



Independent
Evaluation
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



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FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the second Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Moldova, carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP. The evaluation covers the 2018-2021 programming period.

Moldova's development is driven by the National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030' and its pillars of sustainable and inclusive economy, strong human and social capital, efficient institutions and a healthy environment. The country's development trajectories fluctuate between stronger ties with Russia and prioritizing European integration. 'The frozen' conflict in Transnistria, and the recent situation on the Ukrainian border, present an obstacle to advancing pressing policy and development issues.

The evaluation found that the UNDP country programme in Moldova has actively supported the Government's efforts to pursue its diverse priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals and European Union (EU) accession. Key results and changes were achieved in areas related to elections, justice reform, support in Transnistria and the environment. UNDP contributed to building synergies across multiple sectoral areas, bringing its expertise and management systems to harmonize and maximize the results of the collective efforts of United Nations agencies. Vulnerable groups, PwD, Roma, children, youth, women and the elderly have received tangible benefits. Gender equity and women's empowerment have been promoted and scaled up with promising potential for transformative change. However, across the three outcome areas, the absorption capacity of the Government and national ownership prospects were inconsistent and often limited.

As UNDP Moldova advances its progress and commitment to EU accession, the next country programme will need to focus on advancing good governance system reform and addressing corruption and other systemic issues. Digital solutions will require a strategic vision and strong partnerships, developed within a framework of comprehensive national digital reform. UNDP will need to strengthen its policy advisory work and the integration of innovation. UNDP will need consistency in supporting vulnerable groups in line with the human rights-based approach to address the underlying causes of vulnerability and social exclusion. In programme terms, UNDP needs to prioritize energy-efficiency along with other green transformative concepts of the EU Green Deal, to facilitate the development of a greener, more resilient and healthier low-carbon society. UNDP should continue to support the building of strong and broad multi-stakeholder coalitions with a wide range of development partners to support reforms.

I would like to thank the Government of Moldova, national stakeholders, colleagues from the UNDP country office in Moldova as well as the Regional Bureau for Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States for their support throughout the evaluation. I hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will strengthen the formulation of the next country programme strategy, to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable development pathway and recovery for the people of Moldova.



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

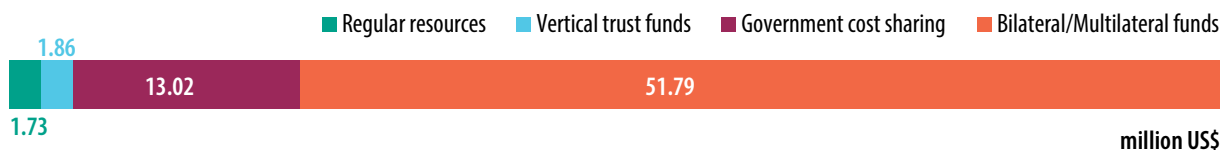
ATU	Autonomous Territorial Unit
CBM	Confidence-building measures
CCA	Climate change adaptation
CCET	Centre for Continuous Elections Training
CEC	Central Electoral Commission
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO	Civil society organization
DAR	Diaspora Acasa Reuseste (Diaspora Succeeds at Home)
DFA	Development Finance Assessment
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ESCO	Energy Service Companies
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEWE	Gender equality and women's empowerment
GHG	Greenhouse gas
HCFC	Hydro Chlorofluorocarbon
HPC	Hydropower complex
HTAs	Home-town associations
IFIs	International financial institutions
IMC	Inter-municipal cluster
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRH	Istanbul Regional Hub
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
LPA	Local public authority
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MiDL	Migration and Local Development project
MEBP	Moldova Energy and Biomass project
MP	Member of Parliament
NAC	National Anticorruption Centre

NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIAS	National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PPE	Personal protective equipment
PwD	Persons with disabilities
ROAR	Results-Oriented Annual Report
SAISE	Automated State Elections Information System
SARD	Support to Agriculture and Rural Development programme
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEIS	Social and Environmental Impact Study
SME	Small - medium-sized Enterprise
ToC	Theory of change
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNPFSD	United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WHO	World Health Organization

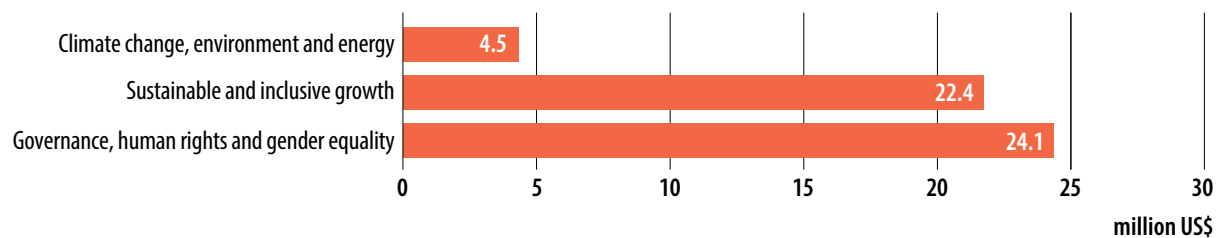
Evaluation Brief: Moldova

The Republic of Moldova is a small, landlocked, low middle-income country situated in Eastern Europe. Geopolitical factors affect Moldova's development trajectory, as the national priorities fluctuate from seeking stronger ties with Russia to prioritizing European integration. Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, heavily reliant on agriculture and remittances. Pervasive corruption, with major deficiencies in the rule of law and weak public administration capacity, negatively affect all aspects of development. Social cohesion is fragile, mostly due to discrimination against vulnerable groups. Moldova is one of the countries in Europe most vulnerable to climate change, with frequent droughts, heavy rains and flooding, and severe weather events.

Total programme expenditure by funding source, 2018-2021



Total expenditure by programme outcome areas, 2018-2021



Key findings and conclusions

UNDP is well positioned as a reliable, responsive and trusted provider of development services, to support the Government's efforts to pursue its diverse priorities including the Sustainable Development Goals and European Union (EU) accession, and changes in politically sensitive areas such as elections, justice reform and support in Transnistria.

UNDP was successful in advancing technical and capacity-building solutions to promote good governance, and enhanced the capacity of the justice system and institutions, strengthening legal foundations, but system-level reforms were constrained by the frequently changing political landscape and limited political commitment. UNDP support has been critical for key reforms and to address technical, policy and capacity gaps in the Government, and has brought positive results for institutions, communities and individuals. However, these have lacked a systemic approach for scalability and the long-term sustainability of results.

UNDP development support in Transnistria resulted in increased cooperation, partnership and quality of services for citizens, with the potential to inform high-level political solutions to the conflict and support replicability.

UNDP is a key development partner in the area of climate change and the environment, with contributions to improved environmental governance, and has generated results with varying potential for transformative change. More cross-sector collaboration and effort is needed, however, to address climate change and facilitate the development of a greener, more resilient and healthier low-carbon society.

UNDP contributed to increased use of renewable energy and advanced energy-efficiency, but with limited sustainability and scalability prospects. A special focus on promoting energy-efficiency and renewable energy use is needed to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets by the country's energy sector.

UNDP has made notable contributions to promoting and scaling-up gender equality and women's empowerment, with potential for transformative change. Empowerment outcomes for targeted individuals, and system-level solutions for women's rights and gender equality, are positive in diverse areas such as political engagement, economic empowerment, social inclusion and protection from gender-based violence.

UNDP was able to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the Government in its preparedness and recovery efforts with comprehensive, timely and highly relevant activities.

The focus of monitoring and evaluation remains at the level of activity and output, rather than outcome, results. UNDP has mainstreamed results-based management, but the consolidation of outcome-level changes at the country programme level is inconsistent and needs to be strengthened.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. In line with Moldova's commitment to EU accession, the next UNDP country programme should focus on exploring possibilities to advance governance reforms for greater accountability and participation, addressing corruption and other systemic issues by leading concerted actions with a wide range of development partners and building strong and broad multi-stakeholder coalitions to support the reform process.

Recommendation 2. UNDP should promote digital solutions at the system level across all outcomes and areas of involvement.

Recommendation 3. As the country rebuilds itself post COVID-19, UNDP should further strengthen its policy advisory work by providing strategic, practical and actionable policy advice to the Government and better embedding the use of innovations into its policy work to advance institutionalization and scale-up.

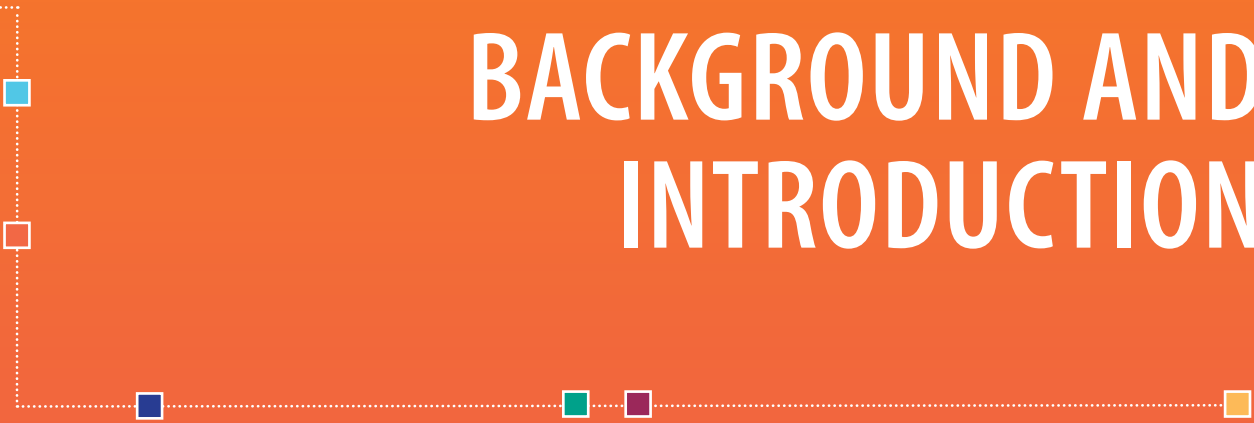
Recommendation 4. Building on past lessons, UNDP should advance a consistent approach to supporting vulnerable groups using a human rights-based approach and address the underlying causes of social exclusion including inequality and marginalization.

Recommendation 5. In line with the EU Green Deal, UNDP should actively promote the green transformation agenda and concepts through its programmes. At the same time, UNDP should prioritise efforts to further strengthen energy security in Moldova and facilitate the development of a greener, more resilient and healthier low-carbon society.

Recommendation 6. UNDP should strengthen the linkages between its programmatic and project-level theories of change, ensuring that they are aligned and contribute to changes identified in the Country Programme Document. UNDP should strengthen its monitoring, evaluation and reporting system to focus on results, so that the measurement of outcome-level results becomes an integral part of monitoring and evaluation culture and is undertaken systematically.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, as well as the methodology applied. It lays out the development context of Moldova and the UNDP programme in the country.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹ The evaluation for Moldova covers the period from 2018 to mid-2021 of the current country programme cycle (2018-2022). The scope of the ICPE includes the entirety of UNDP activities in the country, covering interventions funded by all sources including UNDP core resources, donor and government funds. It also includes any projects and activities from the previous programme cycle that either continued or concluded in the current one, in accordance with the evaluation terms of reference.

The ICPE is guided by four main evaluation questions (Box 1). It presents findings, conclusions and recommendations and will serve as an input to the formulation of new UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD) for 2023-2027. The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP Moldova country office, Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States and Executive Board, and the Government of Moldova.

1.2 Evaluation methodology and approach

The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards,² ensuring that all evaluation steps adhere to ethical and professional standards of evaluation practice. The evaluation adopted a theory-based approach. An abridged theory of change (ToC) was developed at inception stage, based on the desk review, to explain causality and change, including underlying assumptions. This was refined as the evaluation progressed, based on discussions with stakeholders on UNDP progress towards the country programme outcomes (Figure 3). Choices about the methods and strategy for the evaluation were grounded in the ToC and assumptions. An evaluation matrix was developed identifying the sub-questions, sources of information and evaluative evidence for each of the four evaluation questions (Annex 2, available online). Qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis, in line with the type of evidence, to facilitate the triangulation of findings.

BOX 1. Evaluation questions

1. What did the UNDP country programme intend to achieve during the period under review?
 2. To what extent has the programme achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?
 3. To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the country's preparedness, response and recovery process?
 4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP performance and the sustainability of results?
-

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

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

Document review: The evaluation team undertook an extensive desk review including background documents on the regional and national context, documents from international partners and other United Nations agencies (e.g. European Union [EU], World Bank and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] reports and studies), project and programme documents such as workplans and progress reports, monitoring and self-assessment reports such as the UNDP Results-Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs), strategy notes, and project and programme evaluations conducted by the country office, including quality assurance and audit reports. The document review was conducted according to the evaluation matrix (Annex 2, available online).

Portfolio analysis: Purposive sampling was used based on a number of criteria, including: programme coverage (projects covering the various thematic and cross-cutting areas such as gender equality and women's empowerment [GEWE], Leaving No One Behind [LNOB] and human rights); financial expenditure (a representative mix of large and smaller projects); geographic coverage (across project locations); and maturity (completed and active projects). Based on analysis of the country portfolio, the team selected 21 projects (28 percent of portfolio) for in-depth review and analysis, representing a cross-section of UNDP work in the country across the three outcomes.³

Stakeholder analysis: The desk review and portfolio analysis were used to undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify all relevant UNDP partners, including those that may not have worked with UNDP but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributes. The analysis was used to identify key informants for interviews during the data collection phase, and to examine potential partnerships that could improve the UNDP contribution to national development priorities.

Country office questionnaire: A detailed questionnaire was administered to the UNDP country office as a self-assessment and reflection tool, and to gather evidence of results.⁴ This was very valuable in providing an additional source of information on the UNDP country programme, its effectiveness and sustainability, allowing for triangulation of data collected during remote interviews with stakeholders and the secondary data and document review. The preliminary findings of the desk review were validated during stakeholder interviews and used to identify gaps in data and any important issues requiring follow-up.

Primary data collection and key informant interviews: Given the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, the evaluation team, in close consultation with the UNDP country office, designed the evaluation to be conducted remotely, with nearly all interviews conducted online. A total of 180 stakeholders were interviewed remotely between 13 May and 25 June 2021, representing UNDP staff, government representatives, civil society organizations (CSOs), private-sector representatives, United Nations agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors and programme beneficiaries. The ICPE team was able to take advantage of the partial lifting of COVID-19 travel restrictions in June for one team member to undertake visits to five project sites and interview stakeholders in the Northern, Southern, Central and Transnistria regions of Moldova.⁵

³ The selection criteria included programme coverage and cross cutting issues, NIM/DIM, total financial expenditure (projects of all sizes, both large and smaller projects), geographic coverage, maturity (covering both completed and active projects), coverage of successful projects, projects spanning different programme areas, and projects that allowed for good exploration of the project design process, institutional structures and processes, partnerships, policy development, and sustainability.

⁴ Areas covered by the questionnaire include strategic positioning, value added, effectiveness, COVID-19, cross-cutting issues, gender, joint programming, sustainability, South-South cooperation, innovation, operations, coordination with other United Nations agencies and partners. The pre-mission Evaluation Questionnaire was completed by the country office team collaboratively.

⁵ The site visits, interviews and observations were conducted between 24 and 30 June 2021 in Gagauz Yeri region, villages of Congaz (SARD Project) and Comrat city (SARD Project), Borogani village, Leova district (South Moldova), (MiDL Project), Mihaileni village, Rascani district (North Moldova) (MiDL Project); Telenesti town (Central Moldova), (MiDL Project), Chisinau city and Tiraspol city (Transnistria).

Triangulation: All information and data collected from multiple sources was triangulated before any evaluative judgements were made. The evaluation design matrix guided how each of the questions was addressed based on the available evidence, facilitated the analysis and supported the evaluation team to draw well-substantiated findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Evaluation quality assurance: The report went through a series of internal and external reviews in line with the IEO peer-review process, to ensure a sound and robust evaluation methodology and analysis of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Following these reviews, the draft ICPE report was shared with the country office and Regional Bureau for factual corrections, and then with the Government and other national partners and key stakeholders in Moldova.

Evaluation limitations: The travel restrictions posed by the global COVID-19 pandemic limited the capacity to conduct face-to-face interviews and interact with the different stakeholder groups and communities benefiting from UNDP support. Virtual technology, however, allowed the team to establish and maintain quality in-depth interactions with a diverse number of key informants. The challenges posed by remote data collection were mitigated through a broader and a more in-depth desk review and synthesis of existing data, as well as by increasing the number and quality of consultations with different stakeholders. A large number of interviews with national key informants were conducted in local languages (Romanian and Russian), which ensured a comfortable and conducive environment for interviewees to converse and fully express feedback and perceptions. The lifting of COVID-19 travel restrictions in June provided the opportunity to visit project sites and interview stakeholders, particularly important for assessing the effectiveness and sustainability of capital investments and capturing the intended and unintended consequences of the achievement of results.

1.3 Country context

The Republic of Moldova is a small, landlocked, low middle-income country situated in Eastern Europe, with a population of 2.59 million people in 2020, 52 percent of whom are women.⁶ Bordering Romania and Ukraine, Moldova emerged as an independent republic following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Moldova and Romania share a common cultural heritage and language. The territory to the east (left bank) of the Nistru River, generally known as Transnistria, is mainly inhabited by Russian and Ukrainian speakers and unilaterally declared independence from Moldova in September 1990.⁷ Although this has not been formally recognized, Transnistria has remained outside of the control of Moldova's central Government ever since. Since violent clashes and a ceasefire agreement in 1992, the official peace process has not progressed, creating a "frozen conflict" situation, where political negotiations have not yet led to a comprehensive settlement and the protracted divide creates obstacles for cooperation on pressing policy and development issues.⁸

Geopolitical factors affect Moldova's development trajectory, as national priorities fluctuate from seeking stronger ties with Russia to prioritizing European integration. Following the Association Agreement with the EU in June 2016, the Government of Moldova implemented market-oriented reforms that resulted in a

⁶ See https://statbank.statistica.md/PxWeb/pxweb/ro/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice/20%20Populatia%20si%20procesele%20demografice_POPrec_POP010/POP010100rcl.px/table/tableViewLayout1/?rxid=b2ff27d7-0b96-43c9-934b-42e1a2a9a774.

⁷ United Nations General Assembly (2018) Resolution A/72/L.58 on Transnistria, calling for a "Complete and unconditional withdrawal of foreign military forces from the territory of the Republic of Moldova". <https://www.un.org/en/ga/72/resolutions.shtml>.

⁸ General information on the origins and developments of the Transnistria conflict can be found here: <https://www.osce.org/moldova/42308>.

significant redirection of exports to Russia towards the EU.⁹ Following parliamentary elections in July 2021, the new leadership has EU membership aspirations. Moldova is a member of the Eastern Partnership within the European Neighbourhood Policy. The progress of reforms in Moldova is documented by the EU in annual implementation reports. In 2018, the EU recognized setbacks in justice reform and democratic development, and took the decision to substantially recalibrate and reduce its financial assistance and focus on projects with direct impact on the people of Moldova. For the same reason, payments under macro-financial assistance and EU budget-support programmes were put on hold in 2018.¹⁰

Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, and its economy relies heavily on agriculture and remittances. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) make up 98.6 percent of the private sector, and employ 61.6 percent of the total workforce.¹¹ Small business development is key to generating wider economic growth in the country.¹² The employment rate in Moldova is around 40 percent,¹³ with high economic inactivity among young people, especially young women. Emigration increased dramatically in 1997 (when net migration was -165,309), and started to decrease after 2012, reaching 6,935 in 2017.¹⁴

Rural poverty and underemployment have been the biggest drivers of emigration from the country, and workers have become one of Moldova's major exports. Economic opportunities are unequally distributed across the territory, and the rural/urban divide contributes significantly to social exclusion, as employment opportunities in rural areas are limited. The process of decentralization, which aimed to increase local autonomy, move decision-making closer to the people and ultimately improve the accessibility and quality of public services, has been slowed by political volatility and limited political will.¹⁵

Economic growth has contributed to a reduction of poverty from 28 percent in 2010 to 13 percent in 2018. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the Republic of Moldova recorded solid GDP growth, averaging at around 4 percent per annum between 2016 and 2019. This economic upturn boosted the SME sector, which in 2018 accounted for 60 percent of private sector employment. Agriculture continues to play a key role in the economy, generating 12 percent of GDP, absorbing more than 30 percent of total employment and representing the biggest share of total exports (30 percent).¹⁶ Social transfers make up a significant share of household income, with remittances from Moldovans working abroad representing 12.5 percent of total annual income.¹⁷ Economic growth helped Moldova to improve its human development outcomes to some extent, bringing it into the group of countries with high human development, ranking 90 of 189 countries and territories in 2019.¹⁸ However, poverty reduction stalled in 2019, and reversed in 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic. Older people, persons with disabilities (PwDs), children and women are among the

⁹ Moldova signed an Association Agreement and a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement with the EU. Foreign direct investment is steadily growing. UNCTAD, Moldova: <http://unctadstat.unctad.org/countryprofile/generalprofile/en-gb/498/index.html>.

