



# INDEPENDENT COUNTRY PROGRAMME EVALUATION INDIA



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# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Country Programme Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for India. This is the third assessment carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP for the country, covering the programming period of 2018–2022. The partnership between UNDP and India began in 1951.

India, home to one-sixth of all humanity, holds the key to the success of the 2030 Agenda. It is one of the fastest growing emerging market economies with a young population and burgeoning innovation and business ecosystem. Between 2011 and 2015, India succeeded in lifting more than 90 million people out of extreme poverty and is now part of the medium human development category. However, the country is faced with significant adverse development difficulties that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UNDP country programme was designed to achieve accelerated, inclusive and sustainable growth for transformative change and development impact at scale. The evaluation found that UNDP is valued in India as a strategic, reliable and responsive development partner that has achieved important results. The organization has made relevant and effective contributions to the country programme outcomes in alignment with the national priorities, thus ensuring a degree of sustainability through government ownership. UNDP has been providing timely and appropriate support during the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNDP has shown tangible results through its immunization programme, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) integration efforts, the demonstration of skilling models and plastic waste management model, and support for building the capacities of those left behind. In addition, UNDP helped build government capacity for climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and hydrochlorofluorocarbon phase-out. However, there was less evidence significant progress in expanding citizens' access to justice and scaling up the provision of legal aid services. The targets for the provision of digital services were not achieved, and the energy portfolio had limited interventions and success.

As UNDP prepares for its new country programme cycle, the evaluation recommends the country office to take advantage of its strengths to reposition itself as a thought-leader, driving upstream analytical work. The country office should support the sustainable finance agenda with high-quality knowledge and research outputs, together with technical capacity-building assistance. UNDP should ensure SDG localization by leveraging state presence and social inclusion with a focus on skilling and employment models at the core of its interventions. The energy, environment and resilience programme design should be better integrated, and more emphasis needs to be given to preventive approaches, for example, that address chemicals and waste generation, and unplanned development patterns.

I would like to thank the Government of India, the national stakeholders, colleagues from UNDP country office in India, as well as the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific for their support throughout the evaluation. It is hoped that the findings, conclusions and recommendations will strengthen the formulation of the next country programme strategy, in the aim of contributing to more inclusive and sustainable development of India.



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ANCHAL</b>	Antenatal, Neonatal & Child Health Systems and Logistics Tracking Tool
<b>CDRI</b>	Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure
<b>CO</b>	Country office
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease
<b>CoWIN</b>	COVID Vaccine Intelligence Work
<b>CPD</b>	Country programme document
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate social responsibility
<b>DRM</b>	Disaster risk management
<b>EER</b>	Energy, Environment and Resilience
<b>eVIN</b>	Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Facility
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GLOF</b>	Glacial lakes outburst flood
<b>GRES</b>	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
<b>HCFC</b>	Hydrochlorofluorocarbons
<b>HPMP</b>	HCFC Phase-out Management Plan
<b>HSBC</b>	Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporate Limited
<b>ICAP</b>	India Cooling Action Plan
<b>ICPE</b>	Independent Country Programme Evaluation
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>INR</b>	Indian rupee
<b>ISA</b>	International Solar Alliance
<b>IVRS</b>	Interactive voice response system
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave no one behind
<b>MBA</b>	Master of Business Administration
<b>MNREGA</b>	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

<b>MOEFCC</b>	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
<b>MoHFW</b>	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
<b>MoRD</b>	Ministry of Rural Development
<b>MoTA</b>	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
<b>MPI</b>	Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>NACO</b>	National AIDS Control Organization
<b>NRM</b>	National Resource Management
<b>ODS</b>	Ozone-depleting substances
<b>PDNA</b>	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
<b>PLHIV</b>	People living with HIV
<b>PVTG</b>	Particularly vulnerable tribal group
<b>ROAR</b>	Results-Oriented Annual Report
<b>RoI</b>	Return on investment
<b>SAPCC</b>	State Action Plans on Climate Change
<b>SBSAP</b>	Subnational and Local Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
<b>SDGCC</b>	SDG Coordination Centres
<b>SDGFF</b>	SDG Financing Facility
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>TE</b>	Terminal Evaluation
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>UNSDF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Framework
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteers
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development



# Evaluation Brief: India

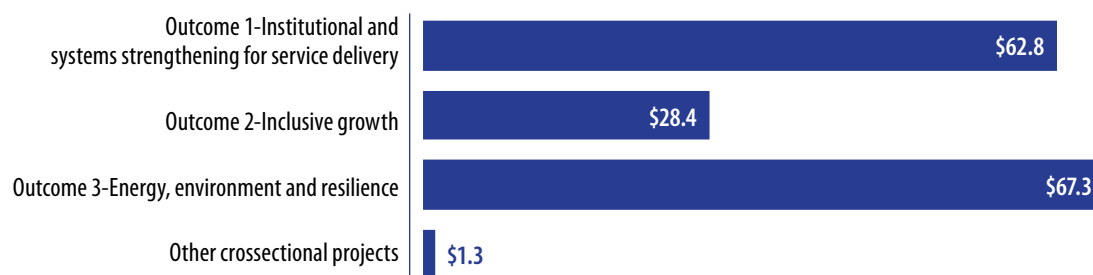
The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an Independent Country Programme Evaluation (ICPE) of UNDP India in 2021. The evaluation covers the programming period of 2018–2022. This is the third assessment carried out by the IEO for the country; the previous assessment was conducted in 2012. The purpose of the evaluation was to strengthen accountability to national stakeholders and the UNDP Executive Board, promote organizational learning, and inform the development of the next UNDP country programme.

India has recorded significant economic growth over last three decades. As the 6th largest in the world, the Indian economy now contributes to 3 percent of global gross domestic product (GDP). Notwithstanding major accomplishments in poverty reduction, poverty and hunger continue to be a major challenge. While there have been improvements in healthcare delivery, overall progress remains slow. The country will soon have one of the youngest and largest working age populations in the world. However, only 2.3 percent of the current total workforce has undergone formal skill training. India's gender equality record is especially concerning. It is estimated that India's GDP would increase by 27 percent if Indian women had the same access to the job market as men.

India has diverse bio-climatic regions: the Himalayas in the north, the arid and semi-arid central region, the tropical rain forests in the south, and a long coastline. India is the third largest energy consumer and fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally. Its per capita emissions, however, are less than half of the global average. India is also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and is prone to disasters.

The current UNDP country programme in India (2018–2022) is part of the United Nations assistance for India, defined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) 2018–2022. UNDP's work focuses on three interlinked priority areas: institutional and systems strengthening for service delivery; inclusive growth; and energy, environment and resilience. In 2016 and 2017, the country office (CO) set up state offices in four states and one regional office. In 2019, the Accelerator Lab was established.

## Expenditure by outcome (Million US\$)



## Findings and conclusions

The evaluation finds that UNDP is valued in India as a strategic, reliable and responsive development partner that has achieved significant results. The key comparative advantages of UNDP have been its strong relationship with the Government, long-term engagement with key civil society organizations (CSOs), and effective outreach to local governments and vulnerable communities. But the India Country Office was in a state of transition over this programme cycle, where its leadership, resources and direction experienced a substantial shift due to its graduation to middle-income country status and a reduction in core resources. Notwithstanding its recognized value, there has been a decline or dilution in contribution in formerly prominent areas of UNDP support in poverty reduction and governance. While progress has been made in establishing the state offices, coordination between the State and Central Offices has been insufficient, and the decentralization process has been slow.

In the **institutional and systems strengthening portfolio**, UNDP's technical assistance at the state and national levels has contributed towards SDG progress monitoring, together with SDG-oriented budgeting and planning. Limited progress has been made towards SDG-oriented integrated development plans at more decentralized levels of governance. UNDP has scaled up the deployment of the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) for efficient vaccine logistics management, thus contributing to the effective strengthening of public health systems and improving the efficiency of the Universal Immunization Programme, which is now being used for COVID-19 vaccine delivery in India. The CoWin platform has been critical in vaccinating India's population with over 1 billion registered beneficiaries. UNDP also established a new multi-stakeholder collaborative platform for an SDG Financing Facility (SDGFF). The Facility within a reasonably short period and with a relatively modest budget managed to achieve important milestones. A key hindering factor has been that most work has focused downstream with a still limited incremental increase of upstream policy and analytical work.

In the **inclusive development portfolio**, UNDP has contributed to the development of models that integrate career guidance and counselling, employability skilling, entrepreneurship and value chain strengthening targeting poor women. Ensuring the sustainability of results has remained a challenge, and the models have yet to achieve large-scale replicability. UNDP also worked closely with the national and state ministries to strengthen implementation of government policies to improve capacities. But despite successes, many training materials and strategies developed by UNDP are yet to be better mainstreamed and replicated further. Sustained partnerships with the Government as well as new and expanded partnerships with the private sector contributed to nationally relevant work, some integrated development solutions, and resource mobilization. UNDP, however, could have benefited from a comprehensive partnership plan.

In the **energy, environment and resilience portfolio**, UNDP's technical and capacity-building support has contributed to the strengthening of the national and sub-national institutional, legislative and policy frameworks on disaster risk management. The capacity of sub-national governments to implement and enhance State Action Plans on Climate Change has been strengthened with the support of UNDP, particularly in state capitals and major cities. The work of UNDP with plastic waste management has successfully demonstrated a largely privately funded model with a policy and social component. UNDP has been helping India to meet the obligations under the Minamata Convention. The organization has also contributed to the development of various models for biodiversity, species conservation and natural resources. In addition, promising work has been initiated for financing investments to enhance biological diversity. The CO's contribution was more limited in addressing the challenges of sustainable energy, developing a more concrete sustainable financing strategy, taking an integrated approach and applying more preventive approaches.

There was varying degrees of attention to gender across the portfolios. Gender equality and women's empowerment have featured prominently in UNDP's gender-responsive inclusive growth work, but this lens was not applied systematically. Gender mainstreaming was weak in the energy, environment and resilience (EER) portfolio.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** Reposition as a thought leader, strengthening the Policy Unit for driving upstream analytical work.

**Recommendation 2:** Support the sustainable finance agenda with high-quality knowledge and research outputs, together with technical capacity-building assistance.

**Recommendation 3:** Take stock of skilling and employment models that are demonstrating significant and sustainable results and focus on strategic partnerships.

**Recommendation 4:** Modify and enhance the energy environment and resilience programme design to be more coherent and results-oriented, providing greater attention to preventive approaches.

**Recommendation 5:** Reprioritize the states' presence by linking the decentralization process to SDG localization work right to the *Gram Panchayat*<sup>1</sup> level.

**Recommendation 6:** Systematically apply a gender lens to all its work, with adequate gender and leave no one behind (LNOB) mapping, including intersecting factors.

<sup>1</sup> *Gram Panchayat* is a basic village-governing institute.

# CHAPTER 1

# BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION



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

## 1.1 Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducts Independent Country Programme Evaluations (ICPEs) to capture and demonstrate evaluative evidence of UNDP's contributions to development results at the country level, as well as the effectiveness of UNDP's strategy in facilitating and leveraging national efforts towards achieving development results. ICPEs are independent evaluations carried out within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.<sup>2</sup>

The evaluation covers the period from 2018 to mid-2021 of the current country programme cycle (2018–2022). The scope of the ICPE includes the entirety of UNDP's activities in the country and covers interventions funded by all sources, including core UNDP resources. It also includes any projects and activities from the previous programme cycle that either continued or concluded in the current one in accordance with the evaluation Terms of References (Annex 1, available online).

The ICPE is guided by four main evaluation questions (Box 1). It presents findings, conclusions and recommendations which will serve as an input to the formulation of UNDP's India new Country Programme Document (CPD) for 2023–2027.

The primary audiences for the evaluation are the UNDP India country office (CO), the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, the UNDP Executive Board, and the Government of India.

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### 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 factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and the sustainability of results?

## 1.2 Evaluation methodology

The ICPE was conducted according to the approved IEO process, and the evaluation methodology adhered to United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards.<sup>3</sup> Following the development of the terms of reference, the IEO mapped all projects and activities against the CO's intended results and, through a stakeholder analysis, identified relevant actors to be consulted by the team. With the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in consultation with the CO, the ICPE team decided to conduct the evaluation remotely, adapting its methodology to the changed circumstances while still guaranteeing the respect of evaluation norms and professional standards.

<sup>2</sup> See UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

<sup>3</sup> See the website of the United Nations Evaluation Group: [www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914](http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914)

The evaluation relied on information collected from different sources and triangulated, to the extent possible. Data from available documents (strategies, project documents, monitoring reports, 14 evaluations, and three audits)<sup>4</sup> were complemented by information available online and more than 152 interviews with UNDP staff and stakeholders,<sup>5</sup> which allowed gaining further insights on the effectiveness of programme interventions, determine factors affecting its performance, and identify the strengths and areas for improvement of UNDP's programme.

The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of UNDP's programme by analysing progress made towards the achievement of the expected outputs, and the extent to which these outputs contributed to the intended outcomes, as defined in the CPD and/or reconstructed theories of change by thematic area. To better understand UNDP's performance and the sustainability of results, the ICPE then examined the specific factors that have influenced, positively or negatively, the programme. UNDP's capacity to adapt to the changing context and respond to national development needs and priorities was examined.

Attention was given to integrate a gender-responsive evaluation approach to data collection and analysis. In line with UNDP's gender mainstreaming strategy, the evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming across the country programme and operations. Gender-disaggregated data were collected, where available, and assessed against programme outcomes. Gender marker<sup>6</sup> data were used for analysis of gender programme expenditures and to assess the level of commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Sex-disaggregated data were assessed against programme outputs, where available. The IEO's Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES) was used to assess the quality and level of gender-related results achieved by the programme, in the different outcomes. The GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender-negative, gender-blind, gender-targeted, gender-responsive, and gender-transformative.

The evaluation combined an in-depth desk review and a large number of virtual interviews (telephone, and zoom online interviews at national, state and local level), and a few in-person interviews. To answer the evaluation questions (see Annex 2 for the evaluation matrix), the ICPE collected and triangulated data through the following methods:

- a.** a review of UNDP strategic and programme documents, project documents and monitoring reports, evaluations,<sup>7</sup> research papers and other available country-related publications. The main documents consulted by the evaluation team are listed in Annex 6, available online;
- b.** an analysis of the programme portfolio and the development of theories of change, by programme area, to map the projects implemented against the goals set in the CPD. The theories of change are available in Annex 3 (online);
- c.** the response by the CO to an evaluation questionnaire, which was further discussed and validated during the virtual interviews;

<sup>4</sup> The main documents consulted by the evaluation team are listed in Annex 6 available online.

<sup>5</sup> A full list of interviewees is available in Annex 5 online.

<sup>6</sup> This is a corporate monitoring tool used to assign a rating score to project outputs during their design phase and to track planned expenditure towards outputs that contributed to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The gender marker does not reflect the actual expenditures assigned to advancing GEWE. Since the gender marker is assigned by project output and not project ID, a project might have several outputs with different gender markers. GEN 0 (No noticeable contributions to gender equality), GEN 1 (Some contributions to gender equality), GEN 2 (Significant contributions to gender equality) and GEN 3 (Gender equality is the principal objective).

<sup>7</sup> Fourteen decentralized evaluations were conducted in the period under consideration.

- d. in-person and phone interviews with 152 stakeholders, including UNDP staff, government representatives, United Nations Country Team (UNCT) representatives, development partners, CSOs, academia and beneficiaries. The interviews were used to collect data and assess stakeholders' perceptions of the scope and effectiveness of programme interventions, determine factors affecting performance, and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the UNDP programme. A full list of interviewees is available in Annex 5 (online);
- e. a ratings scale: The ICPE used the IEO's ratings system to score the country programme performance against the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee criteria of Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Coherence and Sustainability (See finding 19).

Two new methods were added to the basic ICPE methodology: Outcome Harvesting and beneficiary interviews based on the interactive voice response system (IVRS).

- a. **An Outcome Harvesting<sup>8</sup>** workshop was held to better understand the efficacy of change interventions with regard to SDG Integration and State Outreach, and COVID-19 emergency response and socio-economic recovery efforts. The workshop drew upon the deliberations and insights from the Portfolio Sensemaking<sup>9</sup> exercise that UNDP India had conducted in June 2021. The exercise was condensed into a half-day online workshop, which consisted in two principal segments of the Outcome Harvesting workshop. At the first stage, the participants in breakout sessions were facilitated to revisit the Portfolio Sensemaking consensus and related insights from SDG lenses to formulate result descriptions at a systemic level; and identify relationships, connections and entities that might have supported and/or impeded the achievement of results. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the recognized results was also examined. The result descriptions were then analytically interpreted to understand: (i) what enabled the achievement of results; (ii) the contributions of counterparts and other stakeholders/change agents in achieving the results; and (iii) the importance of the Result Descriptions for CPD Outcomes. The non-achievement of certain intended CPD results and achievement of unrealized results as per the CPD and Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19 (SERF) objectives were also explored.
- b. **IVRS-based<sup>10</sup> beneficiary interviews** was used to elicit feedback from on-ground beneficiaries of Country Programme initiatives to complement and triangulate the information collated from a literature review and stakeholder interactions. In light of COVID-19-induced restrictions on field engagement, IVRS-based telephonic interviews were planned and the interviews were executed as a dipstick survey targeting three select cohorts of beneficiaries: (i) women government health workers from 'Aspirational Districts' of six states: Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, who also serve as cold chain handlers in the Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN) (30 respondents); (ii) tribal forest rights claimants from Chhattisgarh and Odisha (85 respondents); and (iii) households assisted by UNDP initiatives to access COVID-19 social

<sup>8</sup> Outcome Harvesting is a methodology that collects evidence of what has changed 'outcomes' and then, working backwards, determines whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes. The approach is inspired by Outcome mapping and informed by the Utilization-Focused Evaluation developed by Ricardo Wilson-Grau.

<sup>9</sup> The process aimed to reflect collectively on the portfolio of current project/initiatives to identify key interlinkages, capabilities, assets, policy levers, and system effects that the CO has built through current suite of projects and identify insights and intelligence that inform the development of the CPD and portfolio of projects for the next programme cycle.

<sup>10</sup> IVR is a system that allows telephone interviews to be conducted with little or no interviewer intervention. The IVR system asks the questions to the respondent and waits for the respondent to enter the answers using the keypad on their telephone.

protection benefits (140 households). Gram Vaani Community Media ([www.gramvaani.org](http://www.gramvaani.org)), an Indian social technology enterprise incubated by the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT) Delhi, was commissioned to conduct the IVRS-based dipstick surveys using their proprietary Mobile Vaani platform. The survey questionnaires were designed by IEO for an automated telephone survey system administered in five languages: Assamese, Hindi, Marathi, Odia and Telugu. The questionnaire for each cohort comprised a mix of multiple-choice questions, a rating survey, as well as questions. All responses, including the narrative ones, were recorded by the IVRS in structured databases, for subsequent analysis.

Finally, the draft ICPE report underwent the usual internal and external quality assurance process before being submitted to the CO and the Regional Bureau for review and identification of any factual errors, and was finally shared with the Governments and other national partners. This process was concluded by the organization of a workshop carried out through videoconference which brought together the main stakeholders of the programme and offered an additional opportunity to discuss the results and recommendations contained in this report.

## Evaluation challenges and limitations

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ICPE team had to fully conduct the evaluation remotely, adapting its methodology to rely more on desk reviews of available material and conducting online and telephone consultations complemented by written exchange with stakeholders via email. The evaluation experienced several connectivity issues. To mitigate these challenges, the evaluation team broadened the scope and depth of its secondary data review by including external reviews, assessment and evaluations, as well as country progress reports, including the extensive use of decentralized evaluations, to cross-reference the data and validate findings. The evaluation team also prolonged the consultation period to accommodate those mitigation measures.

The insufficient quality of the programme result framework affected the capacity of the evaluation to fully assess the achievement of programme objectives at a level higher than the output. While monitoring reports were not always available and the quality of some documents was not always sufficient, the ICPE could access a number of studies and terminal evaluations commissioned by the CO. There was greater availability of evaluations for the environment, energy and resilience outcome, but there were no decentralized evaluations available for the systems strengthening outcome and one external evaluation available for the inclusive growth outcome.

To further quality assure and mitigate the challenges raised above, IEO recruited two highly credible think tanks, the Centre for Development Studies and the School of Public Policy at India Institute of Technology (Delhi), to review select strategic documents to assess the relevance of UNDP's work and to assure the quality of draft outcome reports from each thematic area. Despite the challenges and delays, the evaluation was still able to guarantee the respect of evaluation norms and professional standards.



## 1.3 Country context

### Economy and poverty reduction

India has recorded significant economic growth over last three decades, despite slower GDP growth in recent years (from 8 percent to 4 percent between 2016 and 2020). The onset of COVID pandemic led to a contraction of GDP by 7.6 percent. As the 6<sup>th</sup> largest<sup>11</sup> in the world, the Indian economy now contributes to 3 percent of world GDP. India's Human Development Index increased by 50 percent between 1990 and 2019, making progress in each of the indicators. Among other achievements, it succeeded in lifting more than 90 million people out of extreme poverty between 2011 and 2015 and is now part of the medium human development category. The country's dependence on external aid has witnessed a dramatic decrease to less than 4 percent of its GDP.<sup>12</sup> Over the past decade, it committed more than \$12 billion to international development, thereby emerging as a donor to its neighbouring countries<sup>13</sup> and select sub-Saharan African nations. In 2017, through the India-United Nations Development Partnership Fund, India also pledged \$150 million dollars for a dedicated facility within the United Nations Fund for South-South cooperation for projects in least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developed countries (LLDCs), and small island developing states (SIDS) and select commonwealth countries, having to date contributed \$47.8 million.<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding these accomplishments, poverty and hunger continue to represent major challenges which were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2020-2021 of NITI Aayog reports that 21.9 percent of population (around 300 million) live below the national poverty line.<sup>15</sup> In the 2021 Global Hunger Index (GHI) India was ranked 101<sup>st</sup> out of 116 countries, with a GHI score of 27.5, i.e. a serious level of hunger.<sup>16</sup> This reveals the uneven distribution of developmental gains, further confirmed by the increase of the Gini coefficient relating to wealth inequality from 74.7 to 82.3 from 2000-2020. The incidence of poverty is concentrated in seven low-income states, where social inequalities mirror caste and gender disparities and persist despite welfare initiatives and decades-long affirmative action policies. With inequality factored in, India's Human Development Index drops by 26.4 percent. Historically, social exclusion in India has been based on caste and ethnicity, Indigenous or Scheduled Tribes (ST) Status, disability and gender.

