



Independent  
Evaluation  
Office

United Nations Development Programme

# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION SOUTH SUDAN





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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability  
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
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### INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION: South Sudan

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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

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**Other stakeholders and partners:** The Government of South Sudan, representatives of United Nations agencies, civil society, and bilateral and multilateral development partners.

# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in South Sudan, the first assessment carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP in the country. This evaluation covers the 2019-2021 programming period.

UNDP's contribution to keeping the momentum of recovery, peace and development processes in South Sudan has been important. During the assessment period, UNDP underscored resilience as central to its programme approach, which is relevant to address development drivers of peace and stability in South Sudan. UNDP sought ways to introduce innovation in peace and development efforts. UNDP invested in efforts such as the Acceleration Lab to work with programme partners to create an ecosystem for innovation, particularly at the grassroots level.

The National Dialogue and Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan are intended to increase the pace of recovery, reconciliation and stabilization. South Sudan continues to experience many of the challenges that have threatened its stability since it became an independent country in 2011. The humanitarian, development and peace situation in South Sudan warrants a combination of responses, both short-term and longer-term. This calls for prioritization of development and peacebuilding linkages, which remains a challenge, as the international response has been predominantly humanitarian. Short-term support while addressing immediate needs had limitations in strengthening institutional processes necessary for building sustainable capacities. Sustainable institutional capacities at the national and state levels are critical for consolidating stability and peace as well as transitioning to development.

Peace gains made in South Sudan are fragile and the structural causes of conflict, including development underpinnings of peace, are still to be strategically addressed. UNDP programme strategy should be more oriented to demonstrating sustainable programme models suitable for the South Sudan context that would accelerate development and peace processes. For an inclusive implementation of the Peace Agreement, UNDP's support to peacebuilding in South Sudan should address the complex task of strengthening linkages between community-level expectations and national peace processes. Many development challenges in South Sudan are linked to energy access. So concrete measures are needed to support access to renewable energy services.

I would like to thank the Government of South Sudan, the national stakeholders, colleagues from the UNDP country office, as well as the Regional Bureau for Africa, for their support throughout the evaluation. I hope that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will strengthen the formulation of UNDP's next country programme strategy, and the work of its partners, to enable peace and sustainable development pathways for the people of South Sudan.



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Acclab</b>  | Accelerator Lab  |
| <b>CSO</b>     | Civil society organization   |
| <b>GEMS</b>    | Governance and Economic Management Support                         |
| <b>HLRF</b>    | High-Level Revitalization Forum                                    |
| <b>ICPE</b>    | Independent Country Programme Evaluation                           |
| <b>IEO</b>     | Independent Evaluation Office                                      |
| <b>IGAD</b>    | Intergovernmental Authority on Development                         |
| <b>NGO</b>     | Non-governmental organization                                      |
| <b>PBF</b>     | Peacebuilding Fund   |
| <b>PfRR</b>    | Partnership for Recovery and Resilience                            |
| <b>R-ARCSS</b> | Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan |
| <b>SDG</b>     | Sustainable Development Goal                                       |
| <b>SERP</b>    | COVID-19 Socioeconomic Response Plan                               |
| <b>SGBV</b>    | Sexual and gender-based violence                                   |
| <b>SSHF</b>    | South Sudan Humanitarian Fund                                      |
| <b>SSPRC</b>   | South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission                    |
| <b>STARR</b>   | Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience                             |
| <b>UN</b>      | United Nations   |
| <b>UNCT</b>    | United Nations Country Team  |
| <b>UNDP</b>    | United Nations Development Programme                               |
| <b>UNICEF</b>  | United Nations Children's Fund                                     |
| <b>UNMISS</b>  | United Nations Mission in South Sudan                              |



# Evaluation Brief: South Sudan

The Republic of South Sudan, upon gaining independence from Sudan, became the world's newest country in July 2011. In the 10 subsequent years, the country experienced two periods of civil war (beginning in December 2013 and resuming in July 2016), each characterized by high levels of violence, a large humanitarian emergency and extensive damage to the country's economy and social fabric. Political instability and economic stagnation have constrained the ability of the government and its international partners to reduce humanitarian aid needs and to move South Sudan into a lasting trajectory of recovery and development. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy, livelihoods and access to basic services and has disrupted humanitarian operations.

The South Sudan ICPE assessed the current programme cycle for 2019-2021 (extended to 2022) and the previous country programme document 2016-2017 (extended to 2018). The current country programme document outlined two outcome areas: 1) strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance; and 2) recovered local economies. The previous country programme outlined three outcome areas: 1) resilient communities; 2) local economy; and 3) peace and governance. Due to the nature of UNDP's role within the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF), the scope of the evaluation covers the SSHF from the operational side.

## Findings and Conclusions

UNDP's contribution to keeping the momentum of recovery, peace and development processes in South Sudan has been important. UNDP has created a niche for itself in the recovery and stabilization response in South Sudan. As a service provider, funds manager and one of the key providers of support to peace and reconciliation processes at the national and state levels, UNDP continues to play an important role in South Sudan. Given the nascent government capacity, UNDP's support to the immediate needs of key government institutions enabled their functioning. With its well-established partnership with the government, UNDP has the comparative advantage to contribute to policy and reform process and sustainable institutional capacities

The evaluation reinforces the fact that the humanitarian, development and peace situation in South Sudan warrants a combination of responses, both short-term and longer-term. UNDP would have enhanced its contribution further by articulating its strategic role in South Sudan, where there is an urgency to address critical development drivers of peace and stabilization. UNDP's short-term support has had limitations in strengthening the institutional processes needed to build sustainable capacities. A wide programme spread, whether with respect to geographical spread or programme themes, has been counterproductive to UNDP's positioning as an expert organization. Sustainable institutional capacities at the national and state levels are critical for consolidating stability and peace as well as transitioning to development. While UNDP contributed to filling critical capacity gaps essential for the functioning of government institutions, it is yet to leverage short-term human resource support for building public administration, civil services and local governance capacities.

UNDP support to National Dialogue was important for South Sudan institutions to carry out the extensive exercise. The grassroots consultations and subsequent conferences provided a systematic framework for South Sudanese to discuss in a free and open manner the way forward. Entirely led and managed by the government, the Dialogue was a considerable achievement with great potential for building peace. The opportunities to increase the potential impact of the Dialogue are yet to be maximized.

Vocational training and skill and entrepreneurship development initiatives by UNDP across states had tangible outputs. Support to the value-chain and entrepreneurship development are in preliminary stages to demonstrate comprehensive programme options for employment generation. Weaknesses in addressing different dimensions of the value-chain, from business viability of enterprises, production to marketing, reduced UNDP's contribution. UNDP programmes are yet to build on the potential of renewable energy solutions for sustainable livelihoods. Holistic solutions are needed in parallel to the short-term humanitarian mode of income support.

There is strong commitment across UNDP programmes areas to further youth empowerment. UNDP recognizes that mobilization of youth is key to ensuring the success and sustainability of reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts. The engagement of youth in community peacebuilding efforts was effective only when combined with promising employment and income-generation opportunities.

UNDP has consistently ensured women's inclusion across its programme support. Further consolidation of inter-agency efforts and programmatic partnerships is critical for supporting women as agents of peacebuilding and state-building in a context with widespread sexual and gender-based violence and weak institutions. The fragmented the United Nations (UN) response in South Sudan has reduced the potential to address the complex challenges that women face.

Collaborations with UN agencies through joint programmes under the Peacebuilding Fund were important in supporting recovery and peace efforts. Programmatic collaboration between UNDP and United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), however, has not been geared towards a more united response to strengthening governance processes, especially in areas such as rule of law. Limited programmatic collaborative initiatives between UNDP and UNMISS have missed opportunities to demonstrate that peacekeeping and state-building can occur simultaneously. While the coordination role at the country level rests with UNMISS and United Nations Resident Coordinator's office, UNDP has yet to define areas where it can bring value to coordination efforts in peacebuilding and state-building. Reduced field presence has constrained UNDP's ability to provide local peace and development programme offerings and to galvanize partnerships for a coordinated response. Dependence on civil society organizations for programme implementation in the absence of field presence has produced only output-oriented results.

**Recommendation 1.** Peace gains made in South Sudan are fragile and the structural causes of conflict, including the development underpinnings of peace, are still to be strategically addressed. UNDP's programme strategy should be more oriented towards demonstrating sustainable programme models suitable for the South Sudan context that would accelerate development and peace processes.

**Recommendation 2.** For an inclusive implementation of the peace agreement, UNDP's support to peacebuilding in South Sudan should address the complex task of strengthening linkages between community-level expectations and national peace processes.

**Recommendation 3.** Public administration support should focus on strengthening the capacities of key institutions and related reform processes. A well-considered approach to strengthening the governance capacities of local government institutions should be prioritized, which is critical for stabilization and sustained peace and development.

**Recommendation 4.** UNDP should review its livelihood and employment programme approach to bring them up to scale. Support to productive capacities and value-chain initiatives need a well-considered strategy and strong programmatic partnerships to enable a full range of responses.

**Recommendation 5.** UNDP should continue its emphasis on strengthening efforts to promote women's security and access to development resources. UNDP should consider programmatic partnerships in select areas such as access to justice and addressing violence against women.

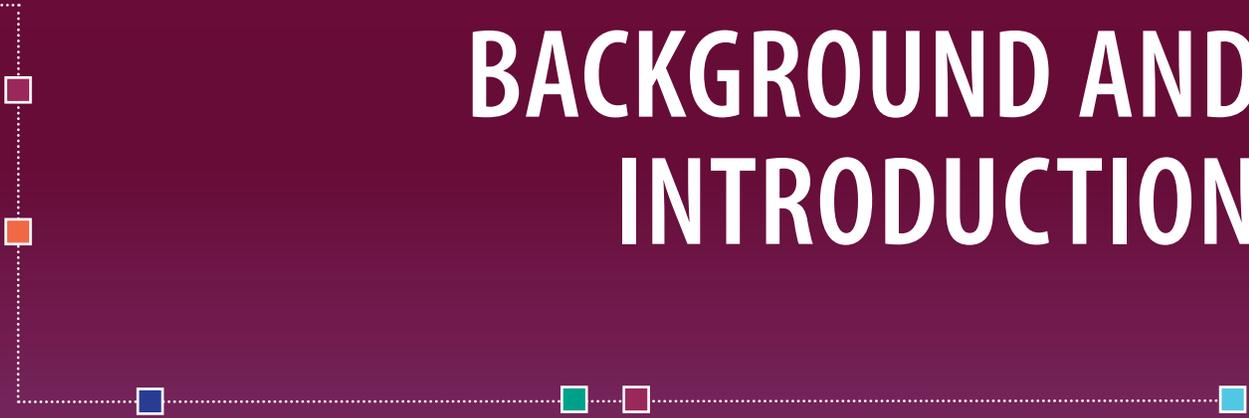
**Recommendation 6.** A conflict programming context and nascent markets in South Sudan present challenges for private sector engagement. UNDP should support efforts to address these challenges in developing practical ways to engage the private sector in employment-generation and social services.

**Recommendation 7.** Expanding field offices should be prioritized to work towards conflict-sensitive sustainable programme options. The field offices should establish stronger partnerships with the local government and other actors.



# CHAPTER 1

# BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) carried out an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) of the UNDP programme in South Sudan in 2021.

Its purpose was to inform the development of a new country programme in South Sudan by analysing the results and challenges of the previous work of UNDP in the country and providing recommendations for future actions. This chapter presents the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation as well as the methodology applied. It outlines the peace and development context in South Sudan and the current UNDP programme in the country. The evaluation was conducted in close collaboration with the Government of South Sudan, UNDP South Sudan country office and UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa.

## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.<sup>1</sup> The ICPE considers evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts for achieving development results. The purpose of an ICPE is to:

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

The South Sudan ICPE assessed the current programme cycle for 2019-2021 (extended to 2022) and the previous country programme document 2016-2017 (extended to 2018). The evaluation covered programmes funded by all types of sources, including government funds, donor funds, allocations from UNDP's core resources, and regional and global programmes of UNDP. In addition, the evaluation included UNDP's advocacy or convening role, which can be crucial in informing public policies or convening various development actors to enhance development contribution. Due to the nature of UNDP's role within the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund (SSHF), the scope of the evaluation covers the SSHF from the operational side. Specific attention was paid to the collaboration of UNDP in common areas with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and efforts have been made to capture the contribution of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV).

## 1.2 Evaluation methodology

The evaluation based its analysis on the outcomes presented by the country programme for the period 2016-2021. It looked at each of the planned outcomes and their respective links to the strategic objectives of the programme, which are presented in a Theory of Change (See Annex 8).

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### 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 country's preparedness, response and recovery process?
4. What are UNDP's performance and, eventually, the sustainability of results?

Source: Evaluation terms of reference

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme, 2016. Evaluation Policy. New York. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>. The ICPE will also be conducted in adherence to the Norms and the Standards and the ethical Code of Conduct established by the United Nations Evaluation Group (<http://www.uneval.org>).

The effectiveness of the UNDP country programme was evaluated through the analysis of the progress made towards the achievement of the expected outputs and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the expected outcomes of the UNDP country programme. To better understand UNDP's performance and the sustainability of results in the country, the ICPE examined the specific factors that have influenced, either positively or negatively, the country programme. The capacity of UNDP to adapt to changing circumstances and respond to national development needs and priorities was also examined. The evaluation sought to answer four evaluation questions (Box 1 above).

The evaluation methodology adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards. In line with the UNDP gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the formulation of the country programme and its operations, as well as the results achieved.

The assessment combined an in-depth desk review and a large number of virtual interviews (telephone and Zoom online interviews at the national, state and local levels) and in-person interviews at Juba and at state and community levels. Data collection was carried out during the period from June to October 2021. The COVID-19 situation and related travel restrictions limited the field visits and community-level consultations. To answer the evaluation questions (see Annex 8 for the evaluation matrix), the ICPE collected and triangulated data from the following sources:

- A review of programme documents of UNDP, UNMISS publications and data, reports of the Government of South Sudan and other agencies. The evaluation reviewed UNDP monitoring and evaluation data, including project reports, UNDP institutional documents (strategic plan, results-oriented annual reports, etc.), data related to programme performance indicators (data disaggregated by sex, when available), action research, as well as other publications available on the country. The main documents consulted are listed in Annex 7. Based on this portfolio analysis, the evaluation team developed theories of change, by programme area, and matched the projects implemented against the objectives set in the country programme.
- The decentralized evaluations conducted by the country office that were of Satisfactory and Moderately Satisfactory rating were used as evidence for the ICPE. Twelve decentralized evaluations have been carried out since 2016. Ten are project evaluations, one is a midterm country programme evaluation, and one is an outcome evaluation. Eleven decentralized project evaluation reports were submitted for IEO quality assurance, four of which were rated 5 (satisfactory), five of which were rated 4 (moderately satisfactory) and two of which were rated 3 (moderately unsatisfactory). The evaluation also used two audit reports as evidence.
- Virtual interviews were carried with 91 key informants. This comprised of who were staff of the UNDP South Sudan office; representatives and officials of various government institutions at the national and local levels; staff from other United Nations (UN) agencies and development partners; civil society organizations and NGOs; and beneficiaries of the country programme, including community-level stakeholders (see Annex 6). The institutions that were interviewed were identified on the basis of the desk review (documents on the UNDP programme and the country context in general), were supplemented by suggestions from the country office and included not only the main partners of the UNDP country programme but also the main development actors in the country. These interviews were used to collect data and obtain a comprehensive view of the perceptions of development partners and actors on the scope, contributions, performance and impacts of UNDP interventions, on the constraints in programme implementation and on the strengths and weaknesses of UNDP in South Sudan. A complete list of interviewees is available in Annex 4.

- Field visits to Aweil, Torit, Rumbek and Yambio were carried out.
- Ratings scale: The ICPE used the IEO's rating system to score the country programme performance against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability (see Annex 8). The evaluation used a four-point rating scale.

The ICPE has undergone a quality assurance process, first with internal peer review at the IEO and an external reviewers. Thereafter, the report was submitted to the country office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and, finally, to the government and other partners in the country for review. This process was concluded by a workshop carried out through videoconference that convened the main stakeholders of the programme and offered an additional opportunity to discuss the conclusions and recommendations presented in this report.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most members of the ICPE team were unable to travel to South Sudan. Observation of project sites and direct interaction with certain vulnerable beneficiary groups were therefore limited. To mitigate these limitations, the evaluation team was reinforced by one national consultant who was in charge of facilitating the data collection exercise and conducting phone interviews with community level-beneficiaries. The ICPE also followed up with national partners by email to obtain more information and access studies and reports allowing it to draw on additional secondary data.

### 1.3 Country programme context

The Republic of South Sudan became the world's newest country in July 2011 upon gaining independence from Sudan.<sup>2</sup> In the 10 subsequent years, the country experienced two periods of civil war (beginning in December 2013 and resuming in July 2016), each characterized by high levels of violence, a large humanitarian emergency and extensive damage to the country's economy and social fabric.

As a result of armed conflict, displacement, governance and economic factors, humanitarian aid needs have grown to some of the highest levels the country has seen. As of October 2021, an estimated 8.3 million people (74 percent of the total population) needed some form of humanitarian assistance (800,000 more people than in 2020)<sup>3</sup> and an estimated 7.2 million (64 percent of the population) are considered to be facing acute food insecurity.<sup>4</sup> Limited availability of and lack of access to health services have contributed to one of the highest under-five mortality rates (96.2 deaths per 1,000 live births) and maternal mortality rates (1,150 deaths per 100,000 live births) worldwide.<sup>5</sup> The country has 1.7 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) within its borders and more than 2.3 million South Sudan refugees have fled to neighbouring countries.<sup>6</sup>

Women, girls and children make up the majority of those displaced and in desperate need of humanitarian assistance. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected by armed conflict, suffering sexual violence, abduction, forced marriage and other violations.<sup>7</sup> In addition to facing structural and societal barriers to political and economic participation and equality, women and girls are also routinely subject to harmful customary practices, sexual violence and gender-based violence.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Cooperation Framework for South Sudan 2019-2021.

<sup>3</sup> OCHA. South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot October 2021. <https://www.unocha.org/south-sudan>.