¹⁰ See, for example, Joint Staff Working Document Association Implementation Report on Moldova, 2019: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/swd_2019_325_f1_joint_staff_working_paper_en_v10_p1_1045191.pdf.

¹¹ NBS, Activity of small and medium enterprises in the Republic of Moldova in 2019: <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=en&idc=168&id=6716>.

¹² <https://www.oecd.org/fr/pays/moldova/republicofmoldovafosteringsmallandmediumsizedcompanydevelopment.htm>.

¹³ NBS (2020) Labour Force in the Republic of Moldova. Employment and Unemployment: https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Forta_de_munca/AFM_editia_2020.pdf.

¹⁴ World Bank open data.

¹⁵ The current territorial-administrative structure of the Republic of Moldova is very fragmented. There are 898 administrative constituencies (first level settlements) with their own mayor. In addition, there are 32 second-level districts and three municipalities (Balti, Bender and Chisinau), one ATU Gagauz Yeri and the Transnistria region.

¹⁶ OECD (2020), Promoting Exports and Supply-Chain Linkages in the Food Industry in the Republic of Moldova: <https://www.oecd.org/eurasia/competitiveness-programme/eastern-partners/Promoting-Exports-and-Supply-Chain-Linkages-in-the-Food-Industry-in-the-Republic-of-Moldova-ENG.pdf>.

¹⁷ NBS (2000), Moldova in Figures, Statistical pocket-book.

¹⁸ UNDP (2020) Human Development Report the Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene, Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report, Moldova.

poorest in Moldova.¹⁹ Also, the Roma population is one of the most vulnerable minority groups in the country (comprising 0.3 percent of the population).²⁰ Large disparities persist in terms of access to public services and welfare provision across urban and rural areas.

Progress in governance reform has been limited. Pervasive corruption in the public sector, links between major political parties and powerful economic interests, major deficiencies in the rule of law and weak public administration capacity negatively affect all aspects of development.²¹ The justice sector remains largely unreformed and unable to meet user needs and expectations. Despite numerous new laws, justice and anticorruption reforms, implementation has been lacklustre, with some reforms compromised from within the system.²²

The number of CSOs in Moldova is relatively high, and while they have diversified their services and are gaining public trust, their operating context and conditions require further improvement.²³ Civil society capacity is strengthening, but barriers to expanding and deepening their role and engagement persist. Parliament adopted the Law on Non-commercial Organizations in 2020, advancing the right to freedom of association and contributing to transparency and participation principles.²⁴ Moldovan CSOs are relatively sustainable, with increased foreign donor funding.²⁵ However, Transnistria civil society is underdeveloped and faces multiple barriers such as regulations limiting access to foreign funds and restrictions on monitoring human rights or democratic processes.²⁶ Social cohesion in the country is fragile, according to the 2018 United Nations Moldova Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index. According to studies of popular perceptions of discrimination, negative attitudes are common towards people with psychosocial disabilities, former prisoners, people living with HIV, people of Roma ethnicity and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, impacting overall social cohesion.²⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic further undermined social cohesion.²⁸

Gender inequalities persist in Moldova. Despite making up 51.9 percent of the population, women continue to be underrepresented in central and local government, including Parliament, district and local councils. Recently a gender quota of 40 percent was reached in Parliament, and both the President and Prime Minister are women. Women's participation in the labour force is lower than men's, even though female students outnumber males in tertiary education. Violence against women is a major concern in Moldova, with about 40 percent of women reporting being victims of physical violence from their current or most recent partner.²⁹ Three-quarters of women (76 percent) think that violence against women is common, and 28 percent think it is very common.³⁰

¹⁹ East European Foundation (2019) 'UNEQUAL MOLDOVA Analysis of the most relevant inequalities in The Republic of Moldova'.

²⁰ See <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/roma-22>.

²¹ The Transparency International 2020 Corruption Perceptions index score for Moldova was 34/100, ranked 115 out of 180 countries, <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/moldova>. Freedom House rates Moldova as partly free, with a Global Freedom Score of 61/100. See more here <https://freedomhouse.org/country/moldova/freedom-world/2020>.

²² World Bank (2018) Moldova. Improving Access to Justice: From Resources to Results A Justice Sector Public Expenditure and Institutional Review: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/683491537501435060/pdf/Moldova-JSPEIR-English-Version-Sep-13-2018.pdf>.

²³ According to the State Register of Non-Commercial Legal Entities published by the Public Services Agency, 14,627 non-commercial organizations are registered in Moldova. The organizations from Transnistria region are not included. For additional information: <http://www.asp.gov.md/ro/node/1655>. See also 2019 Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. Moldova. July 2020. For additional information: <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/csosi-europe-eurasia-2019-report.pdf>.

²⁴ LEGE cu privire la organizațiile necomerciale, 2020, <http://parlament.md/ProcesulLegislativ/Proiectedeactele legislative/tabid/61/LegislativId/4154/language/ro-RO/Default.aspx>.

²⁵ United States Agency for International Development (2019) Civil Society Organization Sustainability index, Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia: <https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-csosi-2019-report-europe-eurasia.pdf>

²⁶ EU Roadmap for Engagement with Civil Society in the Republic of Moldova, 2018-2020.

²⁷ See https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/ro/home/library/effective_governance/studiu-privind-percepțiile-i-atitudinile-fa-de-egalitate-in-repub.html.

²⁸ United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (2020) 'Survey measuring the impact of COVID-19 on social cohesion in Moldova'.

²⁹ United Nations Moldova (2020) United Nations Country Common Assessment for Moldova.

³⁰ OSCE, (2019) LED Survey on Violence against women, Well-being and safety of women, Moldova Report.

Moldova is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in Europe.³¹ The population is experiencing the negative impacts of climate change, with more frequent droughts, heavy rains, flooding and other severe weather events.³² The country's biodiversity is threatened by the effects of climate change, habitat fragmentation and overexploitation due to limited national capacity to cope with natural disasters, unprotected and deforested lands and the lack of a regional/cross-border approach to flood prevention.

Moldova has established key normative acts and thematic strategic planning policies and frameworks aligned with the EU, such as the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (Phases I and II), Low Emissions Development Programme, and regulations on fluorinated greenhouse gases (GHGs), to name a few. UNDP supported Moldova in the elaboration of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and become the fourth country in the world to submit updated NDCs in 2020. These set more ambitious GHG emissions reduction targets (70 percent by 2030 as opposed to 64 percent for the unconditional scenario of 1990) and includes mitigation and adaptation actions for sustainable development.³³

Moldova has made tangible progress in setting and updating GHG emissions targets and improving national capacity on climate action, but mainstreaming climate change in all policymaking areas remains a challenge.³⁴ Pollution and the unsustainable management of natural resources contribute to weak environmental governance, which affects the country's sustainable development. Waste management practices are outdated and inefficient, posing threats to human health. Moldova has advanced its waste management legislation, though implementation is lagging behind and remains a key issue.³⁵

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought considerable human suffering and impacted nearly every aspect of social and economic life, putting the labour market under unprecedented strain.³⁶ The measures taken to control the pandemic have put many groups in Moldovan society further behind, including children, women, older people, adolescents and youth, refugees, Roma and PwD.³⁷ In addition to pressure on the health sector, Moldova has seen a large drop in the inflow of remittances during the pandemic, as migrants lose overseas jobs and return home, putting further pressure on the economy.³⁸ However, a positive bounce-back in remittances was reported in the third quarter of 2020, due to a switch from informal to formal remittance channels.³⁹

Moldova has committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030' provides a strategic vision for the trajectory of the country's socioeconomic development and focuses on four pillars: sustainable and inclusive economy; strong human and social capital; honest and efficient institutions; and healthy environment.⁴⁰ The national authorities issued the

³¹ World Bank (2016) Republic of Moldova Climate Adaptation Investment Planning Technical Assistance.

³² On average Moldova is exposed to 4-5 severe droughts and 1-2 disastrous floods each 10 years. For additional information see United Nations Moldova. Common Country Assessment, 2020.

³³ UNDP Moldova (2020) Results Oriented Annual Report.

³⁴ UNDP Country Programme Document - Moldova (2018-2022).

³⁵ UNDP Moldova (2020) Results Oriented Annual Report.

³⁶ ILO, Effective COVID-19 response in Moldova: Social dialogue for local job creation through Local Employment Partnerships: https://www.ilo.org/budapest/what-we-do/projects/WCMS_753158/lang-en/index.htm.

³⁷ OHCHR (2020) Asigurarea Drepturilor Omului în Republica Moldova în contextual pandemiei cu COVID-19. The most affected groups are: Roma; persons living with HIV and AIDS; GBV survivors; older people; PwD; single mothers; women with several children; and people with chronic diseases. See also UNDP and UNFPA, Impact of COVID-19 on children and youth.

³⁸ IOM (2020) rapid field assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of the Moldovan diaspora: an evidence base regarding migrants' coping strategies and contributions. For additional information: UNDP (2020) What is the impact of COVID-19 on remittances in Republic of Moldova? <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/articles/2020/care-este-impactul-covid-19-asupra-remitenelor-in-republica-mold.html>.

³⁹ See <https://www.bnm.md/ro/content/evolutia-transferurilor-de-mijloace-banesti-din-strainatate-efectuate-favoarea-33>.

⁴⁰ Government of the Republic of Moldova, 'The National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030".'

Voluntary National Review (VNR) of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2019, and reported significant progress towards achieving Goals 1, 8, 13 and 17, while the achievement of Goals 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 was moderate, and no progress was found on Goals 4, 6, 10, 12, 15 and 16.⁴¹

Moldova's reform process is influenced by its aspiration to EU accession. Within the governance sector, the Government implemented the second phase of Public Administration Reform (2016–2020), to reorganize ministries to optimize staffing and digitize and streamline public services, with the aim of consolidating the central public administration, improving decision-making processes and reducing bureaucracy and administrative costs. Since 2011, about 40 public services have been transferred online.⁴² The Law on the Protection of Whistle-blowers entered into force in 2018, establishing a mechanism for reporting integrity incidents, irregularities and abuses and providing protection for whistle-blowers. Although the overall quality and transparency of decision-making and public administration has somewhat improved, capacity gaps remain and need external expert support.

Moldova has ratified seven of the nine core United Nations human rights treaties, and is mostly addressing the recommendations of international human rights bodies, developing the National Human Rights Action Plan for 2018-2022.⁴³ Freedom of expression and the right to access information are generally respected, although challenges still persist in securing the right to a fair trial and not be subjected to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment.⁴⁴ Moldova ratified the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in June 1994, but has not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention against violence against women, or aligned its legislation with international standards on gender-based violence (GBV).

1.4 UNDP Country Programme in Moldova

The UNDP Country Programme for Moldova (2018-2022) aims to contribute to the National Development Strategy 'Moldova 2030' and sectoral policies and programmes. The overarching goal of the programme is derived from the vision of the United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development (UNPFSD) 2018-2022: a country free from poverty and corruption, with reduced inequalities and strengthened social cohesion and inclusion, where human rights, gender equality, the rule of law, environmental sustainability and the wellbeing of the population are nurtured and respected across the conflict divide.⁴⁵ UNDP pursued three of the four UNPFSD outcomes: (a) governance, human rights and gender equality; (b) sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth; and (c) environmental sustainability and resilience (Table 1).

UNDP joined forces with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UN Women in a programme to address gender equality and the needs of vulnerable groups affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNAIDS, UNICEF and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNDP is implementing the Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in Transnistria. Other joint programmes include: collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), UNODC, UNFPA and UNICEF on the United Nations Joint Plan for HIV under the Unified Budget,

⁴¹ Government of the Republic of Moldova (2020) Republic of Moldova voluntary National Review Progress Report 2020.

⁴² Government of the Republic of Moldova, Public Administration Reform Strategy 2016-2020.

⁴³ Government of the Republic of Moldova, the National Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2022.

⁴⁴ United Nations Moldova (2020) United Nations Country Common Assessment for Moldova.

⁴⁵ Government of the Republic of Moldova and United Nations Partnership Framework for Sustainable Development 2018–2022, United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Republic of Moldova.

Responsibility and Accountability Framework; the 'Migration and Local Development' (MIDL) project I and II with IOM; 'EU4Moldova' with UNICEF; and 'Promoting Confidence in the Health Sector' with WHO and UNICEF. The United Nations in Moldova is working under a common One-UN partnership framework.

TABLE 1. Country programme outcomes and resources, 2018-2022

Pillar	Country Programme Outcome		Budget (2018-2022) US\$ million	Expenditure (2018-2021) US\$ million
Governance, human rights and gender equality	Outcome 1	The people of Moldova, especially the 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	26.5	24.1
Sustainable and inclusive growth	Outcome 2	The people of Moldova, especially the most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities, decent work and productive employment, generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth	33.8	22.5
Climate change, environment and energy	Outcome 3	The people of Moldova, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from enhanced environmental governance, energy security, sustainable management of natural resources and climate and disaster resilient development	41.3	4.8
Total			101.6	51.4

Source: UNDP Power BI November 2021

The UNDP country programme portfolio includes a total of 59 projects under implementation within the current CPD, across the three outcomes. There is great variation in budget allocations for projects in each pillar, from under US\$ 20,000 to multi-million dollar projects. Of the total portfolio, 39 projects are long-term interventions that started before the current CPD cycle, some dating back to 2007.

UNDP work within the Democratic Governance portfolio (Outcome 1) focuses on enhancing the capacity of the Government, Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Parliament and local representative bodies (including the Gagauz Yeri People's Assembly); enabling the voices of those underrepresented in decision-making to be heard, and reform of the justice system, police and public administrations for greater integrity and transparency. UNDP supports the country's reform agenda, including overarching public administration and sectoral reforms. It aims to strengthen the rule of law and promote human rights, focusing on women and underrepresented groups, and expand civic space and public participation in policy development, implementation and service delivery.

UNDP work within the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth portfolio (Outcome 2) focuses on the creation of sustainable, inclusive and green jobs through financial support for SMEs (particularly start-ups), integrity-based business development, transparent and accountable local and regional development, efficient and inclusive service provision, and equal and equitable access to economic opportunities. By supporting the Government to implement the employment strategy, UNDP aims to contribute to employment and decent green jobs, an improved enabling environment for formal sector development and diaspora involvement in local development, and catalyse investments for sustainable and resilient livelihoods throughout the country. Some projects focused on enhancing the accessibility and quality of local public services in targeted geographic regions, with a strong community involvement and empowerment component. UNDP implements multisectoral, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed development interventions in regions with special status such as Gagauzia and Transnistria.

UNDP work within the Climate Change, Environment and Energy portfolio (Outcome 3) focuses on three main areas: climate change adaptation (CCA) and mitigation mainstreaming; biodiversity conservation; and waste and chemical management. Issues related to energy poverty and increasing the production of renewable energy are also covered. Most of the projects combine capacity-building, policy advice, technical and financial support, and address SDGs 5, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15 and 16. The portfolio includes actions focused on multidimensional support for strengthening environmental governance, advancing low-carbon and climate-resilient development, developing national adaptation plans, improving policy, legal and normative frameworks, promoting renewable energy solutions, and strengthening national capacity to respond to climate-related and human-made disasters.⁴⁶ UNDP interventions on green businesses and jobs and local sustainable development, particularly waste management, are cross-cutting and implemented under Outcomes 2 and 3.⁴⁷

South-South and triangular cooperation was pursued through multiple projects, with a focus on the transfer of technology and skills, moving cooperation beyond knowledge-sharing to lasting partnerships and results that change people's lives, with achievements in promoting innovation and advancing renewable energy use.

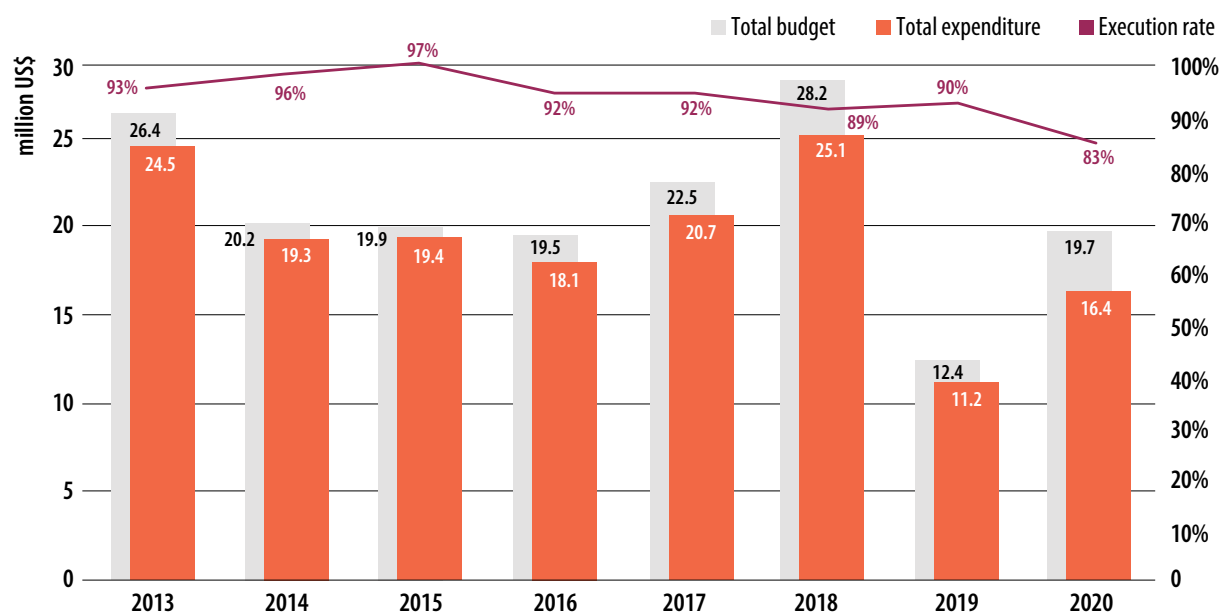
The planned budget for the CPD was \$101.7 million, of which \$51.4 million had been spent by November 2021 (51 percent of the target). The execution rate declined from 90 percent in 2019 to 83 percent in 2020, mainly attributed to COVID-19 interruptions and changes to planned activities. The management efficiency rate has oscillated between 6 and 9 percent during this CPD, with the lowest rate in 2018 and the highest in 2019.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ UNDP Moldova CPD (2018-2022) and UNDP ATLAS project portfolio (22 Jan 2021).

⁴⁷ Outcome 2 - SARD Project implemented in Gagauz Yeri region and Taraclia district. Outcome 3 - Output 3.2: Improved national capacities for environmentally sound management practices in ecosystems, waste and chemicals.

⁴⁸ Management Efficiency Ratio is the ratio of management expenditure over total expenditure. Current UNDP Strategic Plan (2018-2021) management efficiency ratio target is 6.9 percent.

