FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAMME
2016-2022
BANGLADESH

Submitted by:
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The evaluators would like to thank all those who have contributed to this evaluation, including the Human Rights Programme Team for their assistance during the evaluation and in preparing this report. Particular thanks goes to the Business and Human Rights Specialist, Ms. Harpreet Kaur and the Deputy Resident Representative, Ms. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Van for their dedication to this project and time for in-depth discussions.

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PROJECT and evaluation information details

Project/outcome Information	
Project/outcome title	Human Rights Programme (HRP)
Atlas ID	00085027
Corporate outcome and output	Outcome 1: Strengthened capacity of the National Human Rights Commission to deliver on its mandate. Outcome 2: Enhanced capacity of civil society and community-based organisations to engage in human rights advocacy and awareness raising. Outcome 3: Enhanced capacity of law enforcement agencies, in particular police, on human rights issues. Outcome 4: Strengthened capacity of national stakeholders to better protect and promote women's rights Outcome 5: Strengthened capacity of national stakeholders to better protect and promote the rights of ethnic minorities. Outcome 6: Strengthened capacity and coordination of justice sector institutions to better justice delivery and remedies to all citizens including LNOB people.
Country	Bangladesh
Region	Asia Pacific
Date project document signed	28 April 2016

Project dates	**Start**	**Planned end**
	1 January 2016	31 December 2022

Total committed budget	USD 10,597,570.00 (funded 8,859,614.00)
Project expenditure at the time of evaluation	USD 7868606.80
Funding source	Embassy of Switzerland, Embassy of Sweden, Danish International Development Agency, UNDP
Implementing party[1]	National Human Rights Commission, CSOs, Bangladesh Police

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[1] This is the entity that has overall responsibility for implementation of the project (award), effective use of resources and delivery of outputs in the signed project document and workplan.

Evaluation information		
Evaluation type (project/ outcome/thematic/country programme, etc.)	Project Evaluation	
Final/midterm review/ other	Final Evaluation	
Period under evaluation	**Start**	**End**
	1 January 2016	30 April 2022
Evaluators	i) Olivera Puric ii) ii) Asif Mohammad Shahan	
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Evaluation dates	**Start**	**Completion**
	May 2022	August 2022

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ABBREVIATIONS

BNHRC-CDP Project	Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission Capacity Development
CO	Country Office
CPD	Country Programme Document
CSO/CBO	Civil Society Organization/Community Based Organization
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DP	Development partner
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FY	Fiscal Year
GANHRI	Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HR	Human rights
HRD	Human Rights Defender
HRP	Human Rights Programme
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LEA	Law Enforcement Agencies
LNOB	Leave No-one Behind
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NLASO	National Legal Aid Services Organization
OECD-DAC	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAB	Project Advisory Board
PIC	Programme Implementation Committee
PO	Partner organization
PWD	Persons with disabilities
RAB	Rapid Action Battalion

RRF	Results and Resources Framework
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
ToR	Terms of References
ToT	Training of trainers
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
UP	Union Parishad
VAW	Violence Against Women

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation is an external final evaluation of the Human Rights Programme – HRP (1 January 2016 – 31 December 2022). It was commissioned by the project and covers the period 28 April 2016 (the beginning of the HRP) to 31 March 2022, assessing the HRP's progress against the project's theory of change, Results and Resources Framework, Monitoring & Evaluation framework and overall, achieved results. The recommendations laid out in four sets can be applied to both short-term measures for the remaining project implementation period, as well as in the longer-term in view of a future programming cycle. The evaluation was based on data available at the time of evaluation, including project documents and other relevant reports, as well as extensive stakeholder consultations, conducted over a period of three months. The primary audience for the evaluation is the HRP team, the UNDP Country Office in Bangladesh, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the project's donors, the NHRC and other relevant authorities, as representatives of the Project Advisory Board. The secondary audience for the evaluation are other stakeholders, including CSOs.

The methodology used a mixed-methods approach but was essentially qualitative. It comprised an analysis of all relevant project documentation shared by the HRP and data collected through meetings, focus group discussions, including in field visits with over 200 stakeholders and beneficiaries. Participants included the project and programme team, UNDP senior management, representatives of donors, NHRC representatives, LEA (police), National Legal Aid Service Organization, Bangladesh Betar, justice sector institutions, local government institutions, CSOs, Human Rights Defenders, youth leaders (from ethnic and excluded groups/communities).

The evaluators find that the project managed to be equally successful both at policy level (the NHRC continued its advocacy with the Government for the reform of discriminatory laws, policies, and harmful practices against women and children and vulnerable groups) and grassroots level (the capacity of partner CSOs and Human Rights Defenders have increased significantly as a result of HRP's training for grassroots CSOs). The HRP was a multi-partner initiative, proven to be effective in fostering partnerships between relevant human rights stakeholders, instrumental for reaching those left behind. Especially commendable is how gender has been mainstreamed through the HRP, along with a dedicated gender-related output. With its human development focus, HRP brought the complex issue of human rights to the individual – and managed to impact lives of people, as presented in examples throughout the report.

The evaluation report provides a set of 21 findings, 6 conclusions, 4 sets of recommendations with a total of 12 actionable points and 6 lessons learned.

The evaluators would single out several forward-looking recommendations in the Executive Summary, thus inviting the readers to delve further through the body text of the report:

In order to further strengthen its position as a strategic influencer, UNDP might want to widen its scope of work in the human rights field, thus building an all-encompassing portfolio of interconnected interventions, by scanning the horizon for new areas and stakeholders that have not been the most obvious to date. This can be a continuous process, based on learnings, with both short-term and longer-term effects. New partners can lead to new thematic areas, but also existing partners can be exposed to new areas and this interlinkage could be explored further.

Furthermore, UNDP should consider developing a longer term human rights within a wider rule of law strategy.

In addition to the areas and stakeholders already covered, UNDP might want to explore potentials for expanding onto more nascent thematic areas, as appropriate for the country context, such as environment and human rights, rights-based digitalisation, human rights and artificial intelligence, the concept of smart cities and human rights, business and human rights (based on initial work supported through a regional program), etc. For example, young politicians (youth branches of political parties) may not be the immediate and most obvious group of stakeholders, but working with them in the formative years of their career can produce rippling effects long term as they become a positive communication channel to the public and are sensitized to the importance of human rights when taking office.

These are just several examples of potential opportunities UNDP might want to embrace in its next programming phase, based on insights of the evaluators, considering programming in the area of rule of law and human rights in the long-term period.

Finally, instead of piloting single solutions across geographical areas, evaluators recommend applying multiple fast track experiments to accelerate learning, going much more out to the field, searching for those very local solutions that work, and, use UNDP's scaling capability to bring those solutions to more people in need. The project should try experimenting with alternative data sources, including satellite imagery and sentiment analyses for social media posts. Such practices can accelerate learning on what works, what is happening and potentially inform on what will happen through foresight and other predictive analyses. These are cutting-edge development practices that can bring innovative approaches to a classical but complex and ever-evolving challenge – the human rights agenda.

In terms of the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria that the final evaluation was asked to assess - relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, impact and cohesion – the evaluators used an evaluation rating scale of (1) – (4), with 1 being unsuccessful, 2 being moderately successful, 3 being successful and 4 being very successful. The rating scale is further detailed under section 2.5 of the report. It is noted that the project has scored highly, also taking into consideration operating and political contexts.

Relevance – 4/4 – Very successful
The project is very relevant in the given country context. It is aligned with national priorities, most notably, those of national partners as well as the UNDP CO. It is aligned with the UN development frameworks covering the given project phase. The HRP has showcased an extent of adaptive management during the project rollout, given the changing contexts and challenges.

Effectiveness – 3/4 – Successful
The overall effectiveness of the implemented output activities is successful, in particular the multi-partner approach the HRP employed. The project was extended three times and remains with a number of partially achieved targets, despite adjustments in the project targets.

Efficiency – 4/4 – Very successful
The project has created a base of technical support to the NHRC and other partners. It continued to deliver despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, which did derail certain activities. An average delivery rate of 80% was recorded against annual targets. Although the project phased difficulties with initial start-up and building of team capacities, as well as cumbersome governance arrangements at times, the project team managed to steer through the challenges and deliver results. Overall, the project has proven efficient as it did attract further donor

funding, based on its initial results. It was designed as a 10M USD initiative, started off with 4.5M USD and attracted a total of 12M USD by the time of the evaluation.

Sustainability – 3/4 – Successful

Human rights programming is a long-term endeavour with few opportunities for quick wins. It is evident that the HRP has contributed to a gradual increase in capacities of the NHRC and that it strives to ensure strong national ownership of project interventions, which is one of the most important elements for sustainability. A next programming phase is under development, which will contribute to financial sustainability of the project and further institutionalization and consolidation of the project results.

Impact – 4/4 – Very successful

The HRP links the human rights to the development agenda of the country, particularly to human development. Impact was witnessed on concrete lives of people and this is where its main value comes out. Such actions should be scaled, as well as the project's overall multi-partner approach that clearly avails of UNDP's integrator approach.

Coherence – 4/4 – Very successful

The HRP represents the UN's main assistance to human rights in Bangladesh. UNDP has managed to create a platform integrating multiple partners in need of assistance with international partners providing development assistance.

Overall – 22/24 – Very successful

The project was very successful in protection and promotion of human rights, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of the vulnerable groups. Further, the project was adequately designed to build capacity of the existing human rights architecture in Bangladesh (primarily, the NHRC) but also operated in a broader group of human rights stakeholders such as police, CSOs, youth, human rights defenders, focusing on left behind and most vulnerable (women, girls, third gender, ethnic and religious minorities etc.). The project has produced noteworthy results under the given challenging country context for programming in the human rights sphere. It has employed an innovative multi-partner approach and managed to bring the voices of the vulnerable to the attention of authorities in a number of difficult instances. As assessed hereunder, the project contributed to institutions serving and protecting more effectively the rights of all citizens and all people, especially women and ethnic minorities. The next programming phase could benefit from a more integratory approach, more structured management and governing arrangements, as well as from consistent Result Based Management and reporting.

