

ANNEX 1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

INTRODUCTION

As part of its annual work plan, the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will conduct an independent country programme evaluation (ICPE) in Nepal in 2021. Typically conducted in the penultimate year of a country programme cycle, the ICPEs are expected to inform the elaboration of the new country programmes with evaluative evidence of UNDP's contribution to national development priorities. The purpose of an ICPE is to:

- Support the development of the next UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD)
- Strengthen accountability of UNDP to national stakeholders
- Strengthen accountability of UNDP to the Executive Board.

The ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.¹ The responsibility of IEO, which reports directly to the Executive Board, is two-fold: (i) provide the Executive Board with valid and credible information from evaluations for corporate accountability, decision-making and improvement; and (ii) enhance the independence, credibility and utility of the evaluation function and its coherence, harmonization and alignment in support of United Nations reform and national ownership.

This is the second country-level evaluation conducted by the IEO in Nepal. IEO conducted in 2012 an Assessment of Development Results of UNDP's activities in Nepal for the period from 2002 to 2011. The current ICPE Nepal will focus on UNDP Nepal country office's current programme for 2018-2022, with a view to contributing to the preparation of its new programme starting in 2023. The IEO will conduct the evaluation in close collaboration with the Government of Nepal, the UNDP Nepal Country Office, and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP).

The Global COVID-19 pandemic has presented UNDP with considerable challenges in implementing its ongoing programme of work in line with the CPD. Even more so than usual, UNDP has been required to be adaptable, refocusing and restructuring its development work to meet the challenges of the pandemic and country's need to effectively prepare, respond and recover from the wider COVID-19 crisis, including its socio-economic consequences. This ICPE will also consider the level to which UNDP has been able to adapt to the crisis and support Nepal's preparedness, response to the pandemic and its ability to recovery meeting the new development challenges that the pandemic has highlighted, or which may have emerged.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Nepal is a lower-middle income country at medium level of human development. It is a landlocked, mountainous country except for a thin strip of plains, the Terai. Its population is an estimated at about 30 million.² Nepal had stronger economic growth in recent years, averaging 6.95 percent growth from the April 2015 earthquake to 2018-2019, while in the past two decades economic growth averaged 4.2 percent, the lowest in South Asia. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing represent the largest sector, with 27% contribution to economic output and estimated 21.5% of employment. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted Nepal, with substantial decreases in economic growth and intensified economic vulnerability. Tourism income is projected to decline by 60 percent in 2020, a loss of US \$400 million.³

¹ <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/evaluation-policy.pdf>.

² Government of Nepal National Planning Commission (NPC), [National Review of Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), June 2020, p. 1.

³ UNDP, [Rapid Assessment of Socio Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Nepal](#), 2020.

Remittances are expected to remain below pre-COVID-19 levels until the end of FY21 due to lower outmigration and weak economic activity in migrant receiving countries.⁴ UNDP's rapid assessment survey indicated an overall job loss of 31.5 percent – 28 percent for men and 41 percent of women – while 74 percent had not been paid since the beginning of lockdown.⁵

Nepal has made steady improvements in human development, transitioning to middle human development category in 2016.⁶ Nepal's human development index (HDI) value for 2019 is 0.602, positioning it at 142 out of 189 countries and territories, and representing a 59 percent increase in the HDI score from 1990 (0.378).⁷ However, Nepal's HDI remains below the average for South Asia (0.634), and the third lowest in the region and its GNI per capita (\$3610) is far below that of South Asia (\$6448).⁸

Currently a Least Developed Country (LDC)⁹, Nepal aspires to graduate from an LDC to a developing country by 2022 and to an upper middle-income country by 2030 by achieving the SDGs.¹⁰ Nepal's national development strategy is guided by the Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Five-Year Plan¹¹ during the current UNDP country programme development and implementation period. Both plans incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals and accompanying sectoral plans. Nepal currently meets criteria LDC graduation (i.e. human assets and economic vulnerability), but its low per-capita income remains below the threshold and threatens sustainability. LDC graduation also may confer some adverse consequences from short to long-term, due to the loss of trade-related concessions for LDCs and special facilities, which may affect export competitiveness, production and jobs without mitigation measures.¹²