<sup>4</sup> World Food Programme. South Sudan Situation report October 2021. <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/south-sudan-emergency>.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). South Sudan key demographic indicators. <https://data.unicef.org/country/ssd>.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot October 2021. <https://www.unocha.org/south-sudan>.

<sup>7</sup> UN Human Rights Council, 'Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan', February 2021, pp. 13-14.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF South Sudan. Gender-Based Violence Brief. December 2019. <https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/media/2071/file/UNICEF-South-Sudan-GBV-Briefing-Note-Aug-2019.pdf>.

Political instability and economic stagnation have constrained the ability of the government and its international partners to reduce humanitarian aid needs and to move South Sudan into a lasting trajectory of recovery and development. South Sudan's human development index (HDI) value as of 2019 is 0.433 – positioning it as a low human development country at 185<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries and territories – joint with Burundi and followed by Chad, the Central African Republic and Niger. Although still low, South Sudan's Human Development Index increased 5.6 percent from 2010 to 2019, driven mostly by improved life expectancy at birth, which increased by 3.1 years to 57.9 years, and by GNI per capita, which rose from PPP\$1,775 in 2010 to PPP\$2,003 in 2019.<sup>9</sup>

In 2017-2018, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) convened high-level political talks, known as the High-Level Revitalisation Forum (HLRF), which aimed to revive the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The HLRF resulted in a new ceasefire and the signing, in September 2018, of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan. The agreement provided for a new eight-month pre-transitional period leading to the formation of a new power-sharing government, the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity, which was to govern for a 36-month transitional period culminating in elections.<sup>10</sup> After extensions of the pre-transitional period totalling nine months, the new transitional government was formed in February 2020. During 2020-2021, implementation of the Revitalized Agreement lagged behind the R-ARCSS schedule, with targets for formation and training of unified armed forces, reconstitution of the National Legislative Assembly, and other tasks within the Revitalized Agreement being missed.<sup>11</sup>

South Sudan's economy is poorly developed and very vulnerable to shocks. A large share of the population depends on agriculture, livestock and fishing for income and food.<sup>12</sup> The service sector is domestically focused and weakly developed. The extractives sector (comprising oil in particular, but also gold and timber) is of significant size and economic value but is poorly documented and regulated. Oil accounts for almost all recorded exports and for around 60 percent to 70 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>13</sup> The IMF estimates that GDP contracted by 4.2 percent in 2020-2021.<sup>14</sup>

South Sudan's population is mostly rural (80 percent) and large areas of the country are depopulated or sparsely populated due to conflict and environmental challenges.<sup>15</sup> Poverty levels are extremely high, with about 76 percent of the population living below the US\$1.90 poverty line (2011 purchasing power parity).<sup>16</sup> Vulnerable employment (understood as people engaged as unpaid family workers and own-account workers) accounts for nearly 85 percent of total employment in the country.<sup>17</sup> South Sudan ranks 185<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries for gender equality, with systemic patriarchal factors placing women in a disadvantaged socio-economic position, which limits their ability to claim their rights, access healthcare and economic resources, and participate in decision-making roles.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>9</sup> UNDP HDR 2020 South Sudan Briefing Note. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/SSD.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> IGAD, 'Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)', September 2018, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), 'There must be urgency and collective efforts to address impediments, if progress on the R-ARCSS is to be sustained and accelerated', press release, Juba, 23 September 2021; and RJMEC, 'Progress Report', on the first year of the transitional period, report no. 001/21-A, March 2021.

<sup>12</sup> FAO, 'South Sudan at a glance', <https://www.fao.org/south-sudan/fao-in-south-sudan/south-sudan-at-a-glance/en>.

<sup>13</sup> African Development Bank. South Sudan Economic Outlook December 2020. <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/south-sudan/south-sudan-economic-outlook>.

<sup>14</sup> IMF, 'Republic of South Sudan', Country Report no. 21/70, April 2021, p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> The World Bank. South Sudan Rural Population. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=SS>.

<sup>16</sup> The World Bank. South Sudan Poverty headcount ratio at US\$1.90 a day (2011 PPP). <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=SS>.

<sup>17</sup> ILO 2019 in HDR 2020 UNDP. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/indicators/43006>.

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF, 'The Situation of Women and Children in South Sudan 2018-2020', July 2021, p. 51.

Climatic factors and environmental pressures have further impacted livelihoods. Up to 87 percent of the population depends on climate-sensitive sectors – agriculture, forestry, wildlife resources and fisheries – for their livelihood.<sup>19</sup> Climate change and environmental degradation severely impact livelihoods; temperatures have increased faster than in other countries in eastern Africa and rainfall has declined by 10 percent to 20 percent, with increased variability in the amount and timing since the mid-1970s. Areas receiving adequate rain for livestock and farming have declined, affecting agricultural and natural resource-based livelihoods. Over 56 percent of the population is already vulnerable to drought and flood shocks.<sup>20</sup> In 2020-2021, net cereal production in the traditional sector was seven percent above the 2015-2019 annual average but still well below pre-conflict levels.<sup>21</sup>

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the economy, livelihoods and access to basic services such as education and health care. Recorded case numbers have been low, due to low testing capacity (as of November 2021, there had been 133 recorded deaths from COVID-19 and over 12,400 people had tested positive for the virus).<sup>22</sup> However, in-country and cross-border restrictions to counter the transmission of COVID-19 have disrupted livelihoods and services and placed markets under stress, adversely affecting many in the population. The pandemic has also impacted humanitarian operations, with temporary suspensions of some activities and some delays in the disbursement of supplies.

## 1.4 UNDP programme assessed

The UNDP South Sudan's current country programme (2019-2021) outlines two outcomes and eight outputs, and the previous country programme (2016-2018) outlined three outcomes and 10 outputs. The 2019-2021 programme is articulated within the United Nations Cooperation Framework (UNCF) 2019-2021 and is aligned with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) mandate and the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021.

From 2016 through 2021, UNDP South Sudan implemented 60 projects of varying sizes and at various stages of implementation, of which many continued from the previous cycle. The resilient communities portfolio included 12 projects, the local economy portfolio included 5 projects, and the peace and governance portfolio included 16 projects. UNDP also acted in a fund-managing role for 27 projects. Most of the projects were directly executed by UNDP. The list of projects is presented in Annex 4.

UNDP acts in fund-managing capacity for the South Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund (US\$206 million from 2016-2021) and is the principal recipient of the Global Fund for HIV and tuberculosis (US\$110 million from 2016-2021). The resilient communities portfolio is the largest, comprising US\$114 million (of which US\$110 million comprises Global Fund resources), followed by the peace and governance portfolio comprising US\$89 million and the local economy portfolio comprising US\$25 million. Fund-managing projects comprised US\$206 million. The decline in the budget is mainly due to the closure of the South Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund. Execution rates were relatively similar across the portfolios, with the highest delivery for the resilient communities portfolio (83 percent) and the lowest for the local economy portfolio (76 percent) (Table 1).

<sup>19</sup> Relief Web. Climate Change Profile: South Sudan. February 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/climate-change-profile-south-sudan>.

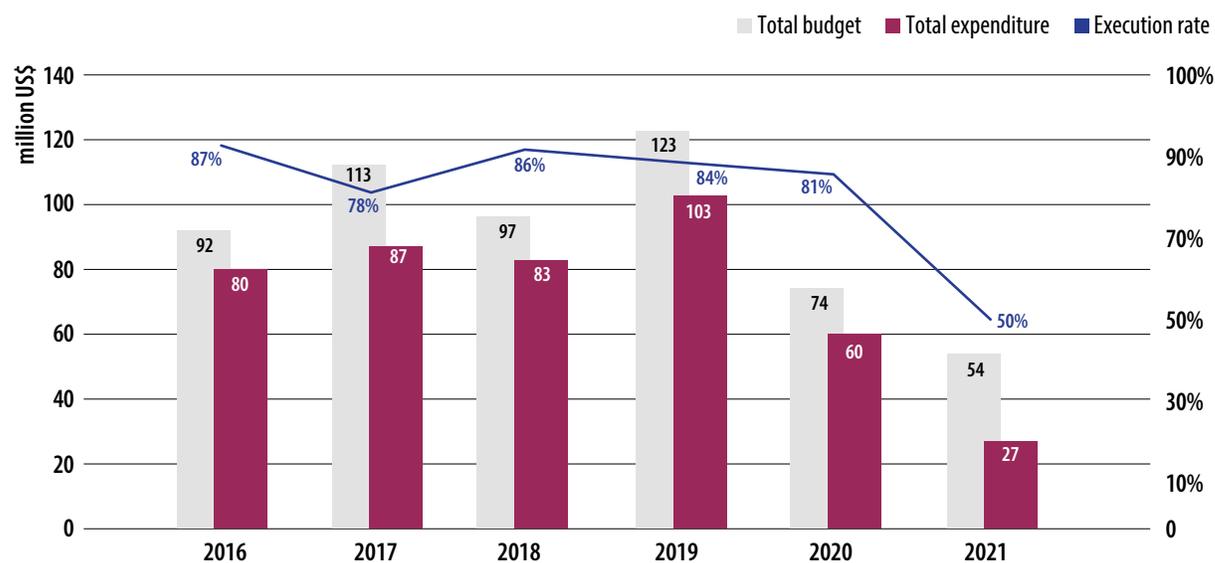
<sup>20</sup> South Sudan initial national communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Government of South Sudan and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2018, p. 19. <https://unfccc.int/documents/199455>.

<sup>21</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and World Food Programme, 'Special Report: 2020 FAO/WFP Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CSFAM) to the Republic of South Sudan', May 2021, p. i and p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> World Health Organization. South Sudan COVID-19 cases. 4 November 2021. <https://COVID19.who.int/region/afro/country/ss>.

The annual budget fluctuated from US\$92 million in 2016 to a peak of US\$123 million in 2019. For 2021, the budget was US\$54 million and expenditure was US\$27 million as of 13 October 2021, with an additional US\$10.9 million committed to be spent in the year. The execution rate has been relatively consistent over the period, with an average of 83 percent from 2016 to 2020 (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1. Programme Budget and Expenditure (2016-2021)**



Note: The budget and expenditure presented here includes fiduciary-related funds, for example, Global Funds and the South Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund.

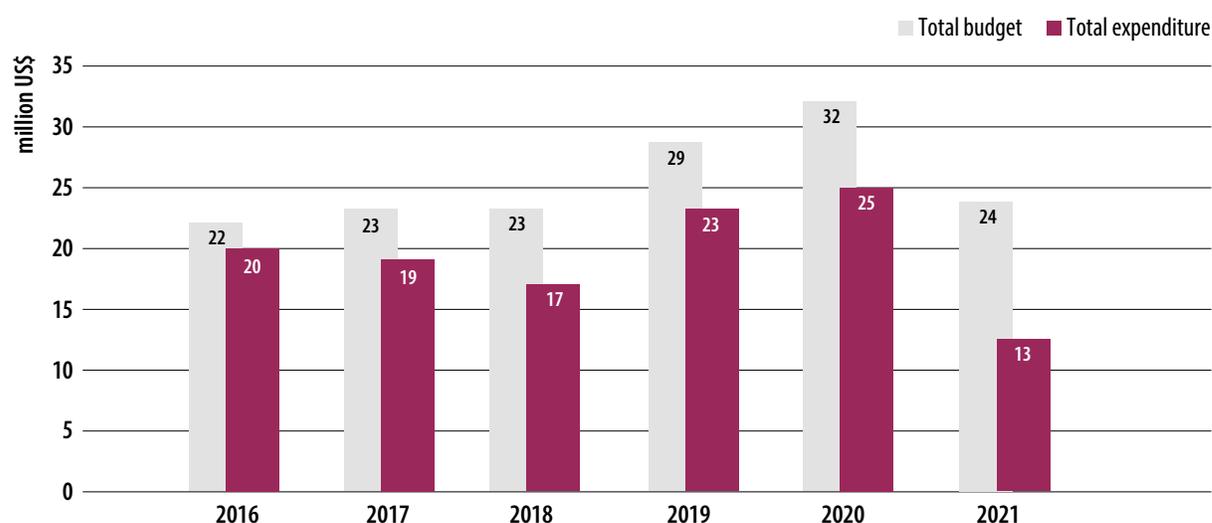
Source: Atlas Project Data, Power Bi, October 2021

**FIGURE 2. Expenditure by Gender Marker (2016-2021)**



Source: Atlas Project Data, Power Bi, October 2021

**FIGURE 3. Annual budget and expenditure – excluding fund-managing projects and Global Fund**



Note: The budget and expenditure presented here excludes fiduciary-related funds, for example, Global Fund and the South Sudan Common Humanitarian Fund.

Source: Atlas Project Data, Power Bi, October 2021

**TABLE 1. Country programme outcome and expenditure 2016-2021 (million US\$)**

| Country Programme Outcomes                    |   | Budget               | Expenditure          | Delivery   |
|---|---|----------------------|----------------------|------------|
| CPD 2016-2018                                 | CPD 2019-2021   |                      |                      |            |
| More resilient communities (Outcome 1)        | Local economies are recovered and conditions and coping strategies are improved to end severe food insecurity (Outcome 2) | \$136,535,651        | \$113,529,021        | 83%        |
| Local economy reinvigorated (Outcome 2)       |   | \$34,036,574         | \$25,848,077         | 76%        |
| Peace and governance strengthened (Outcome 3) | Strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance at the national, state and local levels (Outcome 1)         | \$113,466,215        | \$88,517,500         | 78%        |
| Fund-managing agent projects                  |   | \$254,072,205        | \$206,542,744        | 81%        |
| <b>Total</b>                                  |   | <b>\$538,110,645</b> | <b>\$434,437,341</b> | <b>81%</b> |

Source: Atlas Project Data, Power Bi, October 2021

The country office source of funding was primarily from non-core resources (94 percent of the US\$209 million) and core resources represent 6 percent of the expenditure. Government cost-sharing is very low (see Annex 2). The main donors of UNDP are The Netherlands (US\$24 million), Norway (US\$16 million), Japan (US\$15 million) and Sweden (US\$15 million).

Most resources – US\$333 million – were spent on projects having gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2); this was followed by projects having gender equality as a limited objective (GEN1), valued at US\$94 million (Figure 2).

# CHAPTER 2

# FINDINGS



This chapter presents the evaluation findings on UNDP’s role and contribution to peace and development outcomes in South Sudan.

The analysis of the two country programme outcomes is presented in five sections. Section 2.1 presents the findings of Outcome 1 on support to strengthening peace infrastructures and accountable governance at the national, state and local levels. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 present the findings of Outcome 2 on the recovery of local economies and improving coping strategies to end severe food insecurity. Section 2.4 presents cross-cutting issues including gender equality and women’s empowerment, partnerships and programme efficiency. Finally, Section 2.5 presents the performance ratings of the country programme and the two outcomes.

## 2.1 Strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance

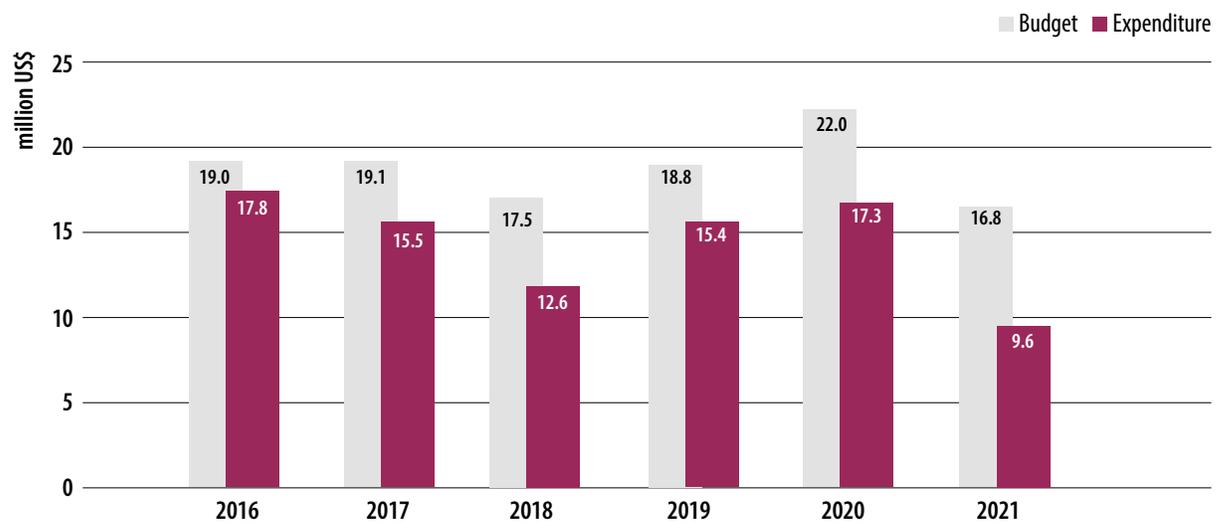
The country programme Outcome 1 – support to strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance – entailed four outputs (listed in box 2), three broad streams of work: institutional strengthening of rule of law and peace institutions, public administration; community peace and stabilization; and access to justice. The outputs and the expenditures are presented in Box 2.

### BOX 2. Outcome 1: Outputs and expenditure

| Outcome  | Outputs:  |
|--|---|
| Strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance at the national, state and local levels (2016-2018 Outcome 3: Peace and governance strengthened) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened communities and local-level institutions’ capacity to foster peaceful coexistence, management of resource-based conflicts, and community cohesion.</li> <li>• Institutional capacities and customary mechanisms at all levels strengthened to monitor, promote and protect citizens’ rights and increase access to justice, especially for vulnerable groups and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors.</li> <li>• Key governance institutions are enabled to perform core functions in line with the New Deal and the outcome of the peace process.</li> <li>• National and subnational governments’ capacities developed for tax and trade policy harmonization, revenue diversification, expansion of fiscal space, and more transparent utilization of public resources.</li> </ul> |

Source: UNDP ATLAS

**FIGURE 4. Outcome 1: Peace and governance strengthened**



Source: UNDP ATLAS

## A. Peace and rule-of-law institutions

**Finding 1. UNDP provided valuable support at the national and local levels to a number of South Sudanese institutions mandated to work on peace and rule of law.** Without this support, some of these institutions would have struggled to conduct key functions. South Sudan also faces challenges typical of conflict contexts, such as a proliferation of institutions and problems regarding their tenability.