1.   INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Background

The Human Rights Programme (HRP) was launched in 2016 as a successor project to the Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission Capacity Development Project (BNHRC-CDP), which ended in December 2015. The HRP has been designed more broadly than the BNHRC-CDP and whereas the earlier project focused mostly on capacity building of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the HRP concentrates on creating an enabling policy environment, and supporting all the relevant human rights and justice institutions (including the law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote and protect the rights of all persons within the jurisdiction of Bangladesh. HRP was initially designed as a 5 -year project (2016-2020), with a budget of USD $ 10,597,570 from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

Due to the COVID pandemic, the project was not able to complete all the planned activities and hence was extended until June 2022 at the time of the evaluation.

With the objective to protect and promote human rights, good governance, reduction of structural inequalities, and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups, the HRP was designed to build the capacity of existing human rights architectures in Bangladesh, in particular the NHRC. HRP also operates in a broader group of human rights stakeholders such as police, CSOs, CBOs, youths, rights defenders and media focusing on the left behind and most vulnerable individuals and groups, including women and girls, children and young people, third gender, ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, Dalits and other minorities with the aspirations to build human rights culture in Bangladesh.

The Human Rights Programme has the following five outputs:

Output 1: Strengthened capacity of the National Human Rights Commission to deliver on its mandate.
Output 2: Enhanced capacity of civil society and community-based organisations to engage in human rights advocacy and awareness raising.
Output 3: Enhanced capacity of law enforcement agencies, in particular police, on human rights issues.
Output 4: Strengthened capacity of national stakeholders to better protect and promote women's rights.
Output 5: Strengthened capacity of national stakeholders to better protect and promote the rights of ethnic minorities.

Additionally, the extended period focused on an added output: Strengthened capacity and coordination of justice sector institutions to better justice delivery and remedies to all citizens, including Leave No One Behind (LNOB) people.

Currently, the project is running at the ultimate stage of its tenure and achieved several key results as planned. The first 18 months' Inception phase review (mid-term review) was completed in 2018 and the assessment concluded that all the components of the Programme continued to be relevant for strengthening human rights architectures in Bangladesh, further

requiring UNDP and/or international support to carry forward the ongoing human rights advocacy in Bangladesh. The HRP is scheduled to end in June 2022 and built upon key results and achievements so far, UNDP aims to formulate a new project document for the next phase of the programme (2023-2028).

The HRP is contributing to the Country Programme Outcome 2[2]
Outcome 2: Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and group and related outputs :
(CPD Output 2.1) Civil society, interest groups, relevant government agencies and political parties haves tools and knowledge to set agendas and to develop platforms for building consensus on national issues

(CPD Output 2.2) The Government has the capacity to carry out formal or quasi-formal, demand-driven and gender-sensitive reforms of the justice sector to provide more equal access to justice to women and men, especially those from marginalized groups.

UNDP has been a consistent supporter of the Bangladesh NHRC both up to and following its launch in 2007, and its renewal in 2009. The Commission has been critical to improving the public's recognition of human rights issues – the number of people who were aware of their human rights increased by 40% between 2011 and 2015 (from 48.6% recognition to 68)[3]

%). The Commission has acted as a critical new voice in support of human rights, changing attitudes and advocating for new human rights approaches from within government. In addition, UNDP actively engages prominent Bangladesh-based human rights advocates and monitoring organizations, helping them to expand their activities, influence and outreach. Respect for human rights is an essential foundation that will strengthen and reinforce Bangladesh's progress towards each of its other Sustainable Development Goals, and UNDP remains a committed partner in helping Bangladesh become an ever more equitable society.

1.2. Context

The Need for Understanding the Existing Political Reality

In determining the future thematic areas where UNDP's HRP can contribute, it is important to understand the existing political reality within which the program has to function. Protecting and promoting human rights is an extremely critical and sensitive issue where it is possible that the programmatic focus and the political interest/ reality may come into conflict. Henceforth, developing an understanding of the existing political environment and reality is essential to determine where future programs should concentrate and how far it can push the boundary in achieving its goals.

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2 UNDP Country Programme Document 2017-2022

3 https://www.undp.org/bangladesh/projects/human-rights-programme (retrieved on September 18, 2022)

Bangladesh's Political Economy: The Success Stories

Over the last decade, Bangladesh has gone through spectacular economic growth. Since 2010-11, the GDP of Bangladesh had been growing at more than 6 per cent reaching 8.1 per cent by 2018-19.[4] Between FY 2009 and FY 2019, the country observed an incredible rise in per capita income from USD 754 to USD 2064. According to recent government estimate, in FY 2021-22, the per capita income is USD 2,824 which was USD 2,591 in FY 2020-21. This economic growth has been complemented by a decline in the poverty rate. The poverty headcount ratio (upper poverty line and per cent of the population) has decreased steadily from 48.9 per cent in 2000 and 31.5 per cent in 2010 to the current rate of 20.5 per cent. The lower poverty line headcount ratio also went down from 17.6 per cent in 2010 to 10.5 per cent (WB, 2019; GoB, 2020).[5] Bangladesh has also performed well in different social development indicators.

At the same time, Bangladesh has earned international recognition for its good performance in increasing women empowerment. Having eliminated the gender disparity in primary and secondary education, solid progress has been made in reducing the large gap between male and female students at the tertiary level. Bangladesh has also advanced well in providing the regulatory framework for the protection of women's rights and privileges. Political empowerment has been boosted through increased membership in the national parliament.[6]

In her recent visit of Bangladesh, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michele Bachelet acknowledged the progress made in socio-economic areas and applauded the efforts made by the country to graduate from the Least Developed Country status in just few areas. She also highlighted the strides made in "…socio-economic development, poverty eradication, access to education and health, women's and children's mortality, access to food, water and sanitation" and acknowledged the fact that the country is playing a leadership role in "…international area on key human rights issues such as migration and climate change".

Existing Challenges: Bangladesh as "Development Paradox"

Despite achieving significant success in economic and social domain, Bangladesh is often defined as a 'development paradox' because the country has managed to attain success while functioning under a weak governance framework. World Bank's Good Governance Indicators have shown that over the years, Bangladesh's score in Voice and Accountability, Government Effectiveness, and Control on Corruption has declined significantly. Bangladesh's national planning documents including the 8th Five Year Plan has acknowledged this weak performance in governance and suggested that the country's democratic institutions need to be strengthened to improve the overall governance as improved governance is key to effective and efficient service delivery (GoB, 2020: 162-163).

In addition to the weak governance framework, concerns have also been raised about Bangladesh's state of democracy. Political analysts have argued that Bangladesh is experiencing a democratic backsliding and different indicators and reports including the Polity IV, Freedom House, V-Dem have shown this democratic recession. The last two elections that took place (2014 and 2018) have eventually allowed the ruling party to control and dominate

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4 https://www.cgs-bd.com/cms/media/documents/ceb38082-af72-4071-85c7-91d277e55cd1.pdf

5 https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32755

6 Government of Bangladesh: Eighth 5-Year Plan 2020 - 2025

policy agenda (V-Dem Project, 2020; Riaz, 2021; 2022)[7]. The 2002 Freedom of the World Report explained Bangladesh's experience in the following way, "Policy is set by the ruling AL, and weaknesses in the country's institutions have reduced checks on its processes and decision-making. Low representation of opposition lawmakers in the National Parliament significantly reduces its ability to provide thorough scrutiny of or debate on government policies, budgets, and proposed legislation."[8]

Of these two elections, in 2014, the general election was boycotted by major opposition parties, resulting in a parliament and government dominated by the Awami League (AL) and its smaller coalition partners. The last election was held in 2018 and in this election, the major opposition parties including Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) decided to participate. The governing party won in 288 seats and the opposition parties rejected the electoral outcome alleging that several irregularities had taken place including ballot-staffing, voter fraud and others (Fair, 2019; Riaz, 2020).

Setting aside the controversies surrounding these two elections, it can be argued that the electoral outcomes have allowed the governing party to centralize power and given that it did not have to face any opposition forces in the parliament, the government managed to function without any credible constraints offered by the parliament. Even though the 8th Five Year Plan is right in identifying that these two elections produced two parliaments which played its part by passing different laws and establishing the parliamentary committees with a promise to hold the executive, political analysts, however, came to a different conclusion. According to their analysis, the absence of a strong opposition has made the legislative constraint weak and has allowed the executive to by-pass the legislative watchdogs in implementing policies and programmes.

Economic Growth in a Centralized Structure: The Emergence of Performance Legitimacy

It is interesting to note that even though the government has concentrated on centralizing power and has managed to exercise this power without any credible democratic constraint, it, however, has decided to embrace a different 'democratic value'. Whereas the government is keen to maintain its control on power and is somewhat intolerant to entertain criticisms that question its democratic ethos, it has nevertheless indicated its willingness to be responsive to the people and address their needs within a centralized governing structure. The government, for its survival and legitimacy, relies on performance and the 'performance legitimacy' has emerged as the key governing strategy. The definition of 'performance legitimacy' is quite simple- the government legitimizes its control on power and exercise of power by 'performing' for the people and within the governance frame, a certain degree of commitment exists that encourages the government machinery to ensure access to services for the people.

Therefore, it can be argued that the current political reality of Bangladesh has two defining characteristics-

- Centralization of power: the weak governance framework and democratic backsliding has allowed the government to centralize power. This willingness to centralize has

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[7] https://v-dem.net/media/publications/dr_2022.pdf; https://www.v-dem.net/static/website/files/dr/dr_2021.pdf; Riaz, A. (2021). The pathway of democratic backsliding in Bangladesh. *Democratization*, *28*(1), 179-197;

[8] https://freedomhouse.org/country/bangladesh/freedom-world/2022

happened within a political environment where democratic constraint on the executive is extremely weak and often non-existent;

- The emergence of performance legitimacy: As country's accountability[9] mechanisms becomes weak, a new form of accountability or legitimation technique has emerged where the government is willing to be responsive to the needs of the citizens and is keen to ensure their access to services by improving the service delivery process. However, it should be kept in mind that performance legitimacy has its boundary or limit. Under this governing strategy, the government is being responsive and serving the people as long as that response does not threaten its control on power. In other words, performance legitimacy functions within a reluctant political environment where the government is not keen in promoting rights or services that will open up political space or raise questions or concerns about its exercise of power.