Inequalities along geographic, gender and community divides threaten Nepal's sustainable development. When adjusted for inequality, Nepal's HDI is 0.446 percent, a loss of 25.9 percent (equivalent to the average discount value for South Asia). There is a large gap between the urban (0.647) and rural (0.561) HDI values, and between the hills regions (0.623) and the mountains (0.564) and Tarai regions (0.563). At province level, Province 2 (0.51), Karnali (0.538) and Sudur Paschim (0.547) lag behind the highest-scoring provinces such as Bagmati (0.66), home to the capital Katmandu.¹³ Nepal has 125 ethnic groups, who historically had no access to services and opportunities. Nepal's Gender Inequality Index value is 0.452, ranking 110 of 162 countries. Nepal has introduced reforms to address social exclusion and gender inequality, e.g., quota of women's seats and participation of marginalized groups in parliament.¹⁴ However, large gaps remain in labour force participation (26.3 percent for women, 53.8 percent for men)¹⁵ and social barriers.

Nepal has experienced political transformation with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006 ending a decade-long conflict, followed by a decade of political transition leading to a new federal constitution in 2015.¹⁶ The 2015 Constitution establishes Nepal's first federal democratic republic, with three tiers of government: federal, provincial and local. The new local level structure held its first elections

⁴ World Bank, 2020. ["COVID-19 and Informality" South Asia Economic Focus \(October\)](#), World Bank, Washington, DC. Doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1640-6. pp. 123-4.

⁵ UNDP, [Rapid Assessment of Socio Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Nepal](#), 2020.

⁶ Government of Nepal National Planning Commission (NPC) and UNDP, [Nepal Human Development Report \(HDR\) 2020 –Beyond Graduation: Productive Transformation and Prosperity](#), 2020, p. 17.

⁷ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NPL>

⁸ World Bank data, GNI per capita PPP (current international US\$), for year 2019

⁹ Decision on graduation deferred to 2021. [UN DESA](#)

¹⁰ Nepal NPC, the Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24), 2020

¹¹ Fourteenth Five-Year Plan: 2016/17-2018/19; Fifteenth Five-Year Plan: 2019/2020 to 2023/2024 fiscal years

¹² NPC and UNDP, Nepal Human Development Report 2020, p. 11.

¹³ Government of Nepal National Planning Commission (NPC) and UNDP, [Nepal Human Development Report \(HDR\) 2020 –Beyond Graduation: Productive Transformation and Prosperity](#), 2020, p. 16.

¹⁴ The National Human Rights Commission, National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, National Inclusion Commission, Indigenous Nationalities Commission, Madhesi Commission, Tharu Commission, and Muslim Commission. NepalNPC, National Review of SDGs, 2020, p. 8.

¹⁵ Nepal NPC, National Review of SDGs, 2020, p. 37.

¹⁶ Nepal NPC, National Review of SDGs, 2020, p. 1.

in 2017. Nepal has also adopted new legislation to strengthen government functioning and ‘leave no one behind’ protections.¹⁷ More than 2.8 million people participate in government social benefits;¹⁸ coverage is estimated at 24 percent in 2019/2020.¹⁹ The most recent general election was held in 2017; K. P. Sharma Oli was sworn in as Prime Minister in 2018. The Prime Minister dissolved the parliament in December 2020 and called for an early election in April/May 2021. In February 2021, the Supreme Court ruled that the dissolved parliament shall be reinstated.

Nepal is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change and experiences significant disaster risk. It has rich biodiversity, many unique Himalayan ecosystems, and natural resources.²⁰ Nepal has nominal contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions (0.027 percent), but the number of Himalayan glacier lakes has increased by 11 percent and glaciers recede on average 38 square kilometers each year.²¹ In recent years, Nepal has contended with an increasing number of natural disasters including landslides, floods and droughts, with high cost to human life and an estimated loss of almost 1.5 to 2 percent of GDP.²² Earthquakes in 2015 killed almost 9,000 people and affected eight million. Additional environmental challenges include air pollution, waste management, deforestation, water resources, access to energy, among others.

UNDP PROGRAMME IN NEPAL

UNDP has been working in Nepal since 1963, when it opened an in-country office, and signed a Standard Basic Framework Agreement²³ with the Government of Nepal in 1984 to govern UNDP support. Under the first Country Cooperation Framework (CCF) for Nepal (1997-2001)²⁴, UNDP has assisted the Government in developing and implementing pro-poor policies and incorporated social mobilization and decentralization in fighting poverty. The second CCF (2002-2006)²⁵ continued to contribute to poverty reduction goals of the Government and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement marked the end of a decade of conflict in Nepal. Against this backdrop, the UNDP country programme for 2008-2010 (extended to 2012), built on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) of the same period, supported the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the organization of free and fair elections. This included collaboration with the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) present in the country from 2007 till 2011. Overall, the IEO’s Assessment of Development Results for 2002 to 2011 found that UNDP Nepal made a strong contribution to development results across a diverse portfolio.²⁶ UNDP contributed to further democratic governance, poverty reduction, crisis prevention and recovery, environment and energy, and HIV/AIDS response.