For some peace and rule-of-law institutions at the national and state levels, UNDP has been the main and most sustained source of support, and, in some cases, the support goes back many years. Examples include the Ministry of Justice (at the national and state levels), the Bureau for Community Security and Arms Control, and the Peace and Reconciliation Commission. In 2020, a Ministry for Peacebuilding was established, which UNDP has also supported. UNDP's contribution in building the capacity of peace and rule-of-law institutions includes the provision of training and equipment and the construction and rehabilitation of buildings. In a context where funding from central government is often unreliable or minimal, institutions are usually meagrely equipped and needs are large, such support has obvious attractions and merits.

One risk is the proliferation of institutions with overlapping mandates, particularly for peace-focused institutions. In some cases, rationalization between institutions might be worthwhile, but the availability of external support (from multiple sources) encourages institutions to continue individually. As of 2021, in the areas of peace, reconciliation and violence reduction, the following institutions exist: the Ministry for Peacebuilding (set up in 2020), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (set up in June 2021), the Peace and Reconciliation Commission (set up in 2005), the DDR Commission (set up in 2005), and the Bureau for Community Security and Arms Control (set up in 2008). A Ministry of Peace and comprehensive peace agreement Implementation existed in 2011-2012. The pattern with such institutions is to build a headquarters structure in Juba and a structure of staff in the states (and sometimes for county staff, too) and to seek international support for office set-up costs and the formulation of strategies and plans. Collectively, this pattern of institution-building makes for high staff numbers relative to capacity outcomes and actual financing from the government, with older institutions struggling to find funds when newer institutions appear and attract external support.

## B. Public finance management (PFM)

### **Finding 2. UNDP support to the national Ministry of Finance and Planning has been important in the preparation of reports and the National Development Strategy.**

UNDP has provided support directly to the national Ministry of Finance and Planning since 2015. In interviews for this evaluation, officials from the Ministry of Finance and Planning and state ministries of finance expressed their appreciation for UNDP material, technical and capacity-building support. Some interviewees called for further support, for example, to repair local ministry buildings that had been damaged in the civil war and to provide training for staff in financial management and revenue collection policy.

Outputs from UNDP's engagements with the Ministry of Finance and Planning included the National Development Strategy for 2018-2021 and reports on re-establishing a New Deal process and funding peace.<sup>23</sup> UNDP is also supporting the preparation of the next National Development Strategy, covering 2022-2024. UNDP support not enabling a larger impact also reflects the scale of the challenge in bringing about progress in economic and PFM reform. In this regard, UNDP is yet to ensure that its efforts in this area are coordinated with relevant international institutions (in particular the IMF, the World Bank and the African Development Bank) so that each organization can leverage its expertise and that efforts are not duplicated. The increased engagement of the IMF with South Sudan in 2020-2021 is an encouraging development for monitoring stabilization prospects.

Efforts to advance economic reforms are vulnerable to political events and changes in ministers and deputy ministers in the Ministry of Finance and Planning and other key government financial and economic appointments (such as governor of the Bank of South Sudan and ministers in economy portfolio ministries). Changes have been frequent in the past and the criteria for dismissal and appointment have not been clear. Between independence in 2011 and 2021, South Sudan had six different ministers of finance, the latest appointed in September 2020. Turnover in political appointments is outside UNDP's control. However, it is important to consider how this impact can be mitigated and whether, for example, greater involvement of South Sudanese non-government institutions such as think tanks and research centres could help make momentum for reform independent of individuals (inside and outside economic reform projects). UNDP's engagement with Ebony Centre assumes importance in this regard. UNDP collaborated with Ebony Centre while enabling high-level policy discussion forums on the National Development Strategy in 2020, for countrywide national consultations. The Centre was engaged as the Virtual Economic Support Team that ensured sustained discussion of the government and the IMF even in the face of changes in the appointment of government officials.

### **Finding 3. Support to state revenue authorities contributed to their revenue management capacities.**

Since 2016, UNDP has supported public financial management in the states through a project that has been extended to 2022. UNDP initiatives largely focused on state authorities variously in Jonglei, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria, providing technical assistance on tax and the regulatory framework for state revenue authorities and training to state officials in budgeting and gender mainstreaming. An evaluation in 2020 found that the project had been satisfactory in its overall objective and effectiveness.

<sup>23</sup> 'Re-establishing the New Deal process in South Sudan', October 2019; and 'Funding for peace in South Sudan: Mapping national, state and donor funding', June 2019.

Reported data and interviews suggest large increases in revenue collection by state revenue authorities. Some caveats apply to these assessments of results with the state revenue authorities. First, the reported increases in revenue collection are from a very low base and have not been accompanied by an increase in public service delivery (which likely depends on other PFM improvements, in particular, budgetary allocations from the central government). Second, it is too early to say whether the increases will form a sustained trend of real-term growth in non-oil revenue collection. Meanwhile, it may also be worth considering whether more could be done to partner with South Sudanese institutions (such as universities or professional skills training centres) for training. The National Transformative Leadership Institute at Juba University is a good example of a South Sudanese institution that has the capacity and ability to play a significant role in training national and state-level officials.

There are signs, too, of an acknowledgement of the importance of accelerating tax reforms and revenue management at the subnational level and of the potential for state revenue authorities to learn from each other's experience. One issue to be addressed is the autonomy of revenue commissioners, which will likely require strengthening the legislation governing state revenue authorities.

**Finding 4. UNDP has supported the production of some good economic analyses and reports. Such work could benefit the government and public understanding of the economy by including a more accurate analysis of the oil sector. Engagement with South Sudanese research centres and think tanks could strengthen South Sudanese policy debate and dialogue and help the development of those institutions.**

UNDP has supported the research and publication of a number of economy-focused reports, such as the two 2019 reports mentioned above (on the New Deal process and funding peace) and a report in 2020 on gender and the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, produced jointly with the University of Juba.<sup>24</sup> In 2021, UNDP published a report with the Ministry of Trade and Industry on trade and peace.<sup>25</sup> UNDP has also sometimes produced internal analytical papers on economic topics: for example, a seven-page analytical paper about depreciation in February 2021 and, in 2018, a joint paper with UNMISS about fuel subsidies. Support to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) for effective collection and analysis of disaggregated data to track progress towards national priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals, is valuable and essential. But it is somewhat peripheral to addressing the much wider challenge of producing and disseminating reliable data about the economy and public finances.

UNDP chose to engage in non-oil revenue areas, considering there are other actors in the oil revenue area. Nonetheless, oil is important at the central budgetary level, where there is a lack of clarity about gross and net revenues and about on-budget and off-budget spending. And oil is important at the local level in states where oil is produced also because of the environmental impacts. Other organizations have tried to contribute to oil sector analysis and transparency. Socio-economic response assessment of COVID supported by UNDP went well beyond the analysis on oil. The report looked at prospects for macroeconomic and fiscal aspects and human development. UNDP was the government's key partner for the revision of the National Development Strategy, which has economic diversification as one of its priorities.

South Sudan has several capable think tanks and university departments and research centres.<sup>26</sup> Greater engagement with South Sudanese research centres and think tanks would be beneficial, as it would likely help to increase the impact of published reports and it would also help the development of South Sudanese institutions. A common weakness when international organizations in South Sudan produce high-quality

<sup>24</sup> University of Juba and UNDP, 'Gender and socio-economic impact assessments of COVID-19 pandemic', April 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Trade and Industry and UNDP, 'Trade for peace and resilience in South Sudan', policy brief, October 2021.

<sup>26</sup> South Sudanese think-tanks with capability in the economic and policy sphere include the Centre for Strategic and Policy Studies, the Ebony Centre and the Sudd Institute.

reports is that, too often, those reports are produced with little ownership (and authorship) by South Sudanese research institutions and think tanks, and the reports consequently have little impact within the country. In an interview for this evaluation, the Vice-Chancellor of Juba University said that UNDP engagement with the university was appreciated and that he would welcome more. The university has reportedly researched areas such as civil service salaries and taxation bands.

## C. Public administration

**Finding 5. UNDP has played an important role in building public administration capacity through projects deploying foreign advisers and support officers. Nonetheless, questions remain about sustainability and long-term institutional capacities.**

Through a 2013-2019 project for support to public administration and a 2019-2022 project for governance and economic management support, UNDP has provided important support for building the capacity of South Sudan's public sector. The first of these projects, with IGAD, deployed a total of 199 'civil service support officers' from East African neighbour states to 22 institutions (19 ministries, the National Legislative Assembly, the Council of States, and the HIV/AIDS Commission). The second project has aimed to deploy 'special skill experts' and also support the implementation of Chapter IV of the 2018 Revitalized Agreement.

The practice of seconding technical advisors or advisers to government institutions is generally not questioned. However, there were questions about its effectiveness, especially when the practice continues for many years, rather than just a short period of seconding staff to address capacity gaps that urgently need filling. One risk is that external advisers act as substitutes, not creating genuine capacity and not producing change that lasts after their departure. Several interviewees expressed the view that advisers are often used only for fulfilling administrative duties rather than technical and policy support or advancing vision. Notwithstanding several policy outputs by the advisors, another risk is that institutions end up depending always on external advisers to draft policies and strategic documents and even to carry out administrative functions. In itself, the production of policies seems positive. However, if the drafting is invariably led and done by external staff or consultants provided through UNDP projects, this is not a promising way to build national ownership of policies. In the near term, there may be no easy solution to the pattern of reliance on external support that is meant to build capacity. But it would be a positive step to acknowledge the risks more and explore ways they could be addressed. In 2020, UNDP deployed Special Skills Experts (SSEs) in targeted government institutions to also provide on-job mentorship and training to national staff (change agents in the public sector of South Sudan). While this is an important measure to address the approach to human resource support to public sector institutions, it is too early to make observations on the outcomes of this approach.

**Finding 6. The lack of a sustainable approach to strengthening staff capacities in government institutions has undermined the contribution of UNDP as well as those of other agencies. UNDP initiatives are yet to address the structural challenges of public administration and civil service capacities.**

In the past decade, UNDP used approaches such as the Project Management Unit (PMU) and twinning to strengthen technical and other capacities in public sector institutions. There is a general view that UNDP has been a leading source of assistance and that embedding PMUs in government has enhanced ownership. Beneficiary institutions often received support from other UN organizations and UNMISS.

The absence of an institutionalized approach to professionalizing civil services remains an issue in South Sudan. Efforts such as introducing Special Skills Experts in a few institutions, while essential, do not supplant the need for concrete measures to streamline human resource support and transition to more sustainable government capacities. Often, public sector human resources support was for a short duration and in a context where there were no efforts towards public administration reform processes or civil service reforms. Opportunities to promote more sustainable structures and professionalization of the civil service have not been adequately explored. While part of the reason for this is the lack of clear and approved institutional mandates and political volatility, this is nevertheless an area that merits further UNDP consideration.

UNDP used Civil society organizations (CSOs) and universities to train government staff on office procedures, work ethics and using computers. The limited scope of training (focused on basic functions and one-off training) meant that training had a limited impact on improving staff skills and capacities. Absent were technical and advanced administrative training structures that could nurture a cadre of national civil service professionals who could then mentor their colleagues. Moreover, training using CSOs was project-focused and lacked continuity in the curriculum. UNDP activities that are planned include updating the government curriculum, providing equipment for training in two government centres in Juba and having a regularized schedule for training civil servants.

Central to building the capacity of the public sector is the ability to retain skilled personnel. As the IGAD project evaluation noted, there are huge challenges to retaining skilled staff, the primary one being abysmally low salaries.<sup>27</sup> Ministries and other government institutions lose trained staff to NGOs and international organizations largely because of greatly inferior remuneration in the civil service. To reach a situation of capable public sector staff, with a satisfactory level of staff retention, civil service reforms need to be implemented, with changes to salaries and the establishment of permanent arrangements for staff training in routing and specialized skills. Given its many years of engagement, there is scope for UNDP to restructure its support to address some of the structural challenges of the civil service.

Although not specific to UNDP, one of the issues that need to be addressed urgently in the economic reform agenda as an intermediary measure is public sector salaries. Salaries paid to the international experts, in contrast, are many folds higher, leading to disparities and negative incentives. Low salaries in the public sector also affect efforts to improve the effectiveness of government, not just efforts to deliver PFM improvements. Over the past five years, public sector salary increases have lagged far behind depreciation and inflation, meaning that, for most public sector workers, official salaries are far too little to live on. In comparison with the diminished value of salaries, the perennial problems of salaries arriving late or being paid in arrears are almost secondary. In some cases, salaries have not been increased since 2015, and the monthly salary for a Grade 1 official was reportedly just SSP7,000 in 2021 (around US\$40 at the budget exchange rate, and less than US\$20 at the commercial exchange rate). Salaries in one state ministry reportedly ranged from SSP720 to SSP5,000 (the latter for a director-general). These salaries are not enough to live on and contribute to a situation in which staff in government offices pursue other casual employment and second jobs. The meagre level of public sector salaries is connected with other characteristics of South Sudan's economy and governance, such as absenteeism, off-books revenues and spending, patronage-based distribution of public monies, and corruption. While some of these issues will be addressed as public sector institutions stabilize, there is a need for intermediary measures. UNDP is yet to prioritize this issue.

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<sup>27</sup> IGAD project evaluation 2020

## D. Peace and reconciliation

**Finding 7. UNDP's support to the National Dialogue was a valuable contribution to South Sudanese efforts to build peace and bring about peaceful change. Opportunities to increase the potential impact of the Dialogue were missed.**

South Sudan's National Dialogue ran from 2017 to 2020, conducting grassroots consultations, then regional conferences and a concluding conference. UNDP supported the National Dialogue Secretariat in the areas of communication and documentation, and UNDP's engagement with the Dialogue helped in mobilizing international financial support for the Dialogue. It also encouraged wider UN engagement with the dialogue, broadly conditioned on the Dialogue satisfying criteria for an effective and genuine national dialogue.

Aspects of how the Dialogue was conducted, and participation in it, were criticized by some South Sudanese. However, in the larger picture, the Dialogue was a considerable achievement, with great potential to help with making and building peace. The grassroots consultations and subsequent conferences provided a systematic framework for South Sudanese to discuss in a free and open manner what they thought had gone wrong in the country and how it could be remedied, as was documented in the Dialogue's reports. Moreover, the Dialogue was entirely managed and led by the government, in contrast with the IGAD-led High-Level Revitalization Forum, which produced the 2018 Revitalized Agreement. UNDP should be credited for providing support to a promising nationally led peacebuilding process.

The National Dialogue and the HLRF had the potential to complement each other as two simultaneous major initiatives that approached peace from different directions and by different means. Ultimately, however, this potential was not fulfilled. Instead, the HLRF's final product, the 2018 Revitalized Agreement, overshadowed the concluding phases of the National Dialogue, despite the manifest shortcomings in the implementation of the agreement during 2018-2021 and the significant recommendations in the National Dialogue Steering Committee's Final Report in December 2020. While UNDP also provided support to the implementation efforts of the Agreement, this outcome, although beyond the control of any one actor or party, is undoubtedly a missed peacebuilding opportunity in South Sudan.

UNDP was right to provide support to efforts to implement the 2018 Revitalized Agreement. However, in its engagement with the National Dialogue, UNDP could beneficially have intensified its technical support to the National Dialogue Secretariat, helping with the publication and dissemination of the Dialogue's documentation. Due to limitations in the Secretariat's communications capacity, the publication of output documentation was slow and little of it reached the general public, UN agencies and donors.

**Finding 8. UNDP peace and social cohesion projects had positive impacts through supporting local peace structures, such as 'peace committees', and partnering with local NGOs. The scale and durability of their impact are modest and may be overstated by quantitative indicators. The standard approach to convening local dialogue events has weaknesses and may need reconsidering.**

UNDP's community peace and cohesion initiatives, and previous iterations thereof, have provided extensive support to local peacebuilding entities, such as county-level peace committees. This has also benefited South Sudanese partner organizations, such as the National Transformative Leadership Institute (NTLI) at Juba University and NGOs. The development of the NTLI (which has had other partners besides UNDP) is a positive example of national capacity development.

For South Sudanese NGO partners, one shortcoming is that UNDP funding has tended to be short-term. This has affected the ability of beneficiary organizations to pursue longer-term developmental ideas of their own and to maintain stable staffing levels rather than being limited to a core of full-time semi-permanent staff and contracting other staff on short-term contracts for projects.

UNDP reports and evaluations have used quantitative measures to indicate impact in local peacebuilding, for example, reporting on the establishment, training and operationalization of 215 county-level peace committees. Peace committees have an important role to play in enabling community peace. The relevance of peace committees is also acknowledged by the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE). However, their effectiveness depends on the approach followed and on anchoring them in larger peace processes. Notwithstanding anecdotal evidence of successful mediation, there is scope for improving the effectiveness of the peace committees in enabling community peace.

Evidence for peace committees contributing significantly to the reduction of conflict and violence, or reconciliation, dialogue and problem-solving, is weak, often due to significant enabling environment challenges. One limitation on effectiveness is the degree to which the institutional and administrative environment enables or prevents the successful functioning of peace committees. In general, local peace committees (at the county level and lower) have not had the facilitating factors such as effective systems of local government rule of law and access to justice. Linkages to peace institutions at the state level have been weak, amidst the wavering national-level efforts

Critical views of the standard approach to convening local dialogue events should also be acknowledged. A long-standing problem with local peace meetings is that the result looks good at the time, but the impact is short-lived. Providing money and expense allowances to participants in UNDP-sponsored, local peacebuilding meetings and events can distort motivations.<sup>28</sup> While this approach may generate immediate national results, such as participation in an event and a resulting declaration or agreement, local peacebuilding and bottom-up peace processes require sustained engagement and other methods if they are to produce a commitment to change and peaceful social cohesion. UNDP and UN partners also organize joint state dialogues, but their effectiveness is evolving. Interviews also point to the fact that there is no clarity, for example, on the state-level mandates for peace committees and how interstate conflict drivers will be dealt with.

Youth actively participated in the community peace and security committees, some with designated formalized community peace roles. A further question is whether initiatives supporting local peacebuilding structures (not limited to committees) should look for more opportunities to generate tangible peace dividends, especially dividends that contribute to livelihoods. To sustain their interest and keep youth away from violence and extremism, productive capacities are critical. In an area suffering from high levels of insecurity and violence, local peacebuilding and dialogue initiatives that produce short-term benefits are not enough to change attitudes and motivations. Peace dividends need sustained engagement and ownership of community-level efforts, linked to viable income-generation opportunities. A comprehensive response that would address different dimensions of community peace was lacking.