Human Rights Situation in the Era of Performance Legitimacy

Understanding this political reality raises two important questions- first, within this political reality, how does the government try to define and address human rights related issues and concerns? Secondly, how independently can the institutions of accountability like the NHRC perform and what is the nature of relationship or interaction between the government and CSOs, especially the bodies that specifically focus on protecting and promoting human rights? In other words, what is the scope of operation for these organizations in the human rights area?

In the area of Human Rights, Bangladesh has a mixed performance. At one end, the government has taken different initiatives to improve human rights situation and remains committed, on principle, to protect human rights of different marginalized groups. To that end, the government has enacted different laws and policies and has ratified eight out of nine core Human Rights conventions. However, even after introducing several legal and policy measures, certain marginalized communities (e.g., religious minorities, ethnic minorities, Dalits, persons with disabilities) are being systematically excluded from enjoying their rights. Furthermore, even though women represent almost half of the total population (BBS, 2022), they do not enjoy the same legal status and rights as men in several key areas of the legal system including family, property, and inheritance law. Nevertheless, the government of Bangladesh is quite aware of these limitations and challenges and in most cases, has remained committed towards address these. Supporting the marginalized groups so that they can gain access to services and enjoy their rights is strongly aligned with the government's performance legitimacy argument. Furthermore, the government of Bangladesh is pushing an 'inclusive development' agenda and ensuring basic rights and access to services eventually allow the government to achieve its goals. Therefore, this concentration on improved access to services for all through an effective service delivery arrangement fits well with performance legitimacy and henceforth, we can observe strong commitment here.

Whereas human rights concerns that may jeopardize the government's concentration of performance legitimacy has received attention and (often) action, human rights concerns that

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[9] The V-Dem Project, a Sweden-based independent research organization, publishes a state of democracy report every year. Since 2017, the V-Dem project's annual democracy reports were showing a downward trend for Bangladesh's democracy on the ground that the country's institutions of accountability were failing to hold the executive accountable. In other words, the subsequent reports were highlighting the weakness of Bangladesh's democratic accountability. In 2019's report, the V-Dem project acknowledged that Bangladesh's democratic accountability has largely disappeared because even the vertical accountability mechanism was not working. The Polity IV project, the respected framework for classifying regimes, also came to the same conclusion about Bangladesh.

challenge the government's willingness to centralize power has remained largely unaddressed. For instance, in Bangladesh, different human rights organizations have pointed out that civic space that allows the CSOs to function has shrunk significantly over the years. This concern has also been raised by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights during her recent visit to Bangladesh as she stated that in Bangladesh, "Laws and policies over-regulating NGOs and broadly restricting the freedom of expression make it difficult – and sometimes risky – for them to function effectively." In fact, different studies have also shown that laws like the Digital Security Act have made it extremely difficult for the journalists and human rights activists to express their opinion openly.

Furthermore, in Bangladesh, extra-judicial killings and forced disappearances have continued. According to a report published by Amnesty International in 2020, "at least 222 people were killed by the security forces in alleged extrajudicial executions – 149 people were killed without being arrested, 39 were killed after arrest, and others died during torture or in other circumstances." Another recent study shows that between 2009 and 2018, at least 522 people have become victims of enforced disappearance and 71 cases of enforced disappearance took place between 2019 and 2021. Of the 71 cases, 16 victims are still missing, five have been found dead and twenty-two have been either arrested, detained or jailed. These studies and reports by international human rights organizations also show that in case of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, it has been alleged that law enforcement agencies including RAB and Detective Branch of the Police were involved and moreover, in most cases, the targets of the enforced disappearance were political leaders, businessmen, students and other individuals who raised voice against the government's actions. The government, however, largely denied any allegation of involvement of law enforcement agencies and in most cases, decided not to pay attention when these concerns were raised in different forums.

This particular concern regarding human rights violation has also been raised by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and she called on the government to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance. In her written statement, she pointed out that various UN human rights mechanisms had raised concern about enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing, torture, the enactment of the Digital Security Act (DSA) and "…highlighted the need for an impartial, independent and transparent investigation into these allegations, accompanied by security sector reform".

The discussion above helps us to draw key conclusion- first, whereas the government is willing to work for the women and marginalized groups to support them and ensure their access to services and facilitate promotion of human rights, in terms of opening the civic space, stopping enforced disappearance or extra-judicial killing, the government has remained a bit reluctant. In fact, this position of the government fits well with the political reality- it is willing to promote and protect human rights issues that are necessary for maintaining performance legitimacy but unwilling to address concerns that threaten its effort to centralize power. Having said that, pressure on the government to address these key human rights violations is increasing as reflected in the recent statement delivered by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

This political reality eventually creates extensive pressure for the institutions of accountability like NHRC to maintain their autonomy and independent status. These institutions, at one end, are supposed to be independent and perform to protect human rights but the existing political environment significantly limits their effectiveness and force them to function within a boundary. As such, often times they have to maintain silence about specific allegation of HR violations.

For Development Partners (DPs) and the NGOs/ CSOs, this situation often creates a dilemma.

Whereas the government has narrowed down the civic space, it is still willing to work with the DPs and the NGOs in relatively apolitical, technical, and less-sensitive areas. In other words, in terms of supporting the marginalized groups, in protecting their rights, in addressing the difficulties they face while interacting with the larger society, the government is willing to listen to the DPs and value their opinions and assistance. Therefore, the dilemma for the Development Partners like UNDP is- under this current arrangement, they can still work for human rights, can support a significant portion of the society and protect them from adversarial situation but in order to do that they have to function within a boundary and acknowledge the risk-associated with drawing attention to politically sensitive issues. These organizations therefore, can work with the NHRC and other institutions but they remain very careful about pushing the boundary within which they perform.

> The questions, therefore, are- what should be the way forward for the HRP? What are the roles that the UNDP, CSOs, and other relevant stakeholders can play?

The Government of Bangladesh has taken different initiatives to improve the human rights situation in the country. Constitution of the country ensures protection of rights (including but not limited rights to life, to liberty, to be treated in accordance with law and to equality and non-discrimination) for all citizens. In line with the constitutional principles, the Government has also enacted different laws and policies including the Children Act, 2013; Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act, 2000; the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, National Adolescent Strategy. At the same time, the Government has also introduced different measures to ensure access of the marginalized groups to different social protection schemes. New legislation to improve the protection of the rights of children and persons with disabilities has also been enacted. In addition to these domestic measures, Bangladesh has ratified 8 core Human Rights conventions, namely the 1)Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, 2)the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 3) the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, 4)the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, 5) the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 6) the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights 7) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and 8) the Convention Against Torture. Moreover, the NHRC is entrusted to promote and protect human rights throughout the country and for Bangladeshi citizens abroad. The NHRC, established in 2010, is an independent and statutory body (as per the National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009), empowered to investigate and rule on complaints against the armed forces and security services, and it can request reports from the Government at its own discretion.

The NHRC has made significant strides towards establishing itself as Bangladesh's independent human rights institution. However, it is recognized that capacities need further strengthening, partnerships and networks need to be reinforced and expanded and the availability of sufficient and sustainable resources are necessary in order to carry out its mandate.

Key findings from various evaluation reports of the *preceding BNHRC-CDP* identified some critical challenges that need to be addressed to improve the overall human rights situations.[10]

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10 UNDP, 2014. Final Evaluation of the UNDP Capacity Development Project (BHRC- CDP); Sidoti, 2019. Capacity Assessment of the National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh. Available at: http://nhrc.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/nhrc.portal.gov.bd/page/bf638136_9155_44d0_b73f_d1e9a e3e6cd3/Sidoti%20REPORT%20%20May%202019%20(1).pdf

These challenges can be categorized into three groups.

1. First of all, the NHRC required support so that it could build further on its technical capacity and carry out its core mandate of promoting and protecting human rights, as stated in its strategic plan 2010-2015 and reiterated in its Strategic Plan 2016-2020.[11] UNDP can improve on its project delivery through a mentoring focus in its capacity delivery.

2. Secondly, the NHRC has also struggled to meet some of its core mandates, such as fact-finding and engagement with Government institutions that lack human rights training and accountability. Since effective functioning of the NHRC depends, to a large extent, on its interaction with and support gained from the law-enforcement agencies, it is important that these agencies also receive a better understanding on protection of human rights. Henceforth, to improve the overall human rights situation of the country, it is necessary to create supporting institutions that would assist the NHRC in achieving its goals.

3. Thirdly, even though the NHRC has made significant inroads into regional centres through building coalitions of CSOs, there are significant deficiencies in the NHRC's presence at the local level. In particular the NHRC lacks capacity to undertake investigations and receive complaints on human rights issues at the local level. From this perspective, it is necessary for the NHRC to build a strong working relationship with the CSOs and the NGOs working for promoting and protecting human rights at the local level. Furthermore, these CSOs/ NGOs can also support the NHRC by building a strong advocacy network and by raising awareness about human rights issues at the local level.

Having a human rights legal framework is not alone sufficient to ensure that all have their rights respected. If people, especially vulnerable and excluded groups, like women and ethnic minorities, are not aware of their rights and cannot access justice or services, their rights will remain unfulfilled. Therefore, human rights awareness raising and inclusion, especially amongst vulnerable groups and representative CSOs/CBOs/HRDs, can ensure that these groups are more informed and empowered to claim their rights. Furthermore, law enforcement and the police play an indispensable role in protecting human rights and maintaining the rule of law. In order to fulfil this role, law enforcement officials need to know and apply human rights standards and be held accountable for violations.

To address the challenges mentioned above, to support the government in keeping its commitment and to improve the human rights record of the country, the United Nations Development Framework (UNDAF) 2012 -2016, and UNDAF 2017-2021, had provided support under outcome: 'Justice and human rights Institutions are strengthened to better serve and protect the rights of all citizens, including women and vulnerable groups'[12] and under outcome 'Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups'.13 The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 is also aimed to uphold human rights.