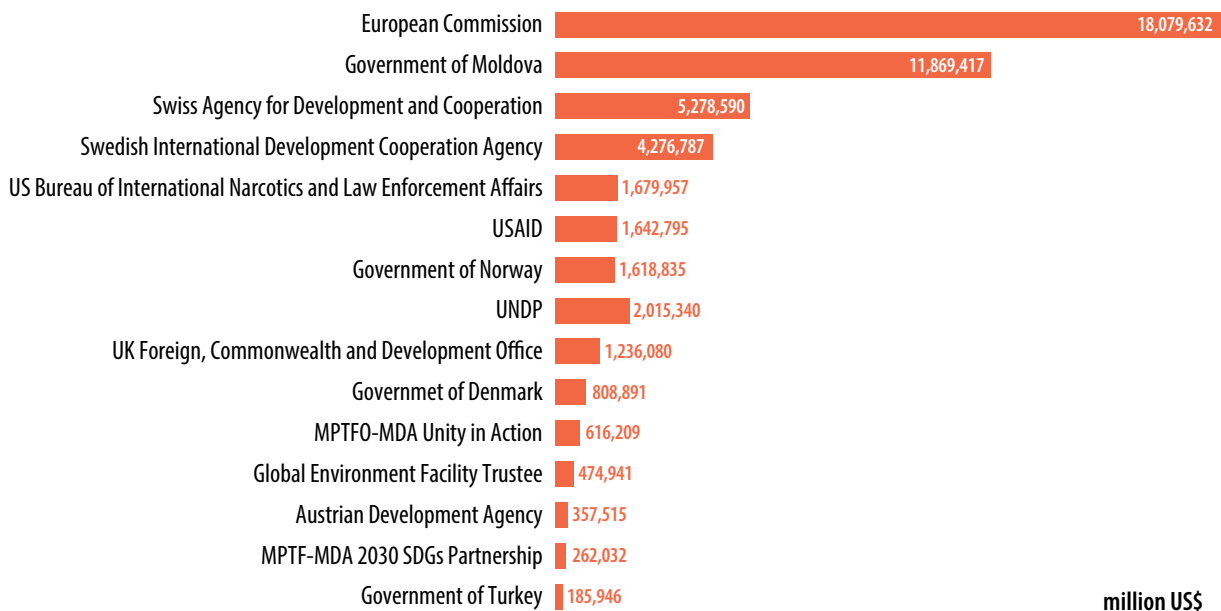
FIGURE 1. UNDP Moldova – CPD budget, expenditure and execution rate 2013-2020



Source: UNDP Atlas PowerBi, November 2021

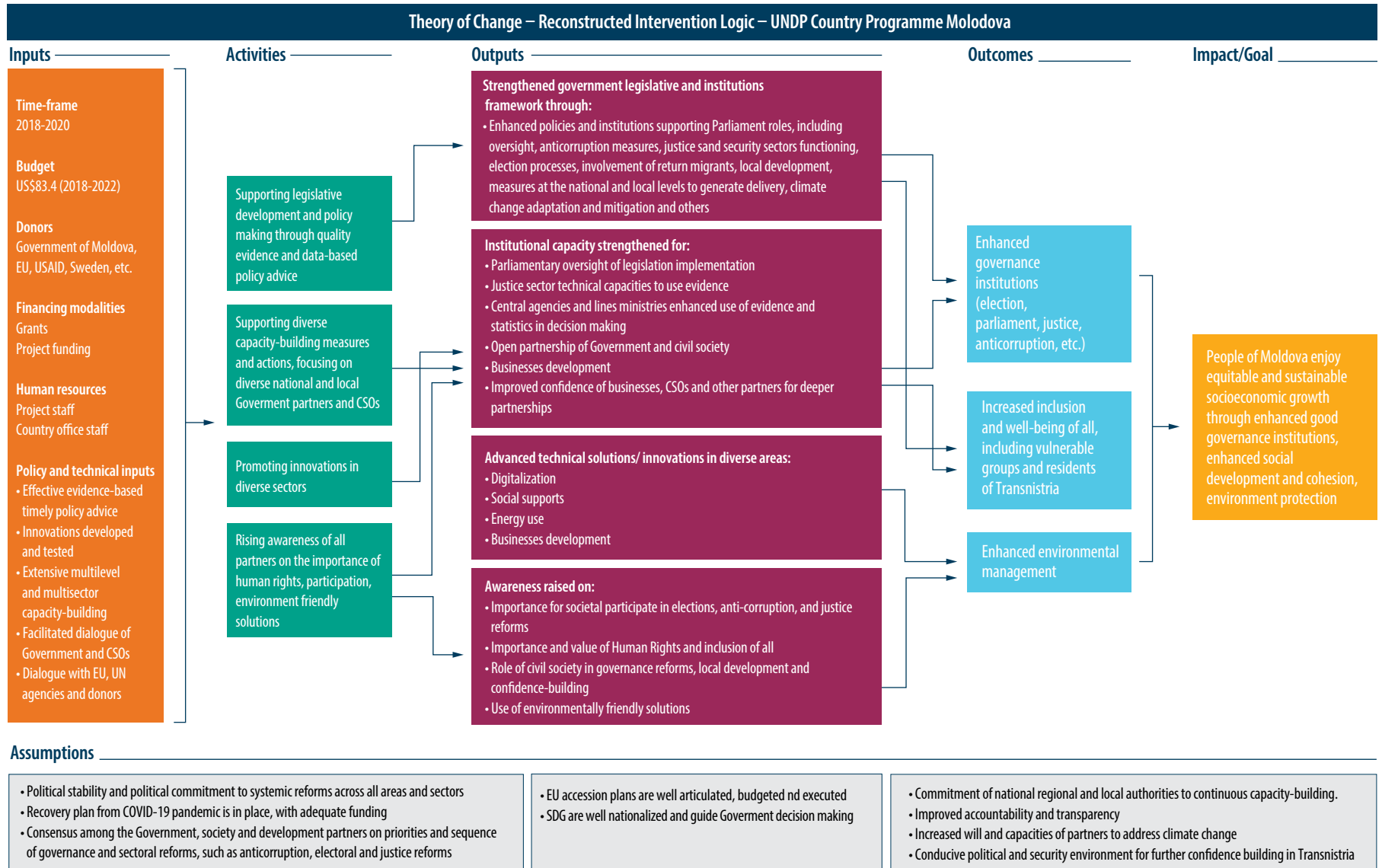
As Moldova’s economic performance improved and it became a low middle-income economy, the role of the Government in development cooperation and cost-sharing also increased. Since 2018, the Government contributed almost \$12 million to UNDP programming. The main financial contributions to UNDP programming in the country have come from the EU and the Government of Moldova, followed by Switzerland and Sweden (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2. UNDP Moldova – key contributors based on country programme expenditure 2018-2021



Source: UNDP Atlas Power Bi July 2021

FIGURE 3. Abridged Theory of change- Reconstructed Intervention Logic: UNDP Country Programme in Moldova⁴⁹



⁴⁹ The abridged theory of change illustrates the logic and casual pathways of the programme under the underlined assumptions. The casual links and contribution are discussed under each outcome analysis.

CHAPTER 2

FINDINGS



This chapter presents the findings of the outcome analysis and an assessment of cross-cutting issues. The main factors that influenced UNDP performance and contributions to results are also described here. The assessment was based on an analysis of the correlation between project results and contributions to the expected outputs under each outcome, and consequently to the overall outcome objectives of the CPD.

2.1 Governance, human rights and gender equality

CPD Outcome 1. The people of Moldova, especially the 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.

UNDP implemented 28 projects under this outcome, three of which had budgets exceeding \$2 million, five had budgets between \$1 and 2 million, and the remainder were of smaller scale.⁵⁰ The total planned budget for the Outcome was \$26.5 million, and expenditure to November 2021 stood at \$24 million, a 90 percent execution rate.

The focus of the Outcome has been to address key strategic issues such as the capacity of the Government, Parliament and local representative bodies (including the Gagauz Yeri People's Assembly), support for the CEC, cross-sectoral anticorruption measures and justice system reform.⁵¹ Many of the focus areas and interventions were continued from the previous CPD, when UNDP results were also affected by the volatile national context and included support to implement the EU integration agenda, anticorruption through the increased transparency, integrity and accountability of central public administration institutions and focused support to the National Integrity Commission established in 2013, support for Parliament's legislative, oversight and representation functions, and institutional strengthening of CEC and the Centre for Continuous Elections Training (CCET).⁵²

UNDP supported a number of governance issues at national and subnational levels, including: legal, policy and strategic frameworks; support for governance institutions, the functioning of selected public institutions and the capacity of public servants and civil society actors to interact with Government and influence decision-making; and support to gender mainstreaming and equality in Parliament and women's empowerment. The majority of UNDP interventions focused on institutional and individual capacity-building and strengthening CSOs to improve accountability. UNDP support also included the system-level integration of the SDGs into government strategies, policies and programmes, in particular the first VNR which took stock of areas of progress and challenges and identified the accelerators of sustainable human development in Moldova.

⁵⁰ Key projects include 'Strengthening Parliamentary Governance in Moldova', 'Construction of jointly operated border crossing point Palanca on the territory of the Republic of Moldova', 'United Nations Joint Project on 'Strengthening the National Statistical System of the Republic of Moldova', 'Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections' project, 'Strengthening Prevention and Analysis Functions of the NAC', 'Strengthening capacities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and its internal subdivisions for the effective implementation of the sector reform agenda' project, 'Curbing corruption by building sustainable integrity in the Republic of Moldova', and others.

⁵¹ UNDP, Country Programme Document for the Republic of Moldova (2018-2022).

⁵² UNDP, Republic of Moldova, country programme performance summary. Reporting period: 2013-2017.

Finding 1. UNDP has made important contributions to building more modern, effective and accountable public institutions. However, due to the frequently changing political landscape and levels of commitment, these interventions prioritized technical aspects of good governance reform rather than systemic issues pertaining to enhanced accountability, transparency and participation.⁵³ Despite efforts to enhance CSO capacity to contribute to governance, CSO participation has not been sustained over time.

UNDP governance interventions in Moldova have been successful in contributing to building more effective and accountable public institutions. Evidence collected through the review of documents from UNDP, Government and donors, and corroborated in interviews, shows that the UNDP focus within this outcome was appropriate and well targeted. UNDP succeeded in delivering results with transformative potential, and enhancing the capacity of diverse national partners such as Parliament, CEC, line ministries and agencies in the justice sector and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). UNDP supported the Parliament of Moldova to develop legislation related to the European Integration Process, and enhance its oversight function in relation to the SDGs, EU integration and government staff capacity-building.⁵⁴ UNDP support contributed to more professional electoral management, and improved technical capacity of the Parliament and justice sector. National ownership has also been considerable in NBS, CEC and Parliament, where changes promoted by UNDP were institutionalized (e.g., SDG data nationalization, electoral rules and processes, and norms supporting Parliament's oversight function).

UNDP managed to achieve high-level results, despite a challenging operational environment characterized by political instability, inconsistent and insufficient government commitment or ability to advance systemic reforms, economic hardship, deficiencies in policy, legislation and implementation, a weak and often unmotivated public administration, high turnover of government staff, and high reliance on external funding. Over the CPD implementation period, the Government of Moldova changed several times due to elections and no-confidence measures, which led to many ministries being renamed and reorganized. Anecdotal evidence suggests that several of these changes disincentivized civil servants to continue working for the Government, opting instead for better paid private sector jobs. Institutional capacity was already weak, aggravated by Moldova's small population and high rates of emigration. Despite all this, UNDP managed to deliver strategic and effective support, starting with addressing technical capacity gaps.⁵⁵ The enhancement of the capacity and accountability of Parliament contributed to the quality of legislation developed and the performance of its oversight functions. The 'Strengthening CEC' project enabled more transparent, inclusive and representative elections. The enhanced technical capacity of the justice system and institutions responsible for corruption prevention and prosecution laid solid foundations for long-term systemic changes. Participatory mechanisms were also enhanced.

Some initiatives, like the gender placement regulations and the approval of the Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy, formed the basis for long-term reform, while other results were concentrated at technical level and failed to address the need for long-term reforms. Some UNDP-led measures enabling CSO participation in decision-making were inconsistent across sectors and focus areas.

UNDP experience demonstrates the benefits of having well-developed CSOs that can engage in policy dialogue in sensitive areas such as anticorruption and electoral support, and mobilize constituencies including vulnerable groups. For example, UNDP partnered with 27 CSOs for an anticorruption project, strengthening their capacity to conduct anticorruption monitoring. Eighteen of them produced shadow

⁵³ Systemic issues refer to inherent issues in the overall system related to transparency, accountability and participation.

⁵⁴ UNDP, Strengthening Parliamentary Governance in Moldova, Project Document.

⁵⁵ The 'Strengthening Efficiency and Access to Justice in Moldova' project, for example, focused on capacity-building of forensic institutions; 'Procurement Support Services to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection' project supported the Ministry of Health in ensuring transparency, accountability and effectiveness in the procurement of medicines and other health products.

reports on the National Anticorruption Strategy, covering a total of five sectoral and 30 local anticorruption plans. The same is true of other projects, such as the ‘Support to Confidence-Building Measures’ (CBM), MIDL, and ‘Support to Agriculture and Rural Development’ (SARD) projects. The ‘Strengthening Human Rights in Transnistria’ joint programme also has a strong CSO engagement component. The ‘Resilient Communities through Women’s Empowerment’ project managed to engage 77 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in advocating for more resilient and environmentally-friendly policies and practices, following a capacity-building programme targeting environmental NGOs. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Programme, implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services with UNDP support, ensured the engagement of 56 environmental NGOs including support for their participation in policy dialogue platforms with the Government.⁵⁶ In other projects, CSO engagement at national and local policy levels was limited by the perception of government counterparts that they were critical of the Government. The sustainability of CSO engagement in policy development and monitoring at national and local levels remains a point of concern.

Despite promising capacity-building results, UNDP support to anticorruption and justice reforms insufficiently anticipated sensitivity and resistance to change, and other limitations of the operating space such as low political will, strong interest groups, economic constraints and political instability. UNDP efforts fell short of developing and executing a strategy for mobilizing and empowering pro-reform groups, including of the most vulnerable, which are critical to the success of systemic governance reform. Advancing all aspects of democratic governance principles and practices through new or revised legislation, institutional positioning and capacity-building is important and necessary, but not sufficient to secure long-term governance improvements.⁵⁷ The improvement of state institutions and, more importantly, the functionality of democratic institutions, requires empowered rights-holders who make the existing formal institutions work for everyone.

Finding 2. UNDP contributions to Moldova’s efforts to enhance the capacity and accountability of Parliament have improved the quality of legislation and the performance of its oversight functions.

Well-functioning parliaments are fundamental to promoting good governance, but this has been a challenge in Moldova in past years.⁵⁸ During the CPD period, UNDP parliamentary capacity-building and support interventions were well justified and focused on critical areas such as the development of legislation supporting the European integration process, SDGs, anticorruption, enhancing the Parliament’s oversight function, staff capacity-building and gender equality.⁵⁹ UNDP supported the development of the Code of Conduct and Ethics for Members of Parliament of the Republic of Moldova and National Human Rights Action Plan 2018-2022, but full implementation will require further UNDP support due to limited political buy-in.

UNDP also supported the Gagauz Yeri People’s Assembly, which endorsed UNDP recommendations for a new structure and institutional change, leading to greater transparency and accountability. Members of the Assembly highly appreciated the training provided by UNDP, which helped to improve the quality and

⁵⁶ See: <https://www.sgpmoldova.org/ro/proiecte/implicare-interactiune-cooperare-intru-identificarea-de-solutii-locale-pentru-probleme-globale> ; <https://www.sgpmoldova.org/ro/proiecte/agenda-nationala-de-mediu-prin-comunicare-spre-o-mai-buna-guvernare-a-mediului> ; <https://www.sgpmoldova.org/ro/proiecte/aplicarea-guvernarii-de-mediu-in-moldova-prin-implicarea-publicului-in-procesul-de-evaluare-a-impactului-asupra-mediului>.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, World Bank (2017) Governance and the Law: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/01/30/improving-governance-is-key-to-ensuring-equitable-growth-in-developing-countries>. The report notes that when policies and technical solutions fail to achieve intended outcomes, institutions often take the blame. However, it finds that countries and donors need to think more broadly to improve governance so that policies succeed. It defines better governance as the process through which state and non-state groups interact to design and implement policies, working within a set of formal and informal rules that are shaped by power.

⁵⁸ Jonas Lövkrona (2018) Midterm Evaluation of “Strengthening Parliamentary Governance in Moldova” project.

⁵⁹ UNDP, Strengthening Parliamentary Governance in Moldova, Project Document.

relevance of their legislative work. Representatives of the Assembly visited Serbia to see best practices for interaction between national and regional legislative bodies, approaches to strategic development and institutional reorganization, which informed improvements to Assembly operations.

Given its EU membership aspirations, laws in Moldova broadly comply with EU requirements and best international practices, but interviewees revealed that implementation is inconsistent and the effects on ultimate beneficiaries are not measured by the Government. UNDP contributed to filling this gap through its support to the oversight function of Parliament, to ensure the consistent implementation of legislation.⁶⁰ Thanks to UNDP support, amendments to the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure and methodology for ex-post analysis of legislation were developed and adopted. As a result, the Permanent Bureau of Parliament now conducts regular systematic reviews of the implementation of selected laws, and provides recommendations to line ministries and other agencies on compliance measures. However, Parliament does not monitor implementation of its recommendations, as the oversight of legislation implementation is not the sole responsibility of Parliament, but also of the State Chancellery. As the roles of state institutions in legislation implementation monitoring are not well delineated, this is a barrier for fully exercising oversight functions.

Finding 3. UNDP long-term strategic and comprehensive support to the Central Electoral Commission has resulted in institutional improvements that have enabled more transparent, inclusive and representative elections. The sustainability of these improvements has been secured through cost-sharing arrangements.⁶¹

UNDP provided relevant technical assistance and capacity development to CEC and CCET.⁶² This supported changes to the electoral legal framework over the CPD period, giving CEC greater responsibility for organizing overseas voting and improving the transparency of the entire electoral process to citizen and international observers and representatives of the candidates. The evaluation found that, despite changes in political leadership, long-term consistent support to CEC and CCET and the strategic placement of UNDP personnel on CEC premises enabled UNDP to achieve notable results.

Building on its decade-long partnership with CEC, and relying on the strong commitment of CEC leadership, UNDP support to the improved Automated State Elections Information System (SAISE) enhanced the accuracy and design of the State voter register, and supported the implementation of effective long-term civic and voter education tools, and the voting of Moldovans abroad. Sex-disaggregated data on active voters, candidates and members of election management bodies at all levels were collected and made publicly available. CCET provided intensive capacity-building support to CEC for conducting elections. In addition, UNDP supported advancements of the political party finance framework. The mandatory submission of financial reports by political parties to this online system, developed by UNDP, improved the transparency of political party finance by disclosing data on donations and expenditure to citizens and mass media. CEC publicly released party financial reports online, and this financial control IT system improved their oversight of party financing and helped to reduce errors. In addition, training of political party members on documentation preparation ensured better quality and timely submission of documentation to

⁶⁰ Key informant interviews and review of Parliament procedures. The methodology for ex-post analysis of legislation developed with UNDP support was approved by the Permanent Bureau of Parliament: <http://parliament.md/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=StfUFPiq0N8%3d&tabid=266&language=ro-RO>.

⁶¹ This analysis is based on a comprehensive contribution analysis that reviewed activities of all other partners working with CEC, interviews with CEC staff, donors and other international partners.

⁶² CEC is a permanent electoral authority with a five-year mandate. It consists of nine members, one nominated by the President and the others by the parliamentary factions proportionately to their representation. UNDP, Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections.

CEC. CEC and CCET are now more transparent, inclusive and trusted thanks to the massive voter education campaigns using innovative approaches, and targeting of specific underrepresented or marginalized groups of voters.⁶³

In sum, long-term, comprehensive and well-designed UNDP support has enhanced the transparency, inclusivity and credibility of the election process and helped CEC to deliver “well-administered elections” as attested by OSCE/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Observation Missions. Civil society partners were funded to reach Moldovans and key population groups, including women, PwD and youth, and provide them with information vital for their participation in elections. Interviewees noted that UNDP support has enabled more transparent elections and strengthened CEC institutional capacity. Many UNDP interventions, such as SAISE and awareness-raising and educational campaigns run by CCET, are now fully funded by the national authorities. UNDP targeted interventions enabled and encouraged the participation of vulnerable groups, including PwD, first time voters and women, in elections. Evidence points towards scale-up by CEC for nationwide implementation. UNDP support has improved the legal frameworks for equal participation by all stakeholder groups seeking office or wishing to participate in elections.⁶⁴ This has increased voter turnout by women and marginalized groups, as well as the number of female elected officials.⁶⁵

Overall, UNDP support has contributed to more professional electoral management, more inclusive processes and more credible electoral events than would otherwise have been the case. Such results were evident primarily at the technical level. The degree of political will among different stakeholders to hold free and fair elections was a critical contributing factor to this achievement. While trust in the public authorities has been increasing over years, it still remains an issue.⁶⁶

Finding 4. UNDP has enhanced the capacity of the justice system and institutions responsible for corruption prevention and prosecution, strengthening their legal foundations, raising public awareness and introducing mechanisms for public engagement. However, systemic reforms were constrained by the unfavourable political climate in the country.