The 2013-2017 country programme focused on poverty reduction and inclusive growth; reducing discrimination; rule of law, justice and human rights; and inclusive governance. The country office reported reaching over 18 million people across Nepal’s 75 districts through work on economic empowerment,

¹⁷ In 2017, Nepal passed the Local Government Operations Act, Inter-Governmental Operations Act, the National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission Act, The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and acts supporting rights to food, housing, employment, reproductive health, and education. Nepal NPC, National Review of SDGs, 2020, p. 1.

¹⁸ UNDP, Rapid Assessment of Socio Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Nepal, p. 27.

¹⁹ Nepal NPC, National Review of SDGs, 2020, p. 24.

²⁰ The World Bank and Asian Development Bank, [Climate Risk Country Profile](#), 2021

²¹ Nepal NPC, National Review of SDGs, 2020, p. 50.

²² Estimate by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, Nepal NPC, National Review of SDGs, 50.

²³ [Standard Basic Framework Agreement \(SBFA\)](#)

²⁴ [First country cooperation framework for Nepal \(1997-2001\)](#)

²⁵ [Second country cooperation framework for Nepal \(2002-2006\)](#), extended to 2007

²⁶ UNDP IEO, Assessment of Development Results (ADR) Nepal, 2012

climate change adaptation, social cohesion and participation.²⁷ UNDP piloted programmes for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and legal aid services, which have been integrated into government policy. UNDP also played a leading role in post-disaster recovery after the 2015 earthquake, including post-disaster needs assessment, early recovery cluster coordination, and resource mobilization. Under the provisions of the 2015 Constitution, for which UNDP has provided support since 2008,²⁸ UNDP has been providing support in the previous and current country programme cycles to the federalization and decentralization process.

For the current UNDP 2018-2022 country programme cycle, the preparation of the CPD was guided by the UNDAF for the same period and lessons from previous cooperation. The UNDAF has an indicative budget of around 643.3 million USD, of which UNDP has an indicative budget of \$205.7 million (32 percent). The UN Country Team consists of 21 agencies (18 resident agencies and 3 non-resident agencies). Adhering to the “Deliver as One” principles, the UNCT has established Outcome Working Groups, in addition to the UN Communication Group, Operations Management Group, Monitoring and Evaluation Group, UN Gender Theme Group and the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer Committee.²⁹ The UNDAF supports interventions under four outcome areas:

- Outcome area 1: Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth (UNDP as participating agency)
- Outcome area 2: Social Development (supported by other UN agencies³⁰)
- Outcome area 3: Resilience, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change (UNDP as co-chair)
- Outcome area 4: Governance, Rule of Law, and Human Rights (UNDP as co-chair)

UNDP’s programming supports three out of four UNDAF outcomes (Table 1). Gender equality, social inclusion and human rights are integrated across the thematic areas. UNDP’s programmatic investments are prioritized for regions with the lowest levels of human development. In 2019, UNDP established four field offices, in addition to the Kathmandu country office.³¹ UNDP launched Nepal’s Accelerator Lab in August 2019, which serves as an innovation incubator for locally contextualized solutions for urgent development challenges.

- **Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth:** UNDP supports poverty reduction in areas such as employment creation, access to energy, and pro-poor development planning, monitoring, and policy support. It supports rural livelihoods through micro-enterprise development programmes, value chain development, and renewable energy initiatives, as well as urban development actions in collaboration with provincial capitals and municipalities. UNDP also assists Nepal in SDG monitoring and reporting, improving investment climate, and promoting south-south cooperation.
- **Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights:** UNDP supports government effectiveness, participation, and accountability, in the context of the federalist structure introduced in 2015. Key areas of UNDP support include access to justice, local governance, and capacity building for the parliament and elections.
- **Resilience, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change:** UNDP contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk reduction and disaster preparedness, early recovery, promoting pro-poor environmental management, and renewable energy access. It targets most at-risk districts and vulnerable persons through synergies with the livelihood and governance portfolios.

²⁷ CPD 2018-2022, citing CPAP 2013-2017 results report.

²⁸ [UNDP support to Nepal’s 2015 Constitution](#), 2016

²⁹ United Nations Country Team Nepal, United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Nepal 2018-2022, 2017.