Given the continued need and following the strategic orientation of UNDP in the country to continue its work in the area of human rights protection, a final evaluation has been commissioned of the HRP in Bangladesh.

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11 NHRC, 2016. 2nd Five year Strategic Plan (2016-2020). Dhaka: NHRC

12 UNDAF 2012-2016

13 UNDAF 2017-2021

2. Evaluation objective, purpose, and scope.

2.1. Objective

As per the TOR, the main purpose of the final evaluation is to assess achievements to date, document lessons learned, and propose ways forward to UNDP and its partners to develop a future HRP in Bangladesh. Responding to the theory of change and agreed Results and Resources Framework (RRF), and the approved workplans, the final evaluations looks at the relevance of the project, quality of the project design, effectiveness, and efficiency of the implementation to date, sustainability of the overall project results, impact of intervention made to date, and forward-looking directions for future.

The specific objectives of the Final Evaluation are to:
•   assess project performance and progress against the expected outcome, expected outputs, targets, including indicators presented in the RRF
•   identify challenges and the effectiveness and efficiency of the strategic approaches that the project adopted for addressing challenges
•   assess both negative and positive factors that have facilitated or hampered progress in achieving the project outcomes, including external factors/environment, weakness in design, management and resource allocation;
•   ascertain the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the project interventions
•   identify and document substantive lessons learned and good practices and draw out lessons for deepening impact
•   assess the effectiveness of the project's engagement with diverse stakeholders including the government, the NHRC Bangladesh, CSOs, human rights defenders, and other rights-holder groups in advancing human rights architecture in Bangladesh
•   provide forward looking recommendations to inform the future designing of UNDP's work on Human Rights in Bangladesh including on SDG 16
•   outline recommendations, including potential realignments in scope and approach for designing the next phase of the project

2.2. The Scope of the Final Evaluation

The Final Evaluation assesses the HRP's progress against the project's theory of change, RRF and the achieved results from 28 April 2016 (the beginning of the HRP) to 31 March 2022 and propose recommendations, which may inform a possible non-cost extension short-term and the designing of any future longer-term projects or programs in the field of human rights, rule of law and access to justice.

An Inception Phase Assessment Report of the project had been commissioned after reaching an 18-month milestone, with a specific purpose to assess the initial performance of the HRP, the independence of the Commission and its capacity, as well as the Programme's ability to involve the civil society and other relevant actor. The Final Evaluation takes into account the findings of the Inception Phase Assessment Report.

The Final Evaluation's geographic coverage was agreed upon with the HRP Team in discussion of the Inception Report. The field-level was collected through 2 field trips covering a total of approximately 6 days. As part of the field travel, two districts- Khulna and Gaibandha were visited by the evaluation team where different interventions under HRP projects have been implemented. The evaluation mainly focuses on the national level aspects of the project, but

also features specific local aspects, in particular on how the project's national level activities are translated at the local level.

2.3.   The Project's Theory of Change

The Project Document did not contain initially a Theory of Change. It was developed during the Inception Phase and contained in the Terms of Reference for conducting the final evaluation, which notes the following:
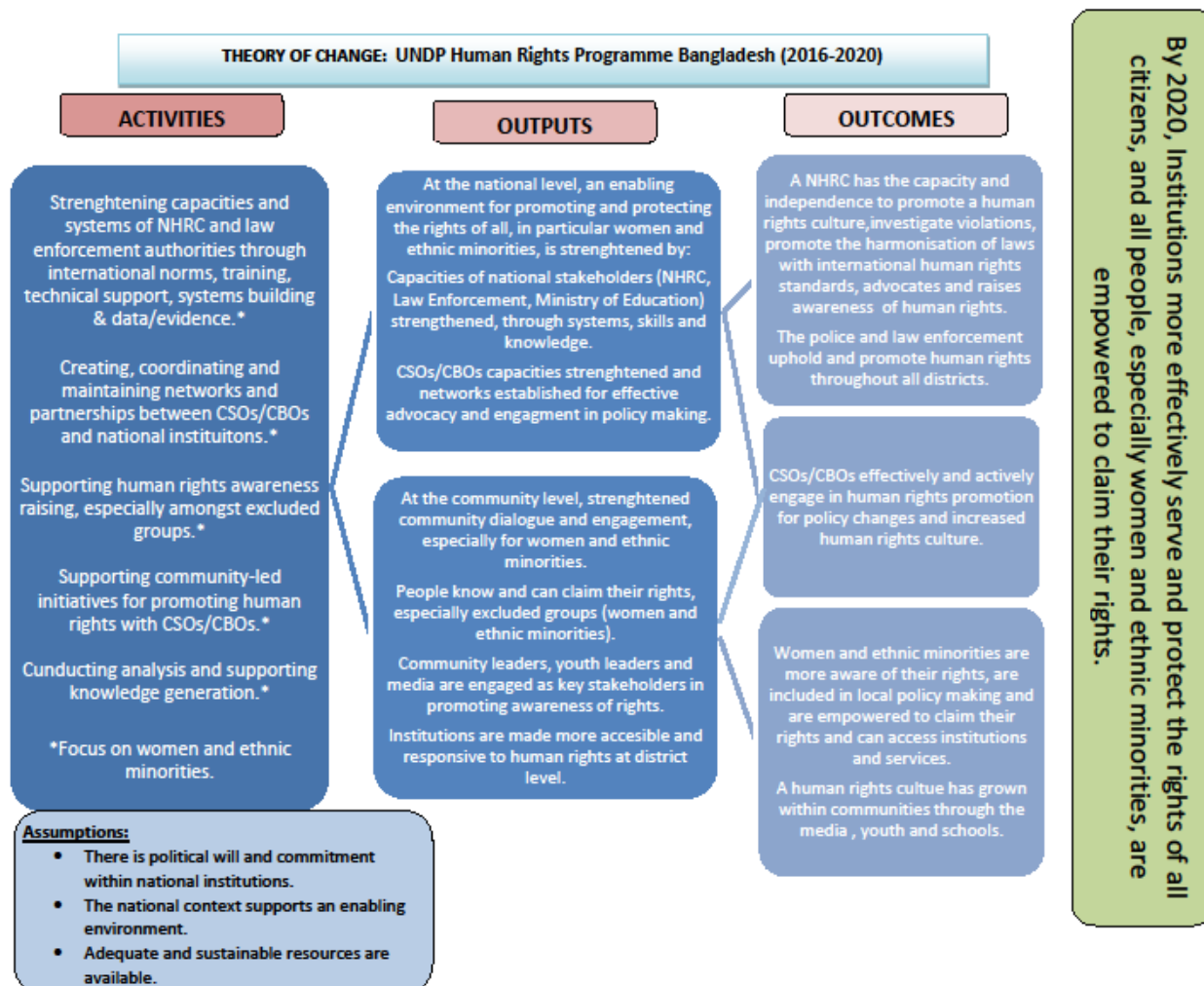
Problem statement:

Bangladesh has made significant progress across a number of key development indicators. However, weak governance and limited capacity has held back efforts in justice and human rights, especially amongst excluded groups. Sustainable development cannot be achieved where there are serious and systematic human rights abuses, as peace, stability and the rule of law are undermined. The effective protection and promotion of human rights at the national level requires human rights compliant legal frameworks and well-functioning state institutions.

The Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is a relatively new institution (established in 2009) and has an important mandate and a key role to play for the promotion and protection of human rights. The NHRC has made significant strides towards establishing itself as Bangladesh's independent human rights institution. However, it is recognized that capacities need further strengthening, partnerships and networks need to be reinforced and expanded and the availability of sufficient and sustainable resources are necessary in order to carry out its mandate.

Having a human rights legal framework is not alone sufficient to ensure that all have their rights respected. If people, especially vulnerable and excluded groups, like women and ethnic minorities, are not aware of their rights and cannot access justice or services, their rights will remain unfulfilled. Therefore, human rights awareness raising and inclusion, especially amongst vulnerable groups and representative CSOs/CBOs/HRDs, can ensure that these groups are more empowered to claim their rights. Furthermore, law enforcement and the police play an indispensable role in protecting human rights and maintaining the rule of law. In order to fulfil this role, law enforcement officials need to know and apply human rights standards and be held accountable for violations.

Overall vision of success:
By 2020, institutions will more effectively serve and protect the rights of all citizens; and all people, especially women and ethnic minorities, are empowered to claim their rights.

THEORY OF CHANGE: UNDP Human Rights Programme Bangladesh (2016-2020)

ACTIVITIES

Strenghtening capacities and systems of NHRC and law enforcement authorities through international norms, training, technical support, systems building & data/evidence.*

Creating, coordinating and maintaining networks and partnerships between CSOs/CBOs and national instituitons.*

Supporting human rights awareness raising, especially amongst excluded groups.*

Supporting community-led initiatives for promoting human rights with CSOs/CBOs.*

Cunducting analysis and supporting knowledge generation.*

*Focus on women and ethnic minorities.

Assumptions:
- There is political will and commitment within national institutions.
- The national context supports an enabling environment.
- Adequate and sustainable resources are available.

OUTPUTS

At the national level, an enabling environment for promoting and protecting the rights of all, in particular women and ethnic minorities, is strenghtened by:
Capacities of national stakeholders (NHRC, Law Enforcement, Ministry of Education) strengthened, through systems, skills and knowledge.
CSOs/CBOs capacities strenghtened and networks established for effective advocacy and engagment in policy making.

At the community level, strenghtened community dialogue and engagement, especially for women and ethnic minorities.
People know and can claim their rights, especially excluded groups (women and ethnic minorities).
Community leaders, youth leaders and media are engaged as key stakeholders in promoting awareness of rights.
Institutions are made more accesible and responsive to human rights at district level.

OUTCOMES

A NHRC has the capacity and independence to promote a human rights culture, investigate violations, promote the harmonisation of laws with international human rights standards, advocates and raises awareness of human rights.
The police and law enforcement uphold and promote human rights throughout all districts.

CSOs/CBOs effectively and actively engage in human rights promotion for policy changes and increased human rights culture.

Women and ethnic minorities are more aware of their rights, are included in local policy making and are empowered to claim their rights and can access institutions and services.
A human rights cultue has grown within communities through the media, youth and schools.