**Finding 9. Despite engagement in local peacebuilding and the National Dialogue, UNDP has not taken full advantage of opportunities to cooperate with other influential South Sudanese peace actors to positively influence thinking about peace strategy and collective action for peace.**

<sup>28</sup> For a similar observation (about workshops and 'incentives'), see 'Access to Justice and Rule of Law project: Final Evaluation', December 2019, p. 41.

One of UNDP's comparative advantages as a UN organization is its wide programmatic and operating experience and its history of partnerships with the South Sudanese Government and civil society actors. In recent years, however, there appears to have been a decline in engagement with civil society advocacy actors. One of the reasons for this is their stand on National Dialogue and the approach. For example, the levels of engagement between UNDP and faith-based organizations such as the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC), a partner of many years, has been limited during 2017-2020. The record of faith-based institutions playing a role in peacebuilding in South Sudan, with and without international or donor cooperation, is understandably mixed.<sup>29</sup> However, given the reach and strength of the SSCC, the shared focus in work on peacebuilding, and the evidence of productive cooperation in the past, there is scope for beneficial cooperation. While UNDP has renewed cooperation with SSCC, the larger point is the efforts that are needed to engage with diverse views and bring them into dialogue.

During UNDP's engagement with the National Dialogue, UNDP had an opportunity to promote clear thinking and understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of the two parallel national peace initiatives (the dialogue and the HRLF) and to encourage active complementarity. With UNDP's capacities and programme history in the country, UNDP can also positively influence advancing peace strategies. It can do this indirectly, by working with and facilitating national voices on peace (such as think tanks, research centres and civil society organizations) and in its cooperation within the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and with UNMISS. That this opportunity was missed by others (South Sudanese actors and international agencies), as well as UNDP, does not negate the fact that this represents a missed opportunity. As of 2021, South Sudan found itself with a Revitalized Agreement that had fallen far behind its implementation targets (causing South Sudanese and international concern) and there remains a set of National Dialogue recommendations that the government had yet to address.<sup>30</sup>

Clarity and proactiveness in the approach to peace and reconciliation were not always evident. For example, the Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation Project, led by UNDP in partnership with UN agencies, which essentially comprises support to the National Dialogue, has limitations in supporting measures that would build from the conflict resolution process (by the High Level Revitalization Forum (HRLF)) to peace and reconciliation (through National Dialogue). This joint UN engagement fell short of its potential to advance thinking about peace strategy. The National Dialogue started before the initiative to revitalize the 2015 peace agreement, but the two initiatives were not harmonious. To a limited extent, therefore, the UN Peacebuilding Fund facilitated the UN's work and engagement with the National Dialogue.

**Finding 10. UNDP has a history of projects that have had stabilization and recovery, and more recently resilience, as the overall goals. These projects have delivered a wide variety of useful short-term benefits, but they lack any significant strategy for longer-term stabilization. UNDP was not successful in providing a stabilization model that addresses the most compelling drivers of conflict and that brings together other actors.**

Between 2009 and 2015, UNDP coordinated and monitored a joint UN programme on stabilization in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes and Warrap. This programme was followed by a UNDP project for 'State integrated recovery and stabilization' and then the 'Recovery and resilience programme', which ran from

<sup>29</sup> South Sudan Peacebuilding Opportunities Fund, 'Learning Towards a National Agenda for Reconciliation: Review of Key National-Level Peace and Reconciliation Initiatives, 2012-2020 – Recurring Patterns and Themes', June 2020, pp. 6-11.

<sup>30</sup> For examples of South Sudanese and UN assessments, see: People's Coalition for Civil Action, 'The Declaration', Juba, 30 July 2021; Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), 'There must be urgency and collective efforts to address impediments, if progress on the R-ARCSS is to be sustained and accelerated', press release, Juba, 23 September 2021; UN, 'Situation in South Sudan: Report of the Secretary-General', S/2021/784, September 2021, paragraphs 107 and 109.

2018 to December 2022. Since 2018, there has also existed a UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience, for which UNDP is the administrative agent and a partner in some of the projects covered by the fund.

These projects have supported a range of outputs, such as local roads rehabilitation, construction of local government buildings, and (in the latest such project) rehabilitation of vocational training centres and parts of Upper Nile University. These activities are essential and basic to confidence-building and peace processes. The Joint Programme for Recovery and Resilience that UNDP led in Yambio points to the importance of joint UN activities in addressing primary drivers of peace in South Sudan. There is scope to expand such activities with a stronger resilience dimension, for providing a concerted strategy for stabilization to enable coordinated recovery and resilience-building that would thereby promote longer-term development. Greater resilience dimension will be essential if UNDP wishes to provide programme alternatives for recovery and rehabilitation in concert with peacebuilding in Yambio or other regions of South Sudan. Any future projects or programmes for stabilization should also be informed by lessons from past programmes in South Sudan and other conflict settings.

## E. Rule of law

**Finding 11. UNDP's support to rule of law and access to justice has been one of its long-term strengths in South Sudan, making an important difference to rule-of-law capabilities. Consolidation of support in this area is crucial for a more focused and longer-term engagement in this area.**

During 2013-2017 and 2017-2020, UNDP implemented successive projects to support access to justice and rule of law. These projects provided valuable and varied support, ranging from support for mobile courts (which, for example, in Western Equatoria increased courts' capacity to hear gender-based violence cases) and the provision of equipment and training for the Police Service's Special Protection Unit, to support to the National Prison Service for vocational training at prisons and to support to the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs for drafting a constitution bill. Justice and rule-of-law officials interviewed for this evaluation had positive views about UNDP's support and contribution.

UNDP should further consolidate its support by building on the lessons from previous programmes and take note of recommendations from project evaluations. UNDP should review its strategy (for rule of law), invest more in infrastructure development, increase the timeframe for implementing partners and seek state government commitment and contribution to ensuring that rule-of-law institutions are functional and operating.<sup>31</sup>

Managing expectations is an important part of increasing ownership. UNDP has successfully built essential technical capacity in rule-of-law institutions and provided basic infrastructure and equipment to enable new initiatives to operate. Initiatives have included the case management system, crime statistics reports, a Special Protection Unit and an Emergency Call Centre. When these initiatives move into an ongoing operational phase, most rule-of-law institutions expect UNDP to continue providing substantive financial support for the ongoing operation of these initiatives. UNDP experience in some rule-of-law projects shows that government institutions maintain assets that were created after the project period. UNDP needs to enable its rule-of-law and justice-sector counterparts to find internal South Sudanese means of support, to reduce reliance on international assistance and to encourage gradual increases in its counterparts' investment in these initiatives.

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<sup>31</sup> UNDP, 'Access to justice and rule of law project: Final evaluation report', December 2019, pp. 44-45.

## 2.2 Local economy reinvigorated

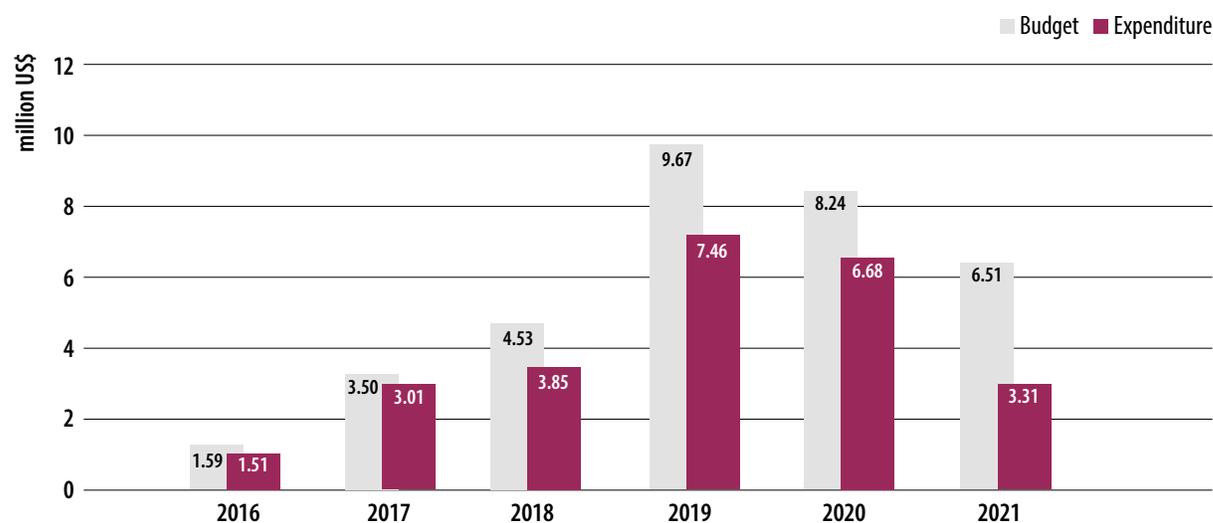
UNDP support to local economic revitalization entailed community-level recovery programmes with a focus on agricultural value-chain development, livelihoods skills and infrastructure development. There were also initiatives specifically targeted at youth to nurture entrepreneurial culture and market-linked skills to enhance employability and productive engagement in economic activities. In addition, several projects promoting community peace use livelihoods as an entry point for community mobilization. Similarly, UNDP's infrastructure support provided short-term cash-for-work. The full list of projects is presented in Annex 4 and the expenditure for the portfolio is presented in Box 3. Compared to Outcome 1, this is a smaller component in terms of the resources mobilized.

### BOX 3. Outcome 2: Local economy invigorated

| Outcome  | Outputs:   |
|--|--|
| Local economies are recovered and conditions and coping strategies are improved to end severe food insecurity. | Increased access to emergency assistance, alternative livelihood, and employment opportunities for families in conflict- and disaster-prone communities. |

Source: UNDP ATLAS

### FIGURE 5. Outcome 2: Local economy invigorated



Source: UNDP ATLAS

**Finding 12. UNDP support to employment and livelihoods comprised several micro-level initiatives that contributed to skills development and addressed basic infrastructure issues.** UNDP's economic revitalization efforts were short-term and did not provide sustainable livelihood options. UNDP could not address key structural challenges to sustainable livelihoods, which are more assured in an environment of general economic growth.

UNDP was largely successful in achieving its set of employment-generation and livelihoods targets, whether it is the functioning of the supported vocational training centres, the delivery of training or the operationalization of start-up units. UNDP was also successful in mobilizing the participation of women in its various programmes, achieving over 28 percent participation in some programmes. UNDP established seven vocational training centres, trained over 2000 youth and women in livelihood skills and supported the construction of community markets. Over 100 micro and small-scale enterprises were supported (including for youth and women entrepreneurs) through the provision of business start-up capital and entrepreneurship skills training and business advisory services. Value-chain support was provided in 14 different areas of milk, fish and agricultural products to enhance market opportunities. Cooperatives and Village Savings and Loan Associations were established to promote the production and marketing of agricultural, livestock and fisheries products. Market assessment to understand supply constraints, demand and opportunities was carried out in Northern Bahr el Ghazal.

Notwithstanding the project delivery in terms of the number of beneficiaries reached and improvements in livelihoods in some cases, UNDP had overall limitations in enabling sustainable processes for addressing the key local livelihood and employment challenges. Besides the development of technical Vocational Education and Training Centres and the construction of markets, UNDP's local economic revitalization falls short of a robust strategy that can go beyond short-term initiatives to address key bottlenecks that would create more sustainable income-generation and employment. Challenges remain in improving coping strategies to end severe food insecurity at the household level, as stated in the programme framework and theory of change. Efforts to facilitate a social protection framework for locating short-term social safety nets measures such as cash-for-work are yet to be implemented.

An issue that came up frequently during evaluation consultations is the disparity in the reach of training and other livelihood support. UNDP programmes were implemented in areas with displaced and returned communities, but the initiatives could not reach severely affected remote rural areas. As vocational training was given in government facilities often located in towns, people in interior regions found it difficult to access that training. Alternatives such as community skills training also had limited reach. Since most agencies work with the same NGOs, the organizations selected for vocational training or enterprise development are those that benefitted from similar initiatives from different funders and are in a position to demonstrate results.

**Finding 13. UNDP-supported value-chain initiatives are in the early stages and need further financial investment, technical inputs and policy linkages. In the absence of concerted efforts to address structural challenges and linkages to the private sector, entrepreneurship development did not achieve the intended outcomes.**

Vocational training, apprenticeship and training centres that UNDP supported, provided livelihood skills (approximately 2000 men and women received vocational training) and there were tangible results in a section of trainees in improving their income. For example, the vocational training in prisons increased the income of trainees by 50 percent and motivated other prisoners by modelling positive behaviour. Most important, it had a positive impact on deradicalizing young prisoners. UNDP rehabilitated the vocational training centres' (VTC) infrastructure, provided tools and utilized government instructors in the delivery of training. UNDP addressed some of the issues of sustainability of vocational training centres beyond the project period and institutionalization processes were enabled by engaging government counterparts. The skills assessment methodology has also been standardized, including by issuing certificates. The personnel in the VTC are all government staff and existing training processes have been improved. After project completion, the government should be able to effectively maintain skills training. At the same time, UNDP and other agencies must contend with a lack of viable private-sector employment after training.

The micro-enterprise initiatives were successful in sparking participant interest to explore income-generation activities and to use household livelihood assets more productively. The outcomes of such initiatives for viable income-generation are constrained by several factors such as weak enabling policies, institutional anchoring and private sector linkages. UNDP's livelihood support at the individual and household levels does not enjoy an enabling environment for market demand and linkages and financing. There have also been limited steps to accelerate policy measures for economic revitalization, which is essential, given the severity of the challenges to livelihood and employment. Lack of partnerships and poor external coherence that could have added value to UNDP efforts, reduced the overall contribution. UNDP is taking measures to address these issues: the next iteration of UNDP's support to medium and small enterprise development is a deliberate and phased approach. The new engagement with the African Development Bank and the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) addresses the issue of continued business development services, financial inclusion and access to finance.

UNDP has identified the right areas for value-chain support, but each of these areas, whether horticulture, agro-products (millets, groundnuts), fisheries or poultry, needs planning, investment, technical input, market facilitation and policy linkages. Often, value-chain development is approached in a generalized manner through one-off activities instead of through efforts to address underlying market constraints. A range of support is needed to increase the marketability and profitability of the products of the micro-enterprises that UNDP supported. However, access to veterinary services is limited and livestock feed is scarce, as there is no proper management of farm cattle by owners and herders. In the value-chain, reliance on traditional meat production systems and lack of cold chain reduced income for livestock owners, resulting in consumption-oriented enterprise. The livestock sector, from a value-chain perspective, has very few value-addition activities, be it in terms of milk production and products or the processing of hides. Although South Sudan is pastoral, the sector is not modernized for self-sufficiency and exporting. There are similar challenges in other value-chain areas of UNDP support.

Too many value-chain areas and a lack of partnerships curtailed in-depth engagement, thereby limiting the impact of such initiatives. Given the limited scope of UNDP's enterprise development and value-chain support, areas such as productivity chains (including access to markets), farming or livestock practices, and locally sustainable practices received limited attention. Efforts to build and strengthen cooperatives are evolving, although urgent attention is needed, given the lack of formal systems and services for rural enterprise development. UNDP evaluations and interviews for this evaluation indicate that the processes and tools used for enterprise development and value-chain support should be reconsidered to identify problems and appropriate solutions.

The sustainability of rural entrepreneurship initiatives is important for stabilization and cohesion in conflict-affected communities. There are opportunities for greater synergy between various initiatives of UNDP. In some locations, such as Yambio, UNDP supported different types of initiatives, such as the construction of community markets, micro-finance for start-ups and value-chain support, each of which is essential for productive capacities. The linkages between such initiatives were not evident. Elements of the value-chain, such as access to support services, cooperatives, market linkages, financial inclusion mechanisms and finance, are essential to sustain the start-ups. Given the limited scope of UNDP support, most initiatives are not oriented towards sustainable medium-term livelihood opportunities. Closer cooperation and systematic partnerships with other agencies would be key to UNDP's value-chain support. A related issue is private sector development for improving employment, where wider partnerships are essential.

**Finding 14. There were efforts by UNDP to strengthen youth employment skills, which is relevant, given the high proportion of the younger population in South Sudan.** Short-duration projects had limitations in creating sustainable income-generation options for youth and in minimizing negative coping mechanisms. A holistic approach to improving productive capacities that address policies and institutional capacities and that promote viable models is required. Current efforts in South Sudan, including UNDP's, fall short of addressing this need.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and UNDP strategies identified youth employment as a priority area for stabilization and peace, a deliberate choice given the high proportion of the young population. Despite the focus on youth employment by UNDP and other agencies, a well-considered approach to improving policies for youth development and employment is lacking especially for the long term, which would involve a transition from humanitarian assistance to development. Livelihood initiatives were spread across value-chains to allow for the development of models that can have wider applicability. UNDP initiatives, including joint programmes, often translated into short-term vocational training and start-ups as discussed in the earlier findings.

While programmes such as the Youth Empowerment and Employment Project (YEEP) and the Skills for Youth Employability and Social Inclusion (SYE-SI) Project sought to link vocational training with employment and income-generation opportunities, poor coordination among agencies engaged in similar initiatives reduced the possibility of a medium-term focus and the promotion of sustainable programme models. In order to prevent violent extremism and to direct youth toward productive activities, viable vocational training linked to employment and income-generation opportunities are needed. Several other UN agencies, including UNMISS, provide similar vocational training, with each agency reaching a small number of beneficiaries. There were, however, limited efforts to provide a coordinated approach to youth employment that would go beyond the humanitarian mode of support.