³⁰ UNDP collaborates with other agencies in the area of gender-based violence.

³¹ UNDP OAI, Audit Report No. 2209, 7 May 2020: UNDP Nepal

The tables below indicate UNDP resources for each UNDAF/UNDP outcome and UNDP CPD outputs.

Table 1. UNDAF/UNDP Outcomes and Indicative Resources

Relevant UNDAF/CPD outcomes	CPD Outputs	Indicative resources (US\$)	Expenditure 2018-2020 (US\$)
Outcome 1: By 2022, impoverished, especially economically vulnerable people have increased access to sustainable livelihoods, safe and decent employment and more opportunities	<p>Output 1.1: Policy institutional and capacity development solutions lead to improved disaster and climate resilient livelihoods productive employment and increased productivity in rural areas.</p> <p>Output 1.2: Municipalities adopt disaster and climate-resilient urban policies that promote access to safe and decent employment and income opportunities for vulnerable groups</p> <p>Output 1.3: Improved national capacities in planning monitoring financing and reporting on 2030 agenda</p>	<p>Total: \$54,745,713</p> <p>Regular: \$10,128,300</p> <p>Other: \$44,617,413</p>	<p>Total: \$19,235,292</p> <p>Regular: \$7,595,623</p> <p>Other: \$11,639,670</p>
Outcome 2: By 2022, inclusive, democratic, accountable and transparent institutions are further strengthened towards ensuring rule of law, social justice and human rights for all particularly for vulnerable people	<p>Output 2.1: National level executive and legislative branches of the Government and commissions have the capacities and tools to implement the constitution including peaceful transition to federal structure</p> <p>Output 2.2: Systems procedures and capacities of government institutions at subnational level in place for service delivery in an inclusive transparent and accountable manner</p> <p>Output 2.3: Civic space for engagement voice and participation of youth women and vulnerable groups broadened at all levels</p> <p>Output 2.4: Justice sector institutions strengthened in accordance with the constitution and human rights standards to ensure greater access to justice</p>	<p>Total: \$58,628,300</p> <p>Regular: \$10,128,300</p> <p>Other: \$48,500,000</p>	<p>Total: \$17,635,318</p> <p>Regular: \$6,005,516</p> <p>Other: \$11,629,802</p>

<p>Outcome 3: By 2022, environmental management, sustainable recovery and reconstruction, and resilience to climate change and natural disaster are strengthened at all levels.</p>	<p>Output 3.1: Understanding and knowledge on environment climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction enhanced at national subnational and community levels to make development risk-informed</p> <p>Output 3.2: Policy and institutional mechanisms strengthened for integrating gender responsive CCA/DRR and environment management in national and key sector's development planning</p> <p>Output 3.3: Mechanisms in place to enable the Government and private sector to increase investment in CCA/DRR recovery and environment management</p> <p>Output 3.4: Capacities of subnational governments and communities strengthened for effective preparedness and response environment management CCA/DRR</p> <p>Output 3.5: Improved capacities of communities and government for resilient recovery and reconstruction.</p>	<p>Total: \$95,833,400</p> <p>Regular: \$13,504,400</p> <p>Other: \$82,329,000</p>	<p>Total: \$22,405,362</p> <p>Regular: \$18,478,069</p> <p>Other: \$6,005,516</p>
<p>Grand Total</p>		<p>Total: \$209,207,413</p> <p>Regular: \$33,761,000</p> <p>Other: \$175,446,413</p>	<p>Total: \$61,694,147*</p> <p>Regular: \$18,942,352</p> <p>Other: \$42,751,795</p>

Sources: UNDAF, CPD and UNDP Atlas programme expenditure data as of 29 Jan 2021.

*Includes \$3,175,358 in expenses unlinked to a specific outcome (i.e., Support to UN Coordination; Management Support to Country Programme Implementation).

Preliminary financial data as of end-January 2021 indicates that country office expenditure from 2018 to date is 69.3% other resources (\$42.8 million) and 30.7% core resources (\$18.9 million).³² Government cost-sharing represents 6.3% (\$3.9 million) and environmental vertical trust funds 1.7% (\$1.0 million), with the remainder from bilateral donors (primarily through direct funding, also through thematic trust funds, multi-partner trust funds, and funding windows). Major donors include the UK Department for International Development (\$6.9 million, 11.2%), South-South Triangular Cooperation funding from India (\$7.0 million, 11.3%) and China (\$2.2 million, 3.5%), European Commission (\$4.5 million, 7.3%), Norway (\$6.4 million, 10.4%), Australia (\$3.1 million, 5.0%), and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (\$2.9 million, 4.7%), among others.