By 2020, Institutions more effectively serve and protect the rights of all citizens, and all people, especially women and ethnic minorities, are empowered to claim their rights.

2.4. Evaluation criteria and questions

The Final Evaluation has been conducted in line with UNEG's Evaluation Guidelines and Norms and Standards for Evaluation as well the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria - (a) relevance/coherence; (b) effectiveness; (c) efficiency; and (d) sustainability. The evaluation also considered any impact that the project has had to date, as well as the potential future impact of the project interventions.

As per the ToR, the evaluators have been asked to consider a number of key questions shaped around the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. The key evaluation questions are provided in Annex I. The evaluators also evaluated the project's integration of gender and social inclusion and the human rights-based approach (HRBA).

The evaluators endeavoured to engage with as many stakeholders as possible to ensure that the evaluation is as inclusive and participatory as possible. The interviewed list of stakeholders is included below under Chapter 6 – Evaluation approach and methodology. Stakeholders include the project and programme team, UNDP senior management, representatives of donors, NHRC representatives, LEA (police), National Legal Aid Service Organization, Bangladesh Betar, justice sector institutions, local government institutions, CSOs, Human Rights Defenders, youth leaders (from ethnic and excluded groups/communities).

2.5. Evaluability Analysis and Evaluation Ranking Scale

The evaluators evaluated the project and its outputs against the evaluation criteria as well as against its context, theory of change and organisational performance. The theory of change was unpacked and the evaluators also took into account elements not necessarily captured in the theory of change, such as policy dialogue, contextual changes and coordination (within the project, the donors and UNDP). The assumptions underpinning the project were assessed for their continuing validity.

> *In short, the evaluators organised primary data collection and analysis to review the Human Rights Programme against its context, theory of change, and organizational performance. Data was then analysed to inform a complementary assessment against OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and coherence.*

The evaluators used a rating scale to rank each evaluation criteria – relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The evaluators proposed to evaluate the project against a 4-fold rating scale as described below.

- Very successful (4)
- Successful (3)
- Moderately successful (2)
- Unsuccessful (1)

Scoring of Project Performance:

Rating	Performance description
4 Very successful (Always/almost always)	Performance is clearly very strong in relation to the evaluation question/criterion. Weaknesses are not significant and have been managed effectively.
3 Successful (Mostly, with some exceptions)	Performance is reasonably strong on most aspects of the evaluation question/criterion. No significant gaps or weaknesses, or less significant gaps or weaknesses have mostly been managed effectively.
2 Moderately successful (Sometimes, with many exceptions)	Performance is inconsistent in relation to the question/criterion. There are some serious weaknesses. Meets minimum expectations/requirements as far as can be determined.
1 Unsuccessful (Never or occasionally with clear weaknesses)	Performance is unacceptably weak in relation to the evaluation question/criterion. Does not meet minimum expectations/requirements.

2.6. Cross-cutting issues

As stipulated in the ToR, gender and the human rights based approach aspects have been integrated into the evaluation methodology and incorporated into the evaluation matrix. In addition to being participatory and inclusive, the evaluators' approach was based on the principles of gender equality. All data gathered was disaggregated to the largest extent possible and efforts were made for positive sampling in terms of ensuring a 50 percent gender balance during the focus groups with project beneficiaries, as well as minority and other vulnerable group representation where possible.

2.   Evaluation approach and methodology

The evaluation was guided by the basic methodology as set out in the ToR, in line with the UNEG and OECD/DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation, and keeping in mind the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As required by the ToR, the evaluation assessed the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the project.

The evaluation was multi-faceted and the methodological approach used mixed (qualitative and quantitative) methods, as the best vehicle for meeting the evaluation's needs. The evaluators ensured that the evaluation was conducted through a participatory and consultative process, which included all relevant national stakeholders and the project beneficiaries.

To this end, a total of 189 stakeholders and beneficiaries were consulted during the course of the evaluation in 7 meetings, 6 focus group discussions, and 20 Interviews. Participants included Chair and Director of NHRC, members of the law enforcement agencies, representative of NLASO, members from the CSOs and CSO coalition, inter-faith groups, youth leaders, Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), and project beneficiaries. A full list of stakeholders who were consulted is provided at Annex II, including the organisation or institution that they represented and gender disaggregated data.

The methodological approach was synthesised into an Evaluation Matrix (see Annex), which guided the evaluators and provided an analytical framework for conducting the evaluation. The evaluation matrix sets out the relevant evaluation criteria, key questions and sub-questions, data sources, data collection methods/tools, indicators and methods for data analysis. The evaluation matrix was divided into each of the 5 evaluation criteria – relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Within the effectiveness criteria, each of the project's outputs are individually scrutinised and analysed – please see below under Chapter 4.

The evaluation's principal guide was the project document for the HRP. While it is usual to rely heavily on the Results and Resources Framework (RRF) containing the project's logframe and M&E framework, which should contain indicators, targets and "means of verification" (i.e. data and documents) for the project's outputs, due to gaps in the project's results framework, logframe and M&E Framework, the final evaluation had to look beyond the RRF in order to assess and measure results. These gaps and shortcomings are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

The evaluators identified a cross-section of data sources in order to optimise data collection and ensure triangulation. A large focus of the evaluation was on obtaining qualitative data through interviews and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders and beneficiaries, as per the consultation list at Annex II.

The evaluators conducted as many interviews as possible to ensure the integrity and the comprehensiveness of the evaluation. Wherever possible data gathered, both qualitatively and quantitatively was triangulated, through cross verification from two or more sources. For interviews, this was done through posing a similar set of questions to multiple interviewees. For the document review it was accomplished through crosschecking data and information from multiple sources to increase the credibility and validity of the material. Draft Informant Guides are provided at Annex IV, which provide an indication and outline as to the set of questions that were asked of each group of stakeholders. Additional questions are provided in the Evaluation Matrix.

The evaluation was conducted in a non-linear, sequential methodology consisting of three main phases – desk research, document review and Inception Report; data collection, analysis and validation; and drafting, revision and finalisation of the report.

3.1. Data analysis

3.1.1. Analytical methods

In order to analysis the collected data, the following analytical methods were applied:
Political economy analysis;
Quantitative and qualitative data analysis;
Data synthesis;
Triangulation; and
Verification and validation.

Political Economy Analysis
A political economy analysis helped the evaluators to understand who seeks to gain and lose from the project's interventions, as well as to identify who has vested interests and the social and cultural norms that need to be taken into account.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis
Most of the primary data collection methods (interviews and FGDs) collected qualitative data. These were analysed using a code structure, which was aligned to the key evaluation questions, sub-questions and indicators. The qualitative data from the primary data collection methods was cross-referenced with other sources such as documents. The quantitative data produced descriptive analysis (rather than more complex regressions).

Triangulation
Triangulation is the process of using multiple data sources, data collection methods, and/or theories to validate research findings. The evaluators used more than one approach (data collection method) to address the evaluation questions in order to reduce the risk of bias and increase the chances of detecting errors or anomalies. The evaluators applied three approaches to triangulation: methods triangulation (checking the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods); interrogating data where diverging results arise; and analyst triangulation (discussion and validation of findings, allowing for a consistent approach to interpretive analysis).

Data Synthesis
The process of bringing all the evidence together to synthesize the data and formulate findings and conclusions took place in two ways. The first was the process of articulating the key findings and cross-checking the strength of the evidence for each. Based on this, the conclusions were then developed and cross-checked for their relevance to the findings.

Verification and Validation
The above steps incorporate verification and validation of evidence during the data collection and data analysis processes. In addition, the evaluators presented their preliminary findings and recommendations at an evaluation de-brief held with the HRP team and CO management and the draft report was shared widely amongst the project team and other key stakeholders, allowing for review and comments. These processes provided an opportunity to share key findings, offer mutual challenges, and discuss the feasibility of and receptiveness to draft recommendations. It also provided an important opportunity to foster buy-in to the evaluation

process particularly for the stakeholders who will have responsibility for implementing recommendations.

3.2. Sampling Methods for Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection

The Final Evaluation's geographic coverage was agreed upon with the Country Office in discussion of the Inception Report. The field-level was collected through 2 field trips covering a total of approximately 6 days. The evaluation team visited Khulna and Gaibandha- two districts of the country (one from the southern region and the other from the northern region) where different interventions under HRP projects have been implemented. The evaluation mainly focused on the national level aspects of the project, but also featured specific local aspects, in particular on how the project's national level activities are translated at the local level.

The evaluators used a purposive sampling approach. The evaluators consulted with the project to develop and refine a list of potential key informants to participate in the interviews and FGDs. This included efforts to ensure a 50:50 ratio of female to male participants, as well as efforts to ensure that a representative sample of geographical locations where the project was implemented were represented.

The sampling approach was purposive due to the small scale of the evaluation, but criteria considered the following contextual and operational factors as appropriate:

- Geographically proportional;
- Gender of participants;
- Sensitivity to the inclusion of diversity of participants;
- A balance of different levels and types of engagement with the project; and
- Socio-economic diversity.

3.3. Methodological Limitations and Attribution of Results

3.3.1. Deviations from the proposed Methodology

There were no major deviations from the proposed methodology, apart from the absence of the survey. It was decided with the project team that conducting the survey would not add additional value, since the focus groups and interviews provided in-depth insights.

3.3.2. Challenges and Limitations of the Evaluation

There were several challenges and limitations confronting the evaluation. The first relates to the challenges of conducting the evaluation remotely using virtual tools for the international consultant. While this is generally a satisfactory substitution for data gathering during the COVID-19 pandemic, it does not allow for building up a rapport with participants, for more informal communication which often takes place before and after formal meetings, or for conducting site visits. Stakeholders are often more reluctant to speak openly and freely into a screen, which acts as a barrier between the evaluator and the participant. In order to mitigate this, the national consultant was usually present on-site, while the international consultant online. However, there were a number of interviews conducted only by the national consultant, especially those requiring field visits to remote areas. In addition, the language barrier also posed an issue with most of the interviewees requiring translation, which impeded a normal

flow of discussion. Therefore, the vast majority of the interviews were conducted by the national consultant face to face, while the team leader had indirect insight.