### Gender

India's gender equality record is especially concerning: it ranks 131 out of 155 in the Gender Inequality Index. In the 2021 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, India dropped by 28 places to 140<sup>th</sup>, the third-worst in South Asia, just ahead of Pakistan and Afghanistan. The most notable decline pertains to political empowerment, where India regressed by more than 13 percentage points, in addition to decreased labour participation rates. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates a GDP increase of 27 percent if Indian women had the same job market access as men.<sup>17</sup> Indian women are not only more likely to lose their jobs, but are also at a higher risk of discrimination and violence. India is ranked 155<sup>th</sup> out of 156, with

<sup>11</sup> The World Bank data. GDP. [https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?most\\_recent\\_value\\_desc=true](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?most_recent_value_desc=true); accessed on 3 July 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Report on External Debt for Quarter ending December 2020; Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India; Government of India. [https://dea.gov.in/sites/default/files/Statement%20I\\_0.xlsx](https://dea.gov.in/sites/default/files/Statement%20I_0.xlsx), accessed on 3 July 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Government of India. Ministry of External Affairs. Grants and Loans. <http://meadashboard.gov.in/indicators/92>, accessed on 3 July 2021.

<sup>14</sup> India-UN Partnership Fund. <https://unsouthsouth.org/india-un-fund-beta/#:~:text=Established%20in%202017%2C%20the%20India,with%20the%20United%20Nations%20system>

<sup>15</sup> The Poverty Head Count Ratio, as per the Multidimensional Poverty Index is higher at 27.90 percent.

<sup>16</sup> Global Hunger Index. India. [www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html](http://www.globalhungerindex.org/india.html)

<sup>17</sup> Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Global Economic Growth: COVID-19 and Beyond, Dr. Hansa Mehta, IMF.

a score of 0.937 in women's health and survival.<sup>18</sup> The World Economic Forum also reports that more than one in four women in India has faced intimate physical and/or sexual violence in her lifetime. Other areas in which women continue to face exclusion are education, access to finance, and property ownership.

## Skills, employment and health

Another prominent challenge pertains to skilling and employment. India will soon have one of the youngest and largest working age populations in the world, with one million young people entering the labour market every month for the next two decades. Only 2.3 percent of the current total workforce has undergone formal skill training.<sup>19</sup> The National Skills Development Policy of India points out that the country is facing a dual challenge of lack in a highly trained workforce, as well as non-employability of large sections of conventionally educated youth who possess little or no job skills.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of health, while there have been improvements,<sup>21</sup> overall progress in healthcare delivery remains slow. This was visible during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. India is ranked 145<sup>th</sup> among 195 countries on the Global Healthcare Access and Quality (HAQ) Index. Striking subnational disparities are too evident between states. Insufficient health-related public spending, inadequate human capital, shortages and weak management practices are all factors that contribute to the situation.

## Environment and climate change

Environmental concerns in India are also on the rise, mainly due to unplanned growth, resource intensity and weak law enforcement. India has diverse bio-climatic regions: the Himalayas in the north, and the arid and semi-arid central region, and the tropical rain forests in the south, and a long coastline. Of the 34 global biodiversity hotspots, four are present in India.<sup>22</sup> Pollution remains a big challenge in the country: 15 of the 20 most polluted cities are in India.<sup>23</sup> Waste management continues to be a major challenge, and marine plastic pollution is an emerging concern.<sup>24</sup> Water stress is acute and predicted to increase.<sup>25</sup> An estimated 70 percent of India's surface water is not fit for consumption<sup>26</sup> and groundwater in large parts of India are affected by salinity and contamination.<sup>27</sup>

India is the third largest energy consumer and the fourth largest emitter of GHG emissions globally. Its per capita emissions, however, are less than half of the global average<sup>28</sup> – two-thirds of its emissions are traced back to the energy sector due to the prominence of coal-based power,<sup>29</sup> followed by oil. Emissions resulting from agricultural production are decreasing, according to the Ministerial Third Biennial update report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).<sup>30</sup> India has electrified all

<sup>18</sup> World Economic Forum, Gender Gap Report, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank. Skilling India. 23 June 2017. [www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/06/23/skilling-india](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/06/23/skilling-india)

<sup>20</sup> National Policy on Skill Development and Enterprise, 2015, Ministry of Skills Development and Enterprise.

<sup>21</sup> Between 1990 and 2016, infant mortality rates fell by half, institutional deliveries in health facilities tripled, and maternal mortality ratios fell by more than 60 percent.

<sup>22</sup> International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), India (country profile), accessed 1 July 2021. <https://www.iucn.org/our-work/region/asia/countries/india>

<sup>23</sup> NITI Aayog, Decade of Action Taking SDGs from Global to Local: India Voluntary National Review 2020, 2020, p.103.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp.107, 109 and 117.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>26</sup> Hirani, Priyank and Dimble,Vikas, Water pollution is killing millions of Indians. Here's how technology and reliable data can change that, World Economic Forum, accessed 1 July 2021, [www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/10/water-pollution-in-india-data-tech-solution](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/10/water-pollution-in-india-data-tech-solution)

<sup>27</sup> NITI Aayog, Decade of Action Taking SDGs from Global to Local: India Voluntary National Review 2020, 2020, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup> Timperley, Jocelyn, The Carbon Brief Profile: India, Carbon Brief, accessed 1 July 2021, <https://www.carbonbrief.org/the-carbon-brief-profile-india/>

<sup>29</sup> Chakrabarty, Subrata, By the Numbers: New Emissions Data Quantify India's Climate Challenge, World resources Institute (WRI).

<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, India: Third Biennial Update Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2021, p.11.

its villages and over 96 percentage of households now have access to clean cooking fuels.<sup>31</sup> Overall, India has reported a 24 percent decline in its GHG emission intensity (per GDP unit) between 2005 and 2016. Globally, it ranks third in renewable power generation, fourth in wind power, and fifth in solar power.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, as of 2019, subsidies to oil, gas and coal were seven times higher than those for renewables and electric vehicles.<sup>33</sup>

A final key concern is that India is also highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and is prone to disasters. Its vulnerability is exacerbated by its large poor rural population and dependence on climate-sensitive sectors for livelihood. Water stress, heat waves, droughts, severe storms and flooding are all already increasingly common in many parts of the country. More than 58 percent of India's land-mass is prone to earthquakes, 75 percent of its coastline prone to cyclones and tsunamis, and 68 percent of its cultivable area vulnerable to droughts.<sup>34</sup>

## Impact of COVID-19

Due to the COVID -19 pandemic, the number of poor people in India is estimated to have increased by 75 million because of the COVID-19-induced recession; this accounts for nearly 60 percent of the global increase in poverty.<sup>35</sup> The State of Working India 2021 – One year of COVID-19 report estimates that 230 million additional individuals fell below the national minimum wage threshold during the same period.<sup>36</sup> Women's share of pandemic-induced job losses is estimated to be seven times higher than men's.<sup>37</sup> Migrant workers, many of whom belong to the communities of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), were forced to return as a result of lost livelihoods.

The closure of schools and Anganwadi centres (rural childcare centres) severely impeded access to education and learning, and also resulted in disruption of Mid-Day Meal programmes and supplemental nutrition in Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) schemes. The crisis exacerbated vulnerabilities in food security and the food supply chain; social protection and social services schemes were acutely stretched to support over half of country's population, including 90 percent of the informal workforce that do not usually have access to savings and employment-based benefits. Key mitigation actions undertaken by the Government included liquidity and financial support programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), employment schemes for migrant workers, and steps towards the development of a nation-wide integrated social protection system.

The long-term impact of COVID-19 on the environment remains partially unclear. On the one hand, lockdowns and disruptions slowed down efforts supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation, which is expected to have a negative impact. The pandemic also brought additional challenges to waste management in India. There is a steep increase in the disposal of contaminated biomedical wastes, often mixed with other types of waste, thereby increasing the complexity of waste management efforts. The massive use of detergents, disinfectants and antimicrobial solutions results in increased wastewater generation.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, lower economic activity and decreased mobility reduced pollution and

<sup>31</sup> NITI Aayog, Decade of Action Taking SDGs from Global to Local: India Voluntary National Review 2020, p.71.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Garg, Vibhuti, Vibhuti Garg, Balasubramanian Viswanathan, Danwant Narayanaswamy, Christopher Beaton, Karthik Ganesan, Shruti Sharma, Richard Bridle, Mapping India's Energy Subsidies 2020 – Fossil fuels, renewables and electric vehicles. Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2020.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, Disaster Management in India, 2011, p.11.

<sup>35</sup> The Pew Research Centre published before the second wave of April–May 2021.

<sup>36</sup> Azim Premji University, *The State of Working India 2021 – One year of COVID-19*, 2021. p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Abraham, R., A. Basole and S. Kesar, "Down and Out? The Gendered Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on India's Labour Market". [https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Abraham\\_Basole\\_Kesar\\_Gender\\_Covid\\_Feb\\_2021.pdf](https://cse.azimpremjiuniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Abraham_Basole_Kesar_Gender_Covid_Feb_2021.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> UNCT, India, United Nations Socio-Economic Response Framework COVID-19 in India, 2020, p. 25–26.

GHG emissions, although temporarily. For example, during the nationwide lockdown in March–April 2020, Kolkata recorded around 40 percent less GHG emissions, the Air Quality Index significantly improved in Delhi and Bengaluru; water quality improved in major rivers (Ganges, Yamuna, Hooghly, Rapti, Sarayu); and notable biodiversity improvements were witnessed in the Hooghly River, Kerala and Mumbai.<sup>39</sup> The behavioural patterns of individuals and organizations pertaining to remote working modalities led to a reduction in consumption. This is expected to have a positive, albeit temporary, impact on the environment.

## 1.4 UNDP programme under review

UNDP is a long-time partner of India, which has been present in the country since 1951, and has been working in a wide array of development areas. This included system and institutional strengthening, governance, inclusive growth, sustainable livelihoods, energy, environment and resilience, with an average yearly programme budget of US\$46.4 million in the past 12 years. Overall, the IEO's Assessment of Development Results for 2004–2011 found that the effectiveness of UNDP contribution has varied. There were examples of highly effective work, such as the subnational Human Development Reports (HDRs), as well as capacity development activities in governance, poverty reduction and energy and environment. However, there were challenges with the lack of strategic focus and synergies between projects and programmatic approaches, a very centralized structure, short implementation periods and a sudden closure of projects.

The 2013–2017 UNDP country programme had five main priorities: support for marginalized communities and groups; the promotion of inclusive and gender-oriented programming; support for rural development; better alignment with national programmes; governance and improved service delivery to target group beneficiaries; and support for the Government in a new round of climate change/sustainable development initiatives. Many of the flagship programmes have continued over the period of last and the current programme cycle, which include the eVIN programme on improving vaccinations and the Disha programme on the socio-economic empowerment of women.

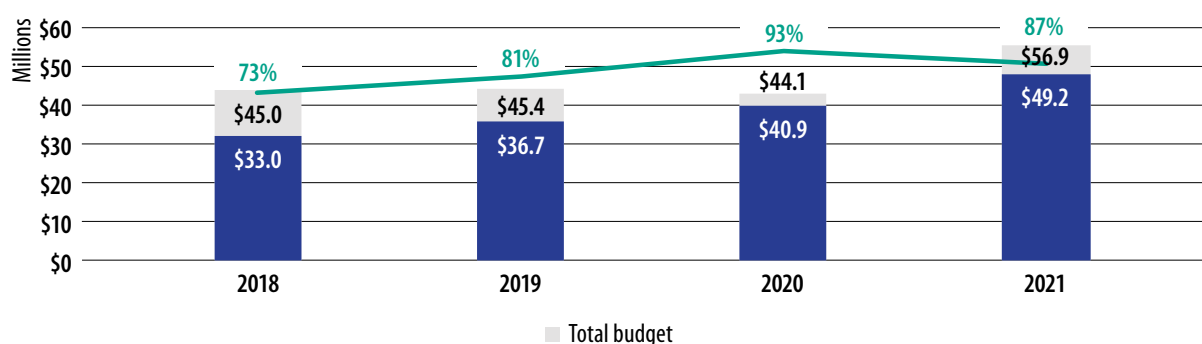
The current UNDP country programme in India (2018–2022) is part of the United Nations assistance for India, defined in the UNSDF 2018–2022. UNDP's work focuses on three interlinked priority areas: Outcome 1. Institutional and systems strengthening for service delivery; Outcome 2. Inclusive growth; and Outcome 3. Energy, environment and resilience. In 2016 and 2017, the CO set up state offices in four states and one regional office. In 2019, the Accelerator Lab was established.

For the current programming 2018–2022 period, Atlas records a total of 69 projects of varying sizes and at various stages of implementation (some having been initiated during the previous cycle). Seventeen projects correspond to the area of Outcome 1; 13 projects are in the area of Outcome 2; and 38 projects in the area of Outcome 3. Eighty-seven percent of the projects, accounting for 88 percent of the total expenditures, were executed directly by UNDP (DIM modality), while 12 percent of the projects accounting for 12 percent of the total expenditures were executed by national partners (NIM modality).

In terms of the evolution of the budget and expenditure, the total budget of the country programme has increased from US\$45 million in 2018, to US\$56.9 million in 2021. In 2020, the execution rate increased from 73 percent in 2018 to 87 percent, with a total expenditure of around US\$49.2 million.

<sup>39</sup> Roy, Nirupam and Chaube, Radha, Environmental Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic in India, *International Journal of Biological Innovations*, 2021, pp. 49–55.

**FIGURE 1. Evolution of programme budget and expenditure, 2018–2021 (Million US\$)**



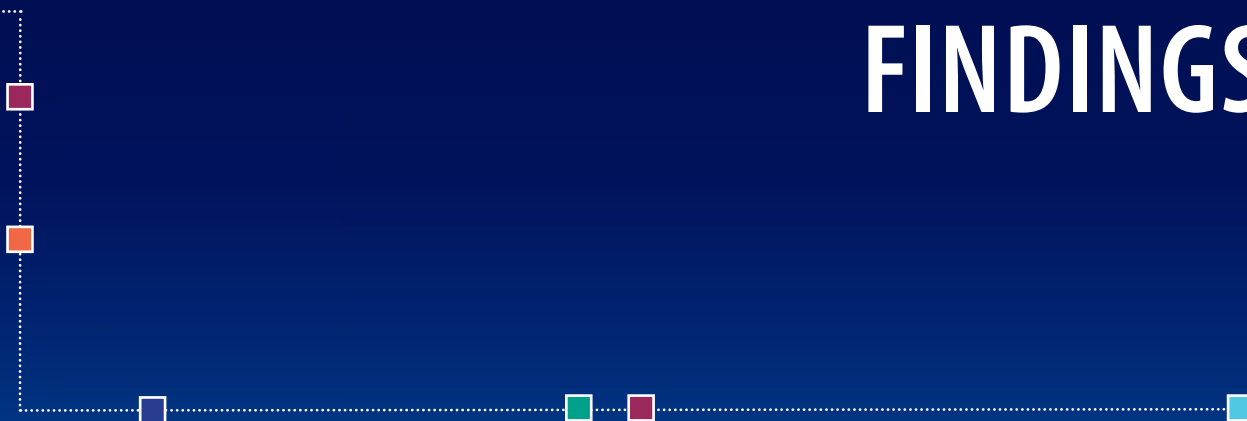
Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

In 2018, the CO reduced the number of staff positions from 60 to 30 fixed-term. By the end of September 2021, the CO had a total of 309 staff members and consultants (30 fixed-term and 279 National Personnel Services Agreements and Service Contracts). Women represented 38 percent of the staff and were present in all position levels.<sup>40</sup> The programme team is structured into the following units: the Accelerator Labs; state outreach and SDG integration; a policy unit; circular economy; environment, energy and resilience; systems strengthening and growth, employment and livelihoods; systems strengthening; inclusive growth; and communications and partnerships. Restructuring is discussed in more detail in finding 13.

<sup>40</sup> Human Resources data provided by UNDP India.

# CHAPTER 2

# FINDINGS



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

## 2.1 Institutional and systems strengthening for service delivery

**CPD OUTCOME:** By 2022, there is improved and more equitable access to, and utilization of, quality affordable health, nutrition, and water and sanitation services.

### Related outputs

**Output 1.1:** Institutions strengthened to support implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

**Output 1.2:** Systems strengthened for increased access to entitlements, services, justice and finance.

**Output 1.3:** Improved efficiency and effectiveness in public health systems for service delivery benefitting women and the poor.

**Output 1.4:** Increased provision of digital government services to citizens.

**Output 1.5:** Partnerships forged between government, private sector, multilateral and bilateral agencies, vertical funds, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and foundations that provide innovative and effective new development solutions that harness South-South opportunities.

The strategic aim under Outcome 1 is to assist institutions at the national and sub-national levels in becoming a harbinger of change towards fast-tracked implementation of national priorities and programmes for decisive and meaningful impact on the ground, and help citizens gain easy access to core services, by particularly reaching the last mile to apply the LNOB principle.

Initiatives under Outcome 1 are thus designed to link strengthening of public systems and enhanced institutional capacities with the vision of governance, accountability and justice; and adopt the *whole of government* approach with an emphasis on synergistic and coordinated convergence of developmental efforts at the state, district and local levels, including at the *Gram Panchayats*.

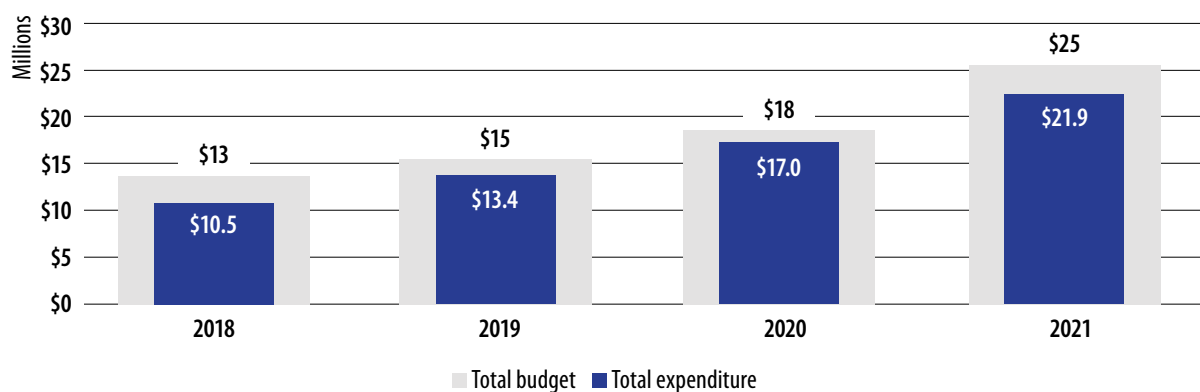
The portfolio of Outcome 1 projects, technical assistance, partnership engagements and policy initiatives in the following areas:

- a. **health systems strengthening** in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), state health missions, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization to support vaccine logistics management towards immunization as well as the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination campaign, piloting of innovations for improved delivery of maternal health services, and technical assistance to national institutions and programmes;

- b. **SDG localization and integration** of goals with national and subnational priorities, in collaboration with NITI Aayog, select state governments, civil society and the private sector;
- c. **SDG Finance Facility**, the multistakeholder collaborative platform incubated and facilitated by UNDP for co-creating and delivering SDG-aligned innovative financing approaches and instruments in India;
- d. **technical assistance** to ministries of the Government of India, national missions and institutions at national and state level by way of embedding technical staff and advisers/consultants for systems strengthening support on programme implementation and policy processes;
- e. support to national and state institutions for **India's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts**, in alignment with the Socio-Economic Recovery Framework of the United Nations system in the country.

During this programme cycle, which concluded in December 2021, 17 projects were implemented under this outcome with a budget of US\$771.9 million and an expenditure of US\$62.8 million, with an 87 percent execution rate as of December 2021 (see Figure 2). This portfolio accounted for 39 percent of the total programme expenditure and has been entirely directly implemented. Third-party cost sharing was the main source of funding for this outcome, at a \$45.7 million expenditure; Global Alliance for Vaccine and Immunization (GAVI) was the largest contributor (\$40.2 million), followed by government cost sharing at \$11.9 million. Most of the expenditure (94 percent) was on projects with gender equality as a significant objective (GEN 2). Limited resources were spent on CPD outputs, which increased the provision of access to entitlements, services, justice and finance (\$164,000), and no resources were spent on the provision of digital services output.

**FIGURE 2. Programme budget and expenditure for Outcome 1, 2018–2021 (Million US\$)**



Source: UNDP Atlas Project data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)



**Finding 1. Institutions strengthened to implementation and M&E of SDGs** – UNDP’s technical assistance at the state and national levels has contributed to SDG progress monitoring, together with SDG-oriented budgeting and planning. Limited progress has been made towards SDG-oriented integrated development plans at more decentralized levels of governance.

Under the overarching partnership framework, UNDP has been providing demand-driven technical assistance to NITI Aayog to fast-track the national development agenda with the SDGs as the compass, and in tracking progress on global goals around the National Indicator Framework (NIF), the backbone of SDG monitoring at the national level. This has translated into the yearly publishing of the SDG India Index and Dashboard for tracking progress at the national and state levels. The SDG India Index sets forth the year-on-year progress on the 2030 Agenda based on a wide basket of indicators. This ensures analytical rigour in understanding sectoral issues and data gaps in order to design future courses of action for all states. As a logical continuation to this stream of work, UNDP is now supporting NITI Aayog to bring the SDG India Index to the district level with the release of a Baseline Report on the District SDG Index in order to track progress in the 120 districts of the Northeastern Region.

This collaboration has facilitated mutually reinforcing state engagements. UNDP assisted in the preparation of the SDG Vision 2030 across a number of states with multi-year strategies and action plans. The organization also provided technical assistance to multiple states in developing SDG State Indicator Frameworks with baselines, targets and a monitoring plan for the achievement of Agenda 2030 goals and targets. The Frameworks are expected to complement the objectives of National Indicator Framework, and some states are now framing district-level indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs with UNDP’s support.

UNDP has supported SDG Coordination Centres (SDGCCs), which are the institutional mechanism to fast-track the achievements of the SDGs at the state level. They are functional in multiple states (Haryana, Karnataka, Nagaland, Punjab and Uttarakhand) and have been supporting the respective governments on multi-sectoral coordination and integration of SDGs in planning and budgeting. SDGCCs are also working with civil society, private sector partners, elected representatives of *Gram Panchayats*, and women self-help groups to reinforce SDG localization efforts at the state, district and sub-district levels.