Public distrust in the justice system is widespread and corruption endemic in Moldova. To address this, UNDP has strategically positioned itself as a partner of choice to strengthen the capacity of the justice sector and anticorruption institutions. UNDP activities have made important contributions, but with greater impact at technical and institutional levels than at system level, as the sector is strongly influenced by the political environment. Overall, the judicial branch of government is underdeveloped (compared to the executive and legislative branches), with limited financial and human resources, which seriously weakens the system of checks and balances.⁶⁷

⁶³ Some innovative approaches used by UNDP are listed in finding 15 below. See, UNDP, EDMITE Project Progress Report, August 2017-July 2020. CCET with UNDP support implemented campaigns and electoral schools targeting young voters using social media in the format appealing to this target group.

⁶⁴ UNDP supported the development and implementation of the legal framework on political party finance regulations that improved transparency and accountability of parties participating in elections. With UNDP support, the Moldovan Parliament adopted a set of new amendments to the Electoral Code and one of them allowed voting for citizens living abroad with expired passports and/or national IDs that enabled this group to participate in elections. See, Law no. 113 adopted by the Moldovan Parliament on 15 August 2019 https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=115816&lang=ro. Also, the Moldovan Parliament introduced a new gender placement quota for political parties’ lists of candidates, as to ensure that at least four candidates out of each 10 represent one of the sexes.

⁶⁵ As the 2019 local election results showed, the share of women elected to local bodies has increased: for mayors from 20,6 percent to 21,8 percent, for local councillors from 30 percent to 36.5 percent, and for district councillors from 18.5 percent to 27.8 percent.

⁶⁶ Robertson, L. (2020) Final Project Evaluation Report, Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections.

⁶⁷ Government of the Republic of Moldova (2021) Technical Assistance Report—Country Governance Assessment, International Monetary Fund.

UNDP helped the National Institute of Justice to assess and further modernize the initial training of future judges and prosecutors of Moldova by making the facilities more modern and accessible, and integrating a new, practical, skills-oriented digital learning model.⁶⁸ This system has been well institutionalized, and was considered by a number of key informants to be effective and modern, promoting the closer alignment of justice practices with EU standards.

The Police Forensic Centre received extensive technical support from UNDP to obtain ISO 17025 accreditation for six types of expertise, attesting to the improved credibility of evidence submitted to the justice system. Interviewees appreciated the support provided by UNDP, and confirmed that the modern equipment provided is being used, but indicated that additional technical support was needed in areas such as DNA-based investigation methods. The capacity of the Joint Law Enforcement Training Centre was also strengthened through the provision of specialist equipment and the training of police officers for its use. UNDP supported implementation of the community policing concept by remodelling two police stations in line with the concepts, making them more open to the public to reduce levels of community mistrust in the police.⁶⁹ National partners informed the evaluation that new police stations would be constructed and old ones renovated based on the new design approach to promote police community engagement.

UNDP supported the digitalization of legal aid services to enable them to be accessed online, and according to interviews, as of June 2020, 82 percent of legal aid requests were submitted online. Some informants suggested that the experience of mass digitalization of services during the COVID-19 pandemic clearly demonstrated that online services are not automatically equally accessible, and some vulnerable groups such as the elderly may not know how to use them. To better support these vulnerable groups, additional measures were provided, such as expanded paralegal support in villages.⁷⁰

To address corruption, UNDP implemented a wide range of diverse measures targeting institutions, public servants, CSOs, public and youth. UNDP supported the development of the National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy 2017-2020 (NIAS) and the Law on the Protection of Whistle-blowers (Law 122/2018), and helped to establish a national system for the protection of whistle-blowers. UNDP provided digital solutions and improved business processes to support implementation of the NIAS. This strengthened the institutional and professional capacity of the National Anticorruption Centre (NAC) and the Ombudsperson's Office to ensure the protection of whistle-blowers, but some interviewees considered that protection mechanisms and processes may not be sufficient to encourage whistle-blowers to come forward.⁷¹ UNDP supported the development of shadow monitoring reports on sectoral Anticorruption Action Plans in education, public property and public procurement, and implemented a number of mass-awareness campaigns on the protection of whistle-blowers and integrity standards in the private sector, targeting diverse audiences such as youth through social media. UNDP was innovative in training young anticorruption volunteers and engaging a popular rapper to perform a song "If you've given if you've taken" that reached almost one million views.⁷²

⁶⁸ For additional information, see: <https://www.inj.md/ro/avut-loc-reuniunea-membrilor-consiliului-de-coordonare-proiectului-implementat-percentC3percentAEn-comun-de-pnud-percentC8percent99i-0>.

⁶⁹ UNDP supported renovation of two police stations based on the principles of functionality, transparency and accessibility, including for people with special needs. Some of key features of the new design put in practice are as follows: Accessible police station: access ramp for the wheelchairs, universal design of doors, accessible toilet; Shift from personal to functional working spaces, the working space separated from the public space; User friendly and client-oriented lobby, integrating a child play area, flexible waiting area.

⁷⁰ Additional information on National Legal aid, its services and number of clients served can be found at: <https://cnajgs.md/en>.

⁷¹ By 2021, out of 11 registered complaints in eight cases protection was granted by the Ombudsman.

⁷² See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDrb2aWN4AM>.

According to the second Impact Monitoring Survey of the NIAS, the level of intolerance to corruption has increased, but it is difficult to assess the extent of the UNDP contribution to this, as multiple factors and partners have contributed.⁷³ Furthermore, corruption remains widespread, and the issues of trust in public institutions and perceptions of their independence persist and require systemic reforms.⁷⁴

The sustainability of mechanisms and practices for youth, CSOs and other partners to engage with national and local authorities in anticorruption activities remains a point of concern, and additional external support is required.⁷⁵ UNDP anticorruption work predominantly focuses on prevention, alongside the work of other partners to strengthen mechanisms for the investigation and prosecution of corrupt officials. As UNDP observes in its annual report, some NAC recommendations were not adopted, resulting in significant budget losses, but enforcing such recommendations requires strong political will.⁷⁶

By prioritizing technical solutions to justice and anticorruption reforms, including infrastructure and equipment, UNDP missed opportunities to deepen and broaden the reforms and advance alternative justice solutions, pursue systemic crime-prevention and further strengthen a culture of rule of law and integrity by generating broader social support. This would require stronger civic education, awareness-raising activities and the empowerment of key non-governmental actors in justice system and anticorruption reforms.⁷⁷

2.2 Sustainable and Inclusive Growth

CPD Outcome 2. The people of Moldova, especially the most vulnerable, have access to enhanced livelihood opportunities, decent work and productive employment, generated by sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth.

Under Outcome 2, UNDP implemented 24 projects, one with an overall budget over \$20 million, three of \$10-20 million, one of \$6-10 million, and two of \$3-6 million. UNDP work within the sustainable and inclusive growth portfolio focused on the creation of sustainable, inclusive and green jobs, and the development of integrity-based business, transparent, accountable, efficient and inclusive service provision, and equal and equitable access to economic opportunities. By supporting the Government to implement its employment strategy, UNDP contributes to improving the enabling environment for formal, innovative employment and decent green jobs, catalysing investment for sustainable and resilient livelihoods throughout the country, including across the conflict divide. Some projects focus on enhancing the accessibility and quality of

⁷³ 62 percent of the population (45 percent in 2017) and 83 percent of businesses (61 percent in 2017) consider any corruption situation to be unacceptable, see UNDP (2019) National Integrity and Anticorruption Strategy Impact Monitoring Survey: https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/effective_governance/studiu-de-evaluare-a-impactului-strategiei-naionale-de-integrita0.html.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 4.7 percent of businesses (3.6 percent in 2017) admitted to paying informal payments when interacting with public institutions.

⁷⁵ In 2019, UNDP provided a small grant to IDIS Viitorul NGO for shadow monitoring of the Anticorruption Sector Action Plan in Public Procurement. Currently IDIS is implementing the Project Increasing the Integrity of Public Procurement in Moldova through Cooperation with Civil Society funded by Partnership for Transparency Fund. Such additional support may be needed to promote the sustainability of extensive anticorruption efforts implemented by UNDP.

⁷⁶ UNDP (2021) Annual Report, "Curbing Corruption by Building Sustainable Integrity in the Republic of Moldova (NAC II)".

⁷⁷ UNDP emphasizes the importance of transparency and social accountability as key elements in the fight against corruption and identifies a number of effective strategies that include improving citizens' monitoring and government responsiveness, particularly through the use of ICTs and enhancing dialogue and collaborative efforts between citizens: <https://anti-corruption.org/themes/human-rights-transparency-accountability>.

local public services in targeted geographic regions, with community empowerment components. UNDP implements multisectoral, conflict-sensitive and risk-informed development interventions in regions with special status such as Gagauz Yery and Transnistria.

Finding 5. UNDP has delivered much-needed development support in Transnistria, in coordination with the national Government, the *de facto* authorities in Transnistria and civil society on both sides of the river, despite the limited operating space.⁷⁸ UNDP confidence-building initiatives have resulted in increased cooperation, partnership and service quality for citizens. The confidence-building platforms established have the potential to inform high-level political solutions to the conflict and support the replicability of local solutions and models in Transnistria and Moldova.

Since 2007, following a major flood-response intervention across the country that included work in Transnistria, UNDP activities in Transnistria have grown in depth and scope. There has been no resolution, and the progress of high-level political negotiations, mediated by Russia, Ukraine, OSCE and EU with United States observers, has been slow. As such, social and political structures on both sides continue to be separate, hindering the socioeconomic development, stability and security of the country.

The evaluation found that cross-river cooperation platforms enable and facilitate structured partnership between professionals across the river, and have helped to develop practical, effective and sustainable confidence-building solutions to community problems and weaknesses.⁷⁹ Over the course of CPD implementation, the number of such platforms has increased as they expanded the scope of their responsibilities to add new vulnerable groups such as people living with HIV/AIDS, people who use drugs, Roma, and GBV survivors. The platform model proved to be particularly effective in addressing challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis, especially in delivering healthcare-related services and products, which otherwise would have required political involvement.⁸⁰

To promote partnership among businesses from both sides, UNDP supported SMEs on both banks of the Nistru river and “cross-river business platforms” for business associations, NGOs and small producers.⁸¹ For example, UNDP provided grants to increase the business relationships between companies from both riverbanks working in fruit processing, lavender oil and honey production, and to expand their export opportunities.⁸² UNDP also helped to establish a business education system in Transnistria in partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce. Over 91 young entrepreneurs (57 from the left bank) were given grants and technical support to partner with entrepreneurs from the other bank and created new job opportunities.⁸³

UNDP was strategic in implementing social infrastructure projects that contributed to promoting cooperation in important areas with potential leverage but relatively low political sensitivity, such as sports, culture, education, healthcare, environment and waste management.⁸⁴ These renovated cultural, health and education premises were conducive to hosting joint events such as sport activities and concerts.

⁷⁸ The territory to the east of the Nistru River (left bank), known as Transnistria, unilaterally declared independence from Moldova in September 1990, although this has not been formally recognized, and has remained outside of the control of Moldova’s central Government ever since. For more information see section 1.3.

⁷⁹ Economic development and entrepreneurship; Community development and cross-river CSO sectoral platforms; Cultural and historical heritage support and Cooperative media local content development.

⁸⁰ Key informant interviews. Examples provided include a joint needs assessment, PPE distribution to healthcare institutions and vulnerable people on both banks, and engagement of 20 healthcare workers from the left bank in healthcare institutions on the right bank.

⁸¹ UNDP, EU-funded Support to CBM Programme.

⁸² The selection criteria were financial viability, new jobs created, employment of people living with disabilities, returning migrants.

⁸³ UNDP Moldova, (2020) Annual Report of the Support to confidence-building across the Nistru river, through advanced cross-river capacities for Trade (AdTrade) and UNDP Support to CBM approach in Moldova.

⁸⁴ UNDP, EU-funded Support to CBM Programme.

The cross-river cooperation platforms engaged individuals, organizations and communities on issues related to the environment, health, culture, education and sports, and have been the backbones for sectoral dialogue across the conflict divide.⁸⁵ Over 30 generated solutions were translated into confidence-building projects and blueprints, resulting in improved service provision for citizens such as better healthcare services, or the promotion of inclusive education and cultural heritage.⁸⁶

In close partnership with other relevant United Nations agencies, UNDP provided targeted support to vulnerable groups on both banks of the Nistru River, such as PwDs, Roma, people living with HIV/AIDS and GBV survivors.⁸⁷ These groups, and CSOs working with or supporting them, were empowered for policy dialogue with Transnistria *de facto* decision-makers who became aware of their needs and rights and committed to align their actions with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and support GBV survivors.

UNDP facilitated regular dialogue between experts, influencers, journalists, civil activists, opinion makers and CSOs from both riverbanks.⁸⁸ Creators of audio-visual content from both riverbanks were supported to create new and improved content, through cooperation that resulted in joint talk shows, documentary films and other products.⁸⁹

UNDP work in Transnistria has expanded and solidified over the years and remains a flagship area of support. Through its continuous local presence, and by ensuring the buy-in of key actors on both banks from the earliest stages to define common priorities and development needs and implement practical win-win and conflict-sensitive solutions, UNDP ensured the success of its measures and approaches in multiple areas of cooperation. UNDP interventions have established healthy relations among people living on both riverbanks, which helped to reduce animosity and isolation and contributed to an environment of trust and cooperation that laid the foundations for international settlement efforts at the political level. More specifically, the platforms and cooperation mechanisms have created solid potential to inform high-level political resolutions to the conflict by sharing experiences and identified solutions.

Programmatically, UNDP is well positioned to increase the number of platforms and practical solutions through continued close coordination with both sides, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups and empowering civil society. Some solutions in the area of business development, regional development, partnership with CSOs and advancement of human rights, especially with PwDs, have considerable potential for scale-up, which UNDP has exploited. The business development component of the CBM programme was scaled up through the 'Support to confidence-building across the Nistru river, through advanced cross-river capacities for Trade' project, to facilitate exports from Transnistria producers and consolidate business development cooperation between the two riverbanks. The SARD project, implemented in Gagauz Yeri and focusing on regional development, waste management and business development, also applied the confidence-building aspect of the CBM project. Other initiatives that emerged from the CBM project include the joint WHO-UNDP 'Contribution to the CBM Programme in Transnistria - Health Sector' project (2016-2018), and the 'One-UN Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistria Region' (2016-2022).

⁸⁵ As reported by key informants, the number of existing platforms will be expanded. Export promotion platform will be created that will improve export opportunities of businesses across both banks.

⁸⁶ The Environment-related solutions refer to sustainable land use, management of national parks, environmental education, etc., whereas the healthcare platform prioritized the work on preservation of women's health, developing Intervention Services for Children at Risk. The education and sports platforms' solutions tackle joint problems in inclusive education, career guidance for young people and healthy lifestyle, while the culture professionals focused on cultural heritage and creative industries. See, UNDP Support to CBM, 2018.

⁸⁷ UNDP Joint Programme Strengthening Human Rights in Transnistria.

⁸⁸ UNDP, Transnistria Dialogues project (2018-2019).

⁸⁹ UNDP, EU-funded Support to CBM Programme.

In summary, despite limited cooperation between Chisinau and Tiraspol through official channels, UNDP managed to establish grassroots-level cooperation mechanisms. UNDP is uniquely well positioned to implement diverse, multilevel confidence-building initiatives between the two riverbanks, involving local authorities, CSOs, the business community and other stakeholders. The UNDP strategy was effective in engaging communities from both riverbanks in resolving non-political issues and sharing development challenges, whilst keeping the decision-makers in Moldova and Transnistria (*de facto*) informed, despite the challenging and sensitive political environment. The established confidence-building platforms have potential to inform high-level political dialogue and to support the replicability of local solutions and models on both riverbanks. The platforms, having the necessary thematic expertise and on-the-ground experience, can also inform settlement discussions through supporting dialogue at the Working Groups level.

Finding 6. UNDP support has contributed to agriculture, rural development and the reinforcement of social cohesion in the Gagauz Yeri special status region.

The SARD programme in Gagauzia ATU and Taraclia district and neighbourhood communities is a UNDP flagship initiative in Moldova. The programme had a tangible socioeconomic impact on the region through reducing the development gap and reinforcing social cohesion.⁹⁰ The initiative supported inclusive local socioeconomic strategies⁹¹ that increased the operational capacity of SMEs and inter-municipal clusters (IMCs), and empowered communities by promoting employability and entrepreneurship through job-hunting workshops, job creation, capacity-building and the establishment of cross-sectorial regional business associations.⁹² Local Action Groups aimed to build social inclusion and community participation through activities targeting women, youth, minorities, PwDs and other socially excluded people.

UNDP support resulted in more extensive involvement of citizens in the formation of local development plans by local public authorities (LPAs). Anchored in local priorities and needs, UNDP interventions enabled better quality infrastructure and social services for an estimated 300,000 beneficiaries.⁹³ Inclusive approaches, broad partnerships and inter-municipal cooperation among local stakeholders promoted local ownership. One factor contributing to the attainment of these results was the successful replication of the 'diaspora engagement' model in the local development plans of 41 communities.⁹⁴ Such gains have helped to improve service delivery in the 41 targeted communities, fostering economic development and inter-municipal cooperation.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Mehlmauer-Larcher, B et al.(2018) Final Evaluation Report of SARD in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district and neighbourhood communities. This shows enhanced dialogue and community empowerment involving over 3,800 people through eight established local action groups; local entrepreneurship and economic development 30 newly SMEs created; small scale infrastructure refurbishment in 41 localities and establishment and development of 7 inter-municipal clusters.

⁹¹ Local strategies in communities were developed in a participatory manner taking into account the special needs to empower women, youth, minorities, PwDs to participate in the policy -influencing process, including public hearings.

⁹² UNDP (2018) Final Narrative Report SARD in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district and neighbourhood communities. About 250 jobs created, including about 48 percent for women. About 65 percent of the jobs were created in rural areas.

⁹³ UNDP (2019) ROAR.

⁹⁴ The Moldovan diaspora was engaged in the local development actions mostly through the HTAs established, piloted and developed with UNDP support and replicated by the Government.. The communities are from all regions of Moldova, except Transnistria, and were targeted under the MiDL project.

⁹⁵ Mehlmauer-Larcher, B et. al. (2018) Final Evaluation Report of SARD in ATU Gagauzia and Taraclia district and neighbourhood communities.

The sustainability of these achievements, however, has been mixed. On the one hand, the prospects for sustainability are promising for the two business associations created (Association of Business People of Gagauzia NEXT and Taraclia Business Association), which provide regular services to their members. Local action groups are functional and delivering initiatives focused on local businesses, rural tourism and the protection of cultural heritage.⁹⁶ The IMCs established for solid waste disposal in cluster villages and neighbouring communities are also functional, well-equipped and regularly collecting solid waste. On the other hand, the environmental sustainability of waste management in SARD-targeted sites is challenged by the lack of financial resources for managing existing landfill sites as per environmental standards, and the lack of a comprehensive legal framework.⁹⁷ UNDP is supporting the groundwork for the national waste management strategy by creating the necessary conditions for enabling separated collection and transportation of waste.

Key factors hindering the full operation of the seven IMCs are the unclear legal framework for establishing IMC enterprises, the long process of changing people's behaviours regarding waste collection, and underdeveloped environmental regulations and norms on solid waste management. In response, UNDP is supporting the authorities to adopt a legal package of normative acts for updating regulations and methodological guidance for implementing IMCs. The legal acts will bring clarity to the institutional issues of IMC Associations, and streamline the status of regional service operators and the delegation of communal services (including the approval of new regulations).⁹⁸

Finding 7. The innovative UNDP approach of engaging migrants and diaspora in local development resulted in positive changes to the social paradigm of migration. Key to success was the highly participatory UNDP model of engaging migrants at local level. This has been widely replicated by the Government on the right bank, but the prospects for successful implementation in the Transnistria region depend on a number of factors.

Over the last five years, UNDP has designed and tested a model of engaging migrants and diaspora in supporting sustainable local development, channelling their expertise and remittances to improve public services and infrastructure in their communities of origin in Moldova.⁹⁹ The model is based on a highly participatory process, to reconnect diaspora and migrants, mostly through Home Town Associations (HTAs), to local planning, decision-making and project implementation processes. It relies on a strong three-dimensional partnership between LPAs, diaspora and local community organized through HTAs. The project has proved to be a flagship initiative, as it has gradually changed the social paradigm of migration from a negative phenomenon of brain drain and workforce reduction to a positive one where diaspora are involved in local and economic development in Moldova.

As a result of UNDP support, about 12,000 Moldovan migrants were involved in local planning and economic and infrastructure development, providing financial and in-kind support, or specific technical and community development expertise. About 96 newly-established and existing HTAs strengthened their functional capacity and mobilized funds for about 442 small local development initiatives.¹⁰⁰ Field missions for the ICPE confirmed that HTAs from different regions are active and involved in different community-level initiatives, such as the development of cultural and recreational infrastructure, or water and sanitation supply services. Some of them have established Junior HTAs, consisting of children and adolescents, with a focus on the implementation of child-centred local actions.