## 2.3 Resilient communities

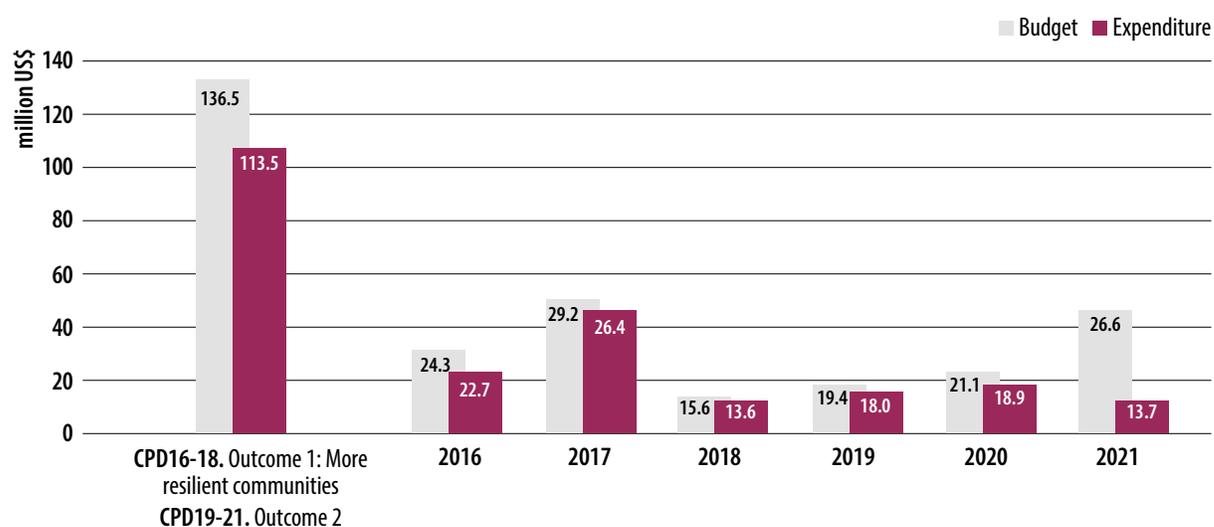
As part of Outcome 2, UNDP support to resilient communities entailed three key themes of work, namely: 1) support for the implementation of Global Fund grants for HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis in its role as the principal recipient; 2) climate change adaptation (which includes renewable energy, protected areas, watershed approaches and national reporting); and 3) improving the response to the COVID pandemic. Box 4 presents the outputs and expenditures for support to strengthen the resilience of communities. Of the US\$114 million, Global Fund comprises US\$110 million. While the outcome included sustainable energy solutions, there were no initiatives by UNDP in this area.

### BOX 4. Support to improve community resilience

| Outcome  | Outputs:  |
|--|---|
| Local economies are recovered and conditions and coping strategies are improved to end severe food insecurity. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacities at national and subnational levels are strengthened to deliver HIV/AIDS and related services to reduce vulnerability and to enhance productivity.</li> <li>• National and subnational institutions have the capacity to formulate and implement inclusive, sustainable energy and climate change adaptation.</li> </ul> |

Source: UNDP ATLAS

**FIGURE 6. Outcome 2: More resilient communities**



Source: UNDP ATLAS

## F. Support to Global Fund implementation

**Finding 15. UNDP contributed to meeting most of the performance parameters of the Global Fund in the areas of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.** Concerted efforts are needed to strengthen institutional capacities, timeliness and accuracy of data for planning and monitoring and internal controls in financial management and procurement.

In the past decade, UNDP has been the Principal Recipient of the Global Fund grants for South Sudan, administering the HIV/AIDS (including health systems strengthening component) and tuberculosis grants. During the assessment period, there was an increase in HIV/AIDS treatment and related services, with antiretroviral treatment coverage increasing from 17 percent in 2018 to 22.3 percent in 2020 (but still short of the target of 24 percent). There was an increase in the number of people on antiretroviral treatment (from 15 percent of the population in 2016 to 26 percent in 2020), prevention of mother-to-child transmission sites, and improvements in HIV prevention awareness. Similar improvements were evident in the availability of tuberculosis services and treatment (98 tuberculosis centres were established), while coverage increased to over 50 percent of the estimated infected population. Further, the success rate for tuberculosis treatment increased from 71 percent in 2015 to 80 percent in 2018, coming close to the target of 82 percent.<sup>32</sup>

The government counterparts appreciate UNDP's mandated role as the Principal Recipient and its efforts to maintain continuity in the grants. Besides the fiduciary role, UNDP support has been important for strengthening the Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM), improving compliance with grant requirements, streamlining data and communications systems, and renovating facilities. In the past three years, measures to strengthen the CCM helped to improve grant disbursement. The government recognizes the important role that the CCM plays in strengthening grant processes, but the CCM still has insufficient resources to perform oversight. There is also scope to improve coordination by the CCM and its effectiveness as a mechanism for engaging stakeholders and making linkages between Fund initiatives and other national health programmes.

<sup>32</sup> [https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8983/oig\\_gf-oig-19-021\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://www.theglobalfund.org/media/8983/oig_gf-oig-19-021_report_en.pdf).

According to the Global Fund Audit report of 2019, inadequate funding and staffing at the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, sub-optimal functioning of the National Health Management Information System (HMIS) and interruptions in the roll-out of District Health Information Software 2 (DHIS2) contributed to delayed HMIS reports in 2017 and 2018. These issues were subsequently addressed and the key steps taken by UNDP include: 1) DHIS2 upgrade and scale-up, which included technical support to the Ministry of Health for strengthening the functionality of the DHIS2 system and upgrade. The DHIS2 has been scaled up to all counties and selected health facilities in the country; 2) improvement of data utilization to address health data challenges in setting and monitoring performance targets. Due to software transition issues, the HMIS is not fully operational for timely reporting. Database support has been reviewed, while bottlenecks and system bugs that hampered the utilization of the system were identified and addressed. Five zonal trainings were provided for data clerks and county health department M&E staff on HMIS/DHIS2, as was training for health facility data clerks in collaboration with other partners, thereby improving capacities; and 3) provision of equipment for DHIS2, which facilitated operationalization of the system. Through the Global Fund grant, 360 electronic tablets (with SIM cards and monthly data bundles) were distributed across the country for use by data clerks to streamline and improve reporting into the DHIS2 system. Previously, the programme relied on the county M&E Departments to enter data into DHIS, but they do not have adequate staff to enter all health data. UNDP also will be providing additional mobile tablets in 2022 to cover the rest of the health facilities. These are significant improvements, but some of the concerns, such as staff turnover, data quality assurance, and the establishment of policy feedback loops, continue to hamper data use.

UNDP has aligned with the Ministry of Health's strategy to improve staff retention. This is appreciated by the Ministry, as it contrasts with other partner organizations' practice of seconding staff. However, issues related to staff capacities, poor procurement compliance, drug commodity management, weak internal controls over financial management, and procurement and management of assets, are yet to be addressed. There is frustration in the Ministry about external support being provided in ways that undermine staff development. The absence of a timeframe for improving the capacities to meet the requirements for becoming the Principal Recipient remains a contentious issue. From the government's perspective, there has been progress to qualify to be a Principal Recipient and setting a timeframe would provide an incentive to meet other requirements. There is also a perception that both of the Principal Recipients of the Global Fund grants for South Sudan (UNDP and Population Services International) are expensive for managing Project Management Units.

In 2018, UNDP carried out a comprehensive capacity assessment of the Ministry of Health and developed a Capacity Development and Transition Plan (CDTP) for the Ministry of Health to become the Principal Recipient, starting with the establishment of a project management unit and the gradual shift from a zero-cash policy to disbursement of funds to the Ministry of Health. The Global Fund approved the plan in 2019, but it could not be operationalized due to a lack of funds. The CDTP was updated to cover the entire health sector and includes civil society, which was recently discussed at a high-level meeting between the Ministry and the Global Fund Country Team. It is expected that the first phase will be rolled out once funding becomes available and the government can begin assuming a phased responsibility for the management of funds in the country.

Strengthening the capacities of South Sudan's health system has been an iterative process for the Global Fund grants. Although targets for infrastructure development, staffing and training were partially achieved, there was scope to use these processes to advance sectoral reforms and improve transparency. Along with fulfilling its role and duties as a Principal Recipient of Global Fund grants, UNDP should in principle have some comparative advantage for addressing health sector governance issues. However, even allowing for the context of COVID-19 and related challenges, it is not evident how UNDP optimized a comparative advantage in the area of health governance. UNDP has also yet to articulate its distinct role and engagement in strengthening the health sector in the areas of staffing policy, the role of local government, infrastructure development, procurement and budget transparency.

## G. Climate change protocols

**Finding 16. Despite the disproportionately lower resource investment, UNDP made important contributions to developing adaptation action plans.** South Sudan is highly vulnerable to climate variability with significant consequences for peace and development. Institutional, policy and legal frameworks for building climate change resilience are in the early stages.

South Sudan ranks amongst the five countries least prepared for tackling the impact of climate change.<sup>33</sup> UNDP has supported the development of South Sudan's second Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement and its first National Adaptation Plan. These are important initial steps to support the country's policy preparation for addressing climate change. The second NDC improves on South Sudan's first NDC by strengthening sectoral targets, policies and actions, improved adaptation components and greater information for general clarity, transparency and understanding.<sup>34</sup> More important, the NDC creates a signal to the international community that the country is moving towards readiness for receiving climate change finance, which may be bolstered by UNDP's support to create South Sudan's climate finance tracker. UNDP has enabled South Sudan to access Global Environment Facility finance, but the broader investments described in the NDC, especially from the private sector, will require greater confidence in the institutional capacities and financial governance before they become viable channels of investment.

The NDC and National Adaptation Plan were created in the absence of an overarching framework to institutionalize climate preparedness within government and the capacity to operationalize a response is weak at all levels. This would require an alignment between the government's national adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sectoral policies at the highest level and supporting laws and institutions to implement those policies. It was also not evident how UNDP is leveraging its previous engagement in the REDD programme to support community adaptation efforts in South Sudan.

The cumulative risk of recurrent disasters and climate variability in South Sudan has a destructive impact on livelihoods and rural infrastructure and is a contributing factor in human displacement. There are ongoing efforts in South Sudan to strengthen national disaster risk reduction frameworks, and the National Disaster Risk Management Policy provides the necessary momentum for this. While UN DRR and bilaterals are supporting policy efforts, there is a need for state- and local-level risk reduction efforts. UNDP intended to support disaster risk reduction data and early warning systems but could not pursue these activities.

Sustainable and affordable energy has immense potential in South Sudan to provide universal access to energy, particularly in employment-generation in rural areas. UNDP intended to pilot the use of solar energy for agricultural water-pumping and electricity supply to businesses and health services. It also intended to test the potential for bio-digesters for power supply in prisons. Decentralized forms of energy production are highly relevant in South Sudan as only 7 percent of the population had access to electricity in 2019.<sup>35</sup> The experience of UNDP Sudan shows that successful initiatives require policy and value-chain development and private sector engagement, and such initiatives are indeed possible in conflict contexts. UNDP is yet to build on organizations' experience in this area to engage strategically in the area of renewable energy.

<sup>33</sup> Climate Vulnerability Index 2017.

<sup>34</sup> See Climate Watch. Last accessed on 3 December 2021: <http://www.climatewatchdata.org/ndcs/country/SSD>.

<sup>35</sup> Tracking Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7): The Energy Progress Report provides the international community with a global dashboard to register progress on the targets of Sustainable Development Goal 7.

Although South Sudan makes a minimal contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions, the country is experiencing significant climate change impacts.<sup>36</sup> South Sudan has major gaps in national capacity for meteorological forecasting and climate planning and in local-level capacities for dealing with climate change (such as community awareness, climate information services) and for livelihood planning.<sup>37</sup> UNDP's support to the development of a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) office can help South Sudan access finance from funds that require a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, which is recognized by government counterparts. However, MRV of emissions requires advanced capacities to be done accurately and reliably. Experience from UNDP's Protected Areas Network Management project demonstrates that capacity for implementing and monitoring environmental interventions in South Sudan is in the early stages.

UNDP's climate-specific funding since 2016 amounts to under US\$1 million, with a portion of this linked to activities intended to mitigate future greenhouse gas emissions rather than building adaptive capacity. Opportunities are missed in enabling adaptation financing and promoting local solutions. Being at its early stages in the development process and characterized by an undiversified economy and nascent private sector, South Sudan has ample opportunity to redefine its development path. For example, investing in climate adaptation and resilience can unlock new industries, create new sources of revenue and generate new employment opportunities.

## H. COVID-19 response

**Finding 17. UNDP demonstrated proactiveness in supporting government efforts to respond to COVID-19.** The Socio-Economic Impact Assessment UNDP carried out has been important in informing the national strategy to respond to the Pandemic.

Although South Sudan, like most African countries, was spared from the worst of the pandemic, there were 12,410 confirmed cases of COVID-19 between 3 January 2020 and 1 November 2021, with 133 deaths.<sup>38</sup> COVID-19 reversed South Sudan's economic growth to 5.4 percent in 2020-2021, after a growth of 13.2 percent in 2019-2020.<sup>39</sup> The intrinsic linkages between the health, humanitarian, peace and development challenges in responding to COVID-19 only confirmed the need for an integrated approach to counter pandemics in South Sudan.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP led the UNCT Socio-economic Impact Assessment.<sup>40</sup> Based on the assessment, the National COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan was prepared to cover the period from June 2021 to May 2022.<sup>41</sup> It incorporates issues to be addressed in response to the pandemic, with total financial requirements estimated at US\$49,165,087. Support to strengthening the Public Health Emergency Operating Centre contributed to improved coordination of the national COVID-19 response. During the disruptions caused by COVID-19 in 2020-2021, there was perhaps justification in some cases for UNDP to provide material support, even on a small and *ad hoc* scale.

Although the pandemic had a smaller direct health impact than in other countries, the health system still came under severe strain, exposing underinvested social services and vulnerability. UNDP missed opportunities as the Principal Recipient of the Global Funds to strengthen health governance and information systems.

<sup>36</sup> Republic of South Sudan National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change 2016.

<sup>37</sup> USAID South Sudan Vulnerability Profile 2019.

<sup>38</sup> WHO, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> World Bank, 2021.

<sup>40</sup> [https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/COVID-19\\_South-Sudan-2020-web.pdf](https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/COVID-19_South-Sudan-2020-web.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/COVID-19\\_sprp\\_south\\_sudan\\_15jun2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/COVID-19_sprp_south_sudan_15jun2021.pdf).

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the implementation of UNDP programme activities, requiring an adaptive approach and fast-tracking of the use of resources. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the suspension of all training programmes and the closure of vocational training centres, as per government directive, and there were delays in recruitment for government technical positions. Another factor was the slow-down of government processes, including the formulation of the 2020-2021 budget. The NDS could not be reviewed in 2020.

## 2.4 Cross-cutting programme themes

### I. Gender equality and women's empowerment

**Finding 18. The 2018 Revitalized Agreement provided new opportunities to increase women's participation in public institutions and politics. But wider progress on gender equality and women's empowerment remained hindered by social and economic and security barriers. Components of UNDP's country-level strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment were implemented with some positive results. Partnerships with other agencies are essential for enhancing UNDP's contribution to women's security and development.**

As South Sudan completes its first decade of independence, the obstacles to gender equality and women's empowerment and safety continue. The constraints to women's security and political and economic participation are huge. There is little doubt, too, that the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 during 2020-2021 affected women disproportionately.<sup>42</sup> Conflicting priorities have also hindered efforts to improve women's livelihoods and security. South Sudan needed a two-pronged strategy of addressing immediate needs and facilitating longer-term solutions. While supporting both, UNDP programmes were more effective in providing short-term initiatives.

The country office gender equality strategies (2016-2017 and 2019-2021) guided UNDP's programmes to address structural barriers to women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence and participation in leadership and decision-making. The strategies also considered how gender can be addressed in conflict prevention, preparedness and recovery, and the importance of women's representation in peace processes. UNDP invested in a staff position to support the implementation of the strategy.

UNDP had some tangible outputs providing a basis for further engagement. UNDP ensured women's representation and participation from all 32 states of South Sudan in the development of the Draft Land Policy, which is at the Land Committee in the Transitional National Legislative Assembly. This process also has significance for gender-responsive policies and legislations. Gender mainstreaming in initiatives such as training for the Special Protection Unit within the South Sudan National Police Service and community policing were specifically designed to address SGBV and human rights violations. Such efforts contributed to changing perceptions about their responsibilities and transforming their role from authority holders to service providers and increasing the trust of security institutions. UNDP's contribution in reducing the backlog of court cases of gender-based violence and children in the conflict was important in addressing women's rights issues and gender-based violence in Western Equatoria. Mainstreaming gender in national planning and budgeting was also a significant step. For example, the State Ministry of Finance and Planning, planning departments and members of the public accounts and financial committees of State Legislative Assemblies were trained in gender mainstreaming in the budget. Such training is important, although translating this into sustained commitment in state government budget practices will require more consistent efforts.

<sup>42</sup> The Sudd Institute, 'The Economic Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic in South Sudan: An Update', Policy Brief, January 2021, pp. 1, 9 and 14.

The development of a gender affirmative action bill, as initiated by the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare with support from UNDP, is a step in the right direction. The bill is expected to operationalize the constitutional provisions on women's representation and can be a good tool for advocacy at all levels. The affirmative action provision in the R-ARCSS has created opportunities for increasing the participation of women in decision-making, although the complaints of the parties have not been resolved.

Although UNDP projects engaged women in employment-generation activities, they lacked well-considered economic development initiatives that address structural constraints that women are facing. As discussed in Section 2.2, several community-level UNDP projects had limited market traction, as they were too small or not viable or could not be sustained after the project period. Gender stereotypes in vocational training also had consequences for the choice and sustainability of women's enterprises supported by UNDP.

In 2015, South Sudan launched its National Action Plan 2015-2020 on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions. The Plan provided a framework to guide decisions on defence, diplomatic, humanitarian and development activities to ensure that the provisions of the UN resolutions on women, peace and security were incorporated into the government's work, with the aim of reducing the impact of conflict on women and girls and increasing women's representation and participation in decision-making.<sup>43</sup> Progress on implementing the plan and meeting its objectives, has been uneven, at best. Increases in women's participation in and representation in high-level political talks have been documented, for example in the HLRF and R-ARCSS.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, levels of conflict-related violence against women and girls have remained high.<sup>45</sup> To address SGBV and women's security, an interministerial response is needed, which the UN System is well-positioned to support. UN responses are often scattered and of limited scope to address even key functional gaps.

There were important collaborations, such as in the areas of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, between UNDP and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Similarly, under the COVID-19 Response Mechanism award, UNDP is partnering with UNFPA, which has expertise in the area of gender-based violence prevention and care. UNDP is also leveraging UNFPA's expertise by scaling up technical and financial support to women- and girl-friendly spaces, which are one-stop centres for women and girls that are being managed by UNFPA across the country.