Another challenge, which is frequently faced during evaluations relates to biases. Each bias and the corresponding mitigation efforts are described below.

- *Recall bias*: HRP has conducted many activities to date and it is quite possible that key informants may not accurately remember particular specific project intervention activities. A similar problem is that participants in multiple project (from other donors or UN agencies) activities may have blended their experiences into a composite memory or response and, subsequently, did not distinguish between them as separate activities in their responses.
  The evaluators mitigated this bias primarily through a semi-structured interview protocol that called for questioning about specific activities; through gentle reminders and nudging about the activities of the project. Triangulation of data also mitigated this bias.
- *Response bias*: Informants may have given the evaluators positive remarks about the project because they would like to stay involved with the intervention in the future and they think that a negative evaluation could mean the end of project opportunities.
  The evaluators adopted two main strategies for mitigating this bias. First, they reiterated for each informant the maintenance of confidentiality and anonymity and then explained the evaluation's independence from both UNDP and the project. Second, as with recall bias, questions designed to elicit specific examples helped to identify response bias.
- *Selection bias*: Beneficiaries provided by UNDP and its partners could mean that the evaluators hear only from people who had positive experiences. As with the other forms of bias, multiple sources of data and questions eliciting specific examples help to mitigate the risk of this bias. In addition, the evaluators sought additional interviews with varied stakeholders to mitigate further this bias.

Finally, are limitations of available data and information. In order to track progress towards the outcomes and outputs, the evaluators required data, information and statistics from the project. It is frequently challenging to obtain data and what exists is often not disaggregated. To mitigate this, the evaluators endeavoured to collect as much data – both qualitative and quantitative - as possible during the data collection phase and from the documents made available by UNDP. However, challenges with the projects' RRF and M&E framework, related to changes in target values and units of measure, limited the quantitative data that was available to the evaluators.

3.3.3. Attribution of Results

In the complex development context in Bangladesh in which the HRP project is being implemented, it is difficult for the evaluators to attribute the observed results solely to the project. This is partly because of the number of stakeholders involved, partly because of other exogenous factors, and partly because of the complex nature of the project itself. For this reason, the evaluators adopted a contribution approach, which does not firmly establish causality but rather seeks to achieve a plausible association by analysing the project's ToC and results framework, documenting the project's successes and value added, applying the "before and after" criterion, i.e. what exists now that did not exist before and what has changed since the start of the project, and through considering the counterfactual – what would have happened without the HRP.

4. Analysis and Findings of the Final Evaluation

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the Final Evaluation grouped around each of the evaluation criteria and cross-cutting issues and based on the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected. Each of the key evaluation questions is answered and the analysis and findings are also informed by the guiding questions provided in the ToR. The guiding questions are extensive and are not included here but are provided at Annex I.

4.1. Relevance

Overall, the project is very relevant in the given country context. It is aligned with national priorities, most notably, those of national partners as well as the UNDP CPD. It is aligned with the UN development frameworks covering the given project phase. The HRP has showcased an extent of adaptive management during the project rollout, given the changing contexts and challenges. The following are key related findings:

Finding 1: The HRP is fully aligned with the relevant UN development frameworks covering the present project phase, UNDP Strategic Plan, but also aligned with the NHRC's Strategic Plan.

UN perspective:

The HRP is fully in line with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012 -2016, and UNDAF 2017-2021, having provided support under outcome: 'Justice and human rights Institutions are strengthened to better serve and protect the rights of all citizens, including women and vulnerable groups'14 and under outcome 'Develop and implement improved social policies and programmes that focus on good governance, reduction of structural inequalities and advancement of vulnerable individuals and groups'15. The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 is also aimed to uphold human rights. The HRP was also in line with the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 to meet citizen expectations for voice, development, the rule of law and accountability by stronger systems of democratic governance.

National perspective:

As noted in evaluation interviews with national partners and other KIIs, human rights are a high priority topic in Bangladesh and as such, directly related to the sustainable development agenda of the country. Progress in the field of human rights enables development – and this is how UNDP sees the issue of human rights – as a development issue. In fact, Bangladesh's Perspective Plan 2041 specifically emphasizes on building and strengthening institutions and argues that these institutions are necessary for country's development and human rights protection.

The project is in line with the national development priorities and especially, the NHRC's Strategic Plan. An alignment of the project with the national partner's Strategic Plan was set

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14 UNDAF 2012-2016

15 UNDAF 2017-2021

from the very beginning, as depicted in Annex B of the Project Document and in the table below for easier reference. This testifies to a high relevance of the project for national priorities at the phase of project design. However, such an approach needs to be maintained throughout the project implementation, by heavily involving national counterparts in further planning processes.

NHRC Strategic Plan – Key Strategies	Human Rights Programme
Investigate and monitor cases of human rights violations	The human rights Programme will develop this capacity both in regard to long term human rights monitoring and short-term responsiveness. The long term investigative and monitoring foundation that the NHRC will work from is being built through: - Developing community profile tools. - Ethnic minority surveys - Database design and development to track human rights complaints - Building CSO relationships – particularly in relation to data sharing The investigative aspects of the NHRC's work is being supported through: - Training further investigators - Building the network of human rights defenders and increasing their formal connections with the NHRC - Building strategies with the NHRC to ensure that investigations are followed through.
Cooperate and coordinate with state agencies, civil society, regional and international bodies for better promotion and protection of human rights	The Programme has a strong CSO focus. This has both an NHRC and independent element, however they are mutually beneficial. - The Programme will work with the NHRC to create partnerships with CSOs building off the coalitions built by the BNHRC-CDP. o MOUs will focus on being durable, reliable and predictable with a *quid pro quo* being developed in which CSOs provide data and information and the NHRC supports their rights work. o The NHRC will build it's 'brand' within CSOs, particularly at the divisional level, enabling it to participate and value add

	to rights events across the country. - The Programme will build the capacity of the thematic committees to better engage with specialist CSOs
Add value to what is already being done by stakeholders	This element of the strategic plan is addressed above.
Support and protect human rights defenders	The Programme will aid the NHRC to create a stronger network of human rights defenders through: - Supporting develop a certification system that acknowledges HRDs partnership with NHRC. - Helping to develop a code of ethics for human rights defenders - Providing continued training for human rights defenders under the auspices of NHRC drawing on incountry academic and legal expertise
Focus on systematic change for better promotion and protection of human rights	The Programme will continue to build capacity in the human rights commission. Additionally, the Programme will work in the wider CSO and local government communities to bring about systematic change through greater human rights data. The Programme will work with law enforcement agencies to build their human rights capacity

Enhance the accessibility, effectiveness and organisational development of the NHRC	The Programme will build the accessibility of the NHRC through: - increasing its reach through improved complaints handling processes - Developing its network of CSOs and increasing its 'brand' through greater exposure - Developing its investigation tools so that human rights violations are investigated fully and results published - Developing a newsletter highlighting the work of the NHRC - Training new staff as they come online - Assisting and building the capacity and strategic direction of the new Regional Centres
Transboundary cooperation amongst NHRIs	There is scope for transboundary cooperation amongst NHRIs if deemed necessary.

*Table taken from the HRP Project Document

Agenda 2030 perspective:

Further, the project contributes towards achievement of the SDGs, although alignment of the project with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs could be further strengthened. A good example of SDG focused action relates to HRP's support to NHRC in developing a tool and an action plan to better monitor the achievement of SDGs from a human rights lens translating all the 17 SDG goals into meaningful actions enabling NHRC to proactively monitor the human rights situation leading to effective Suo-moto or complaint handling of human rights violations.

Donor perspective:

Finally, as evidenced during interviews, the project is of high relevance for donors supporting the initiative. For instance, one of the major donors of the HRP, the SDC mentioned in its cooperation strategy document that in the context Bangladesh, SDC would continue its focus on improving the Human Rights situation in Bangladesh. The strategy document acknowledged Bangladesh's success in achieving economic growth and observed, "However, economic growth and LDC graduation cannot be inclusive and sustainable in the long run without further improvements to the rule of law and good governance in Bangladesh. Therefore, and in line with the 2030 Agenda to which Bangladesh is committed – and especially in order to achieve SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) – Switzerland will retain democratic state-building, human rights and quality basic services, including targeted social protection of particularly vulnerable people, as key pillars of its cooperation"

Finding 2: The project was designed based on a previous phase, which is usually the optimum scenario, enabling more relevant interventions, as they are designed based on

UNDP's direct learnings. However, the project departed from the original RRF quite soon in the process and developed a new M&E framework

The current phase represents basically the continuation of UNDP programming in the area of rule of law and human rights. The HRP stems from the "Bangladesh National Human Rights Commission Capacity Development Project". Such a sequencing of projects usually enables good implementation of lessons learnt from the previous phase, while the new phase can also heavily depend on established communication lines with partners and overall developed partnership network.

As noted in the Inception Phase Assessment Report of Human Rights Program, the BNHRC-CDP achieved modest success in undertaking its mandate to build the capacity of the NHRC. Its final evaluation identified successes, including; helping to professionalize the work of the NHRC through institution building; supporting steady progress in complaints handling; investigation and mediation; developing extensive media contacts for the Commission; and helping to produce a wide range of research studies and policy papers on key human rights issues. Further BNHRC-CDP's evaluation report's main recommendation was to continue support. However, recognizing the weakness of only supporting a single human rights body, UNDP developed to operate with established human rights CSOs and CBOs in addition to the NHRC to foster human rights work at national, regional and local levels and a cohesive human rights dialogue in Bangladesh.

HRP has been designed with extensive consultations with government bodies, national level NGOs, community based organizations, different human rights platforms and human rights associations. UNDP therefore has designed its next generation of support through this Programme addressing the recommendations from the Seventh five-year plan as well as working with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in society, including women, persons with disabilities, ethnic, religious minorities, other minorities and children are protected. UNDP in principle agreed that considering the situation analysis and the nascent NHRC's capacities there is a clear need for this support to continue.[16]

However, as stated in the overall finding, the project departed from the original RRF during the inception phase, having developed a new M&E framework, as required under the conditions of the cost-sharing agreements.. However, the correlation between the initially set RRF and the 18 Month Initiation phase milestones, presented as Annex C of the Project Document remains unclear. The 18-month milestones are mostly milestones related to the NHRC and less so attributable only to the HRP activities, as presented in the RRF.