The SDGCC for Haryana had anchored the launch of *SDG First Network* to facilitate exchange of ideas and learning; and to forge partnerships with CSOs, private players and elected councils for a collective approach to accelerated achievement of the SDGs at the local level. The Haryana SDGCC, since 2019, made headway in SDG-oriented budgeting and planning, and anchored the development of Medium-Term Expenditure Framework 2024–2025 for all departments of the state, in line with Vision 2030 and the SDG national and state indicators. SDGCC Punjab, in collaboration with State Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, has developed training manuals for integrating the SDGs to Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). In addition, SDG-aligned GPDPs for FY 2022–2023 have been developed for five Gram Panchayats of Patiala district of Punjab. Uttarakhand has taken a more granular approach with local-level SDG planning and monitoring. The SDG Programme Management Unit established by UNDP in the Centre for Public Policy and Good Governance (CPPGG) has helped in the design of the data collection instrument<sup>41</sup> and will anchor this process. Elected Gram Panchayat functionaries of Uttarakhand have also been provided with orientation training to increase their capacities in SDG-oriented integrated planning.

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<sup>41</sup> Final Mid-Term Review Report – UNDP India Country Programme (2018–2022).

The SDGCC in Karnataka, which became functional in August 2020, is developing an SDG Action Plan. It started SDG localization efforts by linking its work with the statutory GPDP processes. A CSR convening platform, *Akanksha*,<sup>42</sup> designed and developed by the SDGCC, has been commissioned to bring together all the actors: the private sector, high-net-worth individuals, CSOs, local government institutions and the Department of Planning to fulfil community development needs towards achieving the 2030 Agenda. To date, the platform has managed to mobilize INR2.72 billion (around \$36.5 million) for 95 projects. The SDGCC is also working with the Accelerator Lab to pilot a digital nudge campaign for narrowing the gender gap in unpaid care work, which restrains women's economically remunerative participation in the labour force. The catalytic roles of SDGCCs across states and over a range of initiatives and interventions have been recognized. NITI Aayog, in its report, *Localizing SDGs: Early Lessons from India 2019*,<sup>43</sup> identified the SDGCCs as the signature solution for adopting the 'whole-of-government' approach towards ensuring the achievement of the SDGs, in keeping with the LNOB principle.

Notwithstanding these institutional strengthening achievements towards localizing the SDGs at the sub-national level, not much progress has been observed at the *Gram Panchayats* level in preparing SDG-oriented integrated development plans, which is the key indicator<sup>44</sup> for measuring CPD results relating to Output 1.1, as well as the UNSDF Outcome indicator 1.6. While spadework for planning and building the capacities of *Panchayat* functionaries had been initiated in select districts of a few states, the evaluation could not find evidence of *Gram Panchayat* developing SDGs-oriented integrated development plans, except those cited in para 41 above. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the national lockdown and other containment measures enforced by the government have impeded the work of SDGs-aligned *Gram Panchayat* planning process.

There are significant underspends on planned SDGCC activities and sub-national-level SDG localization projects. Cumulative resource utilization is less than 50 percent in two projects<sup>45</sup> of this cluster, and almost one-third of another project<sup>46</sup> remains unspent, even though their implementation has been going on for a reasonably longer duration. While this can be partially attributed to COVID-19-induced constraints on field implementation, the administrative constraints relating to procurement and contracting at the state level also appeared to be responsible for this slow financial performance of sub-national SDG localization projects.

<sup>42</sup> Government of Karnataka. <https://planning.karnataka.gov.in/info-2/Human+Development+Division/Akanksha++Integrated+Online+CSR+Facilitation+Platform/en>

<sup>43</sup> National Portal of India. [https://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/LSDGs\\_July\\_8\\_Web.pdf](https://niti.gov.in/writereaddata/files/LSDGs_July_8_Web.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Indicator 1.1.1: Number of states in which Gram Panchayats prepare integrated plans oriented to SDGs. Baseline: to be established; Target: 10 additional ones.

<sup>45</sup> SDG Coordination Centre Establishment and SDGCC in Nagaland (Project IDs: 00110391 and 00119967).

<sup>46</sup> Support SDG Implementation (Project ID:00119212).

**Finding 2. Health systems strengthening** – UNDP technical support has helped to improve and promote health systems strengthening with more equitable access to and utilization of quality and affordable health services in India. UNDP has scaled up the deployment of eVIN for efficient vaccine logistic management, thus contributing to the effective strengthening of public health systems and improving the efficiency of the Universal Immunization Program, which is now being used for COVID-19 vaccine delivery in India.

Introduced during the 2013–2017 Country Programme to digitally track vaccine supply chains, the coverage of the eVIN<sup>47</sup> system was scaled up to 28,748 cold chain points (public health facilities for vaccine storage) across all the 732 districts in 36 states and union territories. The rollout was delayed by six months in the last 12 states, owing to COVID-19 pandemic-imposed restrictions. Since 2017, UNDP conducted training of nearly 48,000 cold chain handlers through 1,323 batches to orient them on the eVIN technology platform and the standard operating procedures. Across 19 states, the adherence to the cold chain points conducting transaction through eVIN was reported to be 99percent ; and eight states out of 19 had reported an adherence of 100 percent.<sup>48</sup> Nearly 50 million vaccine supply and usage transactions were made on eVIN during 2020, and according to Immunization Division (MoHFW) estimates, the efficient management of vaccine supply chain and enhanced near real-time visibility of vaccine stocks have resulted in around a 30 percent saving in vaccine utilization. Hence, there were savings of approximately 90 million doses of vaccines, and a 40 percent reduction in the instances of stock-out of any antigen<sup>49</sup> in the health facilities. The increased vaccine availability in health facilities has also resulted in the reduction in the instances of missed vaccination opportunities, benefiting especially women and children from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds.

In addition to the digital cloud-based platform for real-time visibility of vaccine stocks and consumption patterns, the eVIN has systematized the operating procedures to streamline vaccine supply chain. These, together with the presence of qualified human resources<sup>50</sup> for support and supervision at every district, have been cited by a number of senior government officials as the unique value-added of eVIN to the vaccine programmes of the country.

The *Techno-Economic Assessment of Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network*, published by Immunization Technical Support Unit (ITSU) of MoHFW, calculated the total eVIN-induced benefits in Health System Strengthening (HSS) of the states at INR255.84 crores<sup>51</sup> (US\$34.53 million) against a total investment of INR182 crores (US\$24.56 million), a return of investment (RoI)<sup>52</sup> of 1.41, i.e., for 1 rupee of eVIN investment, there is a return of INR1.41. This assessment also calculated the highest return on eVIN investment from Bihar where the RoI was 3.51, followed by Uttar Pradesh, at 3.40.<sup>53</sup> The cited report also made future RoI projections due to reduced start-up investments, as well as savings from existing and new vaccines. Also, the report estimated that the RoI in the future could be an impressive 2.91, with more than six times return in UP and Bihar. However, substantiating the achievement of this projected RoI was not feasible in absence of any programmatic evaluation of eVIN other than the 2018 study.

<sup>47</sup> eVIN is a unique innovation that brings together technology, people and processes to strengthen the vaccine supply chain by digitizing information on vaccine stocks and storage temperatures.

<sup>48</sup> Report on Gavi 2020 Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue: Immunisation Planning in light of COVID-19.

<sup>49</sup> Techno-Economic Assessment of Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (December 2018); Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

<sup>50</sup> The cadre of eVIN teams in districts also provided critical healthcare delivery service in support of emergency health response during the first and second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are now involved in the rollout of the vaccination programme on CoWIN in all districts of India.

<sup>51</sup> Equivalent to US\$0.136 million in October 2022.

<sup>52</sup> The return on investment calculation was based on both the financial cost and economic cost approach; and the utilization data (including all vaccines, both assessed and new vaccines, in HSS1 states).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

The eVIN results have led the national government to fast-track own-resource investment to support implementation in the initial 12 states, and eVIN implementation in these states have successfully been transitioned to National Health Mission funding to ensure sustainability. The eVIN team of UNDP continues to closely support the cold chain handlers and maintain the software platform in these states under mutually agreed frameworks for technical support, which is covered by the budget of the respective State Health Missions.

Building on the software deployment and technical management experience of eVIN, UNDP quickly repurposed the algorithms with appropriate upgrades to establish the COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (CoWIN) of vaccination administration and the near real-time issuance of vaccination certificates. To date, CoWIN facilitated the delivery and tracking of over 1.8 billion vaccine doses<sup>54</sup> administered to around 1 billion registered beneficiaries. The Government of India has now offered the CoWIN platform as a *digital public good* to assist COVID-19 vaccine delivery in other countries.

During the pandemic, the eVIN platform was leveraged for tracking supply chain and monitor stocks of COVID-related emergency response materials in health facilities across 145 districts in eight states to ensure adequate and timely supply. This system has become the technological backbone of the Indian national vaccine programme. The eVIN platform was also used extensively for real-time tracking of COVID-19 vaccine stock, transport and temperature control. There were unanticipated technical challenges during this critical juncture of the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out. The Government of India wanted the eVIN to be open source with no 'vendor lock-in'. To meet this requirement, the new eVIN Advance Edition (eVIN AE) was developed through the services of an alternate developer. All eVIN transactions have since been performing well on the Advanced Edition version of new eVIN software. The Ministry recognizes the professionalism demonstrated by UNDP technical management team in restoring the service within a reasonable timeline.

The MoHFW has also drawn up plans for the integration of both eVIN and CoWIN systems on Open Application Programming Interface- (API) based information interchange architecture. This aims to create a unified vaccination management system that leverages the unique strengths of each individual system to handle all types of vaccination administration activities and to track each and every vaccine recipient. The Government of India's commitment to working UNDP to deliver this ambitious initiative reflects the credibility and achievements of the team working on eVIN and CoWIN systems.

Another key policy and programme implementation engagement in the health sector was with the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) of the MoHFW, through which UNDP continued to provide technical assistance in the framing of rules and guidelines for the operationalization of HIV/AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017, and to foster inter-ministerial collaboration with non-health ministries on mitigating HIV/AIDS impact among people living with HIV (PLHIV) and the most-at-risk populations such as female sex workers and transgender communities. These efforts resulted in NACO formalizing partnership arrangements (under bilateral Memoranda of Understanding) with 18 ministries<sup>55</sup> of the Central Government to reach out to PLHIV and at-risk population with information, services and capacities to mitigate discrimination and stigmatization-related vulnerabilities, and to enhance the accessibility of the Government's targeted schemes and programmes. In addition, UNDP supported the development of a Framework Document on the welfare and wellbeing of the transgender community, which has been mandated under Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2019 and Rules 2020. NITI Aayog and concerned ministries were consulted

<sup>54</sup> Indian Government. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. CoWin Dashboard. <https://dashboard.cowin.gov.in>, accessed on April 2022.

<sup>55</sup> National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO). <http://naco.gov.in/mou-signed-naco-ministriesdepartments>

in framing the document. UNDP's contribution towards the finalization of the Act and the Rules was also reported. However, sufficiently triangulated evidence was not available in a timely manner to make a fair judgment on the efficacy of these policy support interventions.

### **Finding 3. Partnerships for innovative and effective development and financing solutions.**

Multi-dimensional partnerships between UNDP and public institutions, multilateral and bilateral agencies, impact investing advisers, the private sector and foundations have contributed to systemic and institutional capacity improvements, new development solutions, and innovative SDG financing approaches. Limited evidence was found of these partnerships enabling results for those left behind, UNDP has been unable to fully leverage the private sector and the civil society for systems strengthening work.

UNDP continued with the 2013–2017 Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) modality<sup>56</sup> of embedding strategic advisers and technical support teams within national and state institutions, which has contributed to the targeted development of institutional capacities, as well as to helping garner national ownership and sustainability of specific transformational agendas. Collaborative associations with NITI Aayog for identifying development challenges and co-creating solutions included: (i) the Project Management Unit for the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP);<sup>57</sup> (ii) the preparation of the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for India; and (iii) the co-creation of innovations with Atal Innovation Mission,<sup>58</sup> which included the creation of a youth-focused ecosystem conducive to innovation and social entrepreneurship.

UNDP played an important convening role in training and consultation with ministries, departments and states, in addition to onboarding the expertise of the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) for the creation of a multi-dimension poverty index in India. Additionally, UNDP contributed to the creation of the National MPI dashboard. The head count ratio as per the Multidimensional Poverty Index has now been included in the SDG Index 2020 as one of the indicators of SDG 1, and the Baseline MPI Report for India was released in November 2021 with strong media attention. New poverty estimates for a country of 1.3 billion people in 700 districts was an enormous undertaking.

The Policy Unit of UNDP, in partnership with NITI Aayog and other stakeholders conducted an Appraisal of the ADP of the Government of India to assess the effectiveness of the programme; and analyse specific impact of the programme across the different districts, especially in relation to known issues of development challenges. As an overall finding, the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) opined that ADP is a very successful model of local area development and is aligned to the LNOB principle, and “the districts have experienced more growth and development in the last two years than ever before”. However, the appraisal of the ADP depended entirely on governmental information sources,<sup>59</sup> with no efforts made to elicit feedback and insight from the programme beneficiaries or other citizens. In the absence of sufficiently triangulated evidence, the ICPE was not able to further validate its findings.

<sup>56</sup> The outcome evaluation of Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2013–2017 records governments' appreciation of this project implementation modality, which provided capacity-building and institutional strengthening support with dependable technical assistance and high-quality development support.

<sup>57</sup> The Aspirational Districts programme aims to quickly and effectively transform 112 of the most under-developed districts across the country. The broad components of the programme are convergence (of central and state schemes), collaboration (of central, state-level officers and district collectors) and competition among districts through monthly delta ranking, all of which are driven by a mass movement. See: [www.niti.gov.in/aspirational-districts-programme](http://www.niti.gov.in/aspirational-districts-programme)

<sup>58</sup> Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) is the Government of India's flagship initiative to create and promote a culture of innovation. See: <https://aim.gov.in>

<sup>59</sup> The quantitative analysis of the appraisal primarily used the data-points pertaining to 49 indicators that were uploaded by district officials, and were complemented with MIS updates from the concerned central government ministries. The qualitative interviews were restricted only to District Magistrates/District Collectors, Prabhari Officers, Aspirational District Fellows and UNVs, and development partners /knowledge partners on-boarded from private sector resource pool.

UNDP support to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA)<sup>60</sup> and engagements with State Tribal Departments and CSO in the states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha contributed to strengthening implementing agency capacities. There have been two aspects of these technical support: placement of subject matter specialist in order to assist in the drafting of notifications, guidelines, facilitative orders and to provide handholding support; and the strengthening of the implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006 by digitizing the entire process of Forest Rights Act (FRA) claim filling, processing and tracking claim status as well as the generation of reports and analytics. The development and operationalization of the digital solution to support rights recognition and the appeal process under FRA was scheduled for initiation during October/November of 2019, with plans for a rapid rollout. But progress has been slow, and the digital solution was still in the pilot testing stage even after two years; as of October 2021, no claim was officially processed in the system. It was reported that the strengthening of institutional capacities has contributed to the recognition of more than 32,000 individual forest right claims; however, sufficiently triangulated evidence in support of this result was not available in a timely manner to be integrated in the report. This, together with the poor response rate (10 percent) in the IVRS-based dipstick survey (and follow-up feedback from partners), seem to indicate that there was very limited attention given to measuring results at the grassroots level and the results are unclear.

UNDP also established a new a multi-stakeholder collaborative platform involving public institutions, multilateral and bilateral agencies, private sector, impact investing advisors and entities, and foundations, for an SDGFF to ideate, co-create and help incentivize SDG-aligned innovative financing approaches and instruments to incentivize market development. Within a reasonably short period of two and a half years, the achievements of the platform included the following:<sup>61</sup>

- (a) It helped develop ecosystems for blended sustainable financing instruments such as CSR-financed Pay-for-Success model.
- (b) It initiated the issuance of green bonds for municipalities, which led to green development projects.
- (c) It convened and consulted with stakeholders to inform the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) mandated Working Group on the way forward for the Social Stock Exchange framework in India.
- (d) It developed SDG Impact Investor *Map for India* to help identify investment opportunity areas that can contribute to addressing the sustainable development needs of the country and are in alignment with national and sector-specific policy priorities.
- (e) It completed a scoping study to analyse the potential of SDG-aligned Exchange traded fund (ETF)<sup>62</sup> in India as an instrument for furthering the SDG agenda.
- (f) It established the United Nations–NITI Aayog Investor Consortium for Women Entrepreneurs.

<sup>60</sup> This is a cross-cutting partnership across Outcomes 1 and 2. Other results are discussed under Outcome 2.

<sup>61</sup> Source: SDG Finance Factsheet for Country Programme Management Board meeting 2020.

<sup>62</sup> ETF is a type of professionally managed investment fund that are traded freely on stock exchanges (as opposed to mutual funds, which can only be purchased or redeemed at its NAV per share at the end of each trading day).

SDGFF helped convene the Sustainable Finance Collaborative, which is the multi-stakeholder partnership platform steered by the Department of Economic Affairs to bring together leading stakeholders for ideation, collaboration and contribution. The Collaborative provided valuable insights and tangible recommendations that could be helpful in developing a Sustainable Finance framework/roadmap for India. The finance sector hub, the regional office and the CO contributed to the success of the event. Subsequently, UNDP was appointed the Secretariat of the government-led Sustainable Finance Taskforce, and is anchoring the process of developing a sustainable finance roadmap, a taxonomy of sustainable activities, recommendations to create an enabling regulatory environment for sustainable finance, and to strengthen resilience and sustainability-linked disclosures in the country. These critical policy support resources are expected to feed into the sustainable finance agenda of the Government during FY 2022–2023. The work on the Sustainable Finance Taskforce is expected to bridge a gap in the investment finance market and bring a strong unified approach for collaboration to further the sustainable finance agenda. And in this process, UNDP has been able to position itself as a torch-bearer in the sustainable finance space in India.

UNDP aimed to establish a transformational partnership with private sector partners to assist with resource mobilization and to leverage private sector capacities to co-create innovative solutions. The Strategic Partnership Unit was tasked with this mandate. However, in the context of the systems strengthening outcome, there has been limited progress in the achievement of this objective, except for the successes of the SDGFF and a few minor examples. UNDP has not been very effective with private sector partners in communicating the importance of good governance and strong institutions for qualitative improvement in the business environment. Moreover, there have been no outstanding project ideas on integrating the private sector in strengthening governance to improve public sector efficiency, transparency, nor any streamlining of government procedures for effective development outcomes, or the promotion of the principles relating to human rights and rule-of-law. Owing to the ongoing efforts, such as SDGFF-anchored multistakeholder collaborations or Accelerator Lab-nurtured innovations (e.g. the ecosystem-level digital public good partnership in agriculture, the blockchain for traceability and transparency), there are opportunities to encourage responsible private sector participation in access to justice, digital governance, public sector strengthening, and SDG-oriented local development initiatives. These are also areas where UNDP would have benefited from stronger engagement with the UNDP Global Policy Network. However, tangible efforts in these directions have not been noted. Additionally, while there were collaborations with civil society actors that helped to further the sustainable development agenda at the grassroots level, there have been inadequate accomplishments with regard to building transformational and policy engagement collaborations.

Partnership engagements have also been forged with other United Nations agencies: with World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) on inclusive social protection; with UNICEF on health infrastructure strengthening and implementing joint campaign on mental health and psychosocial wellbeing; and within UNCT institutional arrangements for delivering on UNSDF Results. UNDP also established particularly strong partnerships with UNICEF and World Health Organization on eVIN with symbiotic role towards universal immunization. The technology-mediated, cost-efficient approach of eVIN is adapted and/or replicated for logistics management of health commodities in the following countries: Indonesia, Afghanistan, Sudan and Malawi, with technical support and guidance to these COs<sup>63</sup> – an excellent example of South-South cooperation and knowledge exchange.

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<sup>63</sup> The Mid-Term Review Report; December 2020.

## 2.2 Inclusive growth

**CPD OUTCOME:** By 2022, institutions are strengthened to progressively deliver universal access to basic services, employment and sustainable livelihoods to the poor and excluded in rural and urban areas.

### Related outputs

**Output 2.1:** Models with large-scale replicability, integrating employability, skilling, employment and entrepreneurship targeting women and poor people are developed.

**Output 2.2:** Poor and vulnerable have the capacity, options and opportunities to move out of deprivation.

**Output 2.3:** Partnerships for skill development and integrated housing solution forged between government, private sector, multilateral and bilateral agencies, vertical funds, CSR and foundations.

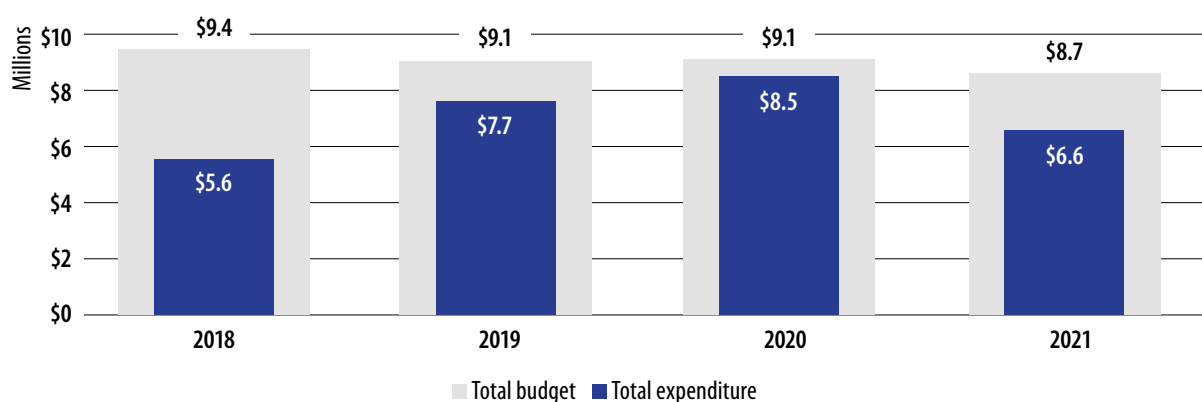
Strategic Outcome 2 is anchored in the national priority of “accelerated growth with inclusion and equity”. UNDP’s efforts are focused on addressing structural aspects of education, training and economic sectors that preclude the realization of inclusive growth. UNDP aimed to achieve this through research, analysis and policy options, as well as by brokering partnerships and facilitating synergies between existing national growth, skilling and employment institutions and programmes; creating scalable integrated development solutions; and confronting the significant barriers faced by women and girls in the economic sector.