Most UN agencies in South Sudan (including UNMISS) work on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. A coordinated response or collective work can enhance women's security and development, particularly when addressing critical issues of SGBV and women's access to justice. UNMISS, for example, has a large gender team spread across the country that can significantly add value to the efforts of other UN organizations. Collaboration between the mission and UNDP has been limited, with exceptions such as engagement during constitution-drafting. Joint programmatic efforts are not pursued despite the use of the Peacebuilding Fund. Engagement with UNMISS in the implementation of the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) decreased in recent years. UNMISS recently launched a network of women in the security sector in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare; this could have worked well if synergies with the current ongoing implementation of gender mainstreaming in the security sector had been considered. More strategic and longer-term partnerships in the areas of women's access to services and addressing SGBV could bolster UNDP's contribution and collective results in this area.

<sup>43</sup> Government of the Republic of South Sudan, 'South Sudan National Action Plan 2015-2020 on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and Related Resolutions', undated, p. 11.

<sup>44</sup> Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, 'South Sudan: 1325 National Action Plan monitoring and analysis', accessed 11 November 2021.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNMISS, 'Armed Violence Involving Community-based Militias in Greater Jonglei, January-August 2020', March 2021, p. 1; and OHCHR and UNMISS, 'Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Northern Unity, September-December 2018', February 2019, pp. 8-13.

## J. Partnerships

**Finding 19. While UNDP established strong partnerships with government institutions, the UN and other actors, it is yet to build on these partnerships for a more catalytic engagement in strengthening policy processes and peace mechanisms.**

Government institutions have expectations from UNDP for more resource inputs in terms of infrastructure, office equipment or staff support. While UNDP is establishing its value propositions as a facilitator of policy options and governance and economic reform models, there is scope for more proactive engagement. The absence of strong field offices to some extent reduced the scope for sustained policy partnerships at the state level and for UNDP to play a facilitating role in mobilizing other actors to concertedly support a sustained reform programme owned by the state authorities.

UNDP worked with the UN Women, UNFPA, International Organization for Migration, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNMISS and UNICEF to provide recovery support. Engagement with UN agencies was stronger when there were joint projects, and funding streams such as the PBF encouraged more joint work. Beyond this, however, there is considerable scope for strengthening programmatic partnerships with UN agencies, including humanitarian agencies, for strategic engagement at the state and local levels in areas such as increasing access to services and productive capacities. For example, UN agencies such as FAO support value-chain development. Programmatic partnerships with such agencies have a greater chance of success in enhancing UNDP's contribution to productive capacities and value-chain development.

There are examples where the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in joint UN programmes cooperated with local partners, which worked well in conflict prevention and mitigation and especially in focusing on the solution to climate-induced season movement of cattle (which is a trigger of conflict in areas such as Northern Bhar El Ghazal). The concerted effort of UNDP, UNMISS Civil Affairs Division and FAO working with state government and the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC) has produced a model for managing interstate cattle movement and seasonal migration. Ongoing efforts by UNDP support state authorities to develop a policy on the seasonal migration of cattle.

The potential of the UN System to advance peace, stability and prosperity in South Sudan has yet to be leveraged fully. As the coordination role within the UN System rests with UNMISS and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, opportunities for UNDP to play an integrator role are limited, although there is scope for a lead role at the thematic level. UNCF provides a limited organizational framework for cooperation in support of peace, governance and economic goals. However, UNDP has not yet clarified its role in promoting integrated programming within the UN System and has not yet provided well-considered offerings that the UN and other partners find compelling for joint engagement.

One area where partnerships have important potential value is strengthening SDG data collection. While several agencies, including UN agencies, support data-related efforts, there remain serious gaps in the continuity, quality and utility of data in policy and programming. Although international agencies (including UNDP) produce data and analytical reports, the extent to which these reports inform government action and public debate is limited and the National Bureau of Statistics remains weak. UNDP is yet to strategically engage in this area.

There was engagement with CSOs in several areas of the programme for implementing projects at the community level and for training initiatives. CSOs were engaged in dialogue during the formulation of legislation (for example, family law and the technical committee for reconciliation and healing). UNDP enabled a dialogue space for the Coalition of Women for Peace and Development with the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare to engage in the HLRF process at a time when women had limited political space

for such dialogue. Supporting neutral and safe spaces for inclusive dialogue is an important contribution to peacebuilding and reconciliation. There is scope for UNDP to pursue opportunities to facilitate CSO dialogue and engagement with the government.

Notwithstanding the challenging context for private sector development and engagement in South Sudan, UNDP efforts also remain inadequate. There is scope to address the policy challenges facing responsible and sustainable private sector engagement. Interviews indicate that, despite the difficult business operating environment, there is significant private sector interest. E-governance, mobile money services, agriculture and education are sectors where telecommunications companies could contribute to development. Given UNDP's core programme engagement in employment-generation, private sector development is critical to improving access to finance and increasing employment opportunities. UNDP's programme strategy has so far taken an *ad hoc* approach to private sector engagement and private sector development.

**Finding 20. The collaboration between UNDP and UNMISS in areas of complementary objectives such as rule of law, peace agreement, peacebuilding and women's security was limited. UNDP and UNMISS lack a well-conceived framework for joint work in areas of common interest. Greater cooperation between UNMISS and UNDP is critical for enhancing the UN's contribution in South Sudan.**

UNDP and UNMISS cooperate on joint events and activities in areas of governance and rule of law, but programmatic collaborations are limited. Efforts to advance the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement have provided new areas for coordination and cooperation between UNDP and UNMISS, including preliminary work on the constitution and election preparations. This experience can be built on.

The delinking of UNDP from the UN RC role has to some extent freed UNDP from the UN political advocacy and coordination role and from having to lead on sensitive issues that the government might not want to be raised. However, UNDP has yet to re-articulate its role under the new UN RC arrangements, in terms of collaboration with UN partners, resource mobilization and capacity to support longer-term solutions for improving governance and rule of law. How UNDP positions itself and is understood by UN partners is important for strengthening UNDP's role and contribution in governance and crisis prevention.

## **K. Enabling innovation for accelerating peace and development**

**Finding 21. Locally driven bottom-up peace and development solutions using technology and information are yet to pick up momentum. There are opportunities to accelerate a new generation of integrated peace and governance solutions. Too many fragmented and unviable initiatives are reducing the potential of the Accelerator Lab.**

In 2019, the country office launched the Accelerator Lab, a UNDP corporate mechanism to support country-level efforts to target and accelerate progress towards certain SDGs. The Labs intend to offer a new generation of integrated solutions to complex development challenges. The South Sudan Accelerator Lab was driven by principles of inclusiveness to unlock diversity of ideas particularly in the area of citizen-centred data management. The lab opened up opportunities for innovative practices and processes to inform UNDP country office activities and national policies as well as spin-off into independent ventures for scaling by engaging wider actors.

The Lab demonstrated the potential to mobilize institutions and communities to develop solutions that would work in a post-conflict context. There has been a range of activities from Innovation Ecosystem Meets that were held periodically, to specific activities such as training for traders (in Nimule), solutions mapping exercises in four states, and developing a toolbox for women's economic empowerment. The Lab's outreach includes a wide range of actors, viz., government, NGOs, communities, UN agencies and donors.

The Lab generated interest, which is essential to share learning from Lab initiatives, particularly those with potential for scale-up. It was successful in generating interest among UN partners, with initiatives such as the support to the Sustainable Foods Reduction Innovation Challenge Partnership for the WFP being a noteworthy example.

Several initiatives are in the early stages and the Lab is exploring ways to generate ideas and support their implementation where possible. Given the purpose of the Lab, it is reasonable to assume that all the activities cannot be seen only from the perspective of the extent of contribution to an innovative solution. What is also important is the processes the Lab follows to establish meaningful bottom-up solutions. However, with respect to the efficiency of the Lab efforts, it has not been productive to explore and experiment in a wide range of areas, given the limited resources. Even while taking a more non-interventionist approach, the Lab could have focused on a limited number of areas where accelerator solutions would have enhanced programme processes. Areas such as digitalization, particularly data efforts that would inform the security sector to maintain peace, or solutions for access to justice and social services, are a high priority in South Sudan. The pandemic further highlighted the challenges in access to services that can benefit from digital governance. The UNDP and IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism engaged with the South Sudan Peace and Reconciliation Commission (SSPRC) in developing the Conflict Early and Response Mobile App, which was launched in June 2021 and is now being piloted in three states. This was developed as part of the youth innovation challenge for technology by the UNDP peace program and Accelerator Lab (Acclab). From June to July 2021, over 264 alerts were received in the South SSPRC Situation room, which was established with technical support from UNDP. UNDP procured 200 solar-powered Android phones to be used by peace committees and other early warning teams. To strengthen the response part, Intergovernmental Authority on Development - Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (IGAD-CEWERN) has provided SSPRC with a Conflict Response Rapid Fund, managed as small grants to CSOs for early response in local conflicts.

The interface of Lab activities with UNDP programmes needs further attention. The contribution of the Lab to UNDP programmes in enabling accelerator development solutions of wider relevance is yet to produce results. Given the structure of the Labs, they do not have the necessary resources to pursue promising initiatives and hence the scaling rests on UNDP or other actors to take forward some of the initiatives. There is further scope for the lessons generated by the Lab to be used by the UNDP programme teams or pursued further.

A challenge evident in the South Sudan Lab (and in the global accelerator Lab approach) is on what innovation encompasses and on the elements of innovation. There is a process by which a solution is arrived at, the process of learning by doing and enhancing rapid learning capabilities, and actual innovative solutions for accelerating peace and development, but the linkage between the two is important. While the process of engaging various actors was evident in different activities of the Lab, it did not always result in development solutions that South Sudan needs urgently. There were Lab activities that do not have elements of innovation or accelerator potential. For example, Lab activities such as financial literacy training or GoSanitize, which promotes a locally made hand sanitizer, are regular programme activities. Another question is whether UNDP programmes are adequately leveraged to generate innovative solutions, rather than pursuing stand-alone Lab initiatives. In the case of many activities, dispersed, small-scale learning-by-doing was often not productive. The evaluation recognizes that the generation of innovation in development practices and their scaling up is time-consuming. However, the approach to generating scalable ideas can be revisited by UNDP.

## L. Humanitarian-development-peace nexus and resilience approaches

**Finding 22. International aid in South Sudan does not yet have a clear and compelling vision for how to answer the simultaneous humanitarian, development and peace challenges that the country faces. With their respective shortcomings, the Revitalized Agreement and the National Dialogue have also not provided an assured path to sustained change and peace. With the UN coordination mandate now resting with the UN RC and UNMISS, what distinguishes UNDP's role and contribution could be better conceptualized.**

Despite the UNCF- and PBF-supported initiatives and manifest efforts invested in coordination, joint programme responses remain rare in international aid in South Sudan. Agencies recognize that international aid engagement needs to address humanitarian, development and peace needs together, and they have common concerns about weaknesses in the peace process. But the collective response so far has been fragmented.

In 2018, UN agencies, donors and NGOs formed a Partnership for Resilience and Recovery (PfRR) as a new way of doing business and collaborating across the humanitarian-development nexus. The Partnership brings together various actors at the national and state levels to enable collaborations across humanitarian and development efforts to increase the resilience of people, communities and institutions. UNDP leads the coordination of PfRR initiatives in Aweil state, filling a role that UNMISS provides in Yambio and Torit. The partnership has supported information-sharing among agencies and has organized annual learning events on different approaches to strengthening resilience in the country. UNDP's contribution has been important in shaping the PfRR strategy.

While the collaborative nexus activities of PfRR are yet to manifest, it provides a narrative to engage in initiatives that enable sustainable outcomes. Programme models that can make nexus implementation simpler are missing. For example, while there is a multi-stakeholder Cash for Work Working Group in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, it was not evident how a short-term social safety net programme in the form of cash-for-work schemes to build flood defences and roads, will build resilience. Plans for pursuing an area-based programming approach by PfRR partners such as UNICEF, FAO and UNDP are yet to be implemented. Unless a programme is designed with a shared area-based approach, the activities of different agencies will not properly interface to produce a transition from humanitarian support to institutionalized medium- to long-term development. Cash-for-work schemes, for example, had a budget for only six months and UNDP's projects have struggled to motivate beneficiary communities to maintain the created or improved assets once the cash-for-work incentive is removed. It was notable that several interviewees looked at PfRR as a conceptual framework for resilience-building within humanitarian aid. A resilience agenda that would inform international cooperation is not at a pace with South Sudan's needs.

UNDP is yet to spell out its approach to resilience in South Sudan and how mechanisms for resilience will be sustained irrespective of the nature and duration of specific UNDP support. UNDP has supported basic but essential operational capacities to its partners. Although these capacities by themselves may not directly address specific shocks, they are requisites for building resilience in a fragile context. However, UNDP did not institutionalize the processes that are needed for ensuring institutional resilience in its public administration support or community resilience in its peace support. Consultations describe UNDP's capacity support as focused on the requirements of project delivery rather than on more comprehensive support that would strengthen their longer-term ability to deal with the challenges that impact their functioning. In short, a loose concept of resilience limited UNDP's ability to deepen its engagement in key areas of support.

UNDP has prior experience in leading multi-donor stabilization and nexus efforts in other crisis contexts. The lessons from this organizational experience are yet to be applied in South Sudan. Conflict and violence, great humanitarian aid needs, and stability and peace process uncertainties, have made donors hold back from moving to development support. At the time of this evaluation, efforts to explore options for a multi-pronged approach to peacebuilding and state-building, within the complex process of political settlement, were limited. While UN agencies and some international agencies agree on the importance of a nexus approach, it remains largely a theoretical approach for South Sudan at the moment, without much traction. Given South Sudan's persistently high levels of humanitarian aid but huge development needs that are undermining peace, it is important to have greater clarity about what the nexus means or should be in South Sudan.

## M. Programme efficiency

### **Finding 23. Too many interventions lacking depth and delays in implementation reduced UNDP programme efficiency.**

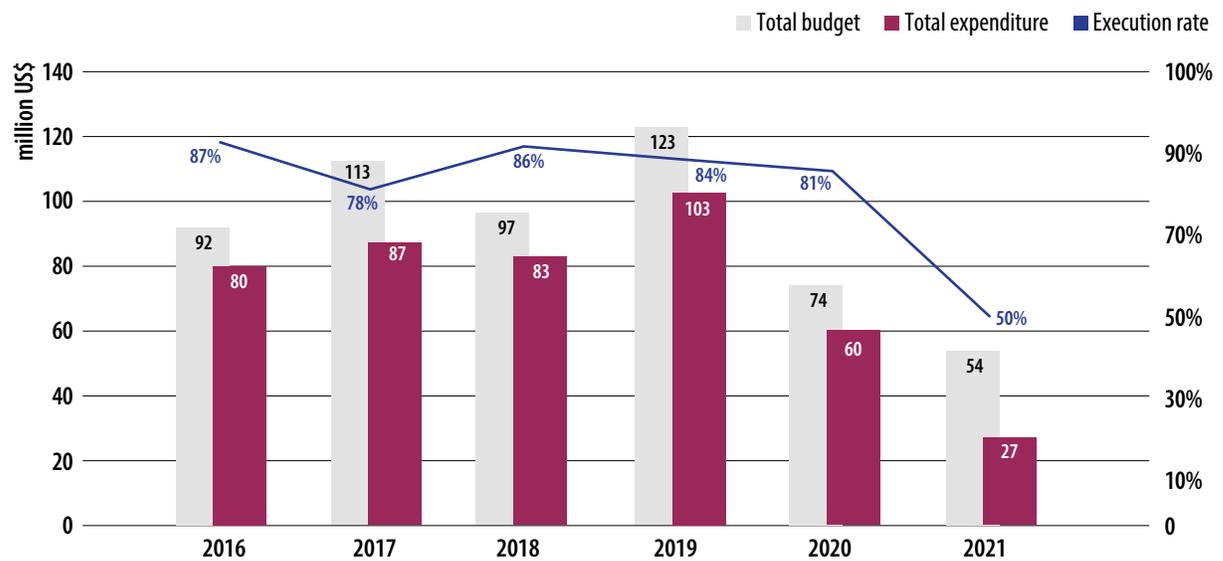
UNDP programme areas emphasized capacity-building and resilience. In the implementation, however, it lacked an overarching framework on how resilience will be approached to guide UNDP's response and to ensure the sustainability of the outputs achieved. Lack of a two-pronged strategy that addressed immediate programme needs while consistently working in select areas on longer-term capacity development processes, reduced overall efficiency and contribution. UNDP is yet to balance responding to diverse needs, on the one hand, and a more proactive and strategic sector engagement, on the other hand. For example, support to productive capacities and value-chain is a huge area and needs clarity about what challenges UNDP would address through its support that would establish processes for strengthening markets and an enabling environment for achieving it.

In some areas, while UNDP had the right strategy, there were limitations in translating them into programmes. For example, in rule-of-law support, UNDP intended to build the capacity of the institutions as well as increase the demand for justice services at the community level through proactive rights-based interventions. A sector-wide core programming strategy was developed. The implementation, however, was at the micro-level with small-scale and fragmented initiatives that did not cumulatively address the significant challenges of the justice sector. Lack of programmatic collaborations to demonstrate comprehensive access to justice models reduced the successful implementation of UNDP's sector-wide strategy.

An issue in South Sudan is the significant humanitarian focus in international cooperation. There were challenges for UNDP in mobilizing resources for medium- to longer-term development support from traditional donors. While UNDP was successful in mobilizing resources for programme support, they were often for short-term assistance. UNDP is yet to explore ways to diversify programme funding for medium-term development support. An additional factor across programme areas was the lack of programmatic collaborations that are important for enabling sustainable solutions but that will also lessen some of the funding challenges for medium- to longer-term development support.

UNDP's programme design often did not include mechanisms for enabling development financing beyond the projects to reduce dependency and improve the sustainability of programme outcomes. Interviewees often mentioned material support from UNDP, which has ranged from provision of office furnishings and computers to vehicles and rehabilitation of buildings. Government representatives tended to suggest that more such support was needed, and there was limited consideration of sustainability. Provision of material support and especially of equipment is an appealing and often easier option than pursuing more cumbersome efforts of enabling development financing that would generate more sustainable asset creation and management.