In general, adaptive management is commendable and a feature promoted increasingly by UNDP across the globe through exercises such as sense-making, learnings and overall through a portfolio approach. In this specific case the project availed of the opportunity to gather stakeholders early on for a Project Planning Workshop (September 2016) and took their recommendations into consideration, thus developing subsequently an M&E plan, with an attempt to focus more on output and outcome levels, rather than activity level. The M&E framework departed considerably from the original RRF presented in the project document (as seen in the overview of effectiveness per output in Annex III). However, despite having an M&E plan, the HRP did not report consistently against it and at times it was hard to follow the relevance of activities against projected results, as portrayed in progress reports.

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[16] Inception Phase Assessment Report of the HRP

Finding 3: The HRP has been able to respond effectively to the changes and demands, proven to be adaptive and responsive to the changing contexts, including political changes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

When looking at the impressive set of results already achieved by the project, it is important to remember that the project was operating in the COVID-19 context for a significant part of the period under evaluation. Further, there have been changes both within the operating context of the project, such as changes in the leadership of NHRC, and political uncertainty, all of which the project has had to adapt to.

The HRP has proven to be adaptive and responsive to changing contexts, including political changes and the COVID-19 pandemic[17]. This flexibility should continue to allow UNDP to shift to changing priorities and respond to needs and opportunities as they arise.

. An M&E framework was developed during the first 18 month milestone, along with a Theory of Change – elements missing in the original project design. Additionally, at the start of the pandemic, the project was quick in its response to stakeholders' needs. The team managed to sustain many of the activities at the local level, by working with CSOs/CBOs to inform vulnerable groups of their rights, combining access to them with supply of essential items, like protective equipment and basic food supplies.

The project availed of the online space, but also used radio communication as a means to reach vulnerable populations lacking digital skills and means.

Activities were contextualized where possible. For example, the youth leaders, trained under the project, pointed out that during the Covid-19, they played an important role to vaccinate the community members. Initially most of the community members were refusing to be vaccinated. The youth leaders raised awareness, helped them to register and connected them to the government health centers so that the community people get vaccinated. This may be associated with the fact that the youth leaders were capacitated to work together and raise voice, and, informed of the rights they could promote.

A monitoring tool developed with the support from HRP enabled NHRC to better monitor the human rights situation during the COVID-19 pandemic and maintain a database on human rights violations.

Please refer to finding 21 for examples of gender specific COVID measures.

4.2. Effectiveness

In order to assess the effectiveness of the project to date, the evaluators reviewed the project's

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[17] The SDC Programme Manager expressed appreciation to the HRP for its rapid response during the pandemic, at the 9th Project Advisory Board meeting

technical as well as operational approaches, deliverables, the quality of results and any indications of their impact, alignment with national priorities and the level of response to the needs of the stakeholders. This was done by assessing the results achieved, the partnerships established as well as issues of capacity. In order to answer the key evaluation questions, the analysis of the effectiveness of the project has been broken down into each of the six output areas, drawing relevant key findings.

> Due to a significant and evolving change in the set indicators and targets throughout the project duration, it was very challenging to evaluate progress towards the initially envisaged outputs or outcomes. To mitigate the inconsistencies, the evaluation assesses attainment of the target values as set in the End of Phase Report, since this is where the most up-to-date progress is reported. However, in order to get a complete overview of set indicators, targets and achievements, the matrixes that analyse the effectiveness per outputs (presented in Annex III) display the originally set targets, which were altered in the inception period, as well as note deviations from targets as provided in the Final Evaluation ToR.

The overall effectiveness of the implemented output activities is successful, in particular the multi-partner approach the HRP employed. The project was extended multiple times and remains with a number of partially achieved targets, despite adjustments in the project targets.

In summary, out of a total of 47 targets, the HRP has met or exceeded 26, partially met 12 and did not achieve 1 target. There was no clear data available for 8 targets.

The following figure shows a summary assessment of progress as per achievement of output targets:

Summary Assessment of Output Progress
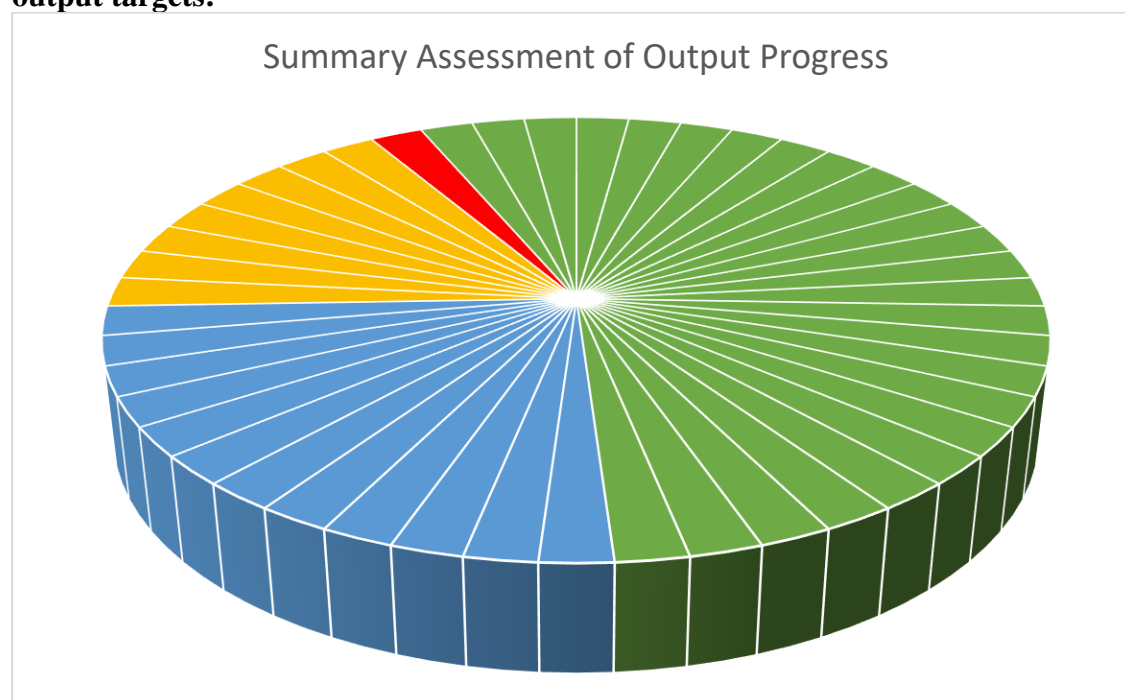
26 targets met or exceeded - 12 targets partially met - 1 target not met - 8 targets with no clear data

The following are key related findings, assessed against each project output:

Output 1: Strengthened capacity of the National Human Rights Commission to deliver on

its mandate[18]

Finding 4/Output 1: The overall capacity of the NHRC has notably improved, however, despite multiple efforts of the NHRC with UNDP support, the NHRC remains with the same international accreditation status.

> Firstly, the overall capacity of the NHRC has notably improved through successful transfer of technical knowledge to NHRC staff particularly in areas of reporting on international human rights instruments, documenting and managing a variety of data and information, tracking or following up on incidents of human rights violations and organizing and managing events. HRP has supported the process of local knowledge generation on gender, human rights, state of disadvantaged communities through various research projects. Similarly, NHRC's visibility, operational efficiency and overall capacity seem to have been enhanced by the interventions of HRP.

The National Human Rights Commission was reconstituted in 2010. The National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009 provides the legal framework for the Commission and as per this, the NHRC is an independent statutory body comprising seven members- a Chairman, a full-time member and five honorary members. The President appoints the Chair and the Commissioners on the recommendation of a 5-member selection committee largely dominated by the ruling party and headed by the Speaker of the Parliament. The Selection Committee does not have any representation from civil society. From the very beginning, the CSOs have been critical about the NHRC Act as it "…contains provisions that essentially limit the independence of the Commission in practice". In fact, the NHRC has so far failed to acquire international accreditation "A status," and according to the capacity assessment report prepared by Sidoti (2019), "The NHRC will not acquire international accreditation at A status unless and until its law, the NHRC Act, changes. The GANHRI Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) has considered the NHRC's accreditation applications twice and on both occasions has pointed to deficiencies in the law that make it impossible for the NHRC to be accredited with A status."

The capacity assessment report prepared by Sidoti (2019) was conducted under the HRP and it focused on understanding the progress of implementation of the recommendations made in the two earlier NHRC capacity assessment reports- one conducted in 2013 and the other in 2017. The 2019's Capacity Assessment Report identified several limitations in the existing legal framework, including -

- The Act does not provide detailed eligibility criteria for selecting its Chair and Members and it vaguely states that the Members of the Commission will be appointed from, "…amongst the persons who have remarkable contribution in the field of legal or judicial activities, human rights, education, social service or human welfare". This vagueness has allowed an opportunity for the ruling party to appoint its party loyalists as Chairs and Members;
- The selection committee that is constituted to recommend the Chairs and Members of the NHRC is nominated by the ruling party and of the five member committee, only one represents the opposition party whereas the others are coming from the ruling party and government agencies.

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[18] Output 1 has mixed achievement when assessing attainment of the set targets.
For a detailed overview please see Annex III.

- As per the current Act, the NHRC can only request a report from the Government "…should there be an allegation of human rights violations committed by the 'disciplined force'". This essentially means that the Commission is barred from independently investigating any human rights violation by the Police or the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). This significantly curtails the NHRC's authority.
- As of 2019, the Commission was still to develop a recruitment rule for recruiting its own people. At the same time, the Commission was relying too much on the deputed government officials, which was raising questions about its independent status.
- As per Section 25 of the Act, the Government will allocate a specific amount of money to the Commission in each Fiscal Year. However, this discretionary nature of allocation by the Government jeopardizes the financial independence of the NHRC and as pointed out by the Capacity Assessment Review, "The allocation to the Commission must be explicit and transparent in the annual state budget so that the allocation is a specific appropriation by the parliament and not merely a discretionary grant from the Government or a government ministry".
- Section 30 of the Act stipulates that the NHRC can make rules for the purposes mentioned in the Act but for that it would require prior approval of the President. This requirement is considered as "an unnecessary and undesirable limitation on the Commission's independence" and also impedes the Commission in performing its responsibilities in a timely manner.