⁹⁶ Marius Barsan (2021) Midterm Outcome Evaluation Report. Inclusive Growth Pillar.

⁹⁷ The current legal framework only allows for staggered collection and transportation of waste.

⁹⁸ Law 1402/2002 on communal household services.

⁹⁹ Migration and Local Development (Phases I and II) Project Documents.

¹⁰⁰ Final Report. Integrated Migration and Local Development Project (1 August 2015 – 31 December 2018).

The UNDP contribution was catalytic for improving socioeconomic conditions in a number of communities across the country, enabling local LPAs to meaningfully engage migrants in local development. The good practice of the HTA approach has generated consistent sustainability prospects. The evaluation found that this initiative fed into the development of the 2020 government-funded 'Diaspora Succeeds at Home 1+3' (DAR) national programme, implemented by the Bureau for Diaspora Relations, which aims to operationalize, institutionalize and scale up the UNDP model of engaging migrants in local development.¹⁰¹ The DAR programme is functional, fully covered by the state budget, and annually funds a wide range of HTA initiatives.

UNDP also conducted preparatory work in 2021 to include communities from the Transnistria region in the Moldovan migration for development model. While this has generated interest from Transnistria counterparts, the success of the model in the region will depend on the involvement of the *de facto* LPAs and the specifics of the diaspora, which is mostly concentrated in the Russian Federation (unlike that of the right bank which is mostly based in EU countries).

2.3 Climate change, environment and energy

CPD Outcome 3. The people of Moldova, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from enhanced environmental governance, energy security, sustainable management of natural resources, and climate- and disaster-resilient development.

The Outcome 3 portfolio consists of 17 projects, with a total budget of \$11 million. The projects cover renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, energy-efficiency, climate change adaptation and mitigation, sustainable transboundary water use, green urban development, ozone-depletion and disaster risk reduction (DRR). Two of the projects had budgets exceeding \$2 million, two over \$1 million, and two of almost \$1 million. The remaining 11 projects had budgets of between \$21,000 and \$230,000.¹⁰²

This outcome had the lowest secured budget of the three outcomes (\$10.2 million against a planned CPD budget of \$41.2 million) and the lowest implementation rate at 44 percent (\$4.8 million expenditure of a \$10.2 million budget).¹⁰³

An established traditional development partner of the environment authorities in Moldova, UNDP has supported the country on environmental governance, sustainable natural resource management, biodiversity, DRR and climate change, as well as innovative and resilient green local development solutions. The support is mainly focused on government institutions and agencies to fulfil their strategic priorities by advancing low-carbon and climate-resilient solutions, evidence-based and risk-informed development, and strengthening their institutional, legal and individual capacity and policy to respond to climate-related and human-made disasters.

¹⁰¹ 1+3 = Government of Moldova + LPA, Development Partners + HTAs/initiatives groups of the diaspora. For additional information, see: <https://brd.gov.md/ro/content/diaspora-acasa-reuseste-dar-13>.

¹⁰² UNDP Atlas project portfolio (April 2021).

¹⁰³ UNDP Atlas PowerBI (October 2021). The country office Climate Change and Environment cluster reported \$12.6 million budget and \$9.5 million in expenditure as of 30 Nov 2021, which also includes commitments. IEO figures only consider expenditure as per UNDP corporate systems and not commitments.

UNDP has supported the Government of Moldova to implement its high-level climate agenda through the development of the updated NDC to the Paris Agreement and establishment of new, more ambitious GHG emissions-reduction targets. Through its interventions in waste, medical and chemical management, UNDP supports public institutions to meet their international standards for hazardous waste management. The UNDP programme also includes supporting Moldova to explore the mitigation potential of accessing international climate financing and promoting renewable energy solutions, reduce energy poverty, increase energy-efficiency and support the reform and modernization of environmental management systems in line with EU standards, while contributing to sustainable growth and job creation.¹⁰⁴

The operational driver of change in the environmental sector of Moldova is the European integration agenda, which requires harmonization and alignment with the EU environmental acquis, as well as Moldova's commitment to over 20 multilateral environmental agreements.¹⁰⁵ In 2019, the European Commission presented the European Green Deal, a comprehensive package of reforms aimed at transforming climate and environmental challenges into opportunities to ensure a green transition to a fair and prosperous society.¹⁰⁶ The European Green Deal is relevant for Moldova, given the cross-border nature of environmental problems, offering an opportunity to design nature-based solutions and encouraging sustainable public-private partnerships in the areas of forestry, waste, urban mobility and transportation and to transform agriculture from a carbon contributor to a carbon sink removal mechanism.¹⁰⁷

Finding 8. UNDP contributed to an increase in the use of renewable energy and advanced energy-efficiency through targeted support to biomass market development and by promoting and piloting new models for green energy, but the sustainability and scale-up prospects of these achievements are limited and affected by a wide range of economic, social and political factors.

Moldova is one of the most carbon- and energy-intensive economies in the region, with energy consumption twice as high as the EU average, contributing 65 percent of the country's GHG emissions.¹⁰⁸ Energy security is among the top national priorities, and UNDP supported the Government of Moldova to promote renewable energy use and diversify primary energy sources and energy-efficiency.¹⁰⁹ The Government has made considerable efforts to modernize and reform the energy sector by substituting fossil fuel imports, increasing energy-efficiency and diversifying primary energy sources. By 2020, renewable sources had reached at least 17 percent of gross energy consumption.¹¹⁰

Through the 'Moldova Energy and Biomass' (MEBP) project, UNDP provided support to introduce European standards and regulations on the quality of solid biomass fuel, based on European legislation and best practices (EU Green Deal).¹¹¹ MEBP contributed to more secure and sustainable energy production in Moldova through establishing and developing key elements of the biomass market (e.g. regulatory

¹⁰⁴ UNDP Moldova Country Programme Document (2018-2022).

¹⁰⁵ UNDP (2020) Green transformation of Moldova. Time is now: https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/climate_environment_energy/green-transformation-moldova.html.

¹⁰⁶ See <https://europeanclimate.org/the-european-green-deal>.

¹⁰⁷ UNDP (2020) Green transformation of Moldova. Time is now.

¹⁰⁸ UNDP Moldova (2020) ROAR.

¹⁰⁹ The "energy security" aspect is a broad concept and covers, among others, electricity grid interconnection, and the Iasi – Ungheni reverse gas pipeline.

¹¹⁰ UNDP Moldova (2020) ROAR.

¹¹¹ The European Commission presented the European Green Deal in 2019, a comprehensive package of reforms aimed at transforming climate and environmental challenges into opportunities for a fair and prosperous society, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy. The European Green Deal covers all sectors of the economy, notably: transport, energy, forestry and biodiversity, agriculture, buildings, and industries such as steel, cement, ICT, textiles, waste management and chemicals. For additional information visit: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1588580774040&uri=CELEX:52019DC0640>.

framework, quality certification lab, supply chain) and increasing interest in biomass energy development in Moldova. MEBP also had a positive impact on awareness of the benefits of biomass energy amongst education sector stakeholders in Moldova.

During MEBP implementation (2014-2018), interventions in renewable energy created new opportunities, improved the quality of life of targeted people and helped to increase the use of renewable energy from 5 to 14 percent of the total energy mix. Key informants confirmed that these efforts contributed to the rapid development of a new economic subsector, strengthened the country's energy security, connected about 157,000 people to affordable heating, including the most vulnerable (e.g. children, elderly people, youth, PwD), and created over 150 new jobs for operators and biofuel producers from Moldova.¹¹²

Despite UNDP efforts to consolidate the sustainability of the project, the prospects for sustainability of the positive impacts are weak and have gradually diminished over the last three years (2019-2021) due to the un conducive country context, and macroeconomic and social factors which significantly decreased the attractiveness of biomass energy.¹¹³ These include the economic decline of the country, a decrease in the price of natural gas and other fossil fuels, constantly increasing prices and monopoly on raw biomass materials, a lack of support at national level, and weak national ownership of the achievements. Consultations with key stakeholders revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and lockdown measures also negatively affected the sustainability of biomass energy as some biomass producers ceased their activities. Nevertheless, energy-efficiency and renewable energy remain high on the agenda of UNDP assistance in Moldova, in response to stakeholder expectations and the need to further support the market and sustain achievements.

In accordance with Montreal Protocol commitments to transition to an economy free of Hydro Chlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), UNDP partnered with two private companies to successfully pilot alternative natural refrigerants.¹¹⁴ Currently, the Ministry of Environment is considering the scale up of CO₂ technology. UNDP efforts to support the Chisinau municipality as a 'smart' low-carbon city, and leverage financing from international financial institutions (IFIs) and the private sector for green urban solutions, are progressing. Other relevant initiatives included the development of strategy documents to enable green urban transformation in Chisinau, such as the strategy on alternative transport and the street design guide.

UNDP partially met its objectives for improved energy-efficiency in public and residential buildings in Moldova and increased use of renewables in the national energy mix, contributing to the relevant CPD outcome indicator.¹¹⁵ One barrier was the failure of the innovative 'Energy Service Companies' (ESCO) approach, proposed to operate under the Energy Performance Contracting modality to stimulate additional investment in the energy-efficiency of public buildings in Moldova.¹¹⁶ This model proved to be too complex and not sufficiently attractive to the market and decision-makers, considering the immaturity of the market and level of government capacity and knowledge on the modality. Other factors contributing to low performance and sustainability were the limited financial and technical capacity of energy service provider companies, non-conducive policy framework, overambitious targets and project planning issues, bank scandals,¹¹⁷ corruption and political instability in Moldova.

¹¹² UNDP. MEBP Phase 2 Final Narrative Report, (2014-2018).

¹¹³ These results include the development of the post-project Sustainability Plan, meetings with the line Ministry, agencies and donor.

¹¹⁴ HCFC Phase-out Management Plans.

¹¹⁵ The targets for the renewable energy were fully achieved (Share of renewables in the gross final energy consumption. Baseline 26.1 target 2022 29.7 and progress to date 26.7 UNDP CPD 2018-2020 and CPD indicators' frameworks), but the targets for energy-efficiency in public and residential buildings are yet to be achieved.

¹¹⁶ 'Transforming the market for Urban Energy Efficiency in Moldova by introducing Energy Service Companies' project (ESCO). The ESCO approach in Moldova was focused on strengthening the capacity of established Energy Service Providers and implementing energy-efficiency projects in the Chisinau area.

¹¹⁷ In 2014, about \$1 billion disappeared from three Moldovan banks: Banca de Economii, Unibank and Banca Socială. For additional information https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moldovan_bank_fraud_scandal.

While UNDP targets may have been overambitious, interviewees noted that ESCO had contributed to acceleration of the adoption of the necessary energy legal framework, building perspectives for ESCO markets through a series of assessments, analyses, stakeholder consultations, collaboration mechanisms, and capacity-strengthening interventions.

Finding 9. The UNDP cross-sectoral and full-cycle approach has made a notable contribution to thematic policy and normative framework development and the enhancement of national and local capacity for environmentally sound management practices in ecosystems, waste and chemicals.

UNDP support has resulted in tangible progress towards the development of a policy and normative framework and stronger national and subnational capacity for the sound management of ecosystems and natural resources. The cross-sectoral approach to mainstream biodiversity into land-use practices and planning processes has proven its effectiveness at both national and local levels. The four biodiversity-compatible General Urban Plans and two District Spatial Plans developed and approved have contributed to the preservation of rare landscape elements and species important for local economies. As a result, about 204,137 hectares of land in the northern and central regions of Moldova (Soroca and Stefan-Voda districts) have been protected and are sustainably used.¹¹⁸

The integration of biodiversity inputs to 20 thematic regulations, legislative acts and policy frameworks at various stages of approval (e.g. Land Code of Moldova, Strategic Environmental Assessment Guidelines, Monitoring and Impact Evaluation Guidelines), may promote the mainstreaming of biodiversity concerns into the remaining 30 districts of the country.¹¹⁹ The potential for scaling up such an approach is high, as the 2030 National Development Strategy already recognizes the importance of biodiversity conservation to the national economy.¹²⁰

Through tailored training for architects and urban planners, as well as the incorporation of biodiversity concerns into the existing training curriculum of the Public Administration Academy of Moldova, UNDP has consolidated the potential impact and institutional sustainability prospects of enhanced capacity for ecosystem preservation.¹²¹ The UNDP-supported guidelines for agricultural entrepreneurs and farmers, now being used by beneficiaries, are expected to strengthen environmental management skills and knowledge for the sustainable development of agricultural communities.

In terms of the effective management of chemicals, UNDP supported Moldova to adopt HCFC-free technology by demonstrating non-ozone depleting technologies, in partnership with the private sector. Refrigerant recycling and recovery equipment, purchased with UNDP support, reduced the imports of HCFC and were used to upgrade the HCFC reuse system, thus enabling a reduction by 35 percent of national HCFC target.¹²²

Demonstrations of the performance of natural refrigerants in the commercial and cold storage sectors were beneficial to climate change and HCFC phase-out. This contributed to a 35 percent reduction in contributions to global warming, and increased national capacity in the commercial refrigeration sector to use new CO₂ technologies conducive for the sound management of chemicals.¹²³

¹¹⁸ National data. Spatial Planning Plan of Stefan Voda district 2018-2038. <https://stefan-voda.md/planul-de-achizitie-2019-pe-perioada-anului-2019-al-consiliului-raional-stefan-voda>.

¹¹⁹ See https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=110732&lang=ro.

¹²⁰ See <http://md.one.un.org/content/unct/moldova/en/home/presscenter/press-releases/strategia-nationala-de-dezvoltare-moldova-2030--aprobat-de-guvern.html>.

¹²¹ Public approaches to the development of territorial planning policies: <https://madr.gov.md/en/node/2210>.

¹²² UNDP Moldova (2020) ROAR.

¹²³ Final narrative report. HCFC Phase out Management Plan–Second Stage.

UNDP offered policymaking support during the public consultations on the Law on Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases, drafted by the Government of Moldova, to adopt a list of chemicals used as refrigerants, cleaning solvents, foaming agents, etc. with high global warming potential. The draft Law is expected to regulate the area, establishing the system for authorization, importation, marketing, labelling, recuperation, phase-out and reporting of these chemicals.

Finding 10. UNDP made an important contribution to the national adaptation planning system and national and subnational capacity to integrate resilience to climate change and disasters into development plans and practices.

According to interviews with government representatives, the Government of Moldova considers the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process as key to achieving the objectives of its 2014 Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and 2016 NDCs, together with the continued mainstreaming of climate change considerations into government policies and budgeting processes.¹²⁴

However, the Government has limited technical capacity and resources to effectively promote adaptation planning and implementation. CCA is not adequately prioritized in the governmental planning agenda, and existing in-country expertise is insufficient to catalyse the necessary adaptation response, particularly for implementation. Therefore, the UNDP contribution is relevant and timely for identification of the country's CCA needs, and promoting the coherent implementation of the response.

With the support of UNDP and the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Government of Moldova is leveraging the second iteration of the NAP process (NAP II) to advance planning in its most climate-vulnerable sectors (energy, transport, health, agriculture, forestry and water resources), by developing a state-of-the-art CCA strategic framework which prioritizes vulnerable sectors and adaptation options. These options are based on sectoral vulnerability assessments and adaptation plans, which include specific actions and estimated measures. While it is too early to see any results, this is expected to increase the capacity of the Republic of Moldova to adapt and respond to actual or potential climate change impacts.¹²⁵

Stakeholders and national partners confirmed that the adaptation process is contributing to: 1) consolidation of the cross-sector cooperation of national authorities with LPAs, private sector, academia and CSOs; 2) CCA awareness-raising at national and subnational levels, including of vulnerable groups and the wider public; 3) mainstreaming of adaptation measures into the socioeconomic development strategies of the six piloted districts; and 4) promotion, monitoring and leverage of CCA finance.

On water resource management, UNDP support is setting the ground for constructive dialogue on the transboundary management of the Dniester/ Nistru River, following Ukraine's intention to expand its hydropower potential.¹²⁶ The Social and Environmental Impact Study (SEIS) is expected to provide evidence for the protection of the River's water ecosystems downstream and support decision-making over the use of the water, on which Moldova's population depends. The findings of the SEIS will be used in negotiations with Ukraine on the functioning of the Novodenstrovsk Hydropower Complex (HPC). As a result of UNDP support, the Moldovan delegation to the Dniester Commission strengthened its negotiation skills and capacity on international water law and diplomacy, and equipped it to represent the water-related interests of the country.

¹²⁴ Annotated Project document template for DIM implemented NAP projects financed by the Green Climate Fund. 23.04.2020.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ The Dniester Hydro Power Complex Social and Environmental Impact Study Narrative report: January -December 2020.

The SEIS encountered difficulties to obtain full information on hydrology, hydrochemistry, etc. from both Moldovan and Ukrainian institutions. UNDP changed the study provider and facilitated access to existing information and data owned by national bodies, as well as from Ukraine on daily water flows of the Dniester HPC. As an alternative solution to baseline data sets, the initial technical/ project documentation of Dniester HPC produced in 1987 and held by a Russian Institute was effectively used.

SEIS data collection was being finalized as the evaluation was carried out, and delays were encountered in the development of one of the sub-studies, the Dniester Socioeconomic Impact Assessment, and more specifically on water flow quantity downstream of the Dniester HPC. Government stakeholders noted that the impact assessment sub-studies produced with available data sets partially met their expectations, and additional quality checks of the study deliverables were planned.¹²⁷

2.4 Overall programme implementation

Finding 11. UNDP is well-positioned as a reliable, responsive and trusted provider of development services to the Government in pursuing its diverse priorities, including the SDGs and EU accession. It is widely appreciated by the Government for its role in supporting changes in politically-sensitive areas such as elections, justice reform, support in Transnistria and specialized technical support in areas such as the environment, where institutional expertise is limited. Political will, government absorption capacity and sometimes national ownership prospects remained inconsistent and limited throughout the CPD cycle.

Despite the frequently changing political landscape in the country and limited operating space for long-term systemic reform, UNDP has made important contributions in addressing governance, human rights, local development and confidence-building in Transnistria, and advanced digital and green innovations.¹²⁸ UNDP engagement in policy advice and advocacy was targeted, with measurable improvements in critical areas such as the NIAS.¹²⁹ However, to some extent, UNDP was limited in expanding the policy areas for support or promoting consistent policy implementation by an unpredictable political environment.

UNDP interventions over 2018–2021 were highly relevant to the national context and guided by the National Development Strategy “Moldova 2030”, the SDGs and the broad parameters of the Moldova Association Agreement with the European Union.¹³⁰ UNDP proved to be a trusted partner, and has contributed effectively to national development priorities while enhancing Moldova’s compliance with international norms and standards of CEDAW and UNCRC, with a focus on vulnerable groups.¹³¹ While the current CPD has been spread across many intervention areas, UNDP maintained its long-term focus on strategic priority areas and further strengthened its capacity and comparative advantage to produce results in confidence-building in

¹²⁷ UNDP Moldova (2020) ROAR.

¹²⁸ These limitations include an unstable political climate, strong interest groups, as well as limited Government’s commitment to systemic reforms. In addition to political-economic factors, government capacity remains constrained by poorly trained and often unmotivated public servants, limited technical expertise, low salaries, and a limited willingness to take ownership of ambitious initiatives.

¹²⁹ UNDP provided extensive expert support to NAC in drafting and implementing the NIAS for 2017–2020. UNDP promoted a focus on results and supported a nationwide survey to assess the effectiveness of implementation of the Strategy, by capturing corruption perception and experience of the population, business community and public institutions. NIAS Impact Monitoring Surveys conducted in 2017 and 2019 were widely circulated to increase public awareness and advocate for further advancement of anticorruption work.