FIGURE 7. UNDP programme delivery



Source: ATLAS

The average programme delivery was 80 percent (see figure 7). Despite the financial programme delivery, there were delays in achieving the planned outputs, reducing UNDP's programme efficiency. While some of the delays in 2020 can be justified because of the COVID-19 shutdown, which included the closing of government offices and the imposition of travel restrictions, delays have been an issue across the country programme period. Conflict context and slow government processes were factors, but UNDP did not find ways to address constraints in programme implementation.

There is a gap between the programme design and implementation, with key elements of the medium- to longer-term sustainability not receiving adequate attention in the implementation. There is a lack of attention to how various outputs aggregate in contributing to the outcome. Often, the interventions are of varied scope and do not lend themselves to achieving the outcomes. For example, support to livelihoods or climate change protocols in a limited way contribute to reducing food security or increasing resilience. On the other hand, support to the implementation of the Global Fund has the potential to contribute to outcome-level processes. Areas such as energy efficiency are outlined in the programme outcomes but received limited attention. It is understandable that, given the conflict context, the programmes address the immediate needs of the communities and government institutions. This reality and programme risks should be also reflected in the country programme document.

In conflict contexts, with challenges in the sustainability of national-level interventions, field offices play an important role in facilitating local solutions. UNDP is working in all 10 states in South Sudan, with project offices in eight of them. The project offices, however, have a limited focus and are not in a position to facilitate UNDP's engagement at the state and local levels. Field offices with adequate capacities would have improved the UNDP programme strategy and effectiveness. UNDP is opening three field offices, which will address some of the limitations of the current programme, particularly in enabling local-area development solutions.

For the period 2016 to 2021, out of a total expenditure of US\$485.8 million, US\$201.8 million was spent on managing the Common Humanitarian Fund. In addition, Global Funds comprised US\$109.8 million, where UNDP played the role of principal recipient. UNDP programme expenditure was US\$122.8 million (of a budget of US\$284 million). UNDP had detailed strategies in some areas, for example, access to justice for a comprehensive response. There were, however, challenges in mobilizing resources for longer-term programmes. One of the factors was humanitarian-focused funding in South Sudan. It is not evident that UNDP tried to address this funding limitation, in terms of the partnership or convincing donors to use the funds to play the role of an enabler instead of project implementor. As discussed across the findings in this report, inadequate programmatic partnerships are reducing UNDP's programme efficiency. Well-conceived programmatic partnerships not only reduce programme costs but also can enable UNDP to better accomplish intended outcomes.

Programme delays are impacting UNDP's contribution. UNDP's programme management structures were slow in addressing implementation constraints, with significant delays in several projects. While COVID-19 further increased the delays, this has been a perennial issue during the country programme period. Also, compliance delays and oversight issues can impact UNDP's credibility as the Principal Recipient of Global Fund and can have implications for programme outcome.

## 2.5 Programme performance rating

**Finding 24. UNDP's performance has been, overall, moderately satisfactory. Although the choice of initiatives is pertinent and has achieved most of the stated outputs, UNDP's programme approach is yet to demonstrate the value of its support. UNDP is yet to balance short-term support with longer-term initiatives essential for accelerating peace and development in South Sudan.**

Table 2 presents country programme performance scores and disaggregated scores for the two outcomes (Annex 8 presents a detailed analysis of each output). UNDP has supported a range of initiatives in the two outcome areas and a large component of the current and previous country programmes has remained fairly consistent. In an evolving conflict context with significant needs, UNDP support in the areas of peace and reconciliation, rule of law, core governance support, and economic revitalization is largely relevant. These areas align with the vision of South Sudan, the national development strategy and the priorities of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. The activities of the country programme are consistent with the outputs outlined in the programme theory of change.

**TABLE 2. Aggregated performance rating of the country programme**

| Key criteria and parameters                       | Score | Justification   |
|---|-------|---|
| <b>1. Relevance</b>                               | 3     |   |
| 1.A. Adherence to national development priorities | 3     | Overall, the country programme includes major peace and governance priorities and local economic development priorities in South Sudan as defined in the national plans and the Revitalized Peace Agreement. The relevance of UNDP's programme approach of engaging in short-term initiatives for a prolonged period, needs revisiting.   |
| 1.B. Alignment with UN/UNDP goals                 | 3     |   |
| 1.C. Relevance of programme logic                 | 2     |   |
| <b>2. Coherence</b>                               | 2     |   |
| 2.A. Internal programme coherence                 | 2     | Across country programme areas, UNDP programmes were largely project-driven, with a limited overarching framework that would bring together complementary initiatives within and across the outcomes.   |
| 2.B. External programme coherence                 | 2     | UNDP established strong partnerships with the government and there are several joint projects and initiatives with UN agencies. But there were limited strategic partnerships in key areas of support.  |
| <b>3. Efficiency</b>                              | 3     |   |
| 3.A. Timeliness                                   | 3     | Delays in programme implementations reduced programme efficiency and effectiveness.   |
| 3.B. Management efficiency                        | 3     |   |
| <b>4. Effectiveness</b>                           | 3     |   |
| 4.A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes        | 3     | Tangible results were achieved across outputs. In an evolving conflict context with significant resource challenges, UNDP programme outputs add value. The extent to which the combination of the outputs contributed to strengthened peace infrastructures and accountable governance at the national, state and local levels for enabling local economic resilience, is limited. The approach and level of activities of UNDP in a limited way enabled achieving the outcomes and country programme objectives. Poor sustainability of outputs further undermines outcome level contribution. |

**TABLE 2. Aggregated performance rating of the country programme (cont.)**

| Key criteria and parameters  | Score | Justification  |
|--|-------|--|
| 4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind) | 3     | UNDP was able to balance its support at the national and state levels. UNDP made efforts to reach those who were at the risk of being left behind, for example, displaced populations, ex-combatants, women and youth. The reach of UNDP, however, was limited in addressing the needs of interior rural areas most affected by conflict. Given the high proportion of the young population, UNDP programmes were effective in including them in various initiatives. However, the lack of a coherent framework for youth engagement reduced UNDP contribution, particularly in facilitating youth development policies. UNDP lacked a prevention framework to identify areas where it can facilitate policy options for youth development and their meaningful engagement in the peace process. |
| 4.C. Prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment                    | 3     | UNDP was successful in mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment priorities in its programmes. Limited collaborative action for consolidated responses in the areas of SGBV and access to justice undermines outcome level contribution.   |
| 4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles     | 3     | While UNDP took measures to include integrated approaches, there was limited success in the implementation stage, reducing the overall contribution of the country programme. UNDP initiatives were often disconnected in enabling sustainable development principles and processes.   |
| <b>5. Sustainability</b>   | 2     |  |
| 5.A. Sustainable capacity  | 2     | UNDP was successful in providing functional capacities and short-term livelihood support. There were, however, limited efforts to establish mechanisms for institutionalizing longer-term processes for sustainable peace and development processes.   |
| 5.B. Financing for development   | 2     |  |

Note: A four-point rating scale was used to determine UNDP programme performance.

**4 = Satisfactory/Achieved.** A rating of this level means that outcomes exceed expectations/All intended programme outputs and outcomes have been delivered and results have been (or likely to be) achieved time of evaluation.

**3 = Moderately Satisfactory/Mostly Achieved.** A rating of this level is used when there are some limitations in the contribution of UNDP programmes that prevented an "satisfactory/Achieved" rating, but there were no major shortfalls. Many of the planned programme outputs/outcomes have been delivered and expected results are (likely to be) achieved. Overall, the assessment is substantially positive and problems were small relative to the positive findings.

**2 = Moderately Unsatisfactory/Partially Achieved.** A rating of this level is used when significant shortfalls are identified, but there were also some positive findings. Only some of the intended outputs and outcomes have been completed/achieved. Overall, the assessment is less positive.

**1 = Unsatisfactory/Not Achieved.** A rating of this level means that the contribution of the UNDP programme faced severe constraints and the negative assessment outweighs any positive achievements. There has been limited or no achievement of planned programme outputs/outcomes.

Source: IEO

During the assessment period, UNDP underscored resilience as central to its programme approach, which is relevant to addressing development drivers of peace and stability in South Sudan. UNDP sought ways to introduce innovation in peace and development efforts. UNDP invested in efforts such as the Acceleration Lab to work with programme partners to create an ecosystem for innovation, particularly at the grassroots level. Across key areas of support, an issue, however, was the relevance of short-term support for a prolonged period.

Coherence within the country programme activities has been challenging in both outcome areas. Limited programme synergies reduced UNDP's contribution to promoting integrated peace and livelihood solutions. The limitations were more significant in the area of support for human resource capacities, where the lack of a coherent approach reduced the ability to enable more holistic public administration and civil service solutions. Managing expectations remains a challenge for UNDP particularly in its positioning as a technical and expert organization. Too much unrelated short-term support has the risk of UNDP not being considered as a key development organization for policy and reforms engagement.

A strength of UNDP that adds significant value to its engagement is the long-standing partnership with the government and its reach across government institutions, which provided an opportunity to work on key development issues. UNDP is yet to leverage this advantage to propose solutions that have the possibility of rallying government and international agencies for comprehensive sector efforts or local-area development initiatives.

Initiatives under the two outcomes were effective in achieving several tangible outputs, as outlined in the previous sections. UNDP as the Principal Recipient of Global Fund for HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis and tuberculosis was effective in its support. There were, however, limitations in how the various outputs, when combined, contribute to the outcomes. For example, the absence of due consideration to enabling sustainable public administration, service delivery processes and institutional structures, has reduced UNDP's effectiveness and contribution to Outcome 1 on strengthening peace infrastructures and accountable governance. While human resources support is essential, South Sudan needs public administration reform processes and mechanisms to professionalize its civil services. For the resilience of South Sudanese institutions, there is a need for longer-term, sustainable and holistic solutions rather than for short-term efforts to substitute capacity gaps. In the areas of community peace and livelihood support, UNDP opted for easy programme options of short-term support similar to those of many other agencies. UNDP had more success in enabling short-term employment opportunities, but there are serious limitations in enabling livelihood and income-generation models that are scalable, as would be necessary for improving coping mechanisms and food security (see Outcome 2). For ensuring sustainability, UNDP needed more consistent policy engagement and practices geared at providing viable models that inform national processes, which could not be accomplished by the country programme.

To a certain extent, UNDP programme challenges reflect the humanitarian focus in international cooperation in South Sudan. A cumulative humanitarian challenge has delayed the shift to development support. While UNDP should be credited for keeping the discourse on development, UNDP had less success in aiding joint stabilization efforts having the possibility of a longer-term focus.

UNDP was fairly successful in mobilizing programme resources for short-term programmes but did not diversify funding sources for longer-term interventions. UNDP had limited success in mobilizing resources for development support, as there was caution among traditional donors to move to longer-term support. While UNDP was successful in mobilizing resources through its fiduciary and programme support services, it is yet to explore ways to diversify programme funding. An additional factor across programme areas was the lack of programmatic collaborations, which are important for enabling sustainable solutions and would lessen some of the funding challenges. Issues remain in the timeliness of the interventions, as the delays not only impacted programme effectiveness but also had reputational risks. UNDP's programme management structures were slow in addressing implementation constraints, with significant delays in several projects.



# CHAPTER 3

# CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This evaluation assessed UNDP's contribution in the two programme outcome areas for the period 2017-2021. The evaluation was conducted at a time South Sudan celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a young nation trying to address significant peace and development challenges. This period also marked the implementation of the UN reforms and renewed UNDP and UNMISS engagement.

Building on the key findings set out in the previous chapter, the conclusions and recommendations presented here focus on strategic issues pertaining to programme approach, institutional capacity to strengthen peace, and stabilization and local economic resilience.

## 3.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1.** UNDP's contribution to keeping the momentum of recovery, peace and development processes in South Sudan has been important. Not adequately articulating its strategic role in South Sudan where there is an urgency to address critical development drivers of peace and stabilization has reduced UNDP's strategic positioning.

UNDP has created a niche for itself in the recovery and stabilization response in South Sudan. As a service provider, funds manager and one of the key providers of support to peace and reconciliation processes at the national and state levels, UNDP continues to play an important role in South Sudan. Given the nascent government capacity, UNDP's support to the immediate needs of key government institutions enabled their functioning. With its well-established partnership with the government, UNDP has the comparative advantage to contribute to policy and reform process and sustainable institutional capacities. This potential advantage is yet to be fully utilized.

The National Dialogue and Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan are intended to increase the pace of recovery, reconciliation and stabilization. The humanitarian, development and peace situation in South Sudan warrants a combination of responses, both short-term and longer-term. The under-prioritization of development and peacebuilding linkages remains a challenge in South Sudan, with the international response being predominantly humanitarian. For UNDP, bringing a resilience approach to the international response needed well-conceived collaborations between humanitarian, peace and development actors, anchored in national frameworks. While such efforts are evolving, UNDP opted for short-term support. The success of UNDP's resilience programme approach in South Sudan depends on the organization's transition from a micro-project implementing mode to an agency that facilitates sustainable solutions. UNDP is yet to clarify its core offering for accelerating the pace of peacebuilding and statebuilding in South Sudan.

**Conclusion 2.** Sustainable institutional capacities at the national and state levels are critical for consolidating stability and peace as well as transitioning to development. UNDP's short-term support had limitations in strengthening institutional processes necessary for building sustainable capacities.

While UNDP contributed to filling critical capacity gaps essential for the functioning of government institutions, it is yet to leverage short-term human resource support for building public administration, civil services and local governance capacities. UNDP is yet to balance its role as a capacity provider and that of an enabler of more sustainable capacities. There is scope for a systematic approach for strengthening institutional and human capacities. A wide programme spread, whether with respect to geographical spread or programme themes, was counterproductive to UNDP positioning itself as an expert organization. As the Principal Recipient of Global Fund for an extended period supporting health systems strengthening component, UNDP has yet to engage in sector reforms.

UNDP's response has been reactive, with limited strategic engagement in select governance areas; this has reduced the contribution of the current programme. The cluttering of peace institutions with overlapping functions and mandates is a challenge in South Sudan, not specific to UNDP support. This also contributed to a fragmented approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts. UNDP's support lacked a robust approach that would generate necessary processes for streamlining public administration structures. There is also a risk of missing opportunities for introducing digitalization and other technological solutions in governance.

**Conclusion 3.** While the rationale for supporting the National Dialogue was strong, important opportunities to increase the potential impact of the Dialogue were missed. UNDP's contribution to community peace and reconciliation was weakened by *ad hoc* and inconsistent engagement.

UNDP's support to National Dialogue was important for South Sudan institutions to carry out the extensive exercise. The grassroots consultations and subsequent conferences provided a systematic framework for South Sudanese to freely and openly discuss the way forward. Entirely led and managed by the government, the Dialogue was a considerable achievement, with great potential for building peace. There is scope for using the Dialogue for an inclusive implementation of the Revitalized Agreement.

In promoting community peace in a sensitive and evolving conflict context with deep-rooted social and political divisions, UNDP's support had limitations in providing workable programme options for scaling by the government and other actors. While there are instances of improvements in community dialogue and mediation, UNDP's interventions needed depth in enabling peace mechanisms. UNDP sought to engage women, youth and marginalized sections in community decision-making. But lack of sustained emphasis on institutionalized approaches for conflict resolution within which community peace and reconciliation efforts could be anchored, considerably reduced UNDP's contribution. A weak link is also the limited focus on local governments as a channel for strengthening community-level peace mechanisms.

**Conclusion 4.** UNDP's local economic development and livelihoods support is of small scale. Support to the value-chain and entrepreneurship development is in preliminary stages and not able to demonstrate comprehensive programme options for employment-generation.

The scope and scale of UNDP's initiatives were not geared to facilitate sustainable changes in creating an enabling environment for improving livelihoods and productive capacities. In a conflict context with significant employment and livelihood challenges, holistic solutions were lacking in parallel to the short-term humanitarian mode of income support. UNDP's vocational training and skill development initiatives did not result in income-generation or in acquiring sufficient skills for entrepreneurship development. Weaknesses in addressing different dimensions of the value-chain from business viability of enterprises, production to marketing, reduced UNDP's contribution. There were also limitations in enabling an ecosystem of financial instruments to support potential start-ups or engage the private sector in enterprise development or scaling employment.

UNDP's programme contribution to sustainable livelihoods and employment-generation cannot be seen in isolation. This evaluation acknowledges the challenges in private sector development and engagement in a fragile context and the need for careful consideration in improving the performance of finance projects in such contexts. Notwithstanding this, the lack of prioritization of private-sector-related programmes in international cooperation in South Sudan reduced the possibility of improving access to and the cost of finance for enterprise development. A broader trend among donors, in general, is the lack of consideration for private sector engagement as part of their support. There was greater leaning towards the short-term

nature of funding for easy options such as the disbursement of livelihood assets or training. Lack of innovation funds that explore longer-term solutions, particularly public infrastructure needed for boosting productive capacities, remains a challenge that also impacts UNDP's work.

In several livelihood areas, low-cost energy is central to success. UNDP programmes are yet to build on the potential of renewable energy solutions for sustainable livelihoods. Opportunities were missed in enabling a conducive policy environment and institutional capacity for expanding energy access and promoting decentralized renewable energy technologies.

UNDP is yet to build on its current programme to support integrated climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction efforts at the community and local levels. The intersection among conflict, recurrent disasters, internal displacement and food insecurity has severely impacted the resilience of the communities and institutions in South Sudan. Women are disproportionately impacted by climate events, given their dependence on natural resources. UNDP's support to addressing disaster risk reduction and climate vulnerability challenges has been sparse despite organizations' expertise in this area. This is also a reflection of limited engagement in holistic approaches linking adaptation, disaster preparedness and livelihoods, and adaptive improvements in infrastructure with ecosystem services in the most impacted regions of South Sudan.

**Conclusion 5.** UNDP recognizes that mobilization of youth is key to ensuring the success and sustainability of reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts. Isolated initiatives and limited programme cohesion and consolidation of its multiple youth initiatives reduced the possibility of greater impact.

The engagement of youth in community peacebuilding efforts was effective only when combined with promising employment and income-generation opportunities. Lack of continued support to market-oriented and viable enterprise and other productive capacities reduced effective youth engagement in peacebuilding. Similarly, inadequate complementarity of a youth component across different UNDP programmes reduced the opportunity to develop consolidated responses, with a combination of initiatives such as community peace as well as employment-generation support simultaneously for an extended period.