Disha in partnership with IKEA Foundation was the flagship project in this outcome, accounting for almost 33 percent of the outcome budget. It aimed to demonstrate proof of concept for creating employability, skilling, and entrepreneurship targeting women from depressed socio-economic backgrounds. In order to focus on rural and peri-urban areas, and disadvantaged women and youth, UNDP undertook several initiatives with a focus on convergent planning and the utilization of available resources, building capabilities of community institutions and local governments/administrative machinery, and building linkages with market to help realize better economic value of human and physical resources. UNDP also aimed to strengthen state and central government capacities through various technical assistance provided to different ministries of the Central Government and departments at the state level. In its COVID-19 response, UNDP facilitated access to local skilling and job opportunities for vulnerable women and youth, restoring livelihoods opportunities for women microentrepreneurs.

During this programme cycle, 13 projects were implemented under this outcome with a budget of US\$36.3 million and an expenditure of US\$28.4 million, and a 78 percent execution rate as of December 2021 (Figure 3). This portfolio was directly implemented and accounted for 18 percent of total programme expenditure. Government cost sharing was the largest source of funding for this outcome, at \$15.0 million expenditure, closely followed by third-party cost sharing expenditure, at \$12.3 million; the largest share of these resources were raised through the private sector (80 percent of third-party cost sharing). Most of the expenditure (64 percent) was on projects with gender equality as a significant objective (GEN2) but there was significant expenditure for initiatives with gender as the main objective (GEN 3, 36 percent).



**FIGURE 3. Evolution of programme budget and expenditure for Outcome 2 (Million US\$)**



Source: UNDP Atlas Project data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

**Finding 4. Models for skilling and entrepreneurship** – UNDP has contributed to the development of models that integrate career guidance and counselling, employability skilling, entrepreneurship and value chain strengthening targeting poor women. Ensuring the sustainability of results has remained a challenge, and the models have yet to achieve large-scale replicability.

For skilling and entrepreneurship, DISHA was the largest programme implemented by the India CO in five States.<sup>64</sup> The DISHA programme developed proof of concept(s) by trying different models to increase women labour force participation from marginalized communities. The four models focused on: the education work continuum; the employment marketplace; the fostering of women’s entrepreneurship (*biz-sakhi*); and value chain strengthening through the capacity building of marginalized women farmers and artisans. The extent to which each of these models succeeded has varied.

The Education work continuum was a relevant model that that helped improve existing systems and processes. The model adapted by the Delhi Government focused on exposure to the world of work through internships, guest lectures and industry visits.<sup>65</sup> However, the evaluation did not find evidence of creation of adequate internship opportunities. The second model on the employment marketplace created IT platforms to connect women and girls to training providers and employers in the area. The model successfully connected young girls with jobs. This was triangulated with beneficiary interviews conducted for the evaluation. This model was piloted in two states: Maharashtra and Karnataka. In Karnataka it was incorporated in the Government’s Youth Employment Service (YES) through an online employment exchange. In Maharashtra, CSOs have been managing the platform including by providing counselling services. Key beneficiary interviews highlighted that counselling was extremely beneficial for them in making career choices.

The third model on fostering women’s entrepreneurship was called “Biz Sakhi”. Women entrepreneur facilitators in the rural areas provided emotional and technical support to other micro enterprise aspirants, including in familial dynamics, which also helped them start their own enterprises. This model was developed in partnership with the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) and Tata Institute of Social Science. The model provided important services for marginalized women entering the workforce force

<sup>64</sup> Maharashtra, Telangana, Delhi, Haryana and Karnataka.

<sup>65</sup> [edudelcareer.com](http://edudelcareer.com) was created for Delhi government schools by iDreamCareer, facilitated by UNDP.

for the first time. While it was appreciated by the government, the approach is yet to find a long-term partner and to be scaled up. The fourth model on value chain strengthening was a mini-Master of Business Administration (MBA), which was reported as a best practice for youth employment in agriculture value chains by the Green Innovation Centre for the Agriculture and Food Sector, together with the Action Room<sup>66</sup> to Fight Poverty, which was set up jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Maharashtra. The mini-MBA, or the Business Enterprise Leadership Management Programme, was designed and developed in partnership with Access Livelihood Consulting and MANAGE<sup>67</sup>. To further scale up and replicate the course, UNDP partnered with the prestigious Indian Institute of Management Shillong and the Institute of Rural Management Anand. The approach focused on engaging with women at the lower end of the value chain by training women (farm and non-farm) producers as women sourcing managers) and women business managers to adopt a managerial role in rural business with a strong input–output market interface component. This model has enormous potential for the Government to adapt and upscale it because of the government’s commitment to forming and promoting 10,000 FPOs, but it has yet to be mainstreamed in government schemes. UNDP partnered with IIM Shillong to customize this curriculum for a project on promoting Eri silk value chains in the Northeast, supported by Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporate Limited (HSBC).

Disha has been unable to achieve the results envisaged. Only 13 percent of the women who were trained under Disha secured an income-generating opportunity, out of the cohort of beneficiaries (about 630,000 women) targeted for long-term income improvement. This is less than the government schemes’ success rate of 30 percent.<sup>68</sup> Many women did not start a job or enterprise after receiving training. DISHA was extremely ambitious, and about 50 percent of the women across all four models only received information through awareness generation sessions, and no direct input was provided for them to secure sustainable incomes (either through training or placements).<sup>69</sup> Overall, the Disha impact evaluation noted that there was a 58 percent shortfall against the overall job targets. The micro-enterprise model fares slightly better; about 4 percent of women trained under Disha’s micro-enterprise model started their own business,<sup>70</sup> which is comparable to the Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) launched under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM). However, UNDP’s cost for these results was higher than that of SVEP.

Another issue is that most of these initiatives ended with the life of the project (in most cases, 9–11 months) and were not absorbed by national authorities or private sector. It is not clear from UNDP documentation and interviews with staff and stakeholders what was learned regarding why adequate national ownership could not be promoted to ensure a better sustainability of results.

There have been some examples of replication of Disha. UNDP, based on its technical know-how, replicated the Disha module of Strengthening Entrepreneurship Development in the State of Madhya Pradesh in partnership with the State Government’s Scheme on Mukhya Mantri Yuva Uddam Yojana (MMYUY). UNDP provided technical support to the MMYUY beneficiaries and trained young entrepreneurs enrolled in the scheme to apply for loans, fill in paperwork and prepare business proposals. A technical evaluation conducted on the application process showed an improvement in the quality of loan proposals of

<sup>66</sup> Inauguration of ‘Action Room to Reduce Poverty’ aims to ensure that every citizen, especially in the 27 identified vulnerable blocks benefits from the livelihood opportunities and gains in education and health.

<sup>67</sup> MANAGE is a centre for agripreneurship. See <https://www.manage.gov.in/>

<sup>68</sup> Disha Impact Evaluation: Key Findings, Dalberg, March 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

entrepreneurs, thus reducing the proposal rejection rate and enhancing efficiency in decision-making.<sup>71</sup> But again, attention to subsequent phases to ensure sustainability of results received limited attention from UNDP and partners.

With the exception of Disha, there were several other smaller interventions to strengthen women's economic empowerment, the most significant among which was the initiative in partnership with HSBC, targeting women weavers in Northeast India. UNDP played a crucial role in connecting HSBC with the government, developing the curriculum for training in partnership with IIM Shillong, but the training did not take place. The project was discontinued due to changes in the Government's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)<sup>72</sup> rules, which made it more difficult to access funding. In the State of Uttarakhand, UNDP helped the State Department to set up a Programme Management Unit to strengthen the Government's intervention on vocational training through Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs). No data were found of the intermediate or final results.

Other smaller partnerships have also been established to replicate Disha models in other different states. These include partnerships with Marico, a multinational firm in Madhya Pradesh and Nyara Energy in Gujarat. Lockdowns due to COVID-19 and the subsequent slow-down of the economy have been a major hindrance for UNDP to replicate its lessons in large-scale government schemes.

**Finding 5. Capacity building of vulnerable population** – UNDP worked closely with national and state ministries to strengthen implementation of government policies to improve capacities and provide opportunities for poor and vulnerable indigenous population to move out of deprivation. Despite successes, training materials and strategies followed are yet to be better mainstreamed, either by the state or national governments, and yet to be replicated further.

UNDP engaged with the MoTA, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports to strengthen the implementation of government programmes and schemes. With MoTA at the national level, UNDP has been part of and provided technical support to two committees drafting the guidelines for Community Forest rights and Guidelines for the Recognition of Habitat Rights and Rights of Pastoral Communities. According to the Ministry, UNDP has also been successfully coordinating the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee on Forest Rights.<sup>73</sup>

Two projects in the State of Odisha have been particularly significant in building the capacities of vulnerable groups. The 1000 Springs Initiative, in partnership with MoTA trained local tribal youth as barefoot para-hydrogeologists to map and rejuvenate natural springs by combining traditional and scientific knowledge and undertaking protection measures in their habitations to conserve these springs. A GIS-based Spring Water Atlas was developed with an inventory of 554 springs in remote areas to serve 116 tribal habitations in 38 watersheds in Odisha, facilitating access to safe and adequate water to remote tribal communities for drinking as well as basic domestic and agricultural use.<sup>74</sup> A total of 135 tribal youth were reported to have been trained as barefoot hydrologists.<sup>75</sup> The initiative has achieved convergence with (MNREGA)<sup>76</sup> by leveraging the scheme's fund, and has been able to demonstrate a successful model. Stakeholder interviews and the Results-Oriented Annual Reports (ROARs) indicate that the Ministry was

<sup>71</sup> Impact Assessment of Mukhya Mantri Yuva Uddami Yojana, NABCONS, 2019.

<sup>72</sup> The challenges are discussed further in finding 15.

<sup>73</sup> The MoTA is the nodal agency entrusted with the implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006. MoTA coordinates with other ministries/departments, including the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), for the effective implementation.

<sup>74</sup> Spring Water Atlas. <https://thespringsportal.org>

<sup>75</sup> Interviews, the evaluation was unable to further triangulate the statement.

<sup>76</sup> MNREGA is an Act that guarantees the right to work. See: [https://nrega.nic.in/Nregahome/MGNREGA\\_new/Nrega\\_home.aspx](https://nrega.nic.in/Nregahome/MGNREGA_new/Nrega_home.aspx)

planning to upscale the 1000 Springs Initiative in the remote forest areas inhabited by the tribal communities where the conventional means of water supply through pipes is either difficult or not cost-effective through its various schemes and programmes. The Spring Water Atlas has also been made available for public access under the banner of MoTA and UNDP. The MoTA subsequently revised the scheme of development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) guidelines and inserted a provision of safe drinking water including preservation and development of springs and underground water, so that state governments can access funds under PVTG scheme focusing on the know-how from the 1000 Springs Initiative. While the initiative is an example of a successful practice being upscaled at the policy level, to date, the initiative is limited to Odisha and is yet to be implemented in neighbouring states such as Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and parts of West Bengal that have similar agro-climatic conditions and similar challenges of accessing perennial water sources.

The second prominent initiative in the State of Odisha was UNDP's support to the 'Housing for All' programme, in partnership with the MoRD, state governments and the private sector. The initiative has promoted integrated habitat solutions in rural Odisha. UNDP focused on developing capacities and skills of local stakeholders in the rural housing market and strengthening material value chains for construction. This included the adaptation of cost-effective, local and environment-friendly building technologies/material. In doing so, the project promoted environmental sustainability while enhancing local technical know-how and capacities of marginalized tribal groups. Efforts were made to ensure that most vulnerable were provided house assistance and to ensure timely construction.<sup>77</sup> In Odisha, this reportedly trained 20,677 masons and facilitated the construction of over four million houses in 30 districts.<sup>78</sup> However, the evaluation was unable to assess the number of trainees that have sustained livelihoods in masonry and triangulate evidence for houses where facilitations were constructed.

UNDP also collaborated with the Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA) and Sports and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in 31 districts in Madhya Pradesh to provide training in volunteering, leadership and entrepreneurship. UNDP's youth officers together with UNV to coordinate with the government in training youth. Districts with UNV-appointed youth officers showed a positive impact on the mobilization of youth volunteers for community development and on promoting leadership skills and social entrepreneurship'. Despite its success, the training materials developed for the districts where UNDP, UNV partnered with MoYA are yet to be mainstreamed either by the state government or the national government, and replicated in other states.

**Finding 6. Partnerships for skills development** – Sustained partnerships with the Government as well as new and expanded partnerships with the private sector contributed to nationally relevant work and some integrated development solutions, and in mobilizing resources. UNDP, however, lacked a comprehensive partnership plan to engage with parties in a complementary and strategic manner following a clear and coherent stakeholders mapping.

One of UNDP's greatest strengths of has been its partnership with the Government both at the national and state levels. UNDP's partnership with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), the National Service Scheme (NSS), *Mukhya Mantri Yuva Uddyomi Yojana* and *PM Awas Yojana* resulted in strong synergy between UNDP priorities and those of the national and state government. UNDP's partnership with the MoTA has been a long-term one working on solutions linked to all three UNDP outcome objectives of systems strengthening, inclusive growth, and environment management.

<sup>77</sup> ROAR 2019.

<sup>78</sup> ROAR 2020.

UNDP partnerships with the United Nations entities have not been fully leveraged. UNDP successfully partnered with UNICEF and UNV to scale up engagement with young people for solutions through the signature programmes of GEN U YuWaah in India.<sup>79</sup> UNDP chaired the UNSDF results group on 'Poverty and Urbanization' and contributed to the other UNSDF results groups on Health; Gender Equality and Youth Development'; and 'Skilling, Entrepreneurship and Job Creation'. However, UNDP has no significant partnerships with International Labour Organization (ILO) during the current programme cycle despite there being overlaps with UNDP's Biz Sakhi model and ILO's Start and Improve Your Independent Business (SYIB) module.<sup>80</sup> While there were discussions with UN Women on future economic empowerment initiatives as well as on the provision of technical assistance to UNDP on area of gender mainstreaming, there were no concrete partnerships during the country programme period. Since UNDP experienced a turnover in the gender positions, the partnership with UN Women on gender mainstreaming could have strengthened the gender analysis work in this area.

UNDP mostly worked with CSOs in implementing all of the projects in the stipulated time without a focus on long-term sustainability on the ground. Partners interviewed raised the issue that for better planning and sustainability of projects on the ground, it would have been appropriate to have the partner CSOs be involved in joint planning, fund raising and implementation. The CSO partners, who have to work with the community in mobilizing beneficiaries, often feel that their credibility with the community is at stake due to the abrupt ending of projects.

UNDP partnership with academia on the inclusive growth initiative has been very limited, barring the work with the Tata Institute of Social Science on developing the Biz-Sakhi Module under Disha and with IIM Shillong on women weavers' economic empowerment initiative. A strong symbiotic partnership with academia could have helped the CO bring in analytical rigour during strategy and project formulations, as well as in better documentation of the process, good practices, and emerging development models/ solutions from ground. It could also have provided critical third-party input for plausible mid-course corrections.

At a programmatic level, the flagship initiative Disha was able to create a robust partnership base with a variety of organizations including government agencies and institution, with private sector partners and trust funds. UNDP's success in partnering with the private sector varied. The partnership with IKEA Foundation for Disha was particularly significant in terms of funding received. Other prominent private sector partners for this outcome included Larsen & Toubro, HSBC, SAP Labs and Nayara Energy. But for most of these partnerships, private sector entities were only donors and not involved beyond where there is much potential. The work with the private sector has a stronger potential for strategic partnerships, including with industrial bodies on the preparation of training curriculum and modules, creating a pool of trainers from the private sector and for reviewing human resources policies of some of these organizations to create a more enabling environment for women. A successful example was the placement of 35 young women in non-traditional work at Jindal Steels through lobbying efforts from IKEA and UNDP, which is a model that can be further explored.

<sup>79</sup> Generation Unlimited, or GenU, is a project implemented by UNICEF globally. In India, it is called YUWAH.

<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note that UNDP's Programme with Youth in partnership with Ministry of Youth Affairs and UNV used ILO's Start Your Independent Business (SYIB) programme for training entrepreneurs.

## 2.3 Energy, environment and resilience

**CPD OUTCOME:** By 2022, environmental and natural resource management is strengthened, and communities have increased access to clean energy and are more resilient to climate change and disaster risks.

### Related outputs

**Output 3.1:** Effective institutional, legislative and policy frameworks in place to enhance the implementation of climate change and disaster risk reduction at national and subnational levels.

**Output 3.2:** Effective solutions developed at national and subnational levels for sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems, ozone-depleting substances, chemicals and wastes.

**Output 3.3:** Inclusive and sustainable solutions adopted to achieve increased energy efficiency and universal clean energy access.

**Output 3.4:** Blended finance mechanisms developed to strengthen sustainable energy and environment solutions.

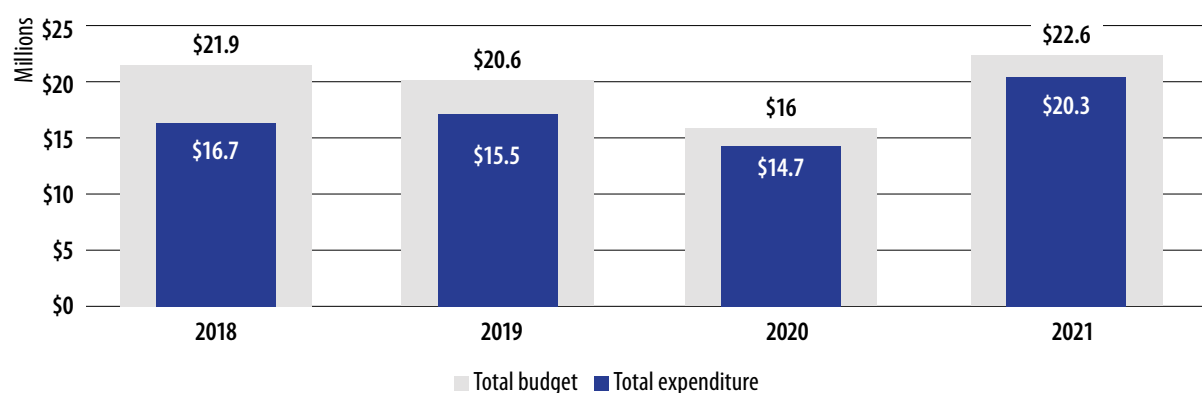
Outcome 3 is anchored in the national priority of ‘energy conservation and efficiency, environmental sustainability, stronger natural resource management, and community resilience’. UNDP aimed to focus on:

- a. increasing awareness on the health and environmental impacts of chemicals and waste, enable private sector participation in chemicals and waste management;
- b. building on its previous successful programmes on natural resource management based on landscape-based conservation approaches that can be scaled up across India’s coastline, highland and mountainous habitats, along river basins and banks, and within community-managed forests;
- c. strengthening and achieving a deeper integration of internationally adopted frameworks and policies for climate change and DRM within national and state-level institutions, systems and processes; building capacity at central, state and city levels; supporting integration of climate change and disaster resilience policies and programmes within key sectors such as energy, transportation, water, agriculture and forestry;
- d. prioritizing access to energy, especially for underserved, vulnerable and poor communities and women, and addressing poverty-related vulnerabilities, and building partnerships to promote renewable energy use, especially for enhancing livelihood opportunities and providing social services.

To deliver these objectives, UNDP has partnered with a range of partners from the Central Government, state and local governments in several states, United Nations and other development partners, bilateral donors (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID]), vertical funds (GCF, the Global Environment Facility, Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol), inter-governmental bodies (International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure), private sector donors and beneficiaries, industry associations (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry), CII, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Manufacturers Association, Indian Polyurethane Association), around 50,000 waste pickers, CSOs, research institutes (e.g. Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology), among others. In most of these partnerships, UNDP served as the implementing agency or as the direct service provider for technical assistance and capacity building, with a few activities where it played a predominantly policy/advisory role.

During this programme cycle, 38 projects were implemented under this outcome with a budget of US\$87.41 million and expenditure of US\$67.2 million, with an 83 percent execution rate until December 2021 (Figure 4). The dependence on vertical funds led to many small-scale projects across the portfolio. This portfolio was mainly directly implemented with UNDP support, i.e. 72 percent of the expenditure (29 projects); nine projects were directly implemented by UNDP (28 percent expenditure). The outcome accounted for 42 percent of the total expenditure. Vertical funds have been the main source of funding for this outcome, with \$46.7 million in expenditure, which included funds from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, followed by \$16.0 million in third-party cost sharing expenditure, which included private sector expenditure of \$6.8 million, of which \$5.4 million from the Coca-Cola Company. Most of the expenditure (49 percent) was used for projects with gender equality as a significant objective (GEN 2) but significant expenditure did not have gender as a significant objective (GEN 1, 47 percent). Limited resources were spent on outputs for sustainable energy (\$422,656).

**FIGURE 4. Programme budget and expenditure for Outcome 3, 2018–2021 (Million US\$)**



Source: UNDP Atlas Project data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

**Finding 7. Climate change planning and adaptation:** The capacity of sub-national governments to implement and enhance State Action Plans on Climate Change has been strengthened with the support of UNDP, particularly in state capitals or major cities. There were gaps in the promotion of innovation and in the strategic considerations of project design, as well as proper knowledge management.

UNDP was the only agency to support the integration of climate change actions into sub national planning through supporting the implementation of the State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs) in Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Jharkhand and Manipur. Initiatives relied heavily on demonstration and replications as a means to build capacity. Progress in building capacity was reported in all five states.<sup>81,82</sup> UNDP helped in setting up the institutional arrangements and in mobilizing resources for implementing the SAPCCs. Demonstrations included piloting of early warning systems for landslides, a climate change integrated decision support system (DSS) for adaptation planning, developing an energy efficiency and renewable energy roadmap, a pilot mapping of climate-resilient forest corridors for managing and conserving flora and fauna, and for reducing human-wildlife conflicts, as well as mitigating and adapting to glacial lakes outburst flood (GLOF) events.<sup>83</sup> UNDP addressed climate change mitigation by developing the market for several energy efficient and renewable energy technologies prioritized in the SAPCCs, mainly through demonstrations, replications and catalysing investments. This included investment in solar PV systems, solar water pumps, solar micro cold storages, solar mini-grid, promotion of electric vehicles and technical assistance to set up a renewable energy Knowledge Park.<sup>84</sup>

UNDP worked with the MoRD to mainstream climate-informed planning within various rural development programmes and schemes in three target states, so as to effectively adapt to future climate change impacts. UNDP supported the construction of natural resources conservation structures at the district and block levels, resulting in a significant uptake of the MNREGA scheme.<sup>85</sup>

UNDP also provided technical and implementation support<sup>86</sup> to the Government of India for national-level reporting to the UNFCCC: preparation of the Third Biennial Update Report (completed);<sup>87</sup> the Third National Communication (ongoing),<sup>88</sup> the Fourth National Communication and Fourth Biennial Update Report (GEF proposal close to approval).<sup>89</sup> This cycle, the CO has also started working on the GCF Readiness Programme through which GCF provides grants and technical assistance to enhance the capacity of national institutions to efficiently engage with GCF.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Terminal Evaluation (TE) of the project “Strengthening State Strategies for Climate Action”.