The UN Framework for Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Nepal (August 2020) provides the framework for UN pandemic response for emergency response and support to “build back better” (12-18 months). The framework includes five pillars: 1) Health First: Protecting health services and systems; 2) Protection people: social protection and basic services; 3) Economic Response and Recovery: Projecting Jobs, SMEs and Informal Sector Workers (UNDP lead agency, with co-leads ILO, WFP and FAO);

³² UNDP Atlas data, extracted 29 Jan 2021.

and 4) Social Cohesion and Community Resilience and Macroeconomic Response and Multilateral Collaboration (Resident Coordinator lead agency, with co-leads UNDP and UNCDF).

SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The ICPE Nepal will examine UNDP's 2018-2022 country programme, as formally approved by the Executive Board. Guided by the CPD Results and Resources Framework, the evaluation will assess UNDP's performance in contributing to the three programme outcomes. The ICPE will consider changes made to the country programme during the period under review, including UNDP's COVID-19 response.

The evaluation will cover UNDP's development programme in its entirety, regardless of its funding sources, e.g., UNDP's regular, core resources, donors, and government. Both projects that are active and/or have completed during the period under review will be covered. Special attention will be paid to the role and responsibilities of other UN agencies contributing to the areas where UNDP has been supporting under the 2018-2022 UNDAF.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms & Standards.³³ It will address the following four main evaluation questions:³⁴

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 Nepal's preparedness, response, and recovery process?
4. What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and eventually, to the sustainability of results?

Evaluation question 1 will be addressed by using a theory of change (ToC) approach. The ToC, either available at the country office or reconstructed in consultation with programme units for the purpose of the evaluation, will be used to understand the underlying programme intent and logic, by outcome, including the assumptions being made for desired changes and expected causal linkages. UNDP's specific areas of contribution under each of the UNDAF will be defined, and any changes to the programme design and implementation strategy from the initial CPD will be identified.

Evaluation question 2 will address the overall effectiveness of UNDP's country programme. It includes an assessment on the degree to which UNDP-specific interventions - CPD outputs - have progressed or have been achieved, as well as the level of UNDP's contribution to the CPD outcomes as envisaged by the initial ToC. In this process, results that are both positive and negative, direct and indirect, as well as unintended results will be identified.

Evaluation question 3 will examine UNDP's support to COVID-19 preparedness, response, and recovery in Nepal, including several sub-questions: i) degree to which UNDP's COVID support has been relevant to the needs of Nepal; ii) how well UNDP's support and response has aligned with government plans and support from other UN agencies, donors, and NGOs/CSOs; iii) how well UNDP has supported the country to develop

³³ <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914>

³⁴ The ICPEs have adopted a streamlined methodology, which differs from the previous ADRs that were structured according to the four standard OECD DAC criteria. More detailed sub-questions will be developed during the desk review phase of the evaluation.

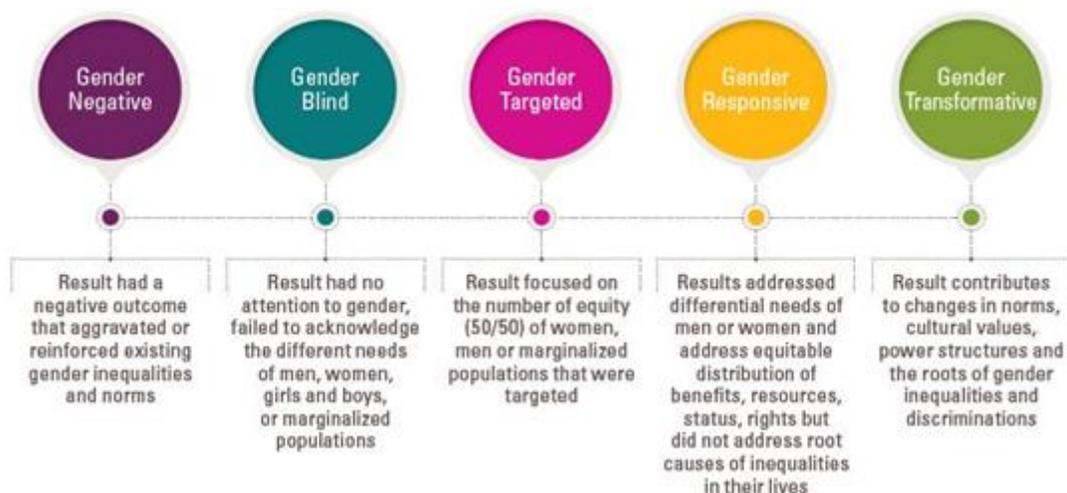
responses that reduced loss of life and protected longer-term social and economic development; iv) degree to which UNDP funding decisions were informed by evidence, needs analysis, risk analysis and dialogue with partners and supported efficient use of resources; and v) whether the support has contributed to the development of social, economic and health systems in Nepal that are equitable, resilient and sustainable.