¹³⁰ National Development Strategy Moldova 2030: <https://www.climate-laws.org/geographies/moldova/policies/national-development-strategy-moldova-2030#:~:text=The%20National%20Development%20Strategy%20%22Moldova,following%20four%20pillars%20of%20sustainable.>

¹³¹ Ratification of the Istanbul Convention of gender violence is still pending. For additional information, see: Moldova Urged to Ratify Istanbul Convention “Without Delay”: <https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/25/moldova-urged-to-ratify-istanbul-convention-without-delay.>

the Transnistria region, election system reform, regional development in Gagauz Yeri (SARD Project), local development in Moldova (MiDL Project), migration and development, and regional initiatives with a focus on products and services for the Government.¹³²

UNDP is recognized as a credible and responsive partner to government priorities and the country's development needs.¹³³ Interviewees considered the relationship between UNDP and government partners as strategic and positive, extending beyond the current CPD. Within upstream support, the UNDP focus on key reforms included high-level technical advisory support and facilitating networks of national and regional institutions and bilateral partners. UNDP was praised for its support in overcoming weaknesses in institutional expertise. Institution-building and capacity-development components are critical for building the necessary government absorption capacity to accept and act upon UNDP policy advice, and were included in all three outcome areas. UNDP employed a range of capacity-development tools such as training, workshops, exchanges, provision of supplies and mentoring. For example, UNDP supported long-term institutional solutions to build the capacity of CCET and the National Institute of Justice. The majority of informants appreciated the high quality and relevance of UNDP capacity-building measures and expert support, although a few examples were mentioned where beneficiary needs were not fully met (e.g. construction of the jointly-operated Palanca border crossing, and shelter infrastructure works in Transnistria).¹³⁴ At local level, UNDP effectively supported the development of local authorities, SMEs, service providers and CSOs and identified and empowered a wide range of vulnerable groups in Gagauz Yeri and Transnistria. Interviewees stated that UNDP has been highly successful in leveraging ICT and innovation, re-engineering and digitizing public administration, governance and business processes.¹³⁵

Procurement support constitutes a large proportion of UNDP interventions, and is well recognized by United Nations agencies, donors and the Government. UNDP has improved its internal procurement processes, which further contributed to the achievement of effective results. National partners prefer UNDP procurement procedures to the government processes which are complex, cumbersome and often do not deliver value for money. UNDP improved its business procedures to further expedite procurement and increase the satisfaction of clients. UNDP strengths lay in the transparency, timeliness and quality of the process. UNDP was also appreciated for its capacity development of partners to conduct procurement processes as part of development assistance, but otherwise did not offer comprehensive technical assistance to reform national and local procurement mechanisms and processes and create opportunities for the Government to adapt its procedures.¹³⁶

Overall, the Government relies on and trusts UNDP procurement expertise, as reflected in the high government investment in the CPD, reaching \$12 million in the current programme period, second only to the EU contribution (Figure 2). However, the trend over the years has not been positive, as the share of government cost-sharing in the country programme budget has declined from 32 percent in 2018 to 0.1 percent in 2020.¹³⁷ Key informants representing government institutions noted that this decline had been influenced by a number of factors, including legislative challenges to channelling government funds through development organizations, and differences in the accounting and fund management procedures

¹³² City Experiment Fund 1.0, through which UNDP Moldova piloted the concept of urban data collectives, and developed specific services to respond to COVID-19 for use by central and local governments.

¹³³ Key informants from the Government (both local and national), private sector, civil society and international development partners.

¹³⁴ UNDP, Construction of the jointly-operated border crossing point Palanca on the territory of the Republic of Moldova, funded by EU, co-financed by the Government of Republic of Moldova, and implemented by UNDP.

¹³⁵ UNDP, Country Programme Document for the Republic of Moldova (2018-2022), key informant interviews and extensive documentation on ICT, digitalization and country office support.

¹³⁶ As part of the MiDL project, the capacity of LPAs and HTAs was built, and within the CBM AdTrade project, the capacity of business support associations on procurement was enhanced.

¹³⁷ UNDP country office reporting, resources by funding type. Also, the share of government contributions is not even among outcomes, Outcome 3 has no government cost sharing at all (Source IEO Power BI, June 2021).

between the Government and UNDP. The highest amount of government cost-sharing was to the 'Support to Security Sector Reform' project (\$2.5 million), followed by support from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the 'Dinamo' project (\$2.1 million) and a \$2.8 million contribution from Local Public Administrations under the EU-funded SARD project. The country office is actively pursuing cost-sharing opportunities with the Government by trying to remove legislative barriers and find suitable opportunities.

The majority of UNDP interventions were delivered without significant delays or deviations from intended plans and within budget, except for a few projects such as ESCO, Green Cities, Dnestra Impact study, Palanca border crossing and some activities in justice sector support. In a few cases where it has not been possible to implement the initial strategy, alternative solutions have been identified.¹³⁸ Key informants representing government institutions and donors considered that UNDP was a responsive partner in the management of construction and infrastructure renovation projects, but due to limited technical expertise in planning and execution of some aspects of construction work, delays were encountered which could create a reputational risk for UNDP.

Finding 12. UNDP interventions have brought benefits for vulnerable groups such as PwDs, Roma, children, youth, women and elderly people through its diverse projects, and has made some gains in promoting human rights-based approaches, although these lacked a systemic and strategic approach for sectoral and national scale-up.

UNDP made a positive contribution to encouraging the participation and empowerment of key stakeholders and underrepresented groups in decision-making and monitoring. This builds on past efforts to ensure participation in decision-making at national and local levels.

UNDP actively supported the LNOB agenda in its programming, especially in the Transnistria region. Through the joint 'One-UN Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistria Region of the Republic of Moldova' (Phase 3) project, together with OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNODC and IOM, UNDP promoted the 'Community Mobilization for Empowerment' approach, involving women and men from vulnerable groups to stimulate emerging CSOs in the Transnistria region and empowering rights-holders to take action, be heard and participate in public administration and community efforts to address human rights violations. For example, UNDP supported Women's Initiatives, a local NGO in Transnistria, to expand its services to reach more vulnerable groups, including Roma women and women with disabilities. UNDP also enhanced the capacity of *de facto* duty bearers to fulfil their human rights obligations relating to conventions such as CEDAW and UNCRPD. Extensive UNDP partnerships with CSOs representing and supporting vulnerable groups were effective, relevant and empowering. Interviewees confirmed that UNDP-led communication efforts increased the awareness of populations of both banks, especially vulnerable groups, on subjects related to the rights of women, PwDs, Roma, people living with HIV/AIDS and GBV survivors.

Interventions supporting vulnerable groups were mostly project-based and not systemic, and limited by data availability and strategy gaps. Representatives of national institutions and the private sector mentioned positive examples of UNDP support to SMEs involving vulnerable groups, including: the inclusion of vulnerable children in sport activities,¹³⁹ the expansion of service availability and accessibility for vulnerable groups such as people living with HIV/AIDS, people who use drugs, Roma, GBV survivors

¹³⁸ For example, the CBM project on the rehabilitation of the Gura Bicului-Bicoc bridge was planned to benefit from cross-river mobility and cooperation. However, due to the impossibility of reaching an agreement on the freedom of mobility at the political level, the project adjusted to focus on cross-river cooperation through social and economic infrastructure development.

¹³⁹ UNDP (2020) European Union Confidence Measures Programme.

and others;¹⁴⁰ and enabling the participation of PwDs and minorities in elections.¹⁴¹ Vulnerable groups with limited access to the labour market were actively supported through training, enhancing access to financing and improving links between social protection schemes, employment measures and public services. To enhance the accessibility of local public services, UNDP strengthened local capacity to engage with targeted groups and community members in the planning and delivery of public services. UNDP conducted a few evidence-based assessments to identify vulnerable groups and the barriers they face, but the use of these studies to address these barriers over the long term was inconsistent across its programmes.¹⁴²

Most United Nations and UNDP work to support vulnerable groups was based on human rights-based approaches and contained effective practices. However, this was mostly at project level, lacking synergy with other UNDP interventions which could have informed system-level solutions and policies to address core challenges for the inclusion and rights of vulnerable groups. UNDP did not advocate extensively for national scale-up of these interventions or consistently promote the mainstreaming of vulnerable groups' issues into the awareness and practices of the wider development community in Moldova.

Finding 13. UNDP efforts to deliver under 'One-UN' through joint projects have demonstrated considerable benefits, owing to the multisectoral expertise of the team and the management systems which promote synergies. There are promising engagements with new partners such as the private sector. Partnership with IFIs, who are extensively involved in the country and have strong leverage to advance governance reforms, were not systematically pursued, and a strategic approach is lacking.

Working within the One-UN framework in Moldova, UNDP has demonstrated the benefits of joint programming and partnerships by bringing synergies and complementary expertise for larger overall impact. However, this has also required considerable efforts in coordination and programming, given the varied mandates and priorities of United Nations agencies. Examples of cross-sector collaboration with United Nations partners exist across the entire country programme, but are most visible in addressing local development challenges (Outcome 2).¹⁴³ The implementation of joint projects within this outcome has fostered local partnerships and promoted comprehensive solutions to address local needs. 74 percent of surveyed partners highly valued the role of UNDP in the development of broad partnerships and its support to national and local Government with development planning and implementation.¹⁴⁴

The 'Strengthening Human Rights in the Transnistria Region' joint programme, for example, was implemented by six United Nations agencies, led by UNDP (see Finding 12). UNDP adopted its methodology to confidence-building that promoted a people-centred approach to identifying the challenges and solutions to improving lives in communities. The results included increased popular awareness on both banks of the Nistru River, especially groups facing multiple vulnerabilities (PwD, Roma community, people living with HIV/AIDS, GBV survivors), of their human rights, which in turn informed the *de facto* Transnistria authorities' commitment and actions to align with UNCRPD and support GBV survivors.

¹⁴⁰ One-UN Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistria Region of the Republic of Moldova.

¹⁴¹ Enhancing democracy in Moldova through inclusive and transparent elections.

¹⁴² UNDP and UN Women, Vulnerability Study, Taxonomy and possible decentralization policy implications for vulnerable groups in Moldova.

¹⁴³ Decent work and productive employment, implemented in collaboration with ILO.

¹⁴⁴ UNDP (2020) Partnership Survey – Moldova Country Report. Partners consulted include Government, civil society, United Nations agencies, IFIs, NGOs and private sector.

Through the 'Strengthening the National Statistical System of Moldova' project, United Nations agencies provided specialist expert advice and support, for example UNICEF supported the collection of child- and adolescent-specific statistical data, while UNDP supported SDG-specific data. Other good examples include the NAP II project, and collaboration with United Nations agencies to address response and recovery efforts associated with COVID-19 (Finding 16).

Partners gave positive feedback on UNDP joint projects, which can be attributed to the UNDP emphasis on relationship management. Connections were made between UNDP work across Pillars 2 and 3, ensuring that the environment and economic development do not leave anyone behind, as well as operationalization of the common chapter and engagement on SEIS and migration. While these successes were the result of collaboration within specific joint projects, often at the request of donors, opportunities to explore deeper collaboration at wider programme level remain underexplored.¹⁴⁵ In some instances, such as the UNDP 'Parliament Support' project, midcourse corrections were made to eliminate the risk of duplication with other projects.

United Nations agencies recognize the UNDP role and reach with the Government and other key actors in Moldova. UNDP leadership was seen as key to supporting United Nations agencies to strengthen their collaboration with the Government and other partners, for example in sensitive areas such as justice, anticorruption and support to Transnistria. The UNDP role has also been key to strengthening the Resident Coordinator's Office after delinking. COVID-19 also created an opportunity to strengthen collaboration between United Nations agencies, in a true representation of the One-UN approach, creating a foundation for further collaboration.

While the diversification of partnerships was limited, UNDP successfully pursued partnerships with the private sector that proved critical to advancing innovations and economic opportunities, including the employment of vulnerable people.¹⁴⁶ UNDP partnership with IFIs has been developing around the areas of CCA, energy-efficiency, private sector engagement and waste management, but is ad hoc and project-based. UNDP shared information and experiences with the World Bank on telemedicine, SME digitalization and green cities, and collaborated in supporting NBS on the ad hoc Household Budget Survey module and World Bank work on e-learning. Possibilities of partnerships with the European Bank of Reconstruction and Development in areas such as promoting the green building design code or energy management information systems were also explored, including synergies in supporting the capacity-building of private sector companies to access loans and for digitalization. UNDP discussed opportunities for partnership with the European Investment Bank in CCA, energy-efficiency, private sector engagement and waste management. These activities did not materialize into long-term joint projects or strategic collaboration with IFIs with significant leverage and influence over government institutional and policy reforms.

Finding 14. UNDP has made notable contributions in promoting and scaling up gender equality and women's empowerment in the areas of political engagement, economic empowerment, social inclusion and protection from GBV, despite the limited financial contribution to GEWE measured by the gender markers. There is a good balance of upstream and downstream interventions with potential for transformative change.

¹⁴⁵ The United Nations as One modality remains underutilized as United Nations joint projects where UNDP participated were developed in response to donor request and not initiated by UNDP.

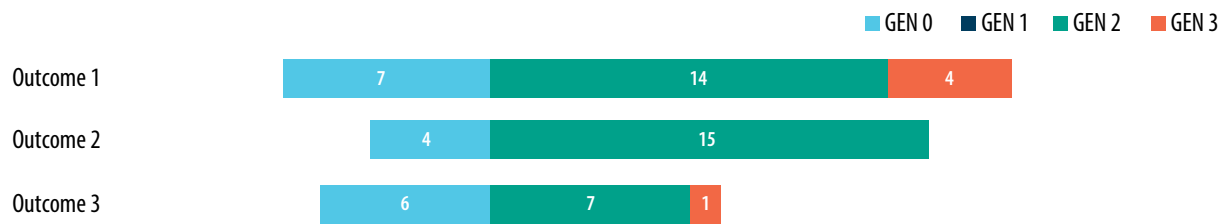
¹⁴⁶ For instance, Green City Lab and SAISE.

UNDP efforts to mainstream gender and support women’s empowerment in its programmes and operations have been extensive and comprehensive. Development partners acknowledged UNDP contributions to gender equality in the country, both through its programmes and its consistent cross-cutting advocacy work for women’s rights and gender equality.

UNDP has invested in GEWE capacity development for its team. UNDP does not have a dedicated gender advisor or specialist, but gender mainstreaming is coordinated by the Gender Focal Team led by the Resident Representative and designated gender focal points at project level. Gender parity has been met in the structure of the country office staff. In 2017, the country office received the Gold Gender Seal, scoring positively on 78 out of 80 benchmarks recognizing the achievements of UNDP Moldova in GEWE.¹⁴⁷ In collaboration with UN Women, gender seal implementation in public institutions is now being planned with the Ministry of Defence and six selected local governments.

According to the Gender Marker score, used to track expenditure towards gender mainstreaming, most of the projects in this CPD (amounting \$45 million) contributed to GEN2, and only a fraction (amounting to \$1 million) were marked as contributors to GEN3.¹⁴⁸ Most of the GEN2 projects were under Outcome 2, and the majority of Outcome 1 projects were GEN 1 and GEN3. Outcome 3 had a balanced distribution between GEN1 and GEN2 projects (Figure 4). The country office faces some challenges to track the attributed gender budget due to the rigidity of Atlas, the UNDP resource planning system, and the classifications of GEN markers.¹⁴⁹

FIGURE 4. Gender Marker by projects and outcomes



Source: UNDP Atlas PowerBI, June 2021

¹⁴⁷ UNDP (2017) Gender Equality Seal, Certificate Report. Gender Seal is an independent assessment of UNDP commitment, expertise and effectiveness in protecting and advancing women’s rights and gender equality.
¹⁴⁸ GEN 3 refers to activities that have gender equality as a principal objective; GEN 2 activities have gender equality as a significant objective and GEN 1 activities are expected to contribute in some way to gender equality, but not significantly.
¹⁴⁹ For example, a statistics project is classified as GEN3, the project has done work on SDG gender-related indicators, gender-sensitive data and a study of women’s entrepreneurship but these were only some of the products, but gender was not the main focus. In other cases, like the Women’s Caucus in Parliament was a clear GEN3 project but the budget was very small, and UNDP considers it as seed funding to develop a more comprehensive project in partnership with UN Women and other partners.

Thanks to the joint advocacy and policy work of UNDP with UN Women, CSOs and other development partners, for the first time in the history of the country 40 percent of elected members of parliament (MPs) are women.¹⁵⁰ UNDP supported a mandatory quota of 40 percent women in the candidate list, and provided extensive support to parliamentary capacity-building and awareness-raising for women MPs.¹⁵¹ Such support was delivered through the women's parliamentary caucus, which reinforced the capacity of individual MPs, while providing a critical mass for influence. Specific results in terms of the adoption of and changes to legislation introduced by the women's parliamentary caucus were limited (for example legislation to ensure that retired teachers who continue working receive summer holiday pay), but the work completed so far has potential to advance the GEWE agenda at national level. UNDP supported the institutionalization of gender-impact analysis as a mandatory step in assessing draft legislation. Support was provided to strengthen the national statistical system to produce data for evidence-based advocacy for women's rights. With regard to women from marginalized groups, UNDP provided capacity-building to Roma women and women with disabilities as candidates for local elections. In the 2019 local elections, six Roma women and six women with disabilities were elected as councillors, an increase from one Roma councillor previously.¹⁵²

UNDP has contributed to the integration of gender concerns into policies and programmes on employment ('Strengthening Parliamentary Governance in Moldova' project), local planning (EU4Moldova), disaster management ('Climate Change and DRR' project)¹⁵³ sustainable energy (MEBP, Green Cities), agriculture (SARD), forestry ('Biodiversity Conservation' project), and anticorruption. For example, the 'Climate Change and DRR' project contributes to the National Strategy for ensuring gender equality between men and women (2017-2021), focused on the integration of gender aspects into climate change related policies. UNDP supported the engagement of six gender-focused or women-led NGOs to actively engage in corruption prevention activities such as monitoring the implementation of the NIAS and local or sector-specific Anticorruption Action Plans.

UNDP also supported women in Gagauz Yeri and Transnistria to take an active part in social and economic life by promoting balanced participation and access to relevant education and information sources. UNDP managed to put GBV high on the agenda of the local authorities in Gagauz Yeri ATU. The first regional centre for the protection and support of women experiencing GBV in the ATU (Chirsova village) was functional and provided shelter for up to six months to 20 women and children, along with psychological, social and legal assistance, peer support and livelihoods training.¹⁵⁴ Anecdotal evidence suggests that more survivors are now empowered, with an increase in reporting of GBV to authorities.

Under Outcome 2, approximately 160,000 women benefited from enhanced social services, improved public infrastructure and local community services such as healthcare, social protection, culture, education and sports.¹⁵⁵ Local development projects were prepared with women's participation. UNDP ensured women's economic self-sufficiency as over 2,000 returned female migrants were assisted in finding jobs or developing local businesses.

¹⁵⁰ Parliamentary elections on 11 July 2021: http://alegeri.md/w/Pagina_principal%C4%83.

¹⁵¹ The amended Law provides additional financial incentives to political parties nominating at least 40 percent of women as candidates in single mandate districts and for every woman elected as Member of Parliament on the party list.

¹⁵² 3,801 women, of 5,741 beneficiaries from the civil society, political parties and vulnerable groups (Roma minority), were targeted for voter information and civic education events and activities.

¹⁵³ The 'Climate Change and DRR' project is contributing to the National Strategy for ensuring gender equality between men and women (2017-2021), as it is focused on integration of the gender aspects into the CC related policies.

¹⁵⁴ UNDP, Addressing violence against women in the Republic of Moldova: exploring and learning from local solutions.

¹⁵⁵ UNDP Moldova ROARs 2019, 2020 not verified by the evaluation.

Under Outcome 3, women were actively involved in UNDP green development programmes. Through the Track Challenge Grant Programme implemented by the Green Cities project, UNDP ensured that three of the five selected enterprises were led by women, to make their voices heard and act as agents of change on inclusive urban mobility, new waste-related businesses and energy poverty. Gender parity was also ensured for participation in activities related to innovative transformation experiments (such as the bicycle infrastructure strategy and action plan) and communication strategies. Women were also targeted in biomass related activities. A total of 538 women have demonstrated their abilities as effective beneficiaries, entrepreneurs and leaders for the use of renewable energy in their communities.¹⁵⁶ As a result of UNDP training, their skills on resource mobilization, participatory planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and management of biomass projects were improved.

UNDP also ensured the participation of women in natural resource management processes. Although it is too early for evidence of the results and impact of this targeting strategy on the empowerment of women, the strategy has ensured gender parity in activities such as the Electric Car Marathon or HCFC-free refrigerants, and the participation of women in the Moldovan delegation to the 2nd Dniester River Commission in Kiev. UNDP also emphasizes women's roles in the sustainable management of water. In order to harness women's voices and perspectives in shaping and advancing gender-responsive CCA measures and solutions at subnational level, UNDP created space to engage over 70 women in environmental debates and technical working groups in five districts (Calarasi, Nisporeni, Leova, Basarabasca and Dubasari).