<sup>82</sup> TE of the project “Market Transformation and Removal of Barriers for Effective Implementation of the State-Level Climate Change Action Plans”.

<sup>83</sup> TE of the project, “Strengthening State Strategies for Climate Action”; stakeholder interviews.

<sup>84</sup> TE of the project, “Market Transformation and Removal of Barriers for Effective Implementation of the State-Level Climate Change Action Plans”; stakeholder interviews.

<sup>85</sup> External partner, online interview on 31 August 2021; UNDP CO staff, online interview on 3 September 2021.

<sup>86</sup> UNDP was responsible for updating d report on India’s National Circumstances as part of the Third National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was also responsible for implementing certain climate mitigation activities.

<sup>87</sup> MoEFCC, India: Third Biennial Update Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, 221, p. 35.

<sup>88</sup> Support provided through the UNDP-GEF project “Preparation of Third National Communication (TNC) and Other New Information to the UNFCCC”.

<sup>89</sup> GEF, Preparation of India’s Fourth National Communication (4NC) and Fourth Biennial Update Report (BUR4) to the UNFCCC and strengthening institutional and analytical capacities on climate change, accessed on 20 October 2021, [www.thegef.org/project/preparation-india-s-fourth-national-communication-4nc-and-fourth-biennial-update-report-bur4](http://www.thegef.org/project/preparation-india-s-fourth-national-communication-4nc-and-fourth-biennial-update-report-bur4)

<sup>90</sup> Green Climate Fund (GCF), Country Readiness, accessed 30 July 2021, [www.greenclimate.fund/readiness](http://www.greenclimate.fund/readiness)



UNDP has initiated important studies on air pollution and its impact on health. As part of a global UNDP project, UNDP supported methodology development in three pilot countries (including India) for cost benefit analysis of the impacts of air pollution, improving national coordination mechanisms on air pollution, strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks, and facilitating scale-up in other countries. UNDP's nascent work on air pollution is currently focused more at the state level, but remains an area where large-scale impact can be made.

The capacity being built is mostly in state capitals or major cities and its impact at the community level is not yet evident,<sup>91</sup> also reflecting the enormity of the task and the need for continued engagement by UNDP. There were concerns regarding the quality assurance and quality control functions, such as a less judicious choice of some of the pilot projects, the impractical design of key project activities (e.g. the development of an overambitious M&E frameworks for SAPCCs at a time when they were being revised),<sup>92</sup> and inadequate quality checks of project outputs.<sup>93</sup>

There have been issues with pilot selection as well as their scalability. For example, the pilot carried out in Sikkim for mitigating GLOF and the construction of ice stupas as a source of water has a high replication potential in other sites,<sup>94</sup> and lessons learned from the work on GLOF provided critical input to national guidelines prepared by the National Disaster Management Authority but have not been followed up by UNDP for scale-up. Similarly, two pilot projects (Uttarakhand integrated forest development, Sikkim spring shed rejuvenation) were considered by terminal evaluators as insufficiently strategic or innovative.<sup>95</sup>

Various market development efforts of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies demonstrated in Jharkhand and Manipur have already been well demonstrated in India in various contexts. Moreover, the opportunities for these technologies are developing fast in India and have a high potential to be driven by the market itself due to reasonable payback periods, a steep decline in prices (solar PV is close to grid parity in India)<sup>96</sup>, together with major support programmes from key government actors such as the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL). Hence, although the demonstration projects were found beneficial by the two states with some scale-up, they were less innovative.

**Finding 8. Disaster risk management (DRM):** UNDP's technical and capacity-building support has contributed to the strengthening of the national and sub-national institutional, legislative and policy frameworks on disaster risk management (DRM). Additionally, systems, infrastructure and financing methods and options for RM implementation more effectively were developed with the technical advice, strategic partnership and thought leadership of UNDP.

During the current programme cycle, UNDP has focused on hydro-meteorological disasters.<sup>97</sup> The organization primarily worked at the state and city levels, creating and implementing policies and building government capacities, and the upstream work carried out has also been very impactful. Due to UNDP's reputation in this area, there is a large demand from the states for UNDP support to coordinate and implement DRM.

<sup>91</sup> TE of the project "Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change".

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> TE of the project "Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change". This is an indirect inference based on the finding of the TE of a weak QA/QC system and the recommendation to strengthen QA/QC of the project outputs produced. This needs to be verified.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Government of India. Ministry of New and Renewable Energy. Solar Energy: Overview. <https://mnre.gov.in/solar/current-status>

<sup>97</sup> The field-level work focuses on hydro-meteorological disasters, while the assessments are more comprehensive.

Continuing with its work on DRM with cities in previous cycles, UNDP worked with six cities<sup>98</sup> to build community resilience to natural disasters through risk and vulnerability assessments, the development and implementation of disaster management plans, capacity building and awareness raising, and by exploring opportunities for public private partnerships. Examples include the development of city disaster management plans, carrying out of hazard risk and vulnerability assessments,<sup>99</sup> and setting up of early warning systems, which, depending on the cities used a combination of formal and informal means.<sup>100</sup> The capacity and resilience developed during this project is reported to have demonstrated its usefulness during the gas leak from an industry at the outskirts of city of Visakhapatnam in 2020.<sup>101</sup> The psychosocial care component in this project was new and has been particularly useful during the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>102</sup>

Several state governments had approached UNDP to provide them with demand-based support on DRM, especially to strengthen the capacity of State Disaster Management Authority (SDMAs) and Department of Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), integrate DRM in sectoral planning, and increase the resilience of communities. In Himachal Pradesh, disaster management plans for 12 districts and 30 action and response plans for *panchayat samitis* (rural local government bodies) were developed including a portal to enable the planning and mitigation of extreme weather risks.<sup>103</sup> Twenty-five departmental plans were developed in four cities in the State of Maharashtra, and work is being planned in three more municipal corporations.<sup>104</sup> This work is reported to have been appreciated by partners, who requested further UNDP support.<sup>105</sup>

UNDP, together with UNICEF, led an inter-agency Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) after the Kerala floods, the first inter-agency PDNA conducted in India.<sup>106</sup> Extensive consultations were held, and long-term recovery framework was prepared.<sup>107</sup> This helped UNDP take a leading role in the PDNA conducted after Cyclone Fani in Odisha.<sup>108</sup> The Government deems this work highly significant, which will contribute to the anticipated development of a national-level disaster recovery framework.

UNDP supported the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission in developing a framework on disaster risk financing, and the recommendations were accepted by the Government. This was a very high-impact work by the National Disaster Management Authority and UNDP, which will change the way states use central government funding for disaster responses, from a more ad hoc manner approach, mostly focused on response and relief, to a disaster preparedness and capacity-building approach.<sup>109</sup> While this is a strong example of a significant and innovative financing effort, together with the BIOFIN project and work related to the Nagoya Protocol, the work on blended finance, a CPD output has not been that well defined. There has been little engagement of the SDG finance team with the energy, environment and resilience pillar except for small inputs into Pillar 3 project activities.

<sup>98</sup> Navi Mumbai, Shimla, Vijayawada, Vishakhapatnam, Cuttack and Shillong. USAID-funded project, “Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change”.

<sup>99</sup> Stakeholder interviews.

<sup>100</sup> TE of the project “Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change”. Stakeholder interviews.

<sup>101</sup> ROAR; MTR of the CPD 2018–2022.

<sup>102</sup> TE of the project, “Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change”; and stakeholder interviews.

<sup>103</sup> ROAR; stakeholder interviews.

<sup>104</sup> ROAR; MTR of the CPD 2018–2022; stakeholder interviews.

<sup>105</sup> MTR of the CPD 2018–2022; stakeholder interviews.

<sup>106</sup> Government of Kerala, Kerala Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Floods and Landslides - August 2018, Government of Kerala, 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> ROAR; Cyclone Fani: Damage, Loss, and Needs Assessment, 2019 by the Government of Odisha.

<sup>109</sup> Sitharaman, Nirmala, Explanatory Memorandum on the Action Taken on the Recommendations Made by the Fifteenth Finance Commission in its Final Report Submitted to the President on 9 November 2020, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, 2021, para. 14.

UNDP continued to provide technical support to the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), which was launched in 2019 and headquartered in India, to promote South-South cooperation on DRM. UNDP provided a technical expert to support the setting up of the CDRI. In February 2021, UNDP CO signed a US\$2 million contract with CDRI, where the CO will lead the development of CDRI's Flagship Report on Disaster and Climate Resilient Infrastructure to be launched in two years, with interim outputs presented by CDRI and the Government at the UNFCCC COP 26.<sup>110</sup>

Overall, the efforts in DRM have been very substantial and effective, but the large demand for UNDP services at the state level has diverted UNDP towards less strategic directions, forcing it to replicate the work that yielded good results in the past, thereby reducing the available resources for exploring new, innovative and strategic approaches.

While these are strong results, there has been limited work in preventive work. A major reason for the severity of impacts in India of natural hazards have been unplanned development patterns for which solutions have been recommended in the two PDNAs in Kerala and Odisha conducted by UNDP and partners, such as integrated water resource management and eco-sensitive and risk-informed approaches to land use and settlements.<sup>111</sup> These comprehensive and longer-term approaches are more preventive. The implementation of these more comprehensive solutions often faced major hurdles, due to resistance from groups with vested interests and disputes based on opposing ideologies regarding development pathways.

Interviews with senior staff indicate that UNDP has aimed to ensure greater integration between DRM and climate change adaptation, which, if successful, will help DRM to look at longer-term approaches. However, UNDP is yet to fully position itself in this upstream policy space with long-term development work, which may require partnerships beyond the DRM community and conducting integrated assessments, some of which could be transboundary.<sup>112</sup>

**Finding 9. Plastic waste management/the circular economy:** With regard to plastic waste management, UNDP has created a successful model largely privately funded, which builds the capacities of urban local bodies and private companies in developing and strengthening policies and norms with a strong social component supporting the waste picker community. However, a comprehensive circular economy approach to waste prevention has yet to be developed.

The circular economy portfolio is supporting a plastic waste management initiative which has been rolled out in around 35 cities as of mid-2021, with a target to reach 40 cities<sup>113</sup> by the end of 2021. This public-private partnership was mainly funded by five private sector donors as well as by local governments. Based on the requirements of the five key donors, there are five similar sub-projects running in parallel. The waste management system includes the collection, sorting and recycling of the plastic. The project has supported the installation and operation of material recovery facilities. A key feature of the project is the integration of around 38,500 *safai saathis* (waste collectors) into this value chain and ensuring their financial inclusion, social security and enhanced livelihood opportunities. Various digital solutions are being tested for the traceability and logistics of the plastic waste and for improved decision-making to

<sup>110</sup> CDRI, Flagship Report on Disaster and Climate Resilient Infrastructure, accessed on 19 October 2021, [www.cdri.world/flagship-report-disaster-and-climate-resilient-infrastructure](http://www.cdri.world/flagship-report-disaster-and-climate-resilient-infrastructure); stakeholder interviews

<sup>111</sup> Government of Kerala, Kerala Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Floods and Landslides – August 2018, Government of Kerala, 2018, p. 19.

<sup>112</sup> For example, to address the severe annual flooding on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, several themes and sectors need to be considered (weather and climate patterns, dam management, hydropower, agriculture and irrigation, land use/urban/rural planning, building codes and construction practices, wetlands, dredging practices, etc). In addition, how these issues are managed across the border in Bangladesh where the river drains into the Bay of Bengal should be considered.

<sup>113</sup> The original target was to reach 50 cities by 2021, but due to the COVID-19 disruptions, this has now been scaled down to 40.

ensure that there are fewer transactions in the value chain and a fair price provided to every stakeholder. The model demonstrated by UNDP is unique since the work is carried out in close cooperation with the local government and has a strong social component.

UNDP successfully responded to private donors' concerns regarding the effectiveness of the UNDP model in the face of changing legal requirements for waste collection targets and related costs. However, this may be an ongoing challenge because changes in rules can impact the viability of the model. This organization is expected to slowly exit from its current role working directly with urban local bodies and partners on the ground, to a more advisory role with the recent publication of the Niti Aayog-UNDP plastic sustainable plastic waste management guidelines, which drew lessons from UNDP's work.<sup>114</sup> According to UNDP staff, around 300 urban local bodies (ULBs) are expected to start using this guideline for implementing plastic waste management, and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MOHUA) expects UNDP to play the role of adviser for these ULBs.

The initiative faced some significant delays in project implementation in a few sites, which was out of step with the project and financial accounting and with the reporting cycle of private donors, risking future funding. UNDP is yet to develop comprehensive market studies and cost-benefit analysis that would be needed to convince the private sector regarding the value of this model.

While the project addresses management of plastic waste after it is generated, the CO has not yet focused on plastic waste prevention approaches on the supply side (e.g. product substitution, reuse, phasing out single use plastics or improvements to product design for size reduction, reducing toxicity or increasing product life) or on the demand side (e.g. awareness campaigns for consumers to avoid or reduce use of plastics). While increasing recycling rates would be impactful, waste prevention approaches are considered a higher priority and more strategic in the waste management hierarchy and would have much more impact in the long term.

**Finding 10. Chemicals and waste:** UNDP was successful in supporting India's phase-out of HCFC-141B and reducing HCFC-22 consumption. UNDP has been helping India build capacity to meet the obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury, but limited attention has been paid to addressing the potential negative impact of the work and to preventive work.

The Chemicals and Waste Unit has mainly focused on addressing the impacts of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) and mercury emission reduction. As part of the ODS control programme under the Montreal Protocol, UNDP serves as the lead agency for the preparation and implementation of the HCFC Phase-out Management Plan (HPMP) in India. These phase-outs are being conducted through a combination of policy, regulatory, technical, financial and capacity-building support. The HPMP Stage two programmes (2017–2022) aimed to phase out HCFC-141b and to phase down HCFC-22 by 35 percent by 1 January 2020. Despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19, the programme has succeeded in completely phasing out HCFC-141b and reducing HCFC-22 consumption by 53 percent.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Niti Aayog & UNDP, UNDP Handbook on Sustainable Urban Plastic Waste Management. Niti Aayog, 2021

<sup>115</sup> Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) destroy the protective ozone layer and contribute to climate change. The most common HCFC in use today is HCFC-22 refrigerant, which is still used in air conditioners and refrigeration equipment. HCFC-141b is utilized as a blowing agent for polyurethane and other insulation foam.

UNDP is also building capacity to meet the obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury to manage and monitor mercury in terms of the trade, use, and stockpiles of mercury-based products and the emissions and releases of mercury. An initial assessment was carried out (Mercury Initial Assessment) and a National Action Plan prepared. There are potential synergies with various other initiatives, because the largest source of mercury in India is coal, which is also responsible for air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions, solid wastes and water pollution.

While these are important initiatives with some strong results, limited attention has been paid to potential unintended negative impacts of project interventions. The ODS reduction requires manufacturers and consumers of these chemicals to make significant changes to their business within the deadlines, especially changes to their products and process technology. This has potential impacts for micro small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in these sectors in India, especially those in the informal sector in terms of their business viability, which could also lead to a loss of employment. In contrast, larger enterprises are expected to benefit from these changes since they can become more competitive by meeting international standards. The HPMP Stage 1 plan, jointly prepared by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC) and UNDP, set out the guiding principles of the HPMP programme for compensating all MSMEs for any process conversions needed and also minimizing economic dislocation. But with the current stage 2 and proposed stage 3, only a very small fraction of the MSMEs affected have been supported whereas many of the larger enterprises have been.

There is also a lack of emphasis on preventive approaches to address chemicals and waste. For example, a preventive approach would focus at avoiding or reducing the demand for ODS as a more cost-effective approach, compared to addressing it downstream, as is currently being done through the ODS phase-out/phase-down process. Some aspects of this thought process have been recognized by the Montreal Protocol process, mainly integrating energy efficiency/cooling load reduction with the hydrofluorocarbons (HFC) phase-down, and in India, the MOEFCC has taken the lead on this through the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) launched in 2019. However, the chemicals and waste portfolio was not including in the ICAP process from the beginning, but the sustainable energy portfolio was included in a new GEF-funded project to harmonize the ICAP and the energy conservation building code. The chemicals and waste portfolio is also less integrated with other streams of work within the EER Unit and with the other pillars and various cross-cutting themes and areas of work such as the Accelerator Lab. At present, the mercury management activities are also not integrated; the work is being carried out by the EER Unit on air pollution.

**Finding 11. Biodiversity conservation and Natural Resource Management (NRM):** UNDP contributed to the development of various models for biodiversity, species conservation and natural resource management that built government capacities at the national and state levels. In addition, it has initiated promising work for financing investments to enhance biological diversity.

UNDP supported the Government in building models that integrate biodiversity conservation and NRM, which, if successful, have the potential for scaling up. This included efforts to conserve the endangered snow leopards and other species and their habitats in the Himalayas by addressing the root causes of the problem. In four different remote and harsh landscapes in four states, the UNDP initiative succeeded in demonstrating models for sustainably managing mountain ecosystems, improving livelihood opportunities for communities, and addressing illegal trade in wildlife. The Subnational and Local Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (SBSAPs) were revised in Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim, and two financial instruments for financing biodiversity investment were proposed in these two states. In the high range areas of

the Western Ghats, UNDP aimed to implement a cross-sectoral collaborative governance framework by building the capacity of key local stakeholders to be part of the governance mechanism, especially from the production sectors and the local community.

Additionally, there were two global UNDP initiatives in India of high strategic value. Through the BIOFIN project, UNDP has supported the government to systematically assess investment needs for the country to achieve its biodiversity-related targets. These are significant efforts, especially considering that biodiversity laws, the institutional framework and initiatives are relatively new in India and biodiversity is difficult to quantify. In India, the BIOFIN project has pioneered the development of systematic methods to assess and quantify biodiversity baselines, accounting for current fund flows into biodiversity conservation and additional funding requirements. The methods developed at the national level were tested and improved in the states of Maharashtra and Uttarakhand.

UNDP supported government efforts in building domestic capacity for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) concept of the Nagoya Protocol aims to ensure that benefits from using genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably. UNDP India, in partnership with UNDP global team, has also helped the National Biodiversity Authority understand the potential of using blockchain technology to track financial flows in the ABS process and provided the services of PricewaterhouseCoopers(PwC) to develop it.

UNDP is also currently supporting the Government in several states in developing SBSAPs and the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) in delivering the India Biodiversity Awards and an internship programme. UNDP's leadership, through the BIOFIN project in assessing financing requirements for biodiversity, solicited the Government for the need for costed SBSAPs. In addition, the India Biodiversity Awards recognized UNDP's contributions to the field of biodiversity.

There have been a few systemic deficiencies in risk management and project execution, which have led to delays and challenges in the high-range project. One of the initial stated aims of this project was to extend the eight Protected Areas within the landscape, which became a political issue and led to a three-year pause. The project was further delayed because of COVID-19 and the Kerala floods. The project has not yet developed a landscape-level governance plan and framework, nor has an institution been identified that can administer it, both of which are needed to ensure sustainability beyond the project period and achievement of results within the short time left in the project. The SECURE project has also reported challenges with the flow of funds to the states and delays due to harsh weather, but these have not significantly affected the results of the project.

**Finding 12. Sustainable energy:** UNDP's contribution was limited in the area of sustainable energy during this country programme cycle. Nevertheless, support for the Indian Railways pilot ground-mounted solar PV-based systems for traction power demonstrated potential for scaling up across the country.

UNDP supported the Indian Railways (IR) to conduct a scoping study for ground mounted solar PV systems installed on trackside land belonging to the IR, which could be used to supply traction power. Electricity demand for IR is expected to be about 49 TWh by 2030, around 80 percent of which is expected to be for traction and to grow at 4 percent per annum. IR has set an internal target of 1 GW from solar by 2022, of which half is expected to be from ground-mounted projects. IR has more than 44,000 ha of land spread across the country and trackside lands ranging in width from 0 m to 30 m along its 66,000-km long tracks, which can theoretically support ground-mounted solar PV installations of more than 25,000 MW of solar PV capacity, which can meet the entire traction power demand of IR. To identify feasible options, this scoping

study aimed to identify suitable land parcels for solar PV installation, feasible business models to attract investments and a technology package, which could contribute to an ambitious electrification programme of the Indian Railways.<sup>116</sup>

UNDP has been contributing to South-South cooperation in this area. In 2018, UNDP headquarters signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Solar Alliance (ISA) launched in 2015, to support ISA mainly on the programmatic side, but also to strengthen the ISA Secretariat. ISA is a treaty-based, inter-governmental organization working to create a global market system to tap the benefits of solar power and promote clean energy applications. There are 102 signatory countries in this global collective system, and India has taken a lead role in setting up ISA. Until now the support was primarily provided by UNDP India with, recently, a nodal staff in UNDP headquarters assigned to oversee this cooperation. Moreover, based on the experience to date, there is demand for more access to UNDP global expertise, considering the limitations in technical support that the CO could provide.

There was also a failure in executing a renewable energy initiative, “Scale Up of Access to Clean Energy for Rural Productive Uses”. The initiative aimed to pilot and scale up deployment of renewable energy in underserved and unserved communities. Only 18.4 percent of the total budget was spent by the end of the project in 2020. The reason cited have been poor project management and project execution, and as the project progressed, a steep change in market conditions in favour of renewable energy technologies, thus reducing the relevance of the project.<sup>117</sup> UNDP also supported sustainable energy in two states in implementing their SAPCCs; however, the choice of the demonstration projects and market development activities was not sufficiently strategic. This was discussed further in Finding 7.

UNDP is a small player in sustainable energy<sup>118</sup> in India due to its limited capacity compared to the existing capacity and requirements of the market. UNDP’s work in these areas has been limited, and its elevation to one of the four result outputs was not reflected in the programmed implementation. Even though the focus was on energy access for the poor and vulnerable, there was very little delivery on this theme, and relatedly there are more fundamental issues of energy subsidies and pricing, and other energy sector-related challenges.<sup>119</sup> Even if the CO does not directly address these fundamental issues, the absence of the CO from discussions related to these issues reduced the opportunity for thought leadership and innovation and made the solutions proposed by UNDP appear less holistic.

