comparative advantage in conflict-affected countries to strengthen partnerships with the World Bank and develop global thematic initiatives in key areas of prevention and response, to further the HDPN agenda. Consolidate programmatic and advocacy partnerships for a comprehensive Sahel response.

UNDP accepts the recommendation noting that partnerships for delivering on humanitarian-development-peace nexus commitments with the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the World Food Programme have been strengthened and are showing potential for synergies and complementarities, with shared advocacy work, tools and field support packages. Other partnerships will also be reviewed for synergies in pursuit of shared humanitarian, development and peace objectives.



Management Response



Recommendation



Management Response





Recommendation

9

UNDP should make private sector engagement integral to its economic revitalization, inclusive growth and service delivery support. UNDP should accelerate the pace and scale of its engagement, with context-specific tools and interventions.

The recently adopted corporate private sector strategy is important for the momentum of private sector development and engagement in conflict-affected countries. While UNDP recognizes the significance of private sector engagement in crisis contexts, and has developed tools to enable it, further efforts and resource investments are needed to systematically pursue this. UNDP should ensure a long-term commitment to private-sector- related support, and this should be integral to country programmes.

Conflict contexts are diverse, and UNDP should have a more customized approach to private sector engagement to address structural constraints in harnessing market opportunities. Innovative private sector finance tools should be developed and promoted. UNDP should strengthen partnerships to address private sector development policy bottlenecks, and catalyze and de-risk private sector investments in conflict contexts. UNDP should select sectors for consistent private sector development.

Management Response



UNDP accepts the recommendation and agrees on the need to further prioritize private sector engagement, investment and development as integral to economic revitalization, inclusive growth and service delivery, aligned to its private sector strategy and livelihoods and economic recovery policy and programmatic offer, and with a focus on inclusive business and market development approaches. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, UNDP will strengthen partnerships with United Nations entities and IFIs to design finance strategies and programmes that are conflict-sensitive, complement ongoing peacebuilding efforts, focus on gender-transformative interventions and are inclusive of youth, women and other marginalized populations.

UNDP should prioritize support to GEWE for enabling gender-inclusive prevention, response and peace solutions.

10

Recommendation

Notwithstanding the initiatives of specialized agencies, UNDP should take concerted efforts to address the drivers of gender inequality. Improve the effectiveness of gender-responsive and gender-transformative interventions based on a well-grounded programme approach. To this effect, the indicators developed by the United Nations Technical Working Group on Global Indicators for UNSCR 1325, currently being revised, are a suitable framework.

Beyond the mainstreaming approach, UNDP should develop sectoral strategies for enhancing women's productive capacities and livelihoods. UNDP should increase its capacity of gender expertise, which is on a decreasing trend. Likewise, the Crisis Bureau should build its capacity to support GEWE in conflict-affected countries, in coordination with the regional bureaux. Addressing GEWE in conflict contexts requires dedicated resources. Take measures to mobilize resources for GEWE-related programming in crisis contexts, given the opportunities the range of UNDP programme engagement provides. Take measures to address issues of coherence in the comparative advantages between UNDP and UN Women at the country level.

UNDP accepts the recommendation and will launch a gender and crisis Engagement Facility in 2021, informed by the relevant findings and recommendations from the evaluation, to serve as a one-stop-shop to consolidate, coordinate, communicate and bring coherence to UNDP support to gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile and crisis-affected countries.

UNDP will prioritize gender considerations in crisis contexts by ensuring: increased deployment of gender-related technical and programmatic capacities on the ground in crisis-affected countries; allocation of the 15 per cent target of TRAC3 for gender-dedicated programme activities; and developing a specific Gender Seal certification track for county offices in crisis settings. UNDP will specifically develop its programmatic offer and sectoral strategies to enhance women's productive capacities and livelihoods in crisis contexts.

UNDP will continue to deliver its partnership with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), implementing the crisis section of the 2018 MOU between UNDP and UN-Women, and through new gender-responsive conflict analysis initiatives to contribute to country-level planning processes and identify priorities for joint programming in crisis/fragile contexts.



Management Response

An abstract background graphic featuring a light gray grid pattern. Overlaid on the grid are numerous thin, dark gray lines that swirl and curve in various directions, creating a sense of movement and complexity. Small dark gray dots are scattered throughout the composition, some appearing at the ends of the swirling lines.

About the Independent Evaluation Office

At UNDP, evaluation is critical in helping countries achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion. By generating objective evidence, evaluation helps UNDP achieve greater accountability and facilitates improved learning from past experience. The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) promotes accountability and learning by conducting independent evaluations at the country, regional, and global levels, as well as on thematic topics of particular importance to the organization. It also promotes development of evaluation capacity at the national level, and provides critical support to the work of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).



SUMMARY:

EVALUATION

OF UNDP SUPPORT TO CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

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