Overall, UNDP found a good balance between upstream and downstream work in promoting GEWE. Results and positive contributions towards the advancement of GEWE in the country during this CPD were attested by partners in the 2020 Partnership Survey. Many results achieved are scalable with transformative potential to promote the rights of all women, especially vulnerable groups, if implemented across Moldova in partnership with other United Nations agencies and development partners.

Finding 15. The long work of UNDP on innovation has evolved to permeate all programme areas, build capacity and generate learning. The country office has actively pursued innovations through designated Labs that were established to experiment and test innovations and mainstream innovative approaches in its programmes, projects and operations. While some of these innovations have been effective and relevant to national development and UNDP operations, others were not implemented nationwide, partly because they were not well linked to government policymaking and budgeting processes or UNDP policy advisory work.

Innovations in UNDP Moldova are driven by demand from partners and clients, the organization's existing portfolios of programmes and projects, and capacity-building gaps (e.g. skills-sets in the innovation teams).¹⁵⁷ UNDP has accumulated the required capacity to accelerate development and innovation in the areas of technical and digital modernization of public service, engagement with the private sector and urban experimentation. The UNDP focus on innovation covers three dimensions: products, services¹⁵⁸ and business/ operational processes, but lacks clear criteria to identify innovation.¹⁵⁹ During this and previous CPD cycles, UNDP has extensively pursued innovations across all of its portfolios, and internally, so that the focus on innovation became part of the country office institutional culture. Some examples of innovation are: the diverse range of digital products for the Government, such as big data tracking and analysis for tackling COVID-19 (for the Prime Minister's office); an individual-focused model of support for the

¹⁵⁶ UNDP Moldova (2018) ROAR.

¹⁵⁷ In the absence of clear corporate criteria on identification innovations, the evaluation team exercised professional judgement to identify innovations to cover in this section.

¹⁵⁸ For instance the migrant/diaspora engagement model (MiDL project); LEADER approach for rural development (SARD Project); big data for tackling COVID-19.

¹⁵⁹ It remained unclear as to how the 'Socioeconomic impact assessment of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups and economic sectors' falls under the innovations umbrella.

unemployed; promoting data use and supporting responsible energy consumption by sharing information on household electricity use and comparing them with more energy-efficient neighbours; the use of ID-card barcode scanners in 70 polling stations in Chisinau municipality; and an IT hackathon to crowdsource the design of a real-time display of voter turnout and preliminary voting results.¹⁶⁰

Data from the country office internal monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of these innovations shows that they generally added value.¹⁶¹ UNDP innovations on telehealth solutions to ensure the effective monitoring and continuous treatment of tuberculosis patients proved to be effective, and were taken on by the Ministry of Health for national implementation.¹⁶² In other cases, innovative models implemented by projects such as MIDL and SARD (LEADER and IMC approaches) have been scaled up by regional and national authorities, such as the DAR 3+1 National Programme and IMC regulatory framework, opening up new streams of partnership with non-traditional partners. UNDP was successful in building new partnerships with private companies. Interviewees from the private sector were satisfied with UNDP partnership for innovation, and expressed interest in continued collaboration in areas such as big data use, digitalization and energy-efficiency.¹⁶³ However, the uptake of some innovations seems to have been low or non-existent, partly because they were not linked to government policymaking and budgeting processes, and UNDP did not pursue extensive advocacy to promote their scale-up.

On the other hand, UNDP was highly successful in pursuing innovations to improve its operations. Among the improvements made, the country office developed local e-banking tools and automatization of bank payment processes, which resulted in efficiency gains, improved the automatic cost-recovery system for local operation services for UNDP projects and United Nations agencies leading to a tenfold decrease in the time required to prepare monthly cost-recovery reports, and enhanced and upgraded the Fleet Management System.

The innovations explicitly linked to UNDP policy and programme work proved to be scalable. For example, the MiDL programme through HTAs, or CBM initiated during the previous CPD cycle and significantly expanded over 2018-2021. Some innovations that did not have such explicit linkages were only partially scaled, such as the experiment on electricity consumption, or were not scaled up at all and need reinforcement, such as the employability experiment.¹⁶⁴ This is due to the ad hoc, demand-driven nature of the innovations pursued, challenges with institutional learning, and a disconnect between innovations and the government policy cycle. The potential for replication, including operational and budget considerations, was not taken into account by the UNDP team, partly because innovations were seen as a response to emerging opportunities to test new ideas, and in some cases to national partner requests.

¹⁶⁰ In partnership with Premier Energy, UNDP identified about 127,000 energy-intensive households, exceeding average electricity consumption during the first quarter of 2019. The identified households were then randomly split into three groups. Two groups received one of the behaviourally-informed letters. For comparison's sake, a control group was randomly assigned to receive no letter. According to UNDP data that was verified by key informants, households that received behaviourally-informed letters reduced their electricity usage by approximately 2 percent in the month following, compared to households that did not receive the letter. See <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/can-we-reduce-electricity-consumption-while-staying-at-home--soc.html>.

¹⁶¹ For example, through tracking the impact of the behavioural electricity experiment, UNDP has medium-term access to granular household consumption data from the electricity distribution company. UNDP supported the National Employment Agency to implement an improved model of support of jobseekers in five Career Development Centres. The methodology focused on improving the job readiness of highly motivated, highly skilled jobseekers and helping them find work more quickly. Research conducted by UNDP found an increase of 5.52 percentage points (7.7 percent) in the likelihood of a file being closed within five months, relative to the control group. See UNDP (2019) Applying Behavioural Insights to Unemployment in Moldova. Still, some government interviewees are not fully satisfied with the effects of the innovation, noting value for money, lack of national capacity to use innovation and efficiencies of innovation.

¹⁶² The service monitors the progress of tuberculosis patients released from hospital after the intensive phase.

¹⁶³ As reported by key informants, an innovation based on data for public transportation use in Chisinau that was developed jointly with IT Orange system company but was not implemented by the city authorities at the time of the ICPE.

¹⁶⁴ Innovations on more effective energy use were time limited and focused on a limited number of urban residents. Innovations in supporting unemployed jobseekers did not take account of limited operational capacity and the additional tasks that had to be performed by staff of the territorial employment offices.

UNDP has developed a reputation as a leader in pursuing innovations, but the approach undermines the potential for scale-up and sustainability of innovations. The challenge is for government ministries to be sufficiently agile and resourced to adopt and scale up the innovations.

Finding 16. UNDP was able to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and support the Government in its preparedness and recovery efforts. UNDP effectively collaborated with UNFPA and a range of partners to deliver the socioeconomic assessment, and with the United Nations Resident Coordinator to lead the socioeconomic response and recovery plan, gender impact studies and recovery activities, which were integrated into the national COVID-19 response. Overall, COVID-related activities were comprehensive, timely and highly critical, although the socioeconomic assessment and some activities on COVID-19 assistance to Transnistria could have been more prompt.

The COVID 19 pandemic has been far more than a healthcare crisis, affecting almost every area of the social, economic, political and cultural life of the country. It revealed systemic weaknesses in the national governance system such as underdeveloped evidence-based policy processes, weak outreach and risk communication practices, and poor healthcare infrastructure. UNDP promptly responded to the need for critical data and policy analysis capacity, as well as providing materials and supplies such as personal protective equipment (PPE).

UNDP led the socioeconomic taskforce, with the participation of around 30 development partners, which resulted in a comprehensive Socioeconomic Impact Assessment to support the recovery efforts of the national authorities.¹⁶⁵ UNDP was also technical lead in the development and rollout of the United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan.¹⁶⁶ Despite delays (eight months in development and production), the UNDP Socioeconomic Impact Assessment recommendations were accepted and implemented by the Government. UNDP capacity to lead policy work during the COVID-19 pandemic was demonstrated in the Government request for UNDP support to establish an intelligence unit in the State Chancellery to strengthen its policy development function. While it is too early to see results, there is great anticipation that the unit will help evidence-based and results-based policymaking processes within the Government.

With UNDP support, the Government is implementing Development Finance Assessments (DFAs) across the public sector.¹⁶⁷ DFAs support a more integrated financing approach that provides comprehensive mapping of financial flows (domestic, international, public, private) and analysis of the institutions, capacities, processes and instruments for financing contributions to the National Development Strategy priorities and the SDGs. The DFA tool assesses the impact of COVID-19 on public and private finance and may help to identify opportunities to mobilize additional resources to finance the post-COVID recovery and progress towards the SDGs.

In implementing its COVID-19 response measures, UNDP secured partnerships with a wide range of development partners, for example with WHO to deliver PPE and other necessary equipment on the ground, including to the Transnistria region and focusing particularly on vulnerable groups. UNDP worked with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and the Congress of Local Authorities to support LPAs and employment offices during the pandemic, to ensure that they were properly informed and educated on safety and prevention measures.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations (2020) Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Vulnerable Groups and Economic Sectors in the Republic of Moldova, Impact Assessment Report.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Moldova (2020) COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan.

¹⁶⁷ UNDP Strengthening capacities and systems for effective public finance management in the Republic of Moldova: <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/projects/effective-public-finances-management-moldova.html>.

In Transnistria, UNDP was among the first to deliver much needed medical equipment. UNDP also supported temporary accommodation for frontline workers residing on the left riverbank but working in healthcare institutions on the right bank, ensuring the normal functioning of these institutions during the pandemic. With financial support from the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) in Moldova, UNDP procured 36,400 units of single-use protective gowns. With \$200,000 funding from the United Kingdom (UK), UNDP met the emergency needs arising from COVID-19 in Transnistria, with 60 percent of the total funding designated to meet emergency needs and 40 percent to providing humanitarian support for the most vulnerable populations.¹⁶⁸ Due to the efficient UNDP procurement process, important savings were secured which were then used to expand the scope and number of beneficiaries from that originally planned. However, the delivery of UK-funded products was not sufficiently prompt, taking about seven months. CSOs from Transnistria had to travel to Chisinau to pick up the assistance and undergo ‘customs’ clearance with the Transnistria *de facto* authorities.¹⁶⁹ Another United Nations agency provided similar support to Transnistria twice and each time delivered direct assistance faster than UNDP (one month compared to seven months). This reveals gaps in the efficiency of the UNDP approach in this particular case, but also the lack of synergy and information sharing between the United Nations agencies.

UNDP was responsive to COVID-19 challenges, reprogramming some of its activities and funds, mobilizing additional resources from development partners, internal funds and adjusting its operations. UNDP redesigned its projects to ensure implementation in the COVID-19 context. Some activities were moved to the virtual space or substituted to ensure progress towards targets and objectives. For example, the Anticorruption project revised one of its activities focusing on capacity-building of youth to engage in corruption prevention and organized the ‘Online Club of Anticorruption Ideas’ where participants were trained on the production of anticorruption videos. As a result, 16 videos were produced and circulated on social media, reaching wide and diverse audiences. UNDP supported the CEC to conduct the Presidential Elections during the pandemic (autumn 2020) by implementing a public awareness campaign on proper COVID-19 safety protocols during voting.

Internally, UNDP quickly adjusted to COVID-19 realities by operating remotely and organizing virtual meetings with national partners. By introducing a paperless office, e-signatures, archiving and other tools, UNDP was able to run its projects remotely. A new online platform helps to give an overview of United Nations procurement activities to coordinate and map joint procurement.

Evidence from interviews with national and development partners and desk review suggest that the UNDP response to COVID-19 was useful and adapted to national needs, but the extent to which UNDP COVID-19 impact studies are being used in the national response is not clear. While national partners appreciate UNDP agility to mobilize support and drive relief efforts to build back better, the development of some analytical and policy products and support to Transnistria could have been more prompt.

The UNDP budget allocation for the COVID-19 response stood at \$653,342, with 66 percent utilization (\$434,851) as of August 2021. The largest investment was in health system support (50 percent), followed by the socioeconomic studies.

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Moldova (2020) Socioeconomic Response and Recovery Plan.

¹⁶⁹ Transnistria customs are not officially recognized.

Finding 17. UNDP has integrated results-based management principles and approaches across its programme work. However, inconsistencies remain in the alignment of project level theories of change with the CPD. The country office M&E architecture is in place, but the focus remains on results at activity and output, rather than outcome, levels.

UNDP has integrated results-based management practices into its programming at national level. The CPD has a well-defined ToC, and the majority of country office projects also include ToCs although these are inconsistent in terms of complexity, change pathways and alignment with the CPD.¹⁷⁰ The justification and prioritization of interventions, along with the depth of analysis, is also inconsistent. The portfolio also has some projects that do not use the ToC approach.¹⁷¹

The use of broadly-defined outcomes and indicators in the results framework helps to orient strategic focus and engage national partners, while allowing some degree of flexibility in the design of UNDP interventions. Outcome-level achievements are tracked in ROARs and outcome evaluations. However, the current M&E system is not able to fully capture outcome-level changes, and logical, clear, measurable connections between the expected contributions of UNDP projects and the broader CPD and United Nations Development Assistance Framework outcomes were not always well outlined.

The country office M&E architecture, while well-structured at output-level, is insufficiently focused on outcome-level results. Some indicators are not sufficiently specific, measurable and time bound.¹⁷² There is close oversight and monitoring of initiatives by UNDP staff, but different tools are applied to measure changes in results and capacity, including Knowledge, Attitudes and Practice studies, baseline scores, capacity assessment scorecards, or screening checklists. Sometimes the measurement of inputs and activities was overemphasized at the expense of a focus on attaining broader and strategic development goals, and subsequent reporting focused mainly on activities and outputs. Some indicators are mostly action-based, i.e. related to the level of implementation of national action plans and strategies, and their measurement requires some subjective determination and judgement of whether a specific action from the relevant strategy has been implemented.¹⁷³ Some projects measure the number of individuals reached rather than changes in knowledge, skills or attitudes.¹⁷⁴

Cross-cutting issues like innovation, South-South cooperation and knowledge management need better monitoring systems that link to the CPD monitoring system. On the positive side, there is evidence of the use of M&E as a management tool and to adjust the design and implementation of projects, which is reassuring.¹⁷⁵ Overall, the country office completed 90 percent of planned decentralized evaluations in the CPD, with moderately satisfactory quality on average.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ For instance, the Green Cities Project (Pillar 3) uses a simplified version of the ToC consisting of three interrelated components (Enable, Implement and Replicate), which is mostly linked to the General Framework for the GEF ToC rather than to the CPD ToC. For additional information see the Green Cities Project document pages 7-8. The MiDL Project (Pillar 2) and One-UN Joint Action to Strengthen Human Rights in the Transnistria region of the Republic of Moldova (2019-2022) use a ToC approach based on 'If....then.... because...' logic. It also uses a ToC for each of its outcomes. For additional information see the MiDL Project document pages 7-9.

¹⁷¹ For instance: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Moldova's territorial planning policies and land use practices; Dniester Impact Study, NAP II project, CBM project.

¹⁷² For instance: the State Register of Voters contains minimum error through interoperability with the main population registers (CPD indicator); the documented longlist of energy-efficiency projects (ESCO Project indicator); the successful operation of commercial briquette production enterprises (Energy and Biomass Project indicator); the establishment of an efficient institutionalized platform for influential groups to influence policy in Transnistria and Moldova proper (Transnistria Dialogues Project indicator).

¹⁷³ See, for example, Governance Outcome Midterm Evaluation, February 2021.

¹⁷⁴ For instance, MEBP, ESCO Project, CBM, Parliament.

¹⁷⁵ For instance, Dniester Impact Study Project, Green Cities Project, CBM Project, Electoral support.

¹⁷⁶ Six evaluations were quality-assured, of which one was rated satisfactory, three moderately satisfactory and two moderately unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This chapter presents the evaluation conclusions on UNDP performance and contributions to development results in Moldova, recommendations and the management response.

3.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. UNDP is strategically positioned to support development in Moldova and is trusted by the Government of Moldova and international partners. Its value proposition lies in both its responsiveness to government development priorities and its ability to address cross-sectoral capacity gaps.

UNDP work in Moldova has been well aligned and responsive to national priorities, and UNDP has served as a strategic and trusted partner in the fulfilment of international and national commitments in the areas of human rights, environment, social cohesion and human development. The UNDP value proposition has been its ability to respond fairly quickly to the needs and demands of the Government and partners (including from the private sector). UNDP technical expertise, policy and legislative-level actions, outreach and resource mobilization capacity are particularly appreciated, as well as its wide-ranging, cross-sectoral, institutional capacity-building interventions. While UNDP is recognized for its support to address development challenges in Moldova, the continuity and scale-up of strategic reforms and initiatives by the Government depends on strong and broad multi-stakeholder coalitions and dialogue platforms to enable decision-makers to listen to, understand and act on the needs of citizens, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups. Some of the broader challenges that UNDP has and will continue to face include the COVID-19 recovery, political instability, inconsistent and insufficient government commitment and capacity to advance systemic reforms, economic hardship, migration and uncertain development in Transnistria. Such complexities will influence shifts or changes in government priorities, which calls for stronger collaboration among United Nations agencies using the UNPFSD as a mechanism for prioritizing work in Moldova so that all agencies can best add value working together.

Conclusion 2. UNDP was successful in advancing technical and capacity-building solutions to promote good governance, but more systemic reforms were constrained by the frequently changing political landscape and limited political commitment.

Continued UNDP support in the area of good governance has contributed to the capacity-strengthening of core institutions, but these efforts have been constrained by a frequently changing and unstable political environment and did not fully contribute to addressing systemic issues in sensitive areas such as anticorruption and justice reform. The systemic reform of institutions can range from improving the policy cycle, use of data for decision-making, advancement of digital solutions and strengthening the technical capacity of line ministries. Without this type of intervention it may be difficult to achieve rapid economic and social recovery, or long-term human development. There is momentum for advancing accountability, transparency and participation through digitalization to ensure that no one is left behind. In addition, capitalizing on extensive UNDP experience, there are opportunities to get more deeply involved in decentralization policy and local capacity-building in the country.

Conclusion 3. UNDP has played a significant role in multiple aspects of confidence-building in Transnistria. Some solutions that were effectively introduced have considerable potential for broader scale-up and nationwide implementation.

UNDP has developed a highly successful model of confidence-building across both banks of the Nistru River. UNDP had continuous local presence and ensured the systematic buy-in of key actors on both riverbanks from the earliest stages, to define common priorities and development needs and implement practical win-win and conflict-sensitive solutions. In this way, UNDP ensured the success of its measures in

multiple areas such as: economic development, healthcare, community development, culture and media development. This model, and the long-term ability to navigate political sensitivities, has helped UNDP to diversify and produce results in institutionalizing technical sectoral dialogue among professionals, ultimately creating practical solutions, building the economic resilience of local businesses from both riverbanks, strengthening CSOs and empowering vulnerable groups. Some UNDP interventions, such as those promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups using human rights-based approaches, contain successful elements that can be used to empower CSOs for dialogue with decision-makers in this very sensitive environment.

Conclusion 4. UNDP is a key development partner of Moldova in the area of climate change and the environment, with contributions to improved environmental governance, and has generated results with varying potential for transformative change. More cross-sector collaboration and effort is needed to address climate change adaptation and mitigation, however, to facilitate the development of a greener, more resilient and healthier low-carbon society. This requires a special focus on promoting energy-efficiency and renewable energy use, to meet GHG emission reduction targets from the country's energy sector.

UNDP is an important development partner supporting Moldova's institutions in the environment, DRR and climate change sector, helping the country to adjust its national and local policy and regulatory frameworks, set ambitious SDG-linked commitments and targets, improve environmental governance, and increase the comprehensiveness and accuracy of national reporting to international treaty bodies. The initiatives to improve national adaptation planning and increase central and local government capacity to adapt to climate change and natural disasters have transformative potential both for the national context and the agricultural sector, vital considering that Moldova is a largely agricultural country. Equally important are the forestry, water, energy, transport and health sectors. UNDP work to build a coherent cross-sectoral portfolio of interventions to support the green transition, green economy and reduced carbon footprint shows potential for more synergetic cross-sector/cross-portfolio interventions focused on comprehensive transformative actions to fight climate change and environmental degradation and support the delivery of global policy objectives, including the Paris Agreement and the SDGs. This will also complement efforts on green transformation, in line with the European Green Deal.

Conclusion 5. The UNDP country programme has contributed to a more systematic response to GEWE. There have been positive empowerment outcomes for targeted individuals and system-level solutions for women rights and gender equality in diverse areas such as political engagement, economic empowerment, social inclusion and protection from GBV.