<sup>116</sup> UNDP, Project document of the project “Powering Indian Railways: Proposal on Scoping Study for Large-Scale Solar Deployment in Indian Railways”, UNDP, p.1; PV Magazine, Idea of solar powered trains gaining traction, accessed on 20 October 2021, [www.pv-magazine.com/2017/12/12/solar-pv-powered-trains-gaining-traction/](http://www.pv-magazine.com/2017/12/12/solar-pv-powered-trains-gaining-traction/); Stakeholder interviews.

<sup>117</sup> UNDP and MNRE, Government of India, Terminal Evaluation of UNDP/GEF Project: Scale Up of Access to Clean Energy for Rural Productive Uses (India ACE Project), 2020, p.6; stakeholder interviews.

<sup>118</sup> One of the outputs for the EER outcome.

<sup>119</sup> There were challenges in the management of state utilities, transmission and distribution infrastructure, and their efficiency, the decommissioning and modernization of thermal power plants, private investments in the power sector, and peak demand management.

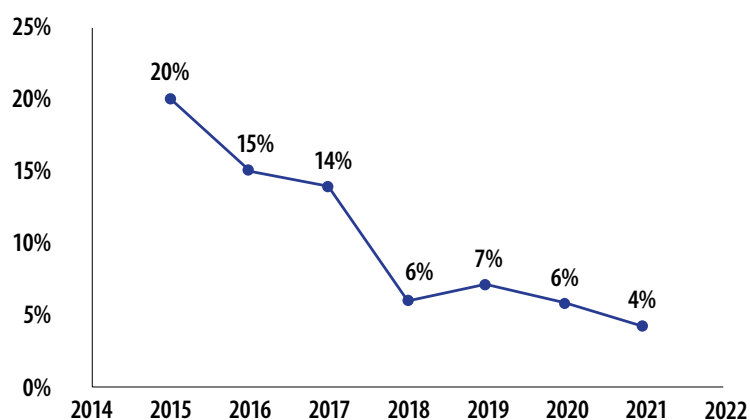


## 2.4 Cross-cutting and key issues impacting results

**Finding 13. Office transitions** – The India CO was in a state of transition over this programme cycle, where its leadership, resources and direction experienced substantial management shifts due to its graduation to middle-income country status and a reduction in core resources. This resulted in a reduction of human resources, unfilled vacancies, and, to some extent, institutional memory. This affected UNDP's positioning and its value added in the country, undermining the favourable perception of UNDP in India in some areas of work.

The development of the UNDP Country Programme 2018–2022 has coincided with the categorization of India from a low-income to lower-middle-income country status by UNDP headquarters,<sup>120</sup> which, because of the UNDP corporate business model, subsequently led to loss of core (regular) resources that are generally allocated for low-income countries. This resulted in a decline of core expenditure to \$2.5 million in 2020 from \$8.7 million in 2014 (Figure 5), and yet, India plays a pivotal role in achieving the SDGs worldwide and the fact that 369 million people are still living in multidimensional poverty<sup>121</sup> in the country.

**FIGURE 5.** Core expenditures a percentage of total resources, 2014–2021



Source: UNDP Atlas Project data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

These changes in income categorization are linked to wider, global factors and decision-making that were outside of the UNCTs control, which led to a major restructuring in 2016–2017, in which half of the fixed-term appointments, from 60 to 30 staff members were abolished. This shift has required UNDP to refocus its support in the country. In 2017, before the restructuring, UNDP had programme units on energy and environment; governance; HIV and development; poverty; disaster management; and a policy unit. There were three state offices in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

In 2021, the programme units included the Accelerator Labs; state outreach and SDG integration; a policy unit; the circular economy; environment, energy and resilience; systems strengthening; and inclusive growth, employment and livelihoods. There was a shift towards the states with offices in the Northeast, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Haryana. Annex 4 shows the transition from the old to the new structure.

Programmes were reviewed. UNDP abandoned some of its traditional programming in order to concentrate on successful large-scale projects. The systems strengthening portfolio, which accounts for many relevant and important initiatives such as eVin, COWIN and SDG localization, shifted its focus from the governance portfolio, which included work on electoral support, accountability and transparency, and access to justice to systems strengthening work. The stakeholders interviewed expressed concern with the new structure where UNDP is no longer working in areas where it had technical expertise, such as legal reforms.

<sup>120</sup> This is based on UNDP categorization of low-income countries.

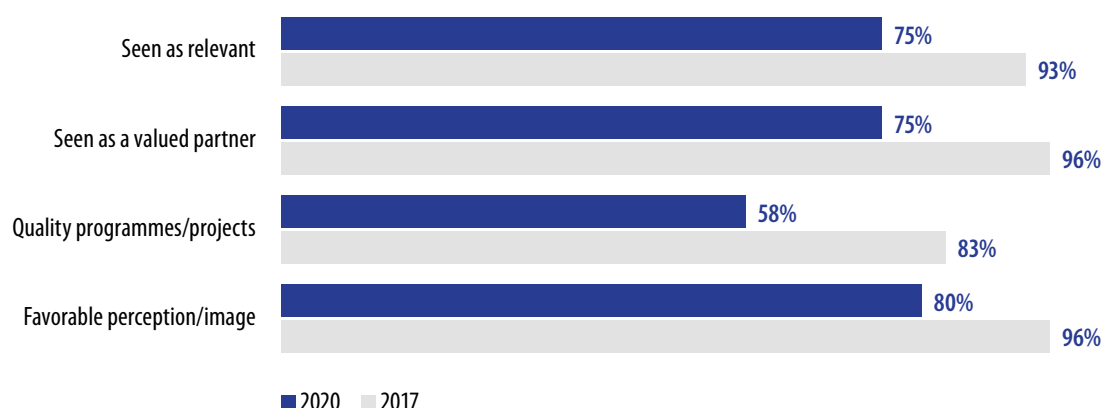
<sup>121</sup> Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative and UNDP Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2021.



Stakeholders also highlighted that the inclusive growth outcome no longer supports flagship programmes such as the Government’s flagship livelihood programme, MNREGA. While the CO supported NITI Aayog in the development of the MPI, it no longer supported the development of HDRs, which were published by many states during the last programme cycle. According to the evaluation of the last country programme, Human Development Reports have since become influential advocacy tools that served to trigger development.<sup>122</sup> In the EER portfolio, while UNDP played a key role in supporting the Government in developing climate change and biodiversity action plans, and complying with and reporting on international protocol and conventions, the DRM portfolio for which the India CO was a respected partner for the state and national government was not adequately leveraged.

UNDP’s Partnership Survey results indicated that partners’ perception declined on several items in 2020, compared to the 2017 Survey, including on the quality of programmes/projects (25 percentage points), on UNDP seen as a valued partner (21 points), and on the overall perception/image (16 points) (Figure 6).

**FIGURE 6. Partners’ perception of UNDP**



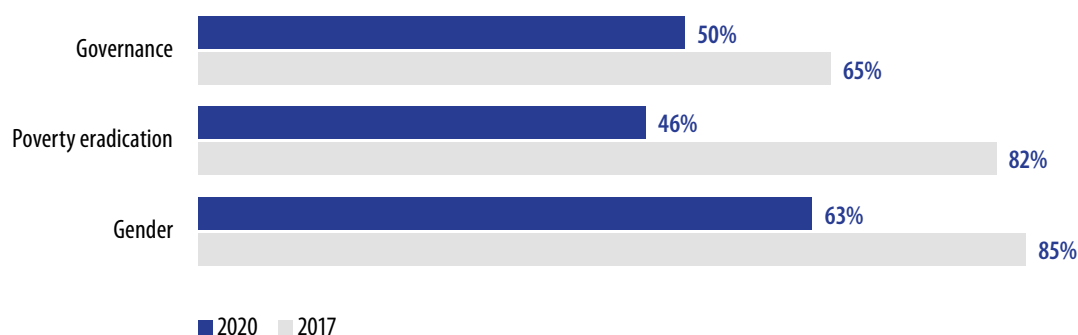
Source: 2017 and 2020 Partnership Surveys

Note: The 2017 survey had 100 participants; the 2020 survey had 56 participants

There was also a decline in the perception of UNDP’s contribution to the areas of poverty, governance and gender, as can be observed in Figure 7. The perception of UNDP’s contribution to poverty reduction was especially low among government stakeholders (40 percent viewed UNDP contribution favourably compared to 75 percent in 2017). The results of the survey were triangulated with interviews. Partners and beneficiaries expressed concerns with key past efforts that were diluted or discontinued, such as the flagship initiative of the Human Development Report, key governance work linked to access to justice, and support for government poverty reduction programmes. Stakeholders interviewed also raised concern regarding the critical mass of UNDP technical expertise, especially at the policy level. In 2020, 30 percent considered UNDP’s technical expertise as UNDP value-added, lower than the regional (58 percent) and global average (66 percent).

<sup>122</sup> Holland, Ian, Pradeep Sharma and Sudhakar Yedla. ‘Independent Outcome Evaluation Report’, 2017.

**FIGURE 7. Partner perception of UNDP's contribution, 2017 and 2020 (% favourable)**



Source: 2020 and 2017 Partner Survey

UNDP's expected role as 'knowledge partner of choice' of national and state governments was not visible. Barring a few exceptions,<sup>123</sup> there has been an inadequate focus on upstream policy and analytical work. Recognizing this gap, the CO established a Policy Unit in March 2020. The Policy Unit has initiated some degree of upstream analytical work to inform the policy processes. Interviewed stakeholders reported that much work is still needed for UNDP to reclaim the legitimate role of pioneer and thought-leader in the development discourse of the country.

Staff and government stakeholders considered the lack of senior leadership as a key factor that affected UNDP's staff morale and its positioning. At the time the evaluation was being conducted, several key positions were vacant or covered by more junior staff. This included the lead of state outreach and SDG integration (temporarily covered by the DRR), the lead of the energy, environment and resilience environment team (a newly created position since 2021, at a time when many senior officers left). The Operations Manager and the Human Resources Analyst resigned during the data collection period, and the position of gender officer was temporarily filled by an employee under a service contract. Due to capacity disruption during the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave of COVID-19, the office received SURGE support for communications from the headquarters during this time.

During this programme period, the CO was led by three different resident representatives (one of whom was the country director at the time of the de-linking). Overall staff turnover was also significant. In the April 2020 – March 2021 period, 47 staff and personnel resigned. Lack of adequate staff also resulted in challenges in staff workload management, an area that had a low Global Staff Survey (GSS) score in 2020, where only 61 percent of the staff agreed that the workload was manageable, and only 58 percent felt that workload was distributed fairly in the office. When trying to understand the reasons for so many people resigning, senior management explained that the toll of the pandemic made people reconsider their priorities, but the evaluation could not fully verify the true reasons for such significant changes in human resources.

<sup>123</sup> Policy support efforts have been noted in the engagements with NITI Aayog, NACO and the Government of Karnataka, and in the works of the SDGFF.

The challenges of restructuring and staff turnover have been particularly acute for the EER work. During the CO restructuring in 2017–2018, the EER pillar was organized into four thematic areas (climate, energy and resilience; chemicals, natural resource management, and circular economy)<sup>124</sup>, each reporting to the DRR. In 2020, a decision was taken to integrate across all units except the circular economy, in addition to creating a new National Professional officer (NO-D)<sup>125</sup> position to lead the pillar. The CO indicated that the aim was to better integrate the circular economy portfolio under the leadership of the newly created NOD position, which was vacant at the time of data collection. These changes undermined the common holistic perspective on the EER mandate and vision, and in turn posed challenges in project delivery and partner relationship management. Sections handling different portfolios were addressing similar kinds of environmental risks using different approaches, with an insufficient integration/harmonization between the environmental risk management approaches, which to a certain extent impacted how UNDP was perceived by external stakeholders.

These changes were viewed by interviewed stakeholders as having created challenges in management and delivery, and subsequently with how UNDP was viewed by the external stakeholders. This pioneer EER Unit is well respected in India in specific areas such as DRM, biodiversity and natural resource management, the Montreal Protocol and plastic waste management. Many of these brands have been built over several cycles of work and still need nuanced investments for sustenance. In other, new areas of work, especially that on climate change adaptation, it is clear that UNDP has the potential to carve out a unique space in the future. Yet, the DRM portfolio is not receiving sufficient support, and is not very visible within the EER Unit. In addition, the chemicals and waste management units have been mostly focused on the requirements of a vertical fund such as the Multilateral Fund of the Montreal Protocol, with less integration within the EER Unit and across the three pillars.

**Finding 14. Operationalization of the state offices** – While progress has been made on the CO strategy to establish the state offices, especially on SDG localization efforts, coordination between the State and Central Offices has been insufficient, and together with slow decentralization of UNDP programmes, have impeded the prospect of fully unlocking the potential of successful state partnerships.

SDG localization and integration with governmental system, in a vast country like India with a complex mix of communities, culture, language. and uneven paces of development, invariably demands a focus on subnational contexts. Owing to their size, relative financial autonomy and diverse development challenges, the individual state in India is almost equivalent to a ‘country’ in terms of planning and goal-setting. The drive towards decentralization to the state level has been underway for some time, underpinned by the agreement between the Department of Economic Affairs, the government counterpart and UNDP to move without delay towards prioritizing support and technical assistance from the central level and to the state level, particularly states with Aspirational Districts. The UNDP strategy of establishing state offices as part of the Transformation Plan was therefore highly pertinent for the purpose of addressing government priority, and also, to deepen the rounded engagement with the state governments and at the districts and local levels. This recognized the federal structure of India, where state (and local) governments are key to the country’s progress on the SDG Agenda and play a pivotal role in implementing key flagship development programmes. In 2016 and 2017, the CO set up state offices in four states: Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Uttarakhand and Haryana; and a regional office in the Northeast. The roll-out of the State Office in Bihar (one of the poorest Indian States) was ‘frozen’ because of the unavailability of core resources and a lack of

<sup>124</sup> Chemicals and waste portfolio was first one unit and then divided into two later.

<sup>125</sup> Minimum 7 years of work experience for D level positions.

an agreement with the state government. The sizes of the state offices also vary. While Uttarakhand and the Northeast are larger offices, others are small outposts. Most state offices are minimally staffed and embedded in state government structures.

While the creation of these offices has been an important step in the right direction, however, non-implementation of institutional constructs and ways-of-working mechanisms have been impeding the prospect of fully unlocking the potential of successful State Partnerships. The recommendations of 2018 State Outreach Strengthening Mission have to a large extent not been implemented, especially those relating to sharing and coordination mechanisms and the furthering of the decentralization process. There was lack of cohesion among all UNDP-led activities at the state and central levels, including projects, partnership building and resource mobilization. The state offices have not yet implemented representational, coordinating and overseeing functions.

The consequent disconnects between CO units as well as national projects and state offices have created a siloed approach, impeding the states from freely accessing knowledge, experience and expertise. There were multiple instances of lack of engagement of the state office in national projects implemented in their states. Accordingly, responses to most of the demands by partner government are fragmented, activity-based with limited access/use of UNDP's global knowledge, toolkits and capacities to find innovative solutions to the states' requirements. The position of Chief Advisor, Strategic Planning and State Operations, which is critical for SDG integration and state outreach efforts and investments, was vacant for almost a year.

A major mandate of UNDP staff in the states is to focus on raising funds from the state governments. However, there is a lack of clarity on UNDP's value proposition and very limited resources at state government's disposal.<sup>126</sup> The CO's inability to clearly prove its value added, as well as the insufficient support from the CO for fund mobilization have impeded the full potential of these state offices. Additionally, the backstopping support activities from the CO, especially in procurement and contracting processes, have been challenging at times.

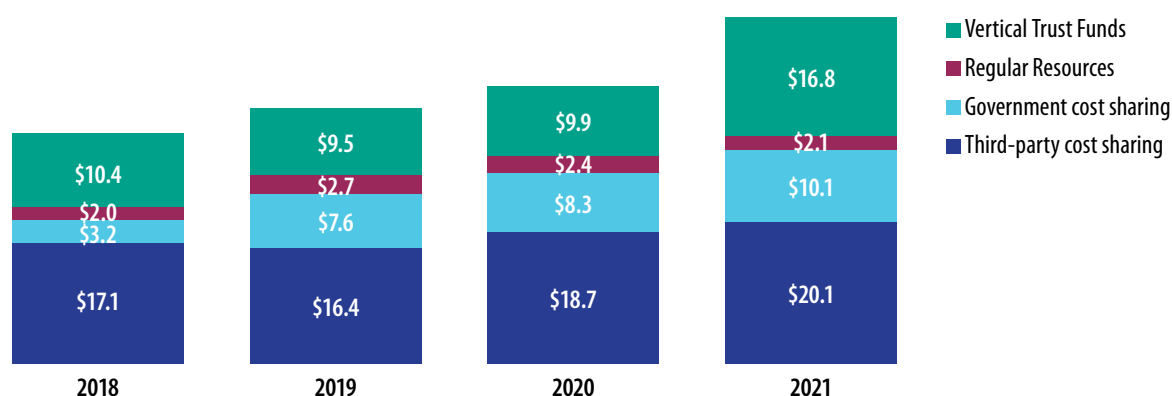
**Finding 15: Resource mobilization** – The CO has had some success in generating private sector resources and government cost sharing. However, there are challenges concerning resources due to complex government regulatory requirements, the perceived rigidity of UNDP's operations, and its unclear value proposition.

The estimated resource envelope of the 2018–2022 programme is US\$349.09 million, of which US\$30.02 million was expected to come from UNDP regular resources. UNDP expected to mobilize funding of approximately US\$183.4 million from vertical funds. The expected funding from bilateral partners, the private sector and foundations (third-party cost sharing) was US\$78.8 million. The indicative funding from the Government to the project envelope was US\$56.8 million. In December 2021, the total spending of resources was \$159.7 million, which indicates that the CO is unlikely to meet its planned targets. The estimations for regular resources, government cost sharing and vertical funding were not achieved. Yet, despite declining Official Development Assistance and regular resource constraints, UNDP managed to have a good pipeline of resources from the private sector for present and future programming, increased government cost-sharing, and maintained a stable expenditure of vertical funds (see Figure 8). The delivery rate<sup>127</sup> of the CO also gradually increased from 73 percent (\$32.95 million in expenditure) in 2018 to 87 percent delivery target (\$49.2 million) in 2021.

<sup>126</sup> Newly established state offices received an annual budget of \$150,000 from the CO; the staff consists of a head of the state office on a service contract, a small operations team (1–2 persons) and a few short-term consultants.

<sup>127</sup> The ratio of expenditure to budget. The budget for the financial estimate is based on the amount promised for the programme in a given year and differs from the CPD estimates.

**FIGURE 8. Total expenditure by fund category and year (Million US\$)**



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

UNDP brought in a partnerships team lead in 2020 who had been working with the domestic private sector. The organization also created specific positions in partnership and donor engagement within each portfolio who are responsible for building partnerships with the Government. In 2020, the CO raised \$7.5 million in private sector funding and by August 2021 there was \$260,000 in partnership income and \$6.8 million in the pipeline. Other significant partnerships during the CPD period were established with Ikea Foundation, Coca-Cola and Unilever, among others. Most funds leveraged are for the inclusive growth and plastic waste management portfolio.

In India, the private sector is emerging as a major source of development cooperation. Private corporations and public sector undertakings are required by law to dedicate 2 per cent of net profit as part of a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) spending. However, compliance with national rule and regulations created some challenges in accessing and cost of managing funding.<sup>128</sup> The rigidity of UNDP procurement and operations is also impacting private sector partnerships.<sup>129</sup> Key partner interviews highlighted that UNDP operations lacked the required expertise to negotiate, report and work with the private sector.

In terms of raising resources from the Government, while eVIN programme was very successful, key challenge remain: UNDP continues to be perceived as the donor, and is expected to contribute a substantial core financial resources to the programmes. Much of the planned resources were also set aside to be mobilized at the state level, which has also been a challenge given the small teams that are unable to define a clear value proposition, as discussed in finding 14. The state teams also felt that they received inadequate support from the partnership team in mobilizing funds.

The Regional Bureau was instrumental in setting up the unit and helping with the transition to the new partnership team and Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA) has been directly providing partnership guidance. However, none of the bilateral partnerships were leveraged through the regional office or the headquarters. Staff reiterated that many private sector companies have global offices, and UNDP is lacking private sector engagement at that level. A stronger steer from the global office would help with advancing with the private sector.

<sup>128</sup> The cost of channeling projects through the CSR Trust consisted of 16 percent in management charges, 8 percent in direct project costs, 5 percent in general management support, 1 percent for the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office, and 2 percent for the United Nations CSR Trust.

<sup>129</sup> The processes followed by the UNDP CO are fully aligned with the processes applied globally.

**Finding 16. Gender** – The application of the gender lens in the design and reporting on results varied across the portfolios. GEWE has featured prominently in UNDP’s gender-responsive inclusive growth work. In the systems strengthening portfolio, although attention to gender mainstreaming was evident in the design of initiatives, there was limited evidence that results substantially contributed to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming was weak in the EER portfolio.

The CO has a draft gender strategy 2019–2022<sup>130</sup> to complement the efforts of the CPD in mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in its implementation. It recognizes that gender equality is a precondition and accelerator for achieving the SDGs. To strengthen gender equality the CO aimed to: remove structural barriers to women’s economic empowerment, including women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid care work; prevent and respond to gender-based violence; promote women’s participation and leadership in all forms of decision-making; and strengthen gender-responsive strategies in crisis (conflict and disaster) prevention, preparedness and recovery. However, this progress has been only partially achieved, as summarized below:

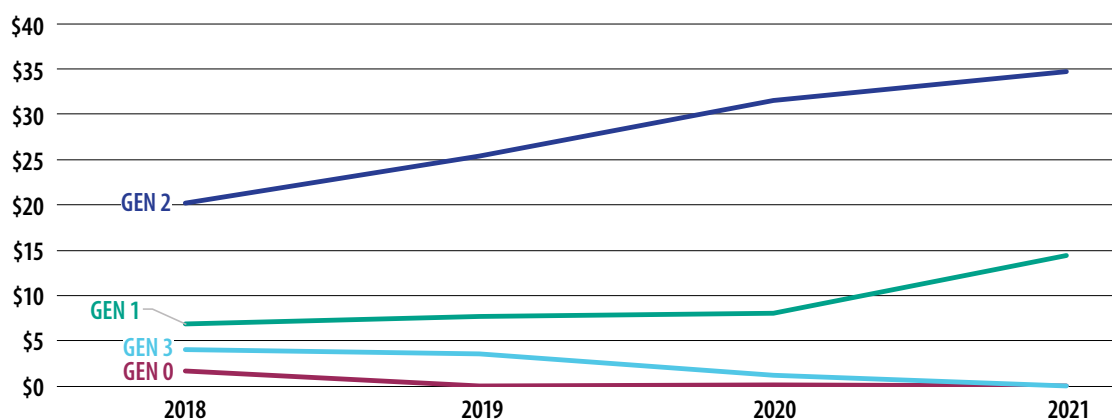
- Women’s participation in the entrepreneurship and skill development programme, as well as cold chain handlers in the vaccine programme increased their agency to participate in decision-making.
- Many UNDP interventions addressed multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination across based on poverty, geographic location, migration, identity and ethnicity. However, this was not a systematic lens used by the CO.
- While there were activities that took into consideration unpaid care work, removing structural barriers to women’s economic empowerment should address other socio-cultural constraints such as religious practices, lack of voice and agency in the family and community, and acceptance of women’s employment outside the home.
- A gender assessment for the resilience programme was lacking, and there was general weakness in gender mainstreaming in the EER portfolio.