Evaluation question 4 will examine various factors have influenced – positively or negatively – UNDP’s programmatic performance, and eventually, sustainability of results. Country-specific issues (e.g., change management), managerial practices (e.g. utilization of resources for results), programmatic design and decisions (e.g. integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment, use of partnerships, South-South and triangular cooperation, delivery modality) will be examined.

Stakeholder involvement: During the evaluation, relevant stakeholders will be engaged to ensure the transparency of the exercise, collect necessary documentation and evidence, and enhance the national ownership of evaluation results. A stakeholder analysis will be conducted during the preparatory phase to identify relevant UNDP partners, including those that may have not worked directly with UNDP but play a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributes. The analysis will help identify key informants for interviews during the data collection phase.

Gender-responsive approach: The evaluation will employ a gender-responsive evaluation approach during its preparatory and implementation phases. During document desk reviews and the analysis of programme theory and delivery, the evaluation will examine the level of gender mainstreaming across all UNDP programmes and operations, in line with UNDP’s gender strategy. Gender disaggregated data will be collected, where available, and assessed against UNDP’s programme outcomes. The evaluation will assess the extent to which UNDP’s programmatic efforts were designed to contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment (e.g., using Gender Marker and programme expenditures), and in fact have contributed to promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment by using the gender results effectiveness scale (GRES). The GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive, and gender transformative.

Figure 1: IEO’s Gender Results Effectiveness Scale



ICPE rating system: Based on the Independent Country Programme Review piloted by the IEO in 2020 and lessons learned, IEO is currently developing a rating system to be applied for the ICPEs in 2021 on a pilot basis. Ratings are expected to be applied to assess UNDP’s progress towards CPD Outputs and Outcomes goals. Details will be provided in due course prior to the implementation of the ICPE.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Evaluability assessment: An assessment was conducted to examine the availability of documentation and information, identify potential data constraints, and determine the data collection methods.

- **COVID-19 restrictions:** As internal mobility is limited and many continue to telework, access to national stakeholders for data collection – particularly those in remote areas and community-level populations including the marginalized – may encounter challenges. Expanded outreach measures will be needed, e.g., use of surveys, identification of locally based data collectors and consultants, access to local project managers/ coordinators, and/or use of GIS technology for virtual site visits.
- **Political situation:** It is currently unclear to what extent the evaluation will be affected by the political situation in Nepal, potentially in terms of availability of government counterparts, should the situation continue to evolve.
- **Availability of past assessments:** The UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC) includes 13 completed evaluations (12 project and one country programme mid-term review) between 2018 and present of fairly good quality.³⁵ An additional 7 project evaluations are planned to conduct in 2021 and 2022. The country programme recently conducted a mid-term review completed in December 2020, which will be used to guide validation of progress.
- **Programme and project information:** Programme documentation (including internal annual reports) is available and of adequate quality. The availability and quality of project level documentation will be examined during documentation collection and desk review.
- **CPD results and resources framework indicator results:** The CPD lists 6 indicators for the 3 outcomes, and 29 indicators to measure the 12 outputs, with baseline and targets. To the extent possible, the ICPE will seek to use these indicators to better understand the intention of the UNDP programme and to measure or assess progress towards the outcomes. The data sources of the indicators are mostly national statistics and reports of various ministries, and the evaluation’s ability to measure progress against these indicators will therefore depend on national statistics, where up-to-date data may not be available for all indicators.
- **Intervention maturity:** UNDP projects are at different stages of implementation. In cases where the projects/initiatives are still in their initial stages, it may not be possible to determine the projects’ contribution to the CPD/UNDAF outcomes. The evaluation will document observable progress and seek to assess the possibility of potential contribution given the programme design and measures already put in place.