UNDP efforts to mainstream GEWE have been extensive and comprehensive. UNDP programming shows the integration of gender issues across all areas, as measured by gender markers and the M&E system and validated by the evaluation team. UNDP strategic positioning and long-term engagement with the Government, public administrations, civil society and political parties has brought important transformative effects for women in these areas. UNDP has contributed to the integration of gender aspects into policies for employment, climate adaptation, local planning, disaster management, sustainable energy, agriculture, forestry and anticorruption measures. UNDP was successful in further enhancing the quota law, strengthening the national statistical system to produce data for evidence-based advocacy for women's rights, expanding opportunities for women's employment and promoting women's participation in development at local and national levels. The award of the Gold Gender Seal to the country office in 2017 is testament to its achievement and it will be important to continue and solidify the achievements by addressing the gaps as it approaches the next gender seal assessment.

Conclusion 6. UNDP support has been critical for key reforms and addressing technical, policy and capacity gaps in the Government, bringing positive results for the institutions, communities and individuals involved. However, the scalability and long-term sustainability of the benefits remain a key issue.

Across the country programme, UNDP supported the Government in the implementation of key reforms on governance, public administration, inclusive growth, economic development, environmental governance and climate-resilient green solutions. UNDP provided high level technical and policy advisory support, facilitated networking with national and regional institutions and, where needed, filled capacity gaps across all three outcome areas through its projects, programmes and pilots.

Benefits have been visible in the governance of public institutions, functioning of the Parliament, improved electoral processes, in promoting agricultural and rural development, social cohesion, renewable energy and green growth, and addressing issues of inclusion and rights of vulnerable groups. Several of these gains have strong sustainability potential, but in most cases they are linked to UNDP project-level interventions and only reach the institutions, communities and individuals involved. They do not systematically and holistically address systemic issues related to the policy and regulatory environment and institutional capacity at local and national levels. While this depends somewhat on the political will and environment, it is a critical pre-requisite for the scale-up and sustainability of UNDP efforts in the country.

Conclusion 7. UNDP has mainstreamed results-based management in its programming and operations. However, the consolidation of outcome-level changes at CPD level is inconsistent and needs to be strengthened.

The country office has mainstreamed results-based management principles in its programming. The CPD and projects use theories of change to illustrate planned changes. However, the logic and structure of ToCs differ significantly from project to project and outcome to outcome. This shows that there is still no common vision and understanding of the ToC concept, nor any standardized approach towards ToCs. The M&E system is well-structured and multi-level, and programming follows M&E standards and policies for tracking performance through the collection of data, analysis of evidence to inform decision-making and adjust programming, and reporting of performance and lessons to facilitate learning. However, despite outcome-level evaluations and results-oriented reporting procedures, the focus of the M&E system remains on activities and outputs, with limited attention to outcome-level transformative changes.

3.2 Recommendations and management response

RECOMMENDATION 1.



In line with Moldova’s commitment to EU accession, the next UNDP country programme should focus on exploring possibilities to advance good governance reforms for greater accountability and participation, addressing corruption and other systemic issues by leading concerted actions with a wide range of development partners and building strong and broad multi-stakeholder coalitions to support the reform process.

The results of recent presidential (November 2020) and parliamentary (July 2021) elections opened a unique window of opportunity and momentum to advance, jointly with other development partners, systemic reforms in sensitive areas of public administration including decentralization and social protection reforms, as well as anticorruption and justice.

UNDP should assess government capacity, ownership and accountability upfront and identify (with other development partners) key strategic areas to focus on. To strengthen its political and economic leverage in a small country like Moldova, with low absorption capacity and uneven political commitment, UNDP should use its comparative advantage of neutrality and trust to secure government commitment prior to engagement, bringing together all development partners if needed. Systemic changes can only occur if UNDP focuses on areas where it can simultaneously pursue legislative and policy changes, deliver programmes on the ground, support a an extensive pool of reform champions and conduct public and media campaigns to affect broader changes in social behaviour. To ensure sustainability, these need to be performed jointly and in concert with other relevant development partners with their various leverages to advance reforms.

Considering the downward trends in official development assistance to Moldova, interviewees considered that the country office should further leverage its strength to advance systemic reforms by building closer partnerships with IFIs, in particular with the World Bank which plans to focus explicitly on good governance in its next programme cycle. Collaboration with United Nations agencies which started during COVID 19 should continue and be extended. In addition, UNDP is advised to support a broad multi-stakeholder coalition supporting UNDP policy advice and create a platform for constructive dialogue between these stakeholders and decision-makers to enable them to listen to, understand and act on the needs of citizens, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups.

UNDP may identify and build the capacity of individuals with significant experience in different government institutions, and trusted by decision-makers. They could be trained in evidence-based policymaking, modern approaches to public administration management and leadership skills. Moldovan CSOs could be more systemically supported to acquire the necessary foundational skills, including for engaging with citizens and local governments. This would help to close gaps between many CSOs and the wider public, as some CSOs do not well represent and serve their target groups. Building on its effective and innovative experience of youth and CSO involvement in regions, including Transnistria, UNDP should mainstream and advance participatory approaches through all of its projects under the new CPD.

Management response: Accepted 

UNDP will pursue advancing systemic good governance transformations, improving and making the policy cycle more accountable and participatory, addressing corruption and other systemic issues by engaging with a wide range of development partners in concerted actions and building broad multi-stakeholder partnerships to support national reform processes. UNDP work will cut across these areas taking into account the country’s strategic priorities with the overall objective of rebuilding trust in governance at all levels and supporting Moldova’s commitment to EU accession by modernizing governance institutions and systems, reducing inequalities, as well as enabling the participation and voice of rights-holders in decision-making processes.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Continue the strategic review of UNDP support to effective governance with clear pathways for scale-up and replication across the country.	September 2022	Effective Governance Cluster		Initiated
1.2 Formulate the CPD 2023-2027 to reflect the comprehensive approach to systemic governance transformations/ NextGen Governance.	September 2022	Effective Governance Cluster, Senior Management		Initiated
1.3 Based on the strategic review outcomes and new direction of the CPD, design and implement programmatic interventions to advance systemic governance transformation.	June 2026	All Clusters, Senior Management, Strategic Support Unit		Initiated
1.4 Continue building partnerships to foster more systemic transformations across the governance system.	June 2026	All Clusters, Senior Management, Strategic Support Unit		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2.



UNDP should promote digital solutions at the system level and across all outcomes and areas of involvement.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the advantages of digitalization of public services, including at local level. UNDP is well positioned to continue promoting digital platforms across all dimensions of public service at national and local levels, to advance transparency, accountability and participation, with a particular focus on the vulnerable groups that should benefit from, and not be further excluded by, digitalization.

The digitalization process should be preceded by the development of a strategic vision for the inclusivity of digital transformation processes, engagement with the private sector for the development of digital solutions, digital literacy and the inclusion of the most marginalized groups. UNDP should consider pushing for reform to both the supply (infrastructure, access to networks) and demand (digital literacy) sides.¹⁷⁷

Management response: Accepted



UNDP Moldova, guided by its global Digital Strategy, will further coagulate its offer to the Government and other counterparts on the digital transformation front. UNDP has recently concluded a formal agreement with the Government and the Deputy Prime Minister on Digital Transformation, which focuses, among others, on the development of a new vision on digital transformation up until 2030. Such vision is to be based on a broad 'whole-of-society' approach that is to look at and include various dimensions such as people, infrastructure, government and private sector in a systemic manner. Based on this, and extensive UNDP experience in digitalization, new portfolios of options for the Government and other partners to accelerate digital transformation will be shaped.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Conduct sensemaking exercise on digital transformation to integrate digital solutions across portfolios and accelerate digital transformation at national and subnational levels, to ensure the implementation of the 'digital by default' principles.	April 2022	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		Initiated
2.2 Support the Government in the development and implementation of a new 'whole of society' strategy on digital transformation for the Republic of Moldova.	May 2026	Strategic Support Unit		Initiated

¹⁷⁷ A similar recommendation was made by Marius Birisan and Alexei Buzu, Mid-term Outcome Evaluation Inclusive Growth Pillar UNDP Moldova February 2021.

◀ Recommendation 2 (cont'd)

2.3 Develop and implement joint portfolios on digital transformation at national and subnational levels (focused on cross-cutting foundational catalysts for digital transformation).	September 2024	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		Initiated
2.4 Conduct and support the implementation of a Digital Readiness Assessment focused on the key pillars of digital transformation and develop/ implement sectoral readiness assessments to identify gaps and accelerators.	May 2023	Strategic Support Unit	Nation-wide Digital Readiness Assessment implemented;	Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 3.



As the country rebuilds itself post COVID-19, UNDP should further strengthen its policy advisory work by providing strategic, practical and actionable policy advice to the Government and better embedding the use of innovations into its policy work to advance institutionalization and scale-up.

UNDP will face some broad challenges in its next programme cycle, including the post-COVID recovery, political instability, inconsistent and insufficient government commitment and ability to advance systemic reforms, economic hardship, emigration and the uncertainty of Transnistria development. The next CPD should include a knowledge management strategy based on UNDP research, policy work and innovations. The strategy should identify priority policy advice topics for UNDP, based on a review of current and continuing research pertinent to Moldova’s development, government priorities and UNDP expertise.

In addition to its analytical reports, UNDP policy briefs should contain a set of well-justified, evidence-based, specific and implementable recommendations. They should be clear and realistic, address specific bottlenecks and present financial, technical and human resource requirements for their implementation. Particular attention should be paid to policy implementation, with a focus on specific targets, performance measures and indicators capturing policy success. It is critically important to pursue (through policy advice) institutional changes and promote the behaviour required for rights-holders to claim their rights and duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations. UNDP can focus some of its capacity-development activities to address the application of human rights-based approaches in specific sectors and areas.

At the same time, UNDP should pay greater attention to the practical results that may materialize from the innovative initiatives it supports, by tracking more closely what happens to the supported innovations over time, what changes they generate at a practical level and how their impact can be sustained over the long term. Some innovations that have potential for broader scale-up and nationwide implementation can be designated as pilots and models by UNDP and national authorities. It is important to ensure that this fairly represents targeted groups and policy issues.

The factors that should be taken into consideration in choosing pilot sites include geography, income levels, potential for replication and accessibility of government services. The SARD and MiDL projects are illustrative examples in this regard, as is the experience of tracking the impact of the behavioural electricity experiment. It is recommended to have a targeted advocacy campaign promoting pilots that will appeal to diverse audiences of potential policy supporters.

Operationally, to support the strengthening of knowledge management and policy dimensions of UNDP work, it is recommended to strengthen analytical/ policy skills sets of the UNDP country team and review its programming and management arrangements.

Management response: Accepted 

UNDP will continue strengthening its policy advice function and build specific services to define and promote evidence-based policy development, as well as specific services to support tactical decisions in areas such as COVID-19 recovery, energy poverty and others. UNDP has already started discussions with the new Government on the necessity of setting-up an Intelligence Unit for Policy Development, a specialized team with an analysis and decision-making mandate for generating actionable intelligence in areas of complex challenges faced by the country and the Government. Also, with the review of the country office innovation function, UNDP has already started anchoring strategic innovation across country office portfolios and at the local level.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Support the creation of new services for use by the Government (on COVID-19 monitoring, energy poverty potentially via an Intelligence Unit for Policy Development) and the measurement of multidimensional poverty.	June 2026	Strategic Support Unit		Initiated/ No date
3.2 Support further mainstreaming SDGs into national policies and programmes, with particular focus on SDG acceleration efforts.	December 2027	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		Initiated
3.3 Develop internal policy briefs and debates focused on key emerging and current development challenges to inform existing and new portfolios. Support the organization of external policy dialogues in support of the Government on emerging development issues.	September 2027	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		To be initiated

◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

3.4 Pilot-test the Acceleration Network as the innovation model to anchor strategic innovation, portfolio approach and policy work in green transition and based on the lessons learned, institutionalize it.	September 2022	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		Initiated
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RECOMMENDATION 4.



Building on past lessons, UNDP should advance a consistent approach to supporting vulnerable groups using a human rights-based approach and address the underlying causes of social exclusion including inequality and marginalization.

UNDP should ensure that an overarching strategic approach to the LNOB Principle is applied consistently through all of its programmatic areas to support vulnerable groups, marginalized communities and those with intersectional challenges, such as women, children, Roma, elderly and PwD. The current project-based approach supports some of these groups and communities but with limited or localized impact and insufficient alignment to key UNDP frameworks such as the SDGs.

UNDP should promote a consistent approach to supporting vulnerable groups through a human rights-based approach and address inequalities, marginalization and exclusion more systematically across all CPD pillars. All projects should consider support for various vulnerable groups, including the promotion of policy solutions that address the underlying factors of social exclusion. UNDP should use its convening power to ensure the further inclusion of marginalized groups in national or local dialogues or processes.

Management response: Accepted



UNDP will continue advancing the 'leave no one behind' principle by supporting the integration and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups, addressing inequalities and underlying causes of social exclusion from the human rights-based approach perspective throughout programmatic and policy interventions. Special attention will be paid to emerging types of inequalities that could stem from digital transformation processes, urban-rural divide or exacerbated by various types of crises (pandemic, energy crisis, natural disasters, etc.). Furthermore, UNDP will support the development of new and more coherent portfolios of options to tackle non-income inequality and access to various public services, including through building digital skills and diversifying supply in digital public services and goods.

◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Mainstream approaches to addressing inequalities and the exclusion of vulnerable groups throughout the 2023-2027 CPD.	June 2022	Strategic Support Unit, Senior Management		Initiated
4.2 Develop analytical products on the most vulnerable, which would inform new projects and portfolios of interventions to support excluded groups.	December 2026	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		Initiated
4.3 Support the Government in the measurement of multidimensional poverty and exclusion (through MPI, Socioeconomic Impact Assessment and similar), as well as non-monetary inequalities and risks.	September 2024	Strategic Support Unit		Initiated
4.4 Support the Government to develop policies targeting most vulnerable that are affected by various types of poverty in the crisis context, including on energy and food poverty and access to services, including digital services.	June 2023	Strategic Support Unit, all Clusters, Senior Management		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 5. 

In line with the EU Green Deal, UNDP should actively promote the green transformation agenda and concepts through its programmes.¹⁷⁸ At the same time, UNDP should prioritise efforts to further strengthen energy security in Moldova and facilitate the development of a greener, more resilient and healthier low-carbon society.

Mainstreaming the Green Deal or green transition requires sound national and local policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, investments and innovation, as well as public dialogue and digital transformation as enablers of change. As stipulated in national environment policies, Moldova needs to promote green transformation and financing instruments, particularly for energy-efficiency, strengthening energy security and reducing the fuel and gas vulnerability of the country within the broader green transformation agenda.

¹⁷⁸ Such as: zero pollution, restoring ecosystems and biodiversity, healthy and environment friendly food systems, smart mobility, resource efficiency, clean and circular economy, climate ambition.

It should include, among others: following a shared vision on the green transition; awareness-raising on the green agenda and sustainable development among decision-makers and society; and capacity-development of key state and non-state (private) stakeholders.

UNDP Moldova is well positioned to support the operationalization of the Green Deal in Moldova, given that it is the leading agency with tangible results in the areas of climate change, environmental governance and biodiversity protection. Furthermore, UNDP has long-standing experience in providing policy-related guidance and support for harmonization with the relevant EU acquis, as well as awareness-raising, community mobilization and consistent capacity-enhancement of the public and private sectors. When mainstreamed throughout all UNDP programmes and projects, structural transformation and resilience building, core elements of UNDP work, have resulted in innovative concepts and solutions to protect the environment and manage different climate risks and natural disasters. UNDP should strengthen its resource mobilization capacity under this pillar and engage with IFIs/ DFAs and other development partners to advance the green deal/ green transition in the country.

Management response: Accepted 

UNDP will continue supporting the national green development agenda and ensuring that relevant stakeholders have enhanced capacity and there are enhanced frameworks in place to advance green, low-carbon and resilient development. In line with the EU Green Deal principles. UNDP has developed a detailed Concept on the country's green transformation, which is currently being discussed with the EU Delegation. On the energy front, UNDP started to support the Government in addressing the energy crisis through policy advice on energy poverty, national programming on energy-efficiency and renewable energy sources, etc.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Finalize the forward-looking Energy, Environment and Climate Change portfolio review with strong focus on green transformation. Conduct UNDP country office internal mapping on green transformation, with a special focus on energy-efficiency and renewables practices.	April 2022	Energy, Environment and Climate Change Cluster, Strategic Support Unit, Senior Management		Initiated
5.2 Conduct the Deep Demonstration exercise to develop country office capabilities to better understand and engage with systemic green development issues, as well as inform development of a new value proposition on green transformation at UNDP country office.	September 2022	All Clusters, Strategic Support Unit, Senior Management		Initiated

◀ Recommendation 5 (cont'd)

5.3 Mainstream green transformation principles into the 2023-2027 UNPFSD and CPD.	September 2022	Energy, Environment and Climate Change Cluster, Strategic Support Unit, Senior Management		Initiated
5.4 Finalize the green transformation concept and develop full-fledged project proposals. Create alliances and partnerships to mobilize resources for implementation.	September 2023	All Clusters, Strategic Support Unit, Senior Management		Initiated
5.5 Support national and subnational authorities in promoting and mainstreaming green development in planning processes and practices.	September 2027	All Clusters		Initiated

RECOMMENDATION 6.



UNDP should strengthen the linkages between its programmatic and project-level theories of change, ensuring that they are aligned and contribute to changes identified in the CPD. UNDP should strengthen its monitoring, evaluation and reporting system to focus on results, so that the measurement of outcome-level results becomes an integral part of M&E culture and is undertaken systematically.

Realistically formulated results, proper planning, communication, improved coordination and effective monitoring can keep the CPD relevant and useful throughout its cycle. The results framework in the next CPD should have a consistent set of indicators that can be attributed to UNDP work and expected outcomes, with adequately specified baselines, targets, intermediate milestones and timeframes. UNDP is advised to improve the linkages between project results frameworks and CPD and UNSCDFC outcomes.

The country office should establish a consistent process of ToC development and monitoring across the entire portfolio of projects in the CPD. ToCs should be used as a tool for designing realistic interventions, and project ToCs should be derived from the CPD ToC with a detailed examination of causality, assumptions and risks. ToCs should be well-articulated and interlinked, so that they provide clear and logical pathways of change and justification for the selected course of action. This will not only make UNDP programmes more effective, but also help stakeholders to visualize a clear and compelling narrative from the expected outputs to the outcome indicators and specific indicators in the CPD, UNSDFC and national plans and programmes.

ToC development should become a truly analytical and participatory exercise, engaging multiple stakeholders. ToCs for both the programme and CPD should be living documents, flexible in responding to emerging needs throughout the course of the CPD implementation. It is therefore advisable to introduce a practice of independent mid-cycle review of ToCs to ensure their relevance and effectiveness in capturing UNDP progress towards addressing each identified bottleneck, as well as reflecting changes and complexities arising in the Moldova context.

The country office M&E architecture needs strengthening, and the culture of results chains reinforcing, so that the monitoring and measurement of mid- and long-term outcome-level changes becomes an integral part of country office M&E culture, seen as a valued exercise and undertaken systematically.

Management response: Accepted 

Steps to consolidate the M&E function in the office were initiated in March 2020 with the inclusion of M&E as part of the core responsibilities of the Partnerships and Development Planning Specialist. UNDP will further strengthen the M&E system with a particular focus on standardized approaches of project ToC design and their alignment to the CPD ToC and outcome-level results measurement across programme and projects. With the development of the new 2023-2027 CPD, a participatory approach has already been put in place, including a workshop on data and trends analysis and the CPD ToC facilitated by the Istanbul Regional Hub (IRH) and HQ (Sept-Oct 2021), as well as series of brainstorming sessions with the entire programme team.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Update the current Standard Operating Procedures on Programme and Project Management to reinforce the Programme design and M&E processes.	September 2022	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters		Initiated
6.2 Design a Project Portfolio Management capacity development plan and deliver regular PPM sessions (focusing on project ToC design and alignment with CPD ToC, outcome-level results measuring, etc.) for programme and project staff.	September 2027	Strategic Support Unit, specialized IRH teams		Initiated
6.3 Design a robust M&E framework for the 2023-2027 CPD for measuring results at all levels.	September 2022	Strategic Support Unit, All Clusters, Senior Management		Initiated
6.4 Ensure adequate funding for monitoring activities in projects and budget for evaluations.	September 2027	All Clusters, Strategic Support Unit, Senior Management		Initiated

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

ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at:
<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/13390>

Annex 1. Terms of reference

Annex 2. Evaluation framework

Annex 3. People consulted

Annex 4. Documents consulted

Annex 5. List of projects for review

Annex 6. Status of country programme document (CPD) outcome & output indicators matrix



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