During the current country programme cycle, there has been an increase in the allocation of resources where gender is significantly promoted (GEN 2), from 61 percent (\$20.3 million) of the resources in 2018, to 70 percent (\$34.6 million) in 2021. But with the closing of the Disha project, there was a significant decline in project expenditures where GEWE is an explicit objective (GEN 3), from 12 percent (\$4.1 million) in 2018, to 0 percent in 2021. The financial allocation also differed according to outcome (Figure 10). While systems strengthening allocated most of the resources to projects that significantly promoted gender equality (GEN 2), half of the EER portfolio contributed to gender in a limited way (50 percent, Gen 0 and Gen 1).

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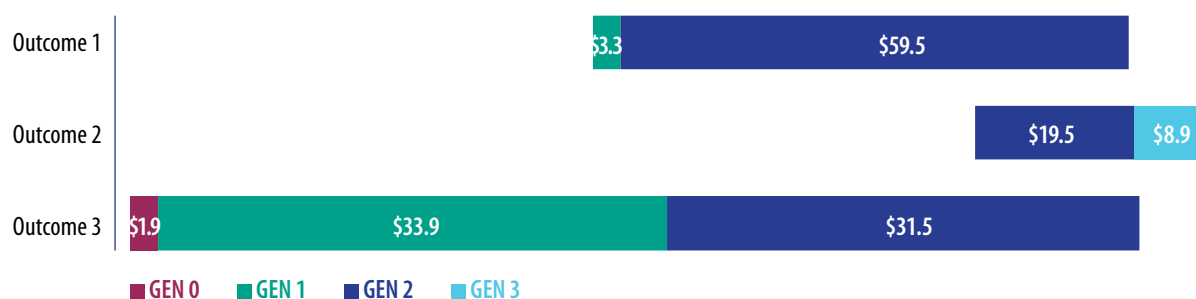
<sup>130</sup> Drafted a year after the country programme was implemented.

**FIGURE 9. Expenditure by gender marker and year (2018–2021)**



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

**FIGURE 10. Expenditure by gender marker and outcome (2018–2021)**



Source: UNDP Atlas Project Data (Power BI, 4 March 2022)

In the systems strengthening outcome, many initiatives in their design had a strong gender focus. Women constituted nearly 60 percent of the 48,000 government health workers who serve as cold chain handlers in the eVIN. Affirmative efforts of the SDG Finance Facility supported 150 women entrepreneurs with technical guidance, mentorship and access to potential investors. A gender focus was incorporated in the State Indicator Frameworks and the training programmes for SDG state- and local-level planning processes. In terms of results, the initiatives relating to Health Systems Strengthening such as eVIN, and technical support to National AIDS Control Organization were gender-responsive. The IVRS-based beneficiary interviews (53 percent response rate) of the women cold-chain handlers associated with the eVIN initiative confirms the CO reporting that UNDP training on how to use their smartphones efficiently had helped them perform their work more efficiently and connect better with colleagues. It also contributed into their enhanced social status and recognition. Many cold chain vaccine handlers were older women from rural areas. The initiative with NACO led to government partnership arrangements to specifically reach out to PLHIV and at-risk populations with information and services and helped mitigate discrimination and stigmatization-related vulnerabilities. It also enhanced their accessibility of targeted schemes and programmes. However, the assessment of UNDP's overall contribution to the outcome was inadequate due to the lack of evaluations for the outcome and of gender-disaggregated information.



For the inclusive growth outcome, a number of models for women's economic empowerment were introduced that focus on access to training and placement in jobs. Many of these models have been innovative and gender-responsive with some success in creating livelihood and entrepreneurship opportunities for women from rural communities. But only the Biz-Sakhi Model focused on the social barriers that women face through counselling support for women and their families. Many UNDP initiatives also cut across different intersection of inequalities, such as 1000 Springs and Odisha Affordable Housing initiative, that worked with poor, rural and tribal populations. But there is lack of evidence of gender analysis impacting the programme design and of results reporting to determine the gender contribution.

In the environment, energy and resilience outcome, gender mainstreaming remains weak. Initiatives focused on resilience have directly or indirectly contribute to reducing the vulnerability of the poor and vulnerable, many of whom are women, though a gender-specific assessment of their benefits is lacking. Gender concerns were factored into the recovery strategy of the PDNA conducted after the Kerala floods. Most initiatives were gender-targeted, simply limited to focusing on ensuring the representation of men and women, and some initiatives regarding compliance and policy work were gender-blind.

UNDP has shown commitment to gender parity by creating a cross-thematic Gender Focal Team in 2019. The organization has also volunteered to participate in the Gender Equality Seal 2021–2023 and is working towards meeting its requirements. One of the challenges that the CO has faced is the lack of adequate gender expertise. The CO has been in the process of recruiting a full-time gender specialist since May 2021. There was turnover in the position due to the restructuring of the CO and then COVID-19, which affected the retention of a UNV recruited for this position in 2020. A senior consultant currently divides her time between her gender specialist role and the health portfolio. In July 2021, a service contract was signed<sup>131</sup> to hire a gender advisor on a temporary basis.

While a key priority area of the CO is to improve gender parity, women still represent 37.7 percent of staff. There are also variations in the staff satisfaction levels. According to the 2020 Global Staff Survey, both female and male respondents from the India CO were equally satisfied with their career development at a favourable rating of 70 percent. However, for empowerment and leadership, women had a lower favourable score than men, with a difference was 11 percent and 6 percent, respectively, on average.<sup>132</sup> It should be highlighted, however, that senior management is composed of female staff. The CO has reported that the senior management is actively working with Human Resources, the gender focal point and all team leaders to set targets, guidance and policies to support female staff recruitment and retention.

**Finding 17. Innovation** – Innovations have been anchored within the Accelerator Lab initiatives and also interspersed across a number of other initiatives and engagements, but without a clear strategy of scaling innovations, except in select cases of UNDP's pioneering for COVID-19 vaccination management support.

The previously delineated narratives on UNDP leveraging eVIN experience to help establish CoWIN, the world's second largest COVID-19 vaccination management platform, the development of indigenized and decentralized MPI in partnership with NITI Aayog, and the sustainable financing instruments emerging out of SDGFF are all examples of programmatic and policy influencing innovations at scale. The 1000 Springs Initiative, while facilitating access to safe drinking water to remote tribal communities, also contributed to policy change,<sup>133</sup> and Disha introduced new skilling and employment models. Similarly, the ecosystem-level

<sup>131</sup> The gender position is hired at the SB4 level, for analytical work that requires basic conceptual comprehension.

<sup>132</sup> On average, the scores for the questions related to empowerment were 65.2 for female respondents and 76.6 for male respondents, and those for the questions related to leadership were 72.9 for female respondents and 78.4 for male respondents.

<sup>133</sup> Revision of guidelines by the MoTA for accessing funds under the PVTG scheme will include the preservation and development of springs and underground water



digital, public-good partnership in agriculture with the Government of Telangana could usher-in a new paradigm on public policy discourse and pave the way to data-driven proactive policy process for anticipatory governance.

The Accelerator Lab has piloted multiple innovative solutions. Outside of the Accelerator Lab umbrella, process innovations are being pursued across specific ideas and tasks by the SDGCCs, and in the Antenatal, Neonatal & Child Health Systems and Logistics Tracking Tool (ANCHAL)<sup>134</sup> to improve maternal health service delivery. The engagement with Atal Innovation Mission is exploring co-creation of conducive ecosystem through outreach events, training and competitive challenges to promote innovations in the context of SDGs. This includes the joint hosting of Youth Co:Lab<sup>135</sup> since 2019 to strengthen the youth-led innovation and social entrepreneurship towards accelerating the implementation of SDGs.

UNDP's support to innovation, especially through the Accelerator Lab initiatives, which piloted multiple innovative solutions such as the GeoAI platform, have the potential to catalyse an expanded range of solutions within UNDP and national missions to address identified development challenges. Steps in this direction, such as pilots on the Internet of Things (IoT) to improve water use efficiency in agriculture, the partnership with the Spices Board for the National Blockchain Platform, and AI- powered Digital Nudge for gender-responsive behaviour change are already being explored. Accelerator Lab is also engaging closely with the Science for Equity, Empowerment and Development (SEED) of the Ministry of Science and Technology in strengthening the innovation agenda in India, and a partnership Memorandum of Understanding will be finalized in coming months. However, the Accelerator Lab-spearheaded innovations are generally stand-alone programmes with limited connection with Outcome verticals of the Country Programme to date, and there is little evidence of UNDP pursuing a cogent strategy of scaling these innovations.

**Finding 18. COVID-19 response** – UNDP has been responsive to addressing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in a timely manner, and has contributed to mid-term recovery initiatives, especially through the use of the eVIN network across states and the development of the CoWin platform, and by supporting the public health and social protection infrastructure.

UNDP response to COVID-19 included the provision of emergency medical devices and essential medical supplies to strengthen public health infrastructure. The embedded eVIN technical teams across states were mobilized for supporting emergency health response to COVID-19. As discussed in the previous finding, UNDP'S role through technical support for CoWIN platform has been critical for the timely delivery of vaccinations during the second wave. Joint work with the National AIDS Control Programme and state governments to expand access to social protection for COVID-19- impacted vulnerable groups from tribal communities, especially particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs), as well as PLHIV populations, and linking them to social protection entitlements and welfare schemes for mitigating COVID-19-induced vulnerabilities. In total, UNDP repurposed \$4.1 million in programme funds for COVID-19 response and raised \$4.8 million in new funding from the Government of Japan.<sup>136</sup>

Demand-driven partnerships with reliable CSOs across states were mobilized to enable access of social protection benefits and welfare schemes towards mitigating the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the poor, unemployed informal sector workers, and returnee migrants. They also aimed to listen to the voices of underprivileged social groups on issues relating to jobs, employability and inclusive equitable development.

<sup>134</sup> The Antenatal, Neonatal & Child Health Systems and Logistics Tracking Tool is an innovation that enables digital tracking of pregnant women registered on the platform for critical antenatal services, facilitates transport for institutional deliveries, and alerts hospitals in advance to prepare for expected high-risk deliveries.

<sup>135</sup> ATAL Innovation Mission. <https://aim.gov.in/youthcolab2021.php>

<sup>136</sup> UNDP COVID-19 Dashboard, accessed January 2022.

UNDP also conducted data interpretations, assessments and evidence-based policy analysis on medium- and long-term COVID-19 impacts on specific vulnerable groups, including but not limited to women, lactating mother, children, elderly, frontline health and sanitation workers, the State Public Works Department (PWD), PVTG, PLHIV, female sex workers, refugees and asylum seekers, slum dwellers and prison inmates.

All these efforts, especially the provision of oxygen-generation plants and emergency medical supplies, as well as ensuring that vulnerable groups have access to social protection have indeed contributed to reduce the disastrous impact of the pandemic on the beneficiaries of these services.

The COVID-19 Mini ROAR 2020 had reported reaching approximately 120,000 households across 14 districts of Odisha and Chhattisgarh to raise awareness on the emergency relief programmes of government and facilitate access to social protection schemes.<sup>137</sup> However, the evaluation did not manage to triangulate these datasets with other independent sources. To elicit feedback from the intended social protection beneficiaries, an IVRS-based dipstick survey was conducted covering 140 randomly selected households across the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. However, the poor response rate (10 percent) impeded further assessment of plausible analytical trends. In order to obtain anecdotal understanding of the situation, the information of a cohort of 12 respondents was reviewed, which reflected very limited satisfaction levels. Only 2 of the respondents had reported that they were satisfied with their experience in accessing social protection benefits. Owing to these data limitations as well as the set of challenges recorded in UNDP-commissioned studies<sup>138</sup> in implementing the social protection programmes, UNDP's contribution to this exercise could not be adequately assessed.

There were also initiatives that aimed at continuity of services against gender-based violence during the COVID-19 lockdown and immediately thereafter to ensure the safety and protection of GBV survivors; however, the available monitoring data do not provide sufficient details. Similarly, details were inadequate for making an informed judgment on the results-oriented efficacy with regard to UNDP's support on 'multi-sectoral planning assistance' to state governments.

## 2.5 Country programme performance ratings

Table 1 provides an overview of the performance of the country programme, using the five internationally agreed evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and a set of parameters for each of the criteria. A four-point rating scale is used, with 4 being the highest and 1 the lowest rating.<sup>139</sup> This rating table should be read keeping in mind the findings presented in the previous sections, which provide more detailed justification for the ratings.

**Finding 19. Rating** – UNDP India generally demonstrated mostly satisfactory progress towards country programme output targets and produced favourable results in its programmes of varied scope, scale and strategic importance. UNDP has made relevant and effective contributions to the country programme

<sup>137</sup> It would be important to put on record that information inconsistencies have been observed across various reports on the accomplishments of facilitating households to access social protection schemes.

<sup>138</sup> Global Lancers, Policy Paper on Implementation of Social Protection Programmes in Chhattisgarh, 2021; Mittal, N., Challenges, and Lessons from the Implementation of Social Protection Programs in Jharkhand India, 2021.

<sup>139</sup> 4 = Satisfactory/Achieved: A rating of this level means that outcome exceed expectations/All intended programme outputs and outcomes have been delivered; 3 = Moderately satisfactory/Mostly achieved: A rating of this level is used when there are some limitations in the contribution of UNDP programmes that prevent an excellent rating but there were no major shortfalls. Many of the planned programme outputs/outcomes have been delivered and expected results 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 assessments. There has been limited or no achievement of planned outputs/outcomes

outcomes in alignment with the national priorities, ensuring a degree of sustainability through government ownership, capacity development and skills building. Yet, there has been limited evidence of progress towards expanding citizens' access to justice, scaling up legal aid and digital services, and access to renewable energy. The results were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, restructuring of the CO and poor operationalisation of the state offices.

**TABLE 1. Country programme performance ratings**

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/Justification
<b>1. Relevance</b>	<b>3</b>	The programme is aligned with the priorities and needs of the Government and it can be adapted to the changing development priorities and challenges. Overall, the country programme was in line with national development priorities, with the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDF) and UNDP strategic plan.
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	4	
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/UNDP goals	3	
1.C. Relevance of programme logic	2	However, inclusiveness and gender equality were not consistently part of programme design and lacked a holistic and fully responsive approach.  In addressing critical programme gaps, UNDP did not adequately utilize its comparative advantage by bringing in global UNDP expertise (e.g. in sustainable energy, normative work on systems strengthening) and it did not adequately emphasize some of its own expertise (such as in disaster risk management).
<b>2. Coherence</b>	<b>2</b>	UNDP has been able to position itself as a trusted partner of the government, but partnership with other development actors have room for improvement. There is limited evidence of joint programming across thematic outcome areas that leveraged the multi-disciplinary expertise across the programme teams in the central office and in the state offices
2.A. Internal programme coherence	2	
2.B. External programme coherence	2	
<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>3</b>	There was reasonable adherence to good project management and completion of timelines within budgets before the pandemic. Some delays occurred due to lack of funding and the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP maintained a good management efficiency ratio despite reduction in resources. UNDP spending on the programme will be far below the budget initially estimated, but UNDP improved its delivery rate and improved funding pipeline. Significant issues are that the Office operated with inadequate staffing in senior positions; the workload balance was a challenge; and governance structures were not optimal.
3.A. Timeliness	3	
3.B. Management efficiency	2	

◀ Table 1 (cont'd)

Key criteria and parameters	Overall rating	Remarks/Justification
<b>3. Effectiveness</b>	<b>3</b>	UNDP has shown tangible results through its immunization programme, SDG integration efforts, demonstration of skilling models and plastic waste management model, support for building the capacities of the poor and vulnerable, building government capacity for climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) phase-out. However, there is less evidence of significant progress in expanding citizens' access to justice and the scaling up the provision of legal aid services; the targets for provision of digital services were not achieved; and the energy portfolio had limited interventions and success.
4.A. Achieving stated outputs and outcomes	3	
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	2	
4.C. Prioritizing gender equality and women's empowerment	2	
4.D. Programming processes adhered to sustainable development principles	3	While many initiatives had a leave no one behind (LNOB) focus and some were gender-responsive, this was not systematic and the results for the beneficiary groups were often unclear. UNDP Social Environmental Standards were adhered to. However, this did not capture negative economic impacts and political risks were not adequately assessed in some cases.
<b>4. Sustainability</b>	<b>3</b>	UNDP emphasized national-level ownership of its programmes through strong engagement with the government and making appropriate linkages with the national-level policies and processes in both systems strengthening, and the energy, environment and resilience portfolios. There has been interest from policymakers in the demonstrated skilling models for vulnerable women, but there were considerable challenges in securing the sustainability of results and ensuring national ownership of models for scaling up. Some demonstration projects in the energy, environment and resilience portfolio lacked a clear rationale, and there were small demonstration projects with no clear trajectory for scaling up.
5.A. Sustainable capacity	3	
5.B. Financing for development	3	Issues such as developing appropriate instruments and approaches, and resolving the institutional bottlenecks towards widening the resource pool for development financing have been accomplished with the body of work and achievements of SDG Financing Facility (SDGFF). However, this was insufficiently linked to UNDP programming, which additionally, will not be meeting planned budget targets.

## CHAPTER 3

# CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



## 3.1 Conclusions

**Conclusion 1 – UNDP’s comparative advantage:**<sup>140</sup> UNDP is valued in India as a strategic, reliable and responsive development partner that has achieved significant programme results. Notwithstanding its recognized value, there has been a decline or dilution in contribution in formerly prominent areas of UNDP support in poverty reduction and governance.

UNDP’s key comparative advantages have been its strong relationship with the Government, long-term engagement with key CSOs, effective outreach to local governments and vulnerable communities, and especially in this current cycle, the knowledge leadership of the SDG Finance Facility (SDGFF). The SDGFF within a reasonably short period and with a relatively modest budget succeeded in realizing an effective multi-stakeholder platform and achieved important milestones. UNDP has demonstrated excellent results through its immunization programme and through CoWIN, which has been the backbone of the COVID-19 vaccination efforts. Good results were achieved through SDG integration efforts and support in building the capacities of the poor and the vulnerable. Good results were also achieved by building the capacities of the Government in natural resources management/biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, HCFC phase-out and plastic waste management.

Partners and beneficiaries expressed concerns, however, with key past efforts that were diluted or discontinued, such as the flagship initiative of the Human Development Report, key governance work linked to access to justice, and support for government poverty reduction programmes, which are missing in the current portfolio. Government partners also stated that they had expected UNDP to have leveraged its reach to a greater extent to offer insightful global and South-South experiences, good practices and innovative solutions to address the development challenges that India, like other countries, face.

**Conclusion 2 – Institutional and systems strengthening for service delivery**<sup>141</sup> – UNDP initiatives on health systems strengthening, SDG localization and integration, innovative financing approaches for development, and of late on COVID-19 response and recovery efforts were designed to achieve transformative change and development impact at scale, and there is evidence of the CO’s good progress. Results have been uneven with regard to SDG localization and integration initiatives, and sub-optimal against the CPD’s aim of leveraging digital innovations. A key hindering factor has been that most work has focused downstream with a still limited, incremental increase of upstream policy and analytical work.

The eVIN in particular has been one of the most successful programmes over two country programme cycles. The adaptation of the eVIN platform for the CoWIN has played a crucial role in vaccinating India’s population, i.e. over 1 billion registered beneficiaries. UNDP’s technical assistance contributed to state- and national-level SDG progress monitoring, together with SDG-oriented budgeting and planning. UNDP supported technical efforts using data-driven advocacy on SDGs through indices such as the SDG India Index, MPI and the SDG India Index for the North East States.

Performance on SDG localization has been sub-optimal at the Gram Panchayat level. Regarding digital innovations, UNDP has deployed a set of tools but their contributions to and solutions for directly providing digital government services for citizens were limited. There was also limited evidence of using UNDP’s global reach for accessing expertise and technical know-how, which could have been leveraged to address issues

<sup>140</sup> Linked to all findings, but primarily 3, 6 and 13.

<sup>141</sup> Linked to findings 1–3.

such as systemic inefficiencies, weak institutional capacities (primarily at the sub-national level), and sparse public sector innovations. Additionally, with the focus of the UNDP team on implementing large projects, there was limited space created for policy analysis work.

**Conclusion 3 – Inclusive growth**<sup>142</sup> – UNDP contributed to skill building and employment models and helped strengthen government programmes aimed at gradually delivering universal access to basic employment and to livelihoods for the poor and the excluded. Scaling-up of skilling models has been difficult in part due to the COVID-19 and the limited availability of resources. Structural problems affecting women beneficiaries were insufficiently addressed, and policy-level impact has been limited.

UNDP in collaboration with the Disha initiative showed a proof of concept for creating employability, skilling, and entrepreneurship targeting women from depressed socio-economic backgrounds and contributed to social and economic empowerment. UNDP helped in building linkages with the market to help realize better economic value of human and physical resources. Additionally, UNDP strengthened state governments' and the central government's capacities for promoting inclusive growth through various schemes. This included important initiatives that built housing and provided access to groundwater while creating livelihood opportunities for rural and tribal populations in the state of Odisha.

UNDP skilling models faced significant challenges to scale-up. There was an inadequate focus on addressing socio-cultural barriers such as social customs and prejudices, religious practices, lack of voice and agency in the family and community, which hindered some results. The support to the Government has also led to limited policy-level changes, except in the case of the 1000 Spring Initiative, which was an innovative solution driven by strong government ownership. There was also lack of mapping of UNDP's role and value-added against other stakeholders in the ecosystem, including the Government, CSOs, private sectors, other United Nations agencies, local leaders and influencers to ensure that UNDP's contribution was complementary, coherent and integrative. Given the limited size of the UNDP portfolio, the lack of connection of its work to the larger ecosystem threatened the sustainability of UNDP's contribution to inclusive growth.