Data collection methods: A design matrix will be prepared to elaborate on data collection and analysis plans. At the time of this writing, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are still felt globally. Given the travel restrictions, the evaluation is expected to take predominantly a remote, virtual approach. Data and information required for the evaluation are collected through primary and secondary sources:

- **Desk reviews:** The IEO will conduct extended reviews of documentation, including those available from the government, the UN, private institutions, donors, and academia, on national context and

³⁵ 6 evaluation reports by the IEO were rated as ‘satisfactory’ (rating of ‘5’), four as ‘moderately satisfactory (rating of ‘4’), and one as ‘moderately unsatisfactory’. UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre.

areas of UNDP programme interventions. Also included are country programme framework and office strategies (e.g., resource mobilization, gender, communication), programme-/ project-related documents and progress reports, theories of change, annual work plans, Results Oriented Annual Reports (ROAR), COVID Mini-ROARs, past evaluation/ audit reports, and UNCT/ UNDAF related documents. The IEO and the country office will identify a list of background documents, uploaded in the ICPE SharePoint portal.

- Stakeholder interviews: Interviews via face-to-face/Zoom/telephone will be conducted with relevant stakeholders, including government partners; donors; UN agencies; other development partners such as IFIs; UNDP staff at country, regional and HQ levels; private sector; civil society organizations; and beneficiary groups. Focus groups may be organized, where possible.
- Questionnaire/Surveys: An advance questionnaire will be administered to the country office during the preparatory phase as an additional self-reporting input. Surveys may be planned, as required.
- Site visits: As mobility will be limited, physical visits to field project sites are expected to be minimal, if any. A brief verification mission may be organized should travels become advisable in the third quarter of 2021.

Projects for in-depth review: A sample of projects will be selected for in-depth reviews based on a purposive sampling. The criteria for selection include programme coverage, ensuring a balanced representation of issues addressed under each outcome; project maturity; budget, implementation modality and geographical areas. Both ‘flagship’ projects of significant visibility and scope as well as those that have experienced challenges will be included.

Validation: Data and information collected from different sources and through various means will be triangulated to strengthen the validity of findings and conclusions.

Midterm briefing: At the end of the data collection phase, the IEO will have a quick brief to the country office on emerging issues and findings. The meeting will also serve as an opportunity to identify areas requiring further analysis and any missing information and evidence before the full synthesis and drafting phase.

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Independent Evaluation Office: The IEO will conduct the ICPE in consultation with the UNDP country office and the RBAP. The IEO will meet all costs directly related to the conduct of the ICPE. It will establish an evaluation team, ensuring gender balance. The IEO Lead Evaluator will lead the ICPE and coordinate the work of the evaluation team, comprising the following members:

- Lead Evaluator (LE): IEO staff member with the overall responsibility for leading the exercise and managing the work of all team members, including the development of evaluation terms of reference (TOR), selection of the evaluation team members, and provision of methodological guidance. The LE will be responsible for the analysis’ synthesis process, preparation of the draft and final evaluation reports, and coordinating the final stakeholder debriefing with the country office, RBAP, and national stakeholders.
- Associate Lead Evaluator (ALE): IEO staff who directly supports the LE in operationalizing the exercise, particularly during preparatory phase, data collection and analysis, and preparation of a draft report. Together with the LE, the ALE will backstop the work of other team members.
- Research Associate (RA): The IEO RA will provide background research, including portfolio and financial analysis. He/she contribute to the preparation of draft/final report, report annexes, and support any tasks as required by the evaluation team.
- National research institution/consultants: The IEO will explore partnering with a locally- (or

regionally-) based research institution, think tank or academia, to augment its data collection and analysis capacity in the country during COVID-related restrictions. Alternatively, 3 individual consultants (national and international) will be recruited to support the analysis of thematic areas.

UNDP Country Office in Nepal: The country office will support the evaluation team through liaising with national stakeholders; ensure that all necessary information regarding UNDP's programmes, projects and activities in the country is available to the evaluation team; and provide factual verifications of the draft report on a timely basis. The country office will provide the evaluation team in-kind organizational support (e.g., arranging meetings and interviews with project staff and stakeholders). To ensure the confidentiality of the views expressed, country office staff will not participate in interviews and meetings with stakeholders. The country office will jointly organize the final stakeholder meeting via videoconference with the IEO, ensuring participation of key government counterparts, where findings and results of the evaluation will be presented. The country office will prepare a management response to evaluation recommendations and support the dissemination and use of the final evaluation report in the country.

Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific (RBAP): RBAP will support the evaluation through information sharing, facilitation of communication between the IEO and the country office, and participation in the final stakeholder debriefing. The Bureau will support and oversee the preparation of the management response by the country office and its implementation of relevant actions.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation will be conducted in the following five key phases:

- **Phase 1: Preparatory work.** The IEO prepares the evaluation terms of reference (define the scope, methodology and process), a list of projects, and an evaluation matrix; and launches document gathering with support of the country office. External consultants will be recruited to augment the work of portfolio analysis.
- **Phase 2: Desk analysis.** The evaluation team conducts desk reviews of reference material and preliminary analysis of the programme strategy and portfolio. The team will engage with country office staff through meetings and an advance questionnaire, administered to fill data gaps in documentation and seek clarification if any. Specific data collection instruments will be developed, e.g., interview protocols, based on the stakeholder and portfolio analyses.
- **Phase 3: Data collection.** The evaluation team will engage in virtual and remote data collection, such as interviews using Zoom and other online communication tools. At the end of the data collection phase, the evaluation team may hold a preliminary presentation on emerging findings to the country office, identifying areas requiring further analysis and any information and evidence gaps that may exist.
- **Phase 4: Analysis, report writing, quality review and debrief.** Following the individual outcome analyses, the LE undertakes a synthesis process to prepare the ICPE report. The initial draft is subject to both internal and external reviews. Once the draft is quality cleared, the first official draft is shared with the country office and the RBAP for comments and factual corrections. The second draft, which considers their feedback, will then be shared with national stakeholders for further comments. The UNDP country office prepares a management response to the ICPE under the overall oversight of the Regional Bureau. The report is then be presented at a final debriefing where evaluation results are presented to key national stakeholders and UNDP's ways forward are discussed. Considering the final set of comments collected at the stakeholder debriefing, the evaluation report will be finalized by incorporating the management response.

- **Phase 5: Publication and dissemination.** The ICPE report will be written in English. It will follow the standard IEO publication guidelines. The report will be widely distributed in both hard and electronic versions. The evaluation report will be made available to the UNDP Executive Board in time for its approval of a new CPD. It will be widely distributed by the IEO within UNDP as well as to the evaluation units of other international organisations, evaluation societies/networks and research institutions in the region. The country office will ensure the dissemination of the report to all relevant stakeholders in the country. The report and the management response will be published on the UNDP IEO website as well as the Evaluation Resource Centre (ERC).³⁶ RBAP will be responsible for monitoring and oversight of follow-up action implementation in the ERC.

TIMEFRAME FOR THE ICPE PROCESS

The tentative schedule of the evaluation activities is summarized as below.³⁷

Table 3: Tentative timeframe for the ICPE process going to the Board in June* 2022		
Activity	Responsible party	Proposed timeframe
Phase 1: Preparatory work		
TOR completed and approved by IEO Deputy Director	LE/ALE	March 2021
Documentation collection for desk review	LE/ALE/CO	February-March 2021
Selection of consultant** team members	LE/ALE	March-April 2021
Compilation of stakeholder contacts (and initial notification by CO)	LE/ALE/CO	April-May 2021
Phase 2: Desk analysis		
Preliminary desk review of reference material	Evaluation team	April 2021
Advance questionnaires to the CO	LE/ALE/CO	Mid-May 2021
Phase 3: Data collection		
Interviews with stakeholders	LE/ALE/Consultants**	Mid-May - June 2021
Virtual preliminary briefing to CO/RBAP	LE/ALE/CO/RBAP	End June - July 2021
Phase 4: Analysis, report writing, quality review and debrief		
Portfolio analysis completed	Consultants**/LE/ALE	July 2021
Synthesis and report writing	LE/ALE	August 2021
Zero draft for internal IEO clearance	LE/ALE	September 2021
First draft for CO/RBAP comments	LE/ALE/CO/RBAP	October 2021
Second draft shared with the government and other national stakeholders for comments	LE/ALE/CO	November 2021
Draft management response	CO/RBAP	November 2021
Final stakeholder debriefing via videoconference	IEO/CO/RBAP	December 2021
Phase 5: Publication and dissemination		
Editing and formatting	IEO	January- February 2022
Final report and evaluation brief	IEO	January- February 2022
Dissemination of the final report	IEO	March 2022

* Tentative; **consultants and/or national institution

³⁶ UNDP IEO website: <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/>; UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre: <https://erc.undp.org/>.

³⁷ The timeframe, indicative of process and deadlines, does not imply full-time engagement of evaluation team during the period.