While UNDP has conducted a study to better address youth development challenges, the prevention of victimization and the participation of youth in violence need comprehensive solutions that would address social drivers and provide optimism through viable policies and inter- and intra-state coordination to prevent violent extremism and negative coping mechanisms. Resorting to easy responses of short-term one-off interventions, UNDP had less success in providing integrated solutions for meaningful engagement of youth as drivers of peace and social cohesion. Given the polarized context in South Sudan and its history of injustice and unresolved issues, UNDP programmes would have benefited from a conflict-sensitive approach to youth engagement.

**Conclusion 6.** UNDP consistently ensured women's inclusion across its programme support. In a context with widespread sexual and gender-based violence and weak institutions, consolidated interagency efforts are critical for supporting women as agents of peacebuilding and statebuilding.

There is demonstrated commitment from UNDP to strengthen gender mainstreaming in its programme strategies, planning and implementation, leading to more concerted efforts to address the concerns of women. Initiatives such as training for security personnel to address issues of SGBV and human rights violations, improving access to justice, and gender-responsive budgeting, are initial steps and, when

combined with persistent efforts, have the potential for greater accountability of public institutions. More extensive programmatic partnerships, however, are critical for the continuity of UNDP's efforts and the institutionalization of measures for gender accountability.

The fragmented UN response in South Sudan reduced the potential to address complex challenges that women face. Despite some joint initiatives, there are insufficient efforts towards a holistic sector or issue-based responses that leverage different agencies' comparative strength.

**Conclusion 7.** UNDP collaborated with UN agencies through joint programmes under the Peacebuilding Fund. Programmatic collaboration between UNDP and UNMISS, however, was not geared towards a more united response to strengthening governance processes, especially in areas such as rule of law, reducing the possibility of a comprehensive UN offering.

Some important collaborative efforts are in place, such as tackling the problem of climate-induced seasonal movement of cattle, which is a conflict trigger, but, overall, the full potential of the UN System for harnessing integrated humanitarian/development/peace approaches and practical programmatic solutions that can stimulate positive national responses, has not been reached. While joint programmes under funding streams such as the Peacebuilding Fund demonstrate the potential of coordinated efforts, the lack of strategic partnerships reduced the overall contribution for sustainable processes in South Sudan. This was more evident at the community level, where there were similar and parallel responses by UN agencies, including UNMISS.

Limited joint programmatic initiatives between UNDP and UNMISS have meant missed opportunities to demonstrate that peacekeeping and statebuilding can be simultaneous processes. Although differences in the programme orientation of the peacekeeping and development mandates are a factor to reckon with, collaboration is in the interest of both UNMISS and UNDP to strengthen the rule of law and public administration in the country.

While the coordination role at the country level rests with UNMISS's and United Nations Resident Coordinator's office, UNDP has yet to define areas where it can bring value to coordination efforts in peacebuilding and statebuilding. UNDP is yet to leverage the organization's lessons in leading large joint stabilization programmes in other conflict contexts to provide options for integrated responses that can accelerate the transition to development.

**Conclusion 8.** Reduced field presence constrained UNDP's ability to provide local peace and development programme offerings and to galvanize partnerships for a coordinated response.

UNDP's state- and local-level presence decreased after the 2013 conflict. Although there have been efforts to address this in the past two years, inadequate field presence remains a factor in a more substantive engagement of UNDP in local peace and development efforts. Also, a consequence of this was generalized short-term responses instead of more-integrated local strategies and programmes that engage local government and other actors. Dependence on CSOs for programme implementation in the absence of field presence produced only output-oriented results.

## 3.2 Recommendations and management response

### RECOMMENDATION 1.

Peace gains made in South Sudan are fragile and the structural causes of conflict, including development underpinnings of peace, are still to be strategically addressed. UNDP's programme strategy should be more oriented to demonstrating sustainable programme models suitable for the South Sudan context that would accelerate development and peace processes.

The response in South Sudan indicates that fragmented peacebuilding efforts had limited outcomes. Drawing on the organization's experience in other conflict settings, UNDP should explore the possibilities for multi-agency stabilization support that would address key constraints in peacebuilding and provide reliable, accountable and transparent modalities for partnership with the government.

While UNDP may continue to provide development services to other agencies, the main focus should be on enabling viable peace and development solutions. Stabilization and sustainable peace dividends in South Sudan require simultaneously addressing humanitarian and developmental needs. UNDP's programme strategy should reflect this urgency. UNDP should position itself to promote solutions that would enable a development approach to peace by connecting actors and resources. A clear distinction between short-term support and long-term peace and development programmes that reflect UNDP's core mandate, should define UNDP programme strategy.

### Management response: **Agreed**

UNDP South Sudan noted the recommendation and will continue to intensify the alignment of the peacebuilding programme to the context and towards nexus approach, given the fluid and fragile situation in South Sudan. The Peacebuilding strategic framework developed with support of UNDP in 2021 will provide a framework for the alignment.

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s)   | Tracking* |        |
|--|--------------|---|-----------|--------|
|  |              |   | Comments  | Status |
| 1.1 Support implementation of national peacebuilding strategy to streamline the peacebuilding effort in the country. | January 2025 | Peace and Community Cohesion (PaCC), Access to Justice (A2J), Strategy, Policy and Capacities for Economic Management (SPACE) |           |        |
| 1.2 Advocate and spearheading the nexus approach (development, humanitarian, and peace).                             | January 2025 | Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (STARR), A2J, SPACE, ACCLab, PaCC  |           |        |
| 1.3 Advocate and lead area-based peacebuilding programming through coordinated approach among peace actors.          | January 2025 | STARR, A2J, SPACE, PaCC   |           |        |

## RECOMMENDATION 2.



**For an inclusive implementation of the Peace Agreement, UNDP's support to peacebuilding in South Sudan should address the complex task of strengthening linkages between community-level expectations and national peace processes.**

While there is no prescribed solution to respond to the complexity of the peace process in South Sudan, there are three areas for UNDP to consider focusing its support. First, mechanisms for fostering dialogue are critical for bridging trust and buy-in of the revitalization process and peacebuilding initiatives. UNDP's support should be oriented to enabling dialogue between citizens and government to share and manage expectations. Also, initiatives should be supported to address some of the anomalies of the Revitalized Peace Agreement process by enabling linkages to local-level dialogue. Advocacy efforts should be supported to bridge the gap among international, national and local peace efforts and to facilitate neutral spaces for civil society engagement.

Second, to strengthen peace institutions and infrastructure at the national and state levels, there should be a prioritization of areas where there will be consistent engagement.

Third, UNDP's support to community peace efforts should be anchored in state and national peace initiatives. Merely including youth in the community peace programmes will not be sufficient to engage them as agents of peace. UNDP should facilitate policy solutions by connecting concerned actors for generational transformation initiatives that focus on improving youth income and productive resources. Programmes should seek to address social cohesion fault lines that can exacerbate violence and negative coping mechanisms among youth.

## Management response: **Agreed**



UNDP will continue to work towards inclusive implementation of the peace agreement by supporting implementation of strategies, policies and programmes that UNDP has supported development such as the peacebuilding strategic framework; support the Commission for Truth and Reconciliation and Healing through the ongoing technical support to the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing Committee; and continue to support the elaboration of an inclusive National Constitution by supporting implementation of the constitution making road map already approved by the cabinet.

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking* |        |
|--|--------------|---------------------|-----------|--------|
|  |              |                     | Comments  | Status |
| 2.1 Incorporate the revitalization process and peacebuilding initiatives to local level community dialogue and advocate for the implementation of the dialogue outcomes. | January 2025 | PaCC                |           |        |
| 2.2 Capacitate targeted CSOs to advocate for and facilitate neutral spaces for civil society engagement in the peace process.  | January 2025 | A2J, PaCC           |           |        |
| 2.3 Implement holistic and coordinated initiatives for youth engagement and benefit in the peace process.  | January 2025 | PaCC, STARR, A2J    |           |        |

### RECOMMENDATION 3.



**Public administration support should focus on strengthening the capacities of key institutions and related reform processes. A well-considered approach to strengthening the governance capacities of local government institutions should be prioritized, as it is critical for stabilization and sustained peace and development.**

Short-term human resource support for extended periods will be counterproductive in strengthening South Sudanese institutions. UNDP should move away from the humanitarian mode of governance support of substituting human resources and *ad hoc* policy support, to a more strategic approach to strengthening institutions and policy processes and human resource capacities. With strong partnerships with the government at the national and state levels, UNDP is strongly positioned to play a larger role in streamlining civil service and public administration capacities. South Sudan, as a young nation with evolving institutions, provides opportunities for introducing new public administration tools. UNDP should promote digital solutions for improving governance and social services.

UNDP should be selective in its support to sector governance at the national and/or state level. For example, areas such as access to justice or PFM need well-considered strategies for consistent engagement in key areas within these broad sectors where UNDP can bring its expertise and solutions. Also, specific emphasis is needed to support health sector governance, where UNDP is heavily involved in its support to the implementation of the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis.

UNDP should prioritize support to local government capacities, with particular emphasis on strengthening service delivery. Specific emphasis is needed to support area development models to strengthen local government capacities in service delivery and to anchor community peace mechanisms. There should be a prioritization of fewer geographical areas to demonstrate workable solutions to improving local government capacities. The South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) platform should be used to forge inter-agency local development solutions for peace and development.

Building on its ongoing support to data and policy analysis, UNDP should identify areas for consistent engagement. This is also an area where coordination within UNCT is critical for maximizing support to SDG data systems.

### Management response: **Agreed**



UNDP will continue, under the Governance and Economic Management Support (GEMS) programme, to support the government in professionalising of the civil service not beyond the project period. UNDP will continue to provide Special Skills Experts (SSEs) for mentorship, twinning and International Consultants to strengthen the capacities of the public institutions at the national and state levels until the end of the project. GEMS will utilize experts from University of Juba until MoPS has sufficiently trained and experienced staff for conducting training. GEMS will also support in the development of the public service training institute and updating curriculum for the various parts of the Public Service.

◀ Recommendation 3 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s)                        | Tracking* |  |
|--|--------------|--|-----------|--|
|  |              |  | Comments  | Status   |
| 3.1 Have a strategic approach to strengthening institutions and policy processes and human resource capacities.                  | January 2024 | GEMS, SPACE, PFM, Global Fund for HIV/Aids |           | UNDP utilized target for resource assignments from the core resources in Global Fund to support the development of capacity development. |
| 3.2 Prioritize support to local government capacities with particular emphasis on strengthening service delivery.                | January 2024 | DRRP                                       |           |  |
| 3.3 Building on its ongoing support to data and policy analysis, coordinate within UNCT to maximize support to SDG data systems. | January 2024 | SPACE, PFM                                 |           |  |

**RECOMMENDATION 4.**



**UNDP should review its livelihood and employment programme approach to bring them up to scale. Support to productive capacities and value-chain initiatives needs a well-considered strategy and strong programmatic partnerships to enable a full range of responses.**

Improving livelihoods and productive capacities is a key driver of peace and stability. Short-term initiatives in the face of immense needs have limited significance for transforming livelihoods. UNDP should strengthen and formalize programmatic partnerships with UN agencies as well as other international agencies and the private sector to support integrated employment and livelihood solutions. Consideration should be given to using the local-area economic development approach for strengthening livelihoods and productive capacities. For example, in the oil-producing areas, skills development should focus on job and business opportunities available within the oil and gas value-chain. This will eventually prepare South Sudanese to take over some of the jobs in a sector currently dominated by outsiders. Ensure a conflict-sensitive approach in livelihood programme support. Prioritize interior rural regions that are severely conflict-affected. Livelihood support should be informed by the ecosystem services approach linking adaptation, disaster preparedness and livelihoods.

Build on the potential of renewable energy for sustainable livelihoods solutions. Support a conducive policy environment and institutional capacity for expanding energy services in productive sectors such as agriculture and for promoting decentralized renewable energy technologies.

UNDP should support the formalization of social protection measures and the use of tools appropriate for South Sudan. Considering that food security support in South Sudan lacks a framework, provide policy support for strengthening the linkages between social protection measures and food security initiatives predominant in humanitarian support.

**Management response: Agreed** 

UNDP will continue to mobilize resources to scale up through its Youth Empowerment and Employment through Agricultural (YEEP) programme will trained more youths so that they can start their own business and can generate employment. UNDP will link vocational training with employment and income-generation opportunities in YEEP and Skills for Youth Employability and Social Inclusion (SYESIP) projects.

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking* |        |
|--|--------------|---------------------|-----------|--------|
|  |              |                     | Comments  | Status |
| 4.1 Design and implement context-oriented, adaptive, and coordinated livelihood programmes that brings long-term benefit for target groups.          | January 2024 | STARR               |           |        |
| 4.2 Incorporate renewable energy initiatives in livelihood and youth employment programmes and advocate and support the national policy environment. | January 2024 | STARR               |           |        |

**RECOMMENDATION 5.** 

**UNDP should continue its emphasis on strengthening efforts to promote women’s security and access to development resources. UNDP should consider programmatic partnerships in select areas such as access to justice and addressing violence against women.**

UNDP has shown commitment to strengthening gender equality and empowerment of women in its programme strategies and planning. Continue to support national policies and programme models to improve women’s security and economic empowerment. Prioritize areas and establish partnerships for in-depth engagement.

**Management response: Agreed** 

UNDP will continue promoting women’s peace and security agenda especially by advocating the passing of the Gender Affirmative Action Bill prepared with support of UNDP. A programmatic approach linking the different pillars of the WPS will be explored, especially with respect to the protection pillar.

GEMS will work with SPACE, STARR, A2J, Global Fund for HIV/AIDS to ensure a coordinated response.

◀ Recommendation 5 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s)                               | Tracking* |        |
|--|--------------|---|-----------|--------|
|  |              |   | Comments  | Status |
| 5.1 Continue to support national policies and initiatives to improve women's security and economic empowerment.      | January 2024 | DRRP, PaCC, A2J                                   |           |        |
| 5.2 Implement a women's peace and security approach to bring women in national leadership and peacebuilding process. | January 2024 | DRRP, PaCC, A2J                                   |           |        |
| 5.3 Mainstream gender in all country programmes for fair participation and benefit.                                  | January 2024 | GEMS, SPACE, STARR, A2J, Global Fund for HIV/AIDS |           |        |

**RECOMMENDATION 6.**



**A conflict programming context and nascent markets in South Sudan present challenges for private sector engagement. UNDP should support efforts to address these challenges in developing practical ways to engage the private sector in employment-generation and social services.**

With programmes at the state and local levels, UNDP can bring to private sector engagement its comparative advantage in policy development and programme implementation. This potential should be capitalized on for more strategic engagement in strengthening policy space for private sector engagement.

Based on an assessment of opportunities and structural constraints in South Sudan, develop a private sector strategy along with the forthcoming country programme. The strategy should aim to enable a conducive environment for small and medium-sized enterprises. Drawing on the lessons of the current programme, seek to address binding policy constraints. Use the Accelerator Lab to identify tools that have a greater possibility of succeeding in a fragile context. Identify sectors for greater engagement where UNDP can partner with other UN agencies for private sector development.

Many development challenges in South Sudan are linked to energy access. Take concrete measures to support access to renewable energy services. Position UNDP as a connector of renewable energy ecosystem actors, enabling collaboration between the private sector and state and central governments. Facilitate efforts to address regulatory environment as well as sector-specific policy measures.

**Management response: Agreed**



UNDP will use Accelerator Lab to identify tools that have a greater possibility of engaging the private sector. UNDP will also identify sectors for greater engagement with other UN agencies for private sector development. UNDP will address the issue of continuing BDS, financial inclusion, and access to finance under the new project with the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and AfDB.

◀ Recommendation 6 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking* |        |
|--|--------------|---------------------|-----------|--------|
|  |              |                     | Comments  | Status |
| 6.1 Advocate for and support policy space for private sector engagement at the national and local levels for employment and development initiatives. | January 2025 | STARR/ACCLAB        |           |        |
| 6.2 Develop private sector strategy for sustainable and consistent approach in all units and programmes.   | January 2025 | STARR/ACCLAB        |           |        |

**RECOMMENDATION 7.**



**Expanding field offices should be prioritized to work towards conflict-sensitive sustainable programme options. The field offices should establish stronger partnerships with the local government and other actors to promote local-area development solutions.**

In a dynamic peace context, field presence is critical for UNDP's contribution to local-level strategies and improved capacities. UNDP recognizes this and is establishing three field offices in addition to the project offices already present. Once established, there will be a need to ensure that field offices, rather than acting merely as implementing units of the Juba office, have context-based local-area development strategies. Where UNDP project offices are already present, improvements are suggested, so that their capacities go beyond the role of project implementation and become units capable of developing local solutions and of galvanizing other actors.

**Management response: Agreed**



Management acknowledges that the field offices should establish stronger partnerships with the local government to promote local-area development solutions. The field offices have a limited focus and are not able to facilitate UNDP's engagement at the state and local levels. Management has agreed on an incremental and coordinated approach to strengthen the UNDP field presence. Senior Management will lead the process in strengthening the field presence. The functional heads will nominate focal points in 10 states that will be rotated on a quarterly basis in various project sites. A task team will be constituted to develop a business case for strengthening UNDP field presence. The business case will provide a rationale for investing in a local presence that includes an evaluation of prospective impact on: a) delivering development results; b) cost efficiency; and c) financial sustainability.

◀ Recommendation 7 (cont'd)

| Key action(s)  | Time frame   | Responsible unit(s) | Tracking* |             |
|--|--------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
|  |              |                     | Comments  | Status      |
| 7.1 Constitute task team for field presence strengthening.   | March 2022   | Senior Management   |           | In progress |
| 7.2 Developing a business case for strengthening field offices and selecting best option in consultation with RBA. | August 2022  | Senior Management   |           |             |
| 7.3 Strengthening UNDP partnership with local government and other actors using programme approach.                | January 2023 | Senior Management   |           |             |

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



# ANNEXES

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Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12787>

**Annex 1.** Terms of reference

**Annex 2** Country at a glance

**Annex 3.** Country office at a glance

**Annex 4.** Summary of country programme document indicators and status (as reported by the country office)

**Annex 5.** List of projects assessed

**Annex 6.** People consulted

**Annex 7.** Documents consulted

**Annex 8.** Performance Rating







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