**Conclusion 4 – Energy, environment and resilience**<sup>143</sup> – UNDP has successfully contributed to biodiversity and natural resource management; disaster risk management; plastic waste management and the circular economy; and more modestly to climate change planning and adaptation; and chemicals and waste. The CO contribution was more limited in addressing the challenges of sustainable energy, developing a more concrete sustainable financing strategy and applying more preventive approaches.

UNDP made a significant contribution in addressing the key environmental, climate change and disaster-related risks faced by India. It has built government capacities to: implement state climate action plans; successfully phase out and reduce HCFC consumption; enhance legislative and policy frameworks on disaster risk management; improve models for biodiversity conservation; and build the capacities of urban local bodies and private companies in developing and strengthening practices with strong social components to support waste picker communities.

Yet, the programme design presented inconsistencies and gaps, including on quality assurance and quality control, and inadequately focused on preventive approaches. There were very limited results in the energy portfolio. The restructuring of the environmental unit created further challenges. There was a lack of integration between different areas of the energy, environment and resilience work. Insufficient importance was given to this historically important area of work of disaster risk management. The integration across the pillars and cross-cutting functions has also been weak.

<sup>142</sup> Linked to findings 3–6.

<sup>143</sup> Linked to findings 7–12.



**Conclusion 5 – Gender<sup>144</sup>** – There were gender-responsive results in the inclusive growth portfolio and to some extent in the systems strengthening portfolio, but the application of the gender lens was not systematic across the portfolio. There was a lack of consistency in UNDP’s approach to addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment in programmes/projects, inadequate measurement of results, and inadequate gender expertise to support the programme. UNDP India has not yet achieved gender parity in its staffing.

UNDP’s efforts in improving women’s participation in labour force and in piloting skilling and entrepreneurship models have led to new methods of engaging with marginalized populations. Some UNDP initiatives addressed intersectionality of deprivations and inequalities, including with poor, indigenous and rural women, but this lens was not applied systematically. The CO has shown a commitment to mainstream gender by participating in the Gender Seal certification process and establishing a gender focal team.

The results of the skilling models have significant shortcomings and not enough efforts were invested to effectively address structural barriers such as social customs and prejudices, religious practices, and lack of voice and agency in the family and community. Gender was particularly inadequately mainstreamed in the energy, environment and resilience portfolio where a significant percentage of projects contributed to gender in a limited way. The gender advisor position has experienced multiple turnovers due to restructuring and COVID-19, and currently there is inadequate capacity.

**Conclusion 6 – Restructuring, value proposition and management of resources<sup>145</sup>** – The corporate change management and restructuring of the CO that took place in 2017 has challenged the leadership and generated an increased workload, undermining the strategic management of the programme. A lack of clarity about UNDP’s value-added, together with the perceived slowness of the operations has created difficulties with resource mobilization and implementation, even though a commendable amount of private sector resources has been raised in more recent years.

Given the reduction in core regular resources due to India’s graduation to middle-income status, UNDP in some areas has become increasingly driven by demand and opportunity in alignment with available resources. As a result, UNDP was insufficiently programme-based and portfolio-oriented, working on multiple scattered and often siloed projects without establishing a clearer, innovative and strategic value proposition. Recognizing the need to step up its upstream role, the UNDP leadership has rightly identified the need to create a Policy Unit. The Unit has initiated some degree of upstream analytical work to inform the policy processes, but these efforts are modest in some key areas. Resources have been raised among the private sector in the inclusive growth portfolio and plastic waste management with a clear potential for further engagement. However, regulatory challenges, perceived high management costs, and the lack of the required expertise to deal with the private sector were identified as challenges.

<sup>144</sup> Linked to finding 16.

<sup>145</sup> Linked to findings 13 and 15.



**Conclusion 7 – State offices**<sup>146</sup> – The expansion of the state offices has been important and strategic in repositioning UNDP to remain relevant and engaged, and in expanding the SDG integration process. There is, however, considerable variation in the competencies of the state offices, which are restricted by low staff capabilities and lack of integration with the CO.

The limited interaction and integration between the state offices, the CO programme team and operations team are hindering the effectiveness and expansion of the state offices. State offices are often uninvolved in central programmes implemented in their states and receive limited guidance from the central operations team. The state teams have also struggled to meet the resource mobilization targets partially because of the inability to demonstrate a clearer value proposition. There is a lack of adequate strategic guidance for the state offices, the position of the Chief Advisor, Strategic Planning and State Operations, which is critical for the coordination efforts and for connecting the state office to the central offices was vacant for almost a year during the data collection period. The lack of adequate human and financial resources has affected state offices' abilities to meet targets for raising resources from state governments.

## 3.2 Recommendations and management response

### RECOMMENDATION 1.



**Repositioning**<sup>147</sup> – In the new CPD, UNDP should reposition itself to reclaim its original pioneer and thought-leader role in strengthening the Policy Unit for driving upstream analytical work to inform policy processes at the national and increasingly at the subnational levels.

The policy-interfacing role should be assimilated across the CO, state offices and programme portfolios. UNDP should focus on its niche areas, and those areas where it is recognized as having added value. These areas include: human development-related products and initiatives; thought leadership; policies for strengthening SDG finance; digital governance and implications of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence; support for policy-level efforts for poverty reduction through skilling and employment that focuses on inequalities and the LNOB principle and on preventive approaches in the environment portfolio. The CO should develop a concrete action plan to improve the integration of its programme pillars as well as the states teams and improve inter-agency and multi-sectoral engagements. This should allow the CO team to operate more strategically and work less in siloes and in a more integrated manner, with adequate stakeholders' mapping and coherent theories of changes for improved results.

<sup>146</sup> Linked to finding 1 and 14.

<sup>147</sup> Linked to conclusion 1 and 6.

**Management response: Accepted**


Having been established in early 2020, the UNDP India Policy Unit has already started to reposition UNDP to increase its role in thought-leadership. Under the new CPD, it will drive a sharper focus in the CO's pipeline of policy products, ensuring higher analytical quality and building partnerships to inform policy processes at both the national and subnational levels. The Unit will work closely with team leaders to ensure that policy lessons from UNDP programmes are distilled and shared through sharp, policy-focused communication, both internally and externally.

The Policy Unit will proactively identify opportunities for, and drive forward, the integration of policy work across programmatic pillars and state offices, focusing on themes including digital governance, poverty reduction through skilling, the link between poverty and climate change, SDG Finance and the LNOB principle.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Establish a quality assurance (QA) process for UNDP India's policy products. All major policy products will have clear details on their positioning and value addition to important policy dialogues. The QA process will also include an ex-ante plan for the use and necessary partnerships for all of these products in the CO's policy pipeline. The process will also facilitate the integration of policy work across programme pillars and state offices. This pipeline will be defined at the beginning of each year in consultation with the teams. The Policy Unit will also support creating policy Terms of Reference (ToRs), steering research methods, and linking programme teams with external experts.	Current year's pipeline will be finalized by May 2022 as the QA process is being established  Subsequently by the end of February of each year	Policy Unit in close collaboration with project and programme teams		Initiated

◀ Recommendation 1 (cont'd)

1.2 The Policy Unit will be strengthened with additional human resource with research and analytical capabilities. At least one Research Associate will be hired in 2022 having strong data and writing capability.  Identify 'policy champions' in each of the three thematic areas to ensure that the CO's policy work is integrated across pillars.	July 2022	Policy Unit		Initiated
1.3 Establish and strengthen partnerships with key government and non-government entities, state governments, academia and prominent think tanks. At least two policy products this year will be with a new knowledge or government partner.	October 2022	Policy Unit		Initiated
1.4 Demonstrate UNDP's thought leadership in its thematic areas through participation in external events and think pieces in key publications.	Through the year, start with at least 2 think pieces in 2022.	Policy Unit		To be initiated

RECOMMENDATION 2.



**SDG financing<sup>148</sup> – Given the potential of future engagements and works with state governments and the private sector in India, UNDP should support the sustainable finance agenda with high-quality knowledge and research outputs, together with technical capacity-building assistance to build on the work that has been accomplished to date.**

UNDP should transform the present SDG Finance Facility (SDGFF) into a stand-alone unit that works across the system strengthening, inclusive growth, and energy, environment and resilience portfolios. Beyond policy support work with the Ministry through the sustainable finance taskforce, the Facility needs to: (i) anchor the process of designing and incubating instruments and ecosystem approaches on innovative financing; (ii) strengthen the scaling of private finance and investment, for example by supporting UNDP teams and relevant stakeholders to introduce innovative blended finance instruments within their project portfolios, including for state- and city-level financing; and (iii) advocate for and contribute to the development of a conducive multi-stakeholder environment for sustainable finance to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example, by advancing the development of an Integrated National Finance Framework.

<sup>148</sup> Linked to conclusion 1.

**Management response: Accepted**



The Country Office (CO) continues to prioritize work on SDG financing, which includes sustainable and climate finance. As highlighted in the Evaluation Report, the CO has increased engagement and support for this area by working closely with the Ministry of Finance of the Government of India to launch the Sustainable Finance Collaborative in 2020 and formally supporting the Task Force on Sustainable Finance in 2021. The CO will continue to build on this by formalizing strong partnerships with government, the private sector and financial institutions. Additional efforts are being made to mobilize resources not just for SDG Finance as a stand-alone team, but also as part of integrated offerings with other teams and units within the CO. In terms of alternative/ blended financing instruments, building on the work carried out through platforms such as the REVIVE Alliance and pay-for-success instruments at the city level in Maharashtra, the CO is taking meaningful steps to increase engagement with state governments on financing instruments.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Formalize the partnership with the Ministry of Finance on sustainable finance.	July 2022	SDG Finance		Under discussion
2.2 Review and strengthen engagement with the environment team for coordinated outputs on climate finance.	July 2022	SDG Finance, Environment Unit		Initiated
2.3 Develop standardized offerings to support the state governments and municipalities with knowledge, research and technical capacity on SDGs/ sustainable finance.	June 2022	SDG Finance, SDG State Outreach		Initiated

### RECOMMENDATION 3.



**Inclusive growth<sup>149</sup> – UNDP should take stock of skilling and employment models that are demonstrating significant and sustainable results, that are unique in their offering, and that are the most relevant to government needs. In addition, UNDP should focus on strategic partnerships with other bilateral/multilateral partners, CSOs and state governments to ensure national ownership and sustainability of results.**

It is highly important that UNDP systematically take stock of the skilling and employment models that are innovative, successful and have potential for scaling-up. The Biz Sakhi model was unique in its approach of focusing on social barriers, and the value chain mini-MBA offers an important linkage with the Government's FPO scheme goals. The microenterprise model has also had success similar to the government schemes but at a higher cost, which needs to be further examined. Given the limited size of UNDP's inclusive growth portfolio, the theory of change needs to better consider the role of other partners in helping to scale up and ensure that the initiatives are sustainable. More long-term programmes will also help better understand the performance of these models. This should include partnering with United Nations agencies such as International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women, programmatic partnerships with civil society in project design, and engagement with academia to improve UNDP models and for better knowledge management. Better knowledge management together with results from scaled-up initiatives should provide more credible proof of concept for policy work.

### Management response: **Accepted**



The CO has taken stock of the skilling and employment models that demonstrated results specifically for girls and women under the Disha project. The four documented models have been widely shared with the government and other key stakeholders for scale up and replication. The approach is being replicated in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, in partnership with private sector such as Nayara Energy, Marico, and SAP Lab. The recently agreed partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), of the Government of India for the programme, 'Promoting Inclusive Growth through Enhanced Access to Rural Livelihood Opportunity, Education to Work Transition and Social Protection Schemes (PROGRESS)', will further strengthen alignment of UNDP's work with the government needs and priorities. This is in addition to UNDP India's strategic engagement with the state governments of Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh on skilling and employment. UNDP is also proactively engaging with bilateral and United Nations agencies such as Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), UN Women, ILO and UNICEF on knowledge exchange, project design and to leverage each other's strength in field implementation. For example, UNDP is an active strategic partner of UNICEF's YuWaah Initiative and is coordinating with UN Women to scale up the Biz-Sakhi model in the state of Maharashtra through the State Women Entrepreneurship Cell.

<sup>149</sup> Linked to conclusion 3.

We do see merit in the recommendation to take stock of other successful models of skilling and employment in India and at the regional and international levels, and to focus on building strategic partnerships. Going forward, we will seek to establish partnerships with select state governments on macro- and meso- level interventions aimed at ecosystem improvement, the adoption of successful approaches and capacity building of district- and state-level institutions. We also aim to strengthen our collaboration with regional and headquarters teams for improved knowledge management, specifically international practices. We will continue to strengthen our engagement with UNICEF, UN Women, and ILO.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Operationalize the 'Promoting Inclusive Growth through Enhanced Access to Rural Livelihood Opportunity, Education to Work Transition and Social Protection Schemes (PROGRESS)' partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.	July 2022	Inclusive Growth		Initiated
3.2 Leverage the UNDP-Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship partnership and reach out to 8–10 focus states and corporates for establishing strategic partnerships.	October 2022	Inclusive Growth, CO Partnership Unit		Initiated
3.3 Conduct a systematic review of other successful models a) in India developed by other ecosystem actors b) international practices/models of UNDP in partnership with headquarters and the regional Inclusive Growth Team.	June 2023	Inclusive Growth – India, RBAP, headquarters CO Monitoring and Evaluation		To be initiated
3.4 Conduct a landscape analysis of skilling and employment models in select states to understand gaps in existing skilling ecosystem.	July 2022	Inclusive Growth		Initiated

#### RECOMMENDATION 4.



**Energy, environment and resilience<sup>150</sup>** – The energy, environment and resilience programme design should be modified and enhanced to be made more coherent and results-oriented, with more emphasis given to preventive approaches. These should address more fundamental root causes of the problems and ensure a more comprehensive and effective approach for achieving results in the long term. There is also a need for leadership to focus on the structure of the Energy Environment and Resilience Unit and to redefine it more coherently to deliver on a long-term vision that is more aligned with preventive measures.

Considering the limited capacity within the CO compared to the market capacity and requirements, the sustainable energy portfolio should focus more on sustainable energy themes that support the vulnerable, the poor and those lacking access, and should be involved in more market-oriented interventions only in niche areas where there is a significant capacity gap. The chemicals and waste portfolio and the plastic waste management portfolio should be combined and a more holistic and socio-economically inclusive approach should be adopted for the whole programme. In the projects where there is less flexibility because of donor requirements, UNDP should ensure better analysis of socio-economic and political impacts and design of safeguards.

The plastic waste management model should be improved to be made more attractive to the private sector, without any major dilution of its flagship social component, by first conducting a more comprehensive cost-benefit analysis of the existing model. A decision should be taken on if the Disaster Risk Management portfolio should address disasters that are not influenced by climate change, given the CO's ambitions to support the implementation of disaster management plans at the national, state and local levels; if so, the existing strategy needs to be modified to include this. The integration of the Disaster Risk Management portfolio with climate change adaptation should be made more systematic and concrete, based on a longer-term roadmap for integration. There should be closer consultation and integration with Pillars 1 and 2, and as well as with the SDG financing unit and with the Accelerator Lab.

#### Management response: **Accepted**



In order to strengthen the CO's offer in this pillar and make it more coherent, National Professional Officer-D post was already re-established in late 2020 and recruitment was finalized in the following year. This change was undertaken precisely to strengthen coherence of this portfolio, which, during the restructuring process in 2018, had been split into three independent units to cover: climate change; natural resources management, and; chemical waste.

<sup>150</sup> Linked to conclusion 4.

The Energy, Environment and Resilience (EER) programme pillar is currently funded mainly from vertical funds that address the current priorities of the national partners. We agree to explore more comprehensive approaches, including a stronger focus on prevention. We also agree to develop more comprehensive and integrated approaches by, *inter alia*, combining the portfolio on chemical and plastic waste, forging stronger links between climate change adaptation and disaster risk resilience, and establishing interfaces between decentralized renewable energy applications and livelihoods. Working with the partnerships and the communication team, the Energy, Environment and Resilience Team will seek to diversify funding sources beyond vertical funds to increasingly target innovative financing mechanisms and private sector partnerships over the course of the coming programme cycle.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Shift from vertical funds to other potential sources of funds to combat the triple planetary crisis for sustainable development. CO will focus on mobilizing resources through innovative finance mechanisms (including corporate social responsibility) for developing results-oriented integrated programmes to address environment challenges in the country.	April 2024	Energy, Environment and Resilience		Initiated
4.2 Programme design to include expertise from verticals within the Environment, Energy and Resilience unit (Natural Resource Management, Biodiversity, Energy, Circular Economy and Disaster Risk Management) and from other units (Inclusive Growth, Health, SDG Acceleration, Sustainable Finance and Policy), which would allow for more comprehensive design and implementation, including addressing long-term root causes.	June 2023	Energy, Environment and Resilience, SDG Finance and Policy Units		Initiated



◀ Recommendation 4 (cont'd)

4.3 Strengthen the technical capacities in the Energy, Environment and Resilience (EER) pillar by engaging external thematic expertise for developing comprehensive and integrated approaches, especially on climate adaptation-disaster risk resilience, the circular economy-chemicals and decentralized renewable energy-livelihoods.	December 2022	Energy, Environment and Resilience		Initiated
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RECOMMENDATION 5.



**State offices<sup>151</sup> – State presence needs to be reprioritized by linking the decentralization process to SDG localization work right to the Gram Panchayat level, bolstered by agreements with the state government that support UNDP presence. The first steps needed are clearer work arrangements between the central and state offices.**

UNDP should implement the 2018 recommendations of the State Outreach Strengthening Mission, the proposed Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and guidelines for effective state offices functioning.

Clarity in matrix arrangements for decision-making and a reporting line between Delhi and the State Office should be ensured together with logical delegation of back-office functions (procurement, contracting, finance and human resources) to support the decentralized operating model. Mobilization of local resources for optimum programmatic delivery should ensure effective state office presence and performance but aligned with UNDP's strategic priorities. Where state presence may not be financially feasible, UNDP could deepen its presence through partnerships with key entities. State offices should assume representational, coordination and oversight functions within a year of opening to ensure proper transparency and an adequate operational framework. In addition, conceptual cohesion should be ensured among all UNDP-led activities within the states: projects, partnership building and resource mobilization.

<sup>151</sup> Linked to conclusion 2 and 7.

**Management response: Accepted**



The CO has followed a sequential SDGs localization model by first engaging with the national government including with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, and then with the sub-national/state governments. The work with the state governments through SDG Coordination Centres (SDGCC) will be further strengthened with the Gram Panchayat (local government) to link to the larger decentralization process. In line with the recommendation, the CO will expand SDGs localization work at the Gram Panchayat level through the existing and planned SDGCCs to further the localization agenda at the decentralized levels. The CO has already initiated efforts to strengthen state presence by providing seed funds to the state offices for integrated programming across CPD pillars and with the respective units.

The CO will continue to work towards a strengthened presence at the state level and clarify working arrangements between the central and state offices, including by revising and updating the 2018 SOP around state level engagements.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Formalize partnership with the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to promote SDG localization in Panchayati Raj Institutions	May 2022	SDG and State Outreach		Completed
5.2 Leverage SDG Coordination Centres to further SDG localization within the Gram Panchayat Development Plans (local government development plans)	December 2022	SDG and State Outreach		Initiated
5.3 Update the 2018 Standard Operating Procedures to further strengthen 'ways of working' between central and state offices, and to establish mechanisms that are responsive to the new CPD	December 2022	Senior Management, SDG and State Outreach		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 6.



**Gender<sup>152</sup>– UNDP needs to systematically apply a gender lens to all of its work, with adequate gender mapping, and leave no one behind (LNOB) mapping, including intersecting factors. The gender lens should be integrated into programme design with adequate monitoring of implementation and reporting of results to ensure that results are responsive and transformative to truly address the root causes of inequalities and discriminations.**

An action plan to implement this recommendation needs to be supported by an active gender focal team with clear gender equality and women's empowerment-oriented indicators for staff to ensure the achievement of results. The position of the gender specialist should be filled by the first quarter following the new CPD approval, and partnerships should be established with UN Women and other agencies. More attention needs to be paid to mainstreaming gender in the environment, energy and resilience portfolio in particular. Monitoring and evaluation should better capture the differentiated result by gender and for those left behind.

### Management response: **Accepted**



The CO office is currently undertaking the Gender Seal certification process, which is led by the Gender Focal Team. This process will further deepen, systematize and expand the CO's efforts to build capacities and apply gender mainstreaming principles to programmes and operations. The CO will invest in capacity and perspective-building on gender and gender mainstreaming, undertake portfolio and gender reviews of select projects to systematize gender integration, and strengthen the reporting of gender results. Capacity and perspective building will prioritize intersecting vulnerabilities, gender norms and structural discrimination with a focus on LNOB.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Structured Capacity building of the Gender Focal Team on gender mainstreaming and gender marker corporate tools.	April 2022	Gender Team		Completed
6.2 Perspective building of staff on intersectional analysis and gendered vulnerabilities by organizing gender dialogues (3)	July 2022 October 2022 December 2022	Gender Focal Team		Initiated
6.3 Develop and roll out a Gender-Responsive Evaluation Checklist for gender integration in projects/programmes	July 2022	Gender Team		Checklist completed; roll out ongoing.

<sup>152</sup> Linked to conclusion 5.

◀ Recommendation 6 (cont'd)

6.4 Portfolio and gender review of select projects across CPD thematic areas to strengthen gender mainstreaming and develop gender recommendations for adaption. The portfolio review will undertake:  (i) Gender analysis (ii) Gender actions to narrow gender disparities and the specific needs of women/ girls; boys and men in all their diversities (iii) Gender monitoring and evaluation.	December 2022	Gender Team		Initiated
6.5 Strengthen partnerships with women-led and non-binary organizations for deepening understanding of gender issues gender equality and Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) programming.	March 2023	Senior Management and Gender Focal Team		Discussions initiated with select organizations
6.6 Project-related data disaggregation by gender (man, woman, trans man, trans woman, non-binary) to also include mapping of vulnerable groups with a focus on LGBTIQ communities.	December 2022	Gender Focal Team		Initiated

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

# ANNEXES



Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at:  
<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12801>

**Annex 1.** Evaluation terms of reference

**Annex 2.** Evaluation framework

**Annex 3.** Reconstructed theory of change

**Annex 4.** Changes in the organizational structure

**Annex 5.** People consulted

**Annex 6.** Documents consulted

**Annex 7.** List of projects for review

**Annex 8.** Status of CPD outcome and output indicators matrix



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