The 2019's report through provided a critical overview of the NHRC, its overall findings were well accepted by the Commission. It is important to note that since 2019, the NHRC has taken different initiatives to address these concerns. For instance, acknowledging the limitation identified in the capacity assessment report commissioned by HRP, in 2020, the NHRC introduced its very own recruitment rules and tried to gradually reduce the number of deputed officials. Interview findings show that two factors were responsible for this change. First of all, the HRP played a critical role in identifying the limitations and at the same time, it provided technical support to the NHRC so that it could design and implement the necessary changes. Secondly, a new leadership at the NHRC also played a critical role. Whereas earlier leadership also tried to initiate changes, the leadership of the 2020 managed to utilize her experiences as an administrator to push through the legal changes while convincing the government about its necessities. Furthermore, the HRP also supported the NHRC to come up with a 13-point recommendations that would help the Commission to achieve international accreditation. The NHRC has already submitted a 13-point recommendation to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. These recommendations, if accepted and implemented, would result in significant changes in the activities of the NHRC and would finally allow the Commission to carry out enquiries to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by the law enforcement agencies. However, to date, the act has not been revised yet.

Finding 5/Output 1: UNDP plays an integratory role in the HRP, by fostering partnerships.

Unlike the previous initiative which focused only on the NHRC capacity building, the HRP was designed as a multi-partner initiative, providing a platform for NHRC to flexibly connect with other stakeholders.
As commented at a project advisory board meeting:

It may be more difficult for state institutions to officially enter into partnerships with various government and non-government stakeholders, whereas a UNDP programmatic framework they sign off on, does exactly that, but through a much more flexible mechanism. Therefore, the HRP enabled the NHRC to enter into wide-ranging partnerships with CSOs, but also to impact the work of other institutions when it comes to human rights, through a seemingly light project-based framework (such as law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, etc.). Such an approach rendered increased effectiveness of actions as well as an overspill between outputs. For example, due to such an approach, the HRP managed to raise issues affecting local communities to the national level, through its capacity building activities with the NHRC. It also managed to act as a platform, connecting state institutions between themselves (e.g. NHRC with law enforcement authorities) and institutions with CSOs/CBOs, or youth activists. To conclude – such an approach is fully in line with UNDP's integratory mandate.

When it comes to building partnerships, the project has introduced different initiatives to protect human rights and these initiatives and activities can largely be categorized in three groups-
   a. Awareness raising and access to service activities- these activities have been carried out in all the areas where the goal is to raise awareness of the community of their rights and ensure that they can get the necessary government services;
   b. Identifying, reporting, and mobilizing in case of violation of HR- these activities have also been carried out in all the areas and are closely related with the first category. It works under the assumption that if the targeted communities are aware of their rights and have the necessary resources and political space to mobilize, it is possible for them to protest and/ or negotiate with the government authority in case of human rights violation which will eventually bring about some positive outcome;
   c. Politically Sensitive and rights-based mobilization- these are generally critical and sensitive activities where issues like land rights have been addressed.

The table below tries to provide a brief description of these activities -

| Category	Definition	Examples	UNDP's Role	PO's Role	Tools
Awareness raising and Access to service	These activities aim at raising awareness of the communities so that they can understand their rights and also try to ensure their access to services like social safety net, education,	Access to the social safety net programmes have improved. Community has relatively better access to programs like VGD, Elderly Allowance, Stipend	UNDP supported the POs in establishing a connection and relationship with the local government agencies like the UP, UZP,	POs played the role of the facilitator in linking the community members with the local government organizations. On behalf of the community members, the POs and other	Advocacy campaigns, regular yard meeting, poster presentation, linking and referral services.

	health care etc.	Programs.	Office of the UNO and others. Helped the POs in organizing events where the powerful and influential actors of the community were brought together and provided funding for organizing events, consultatio n and campaigns.	structures (e.g., CSO coalition, inter-faith communities) reached out to the local government, negotiated and bargained on behalf of the community.	
Reporting and Taking Action against violation	Activities within this category involve identifying and reporting incidents where community members have faced violence, denied access to services, faced gender-based violence and events where the law enforcement agencies showed inertia in taking action	In almost all the areas covered through the program, it happened sometimes that the community members (especially the marginalized and vulnerable groups) faced violence (that are not on politically sensitive issues like land rights) from the powerful groups or the neighboring	UNDP, in this case, has played a relatively indirect role where it has adopted two strategies- allowed the POs and other institutional set-ups (Youth Leaders, HRDs, CSO coalition) to introduce themselves as an entity supported by UDNP, which in turn has	The POs and institutional entities (HRDs, CSO coalition) has done two things- first, they have encouraged the community members to find their place within the shrinking political space. Consequently , members from the vulnerable communities are now trying to be involved in standing	Monitoring and identifying HR violation incidents, publishing HR monitoring reports, sharing findings with HRC, mobilization .

		community. In these cases, the vulnerable community also found it in a position where the local administratio n was reluctant in ensuring their rights to justice. Before the program, the communities usually did not do anything and tolerate this injustice. But the program has changed it. It builds their power to mobilize, encourages them to fight for political space and achieve justice.	built their reputation and legitimacy) and secondly, UNDP has tried to build a connection between the HRP component s and NHRC so that these component s can gain support from NHRC, when necessary.	committees of the UP, participating in local level elections and gaining political representation . Secondly, the POs are working closely with the NHRC in drawing attention to violation incidents.	
Mobilizatio n for Politically Sensitive Issues	Issues like land rights are extremely politically sensitive where the community's interests are often in conflict with the local administration' s interest.	Land-rights	In these sensitive areas, UNDP played the role of 'invisible linker'. Since these are nationally sensitive issues, UNDP does not get involved directly and	The POs take the leading role here. They receive guidance and advice from the UNDP but in general, relies on their own connection and influence to mobilize the community.	Movement

			the organizatio n plays a behind-the-scene role.		

Interestingly, the nature, engagement and involvement of UNDP vary based on the sensitivity of the issue. To understand this better, it is important to define sensitivity. The issue of sensitivity, from this perspective, is closely related with the understanding and agreement of and within the government (actors) about a certain issue. For instance, there are some specific policy areas and concerns about which there is no disagreement within the government and between the government and the CSOs. These include ensuring better service for the marginalized groups, ensuring that these groups can survive and thrive and can fight against discrimination. These are essentially 'low sensitive' areas. In contrast, there are some issue areas or policy concerns where disagreement exists within the government or where the government, in principle, agrees with the rights of the citizens but are not committed enough to implement them. Violation of rights by law enforcement agencies is an example of that. These are 'moderately sensitive' issues where things can still happen after putting significant efforts. Finally, there are issue areas where the interest of the government agencies differ significantly from the interest of the marginalized community, CSOs. Ensuring land rights of the marginalized groups is such a highly sensitive areas.

As mentioned earlier, the involvement of UNDP differs based on the sensitivity of an issue. The figure below gives a graphic overview of this notion:
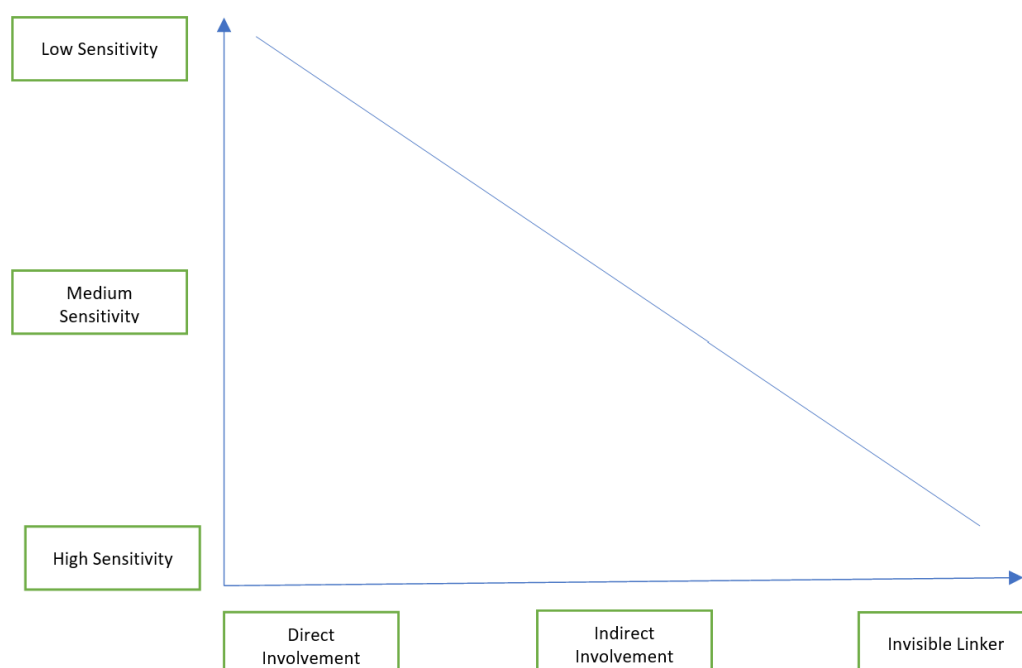
Finding 6/ Output 1: The external image of the NHRC is positive and it bolsters a client-oriented approach.

The results of the public opinion survey show[19] an overwhelming percentage of respondents satisfied with the services of the NHRC, with only about 12% of respondents noting dissatisfaction with NHRC's complaint mechanism, being a core function of the institution. This is a remarkable result for an institution dealing with such a sensitive issue as human rights in a country still struggling with their abidance.

Output 2 Enhanced capacity of civil society and community-based organisations to engage in human rights advocacy and awareness raising[20]

Finding 7/ Output 2: The HRP provided a platform for CSOs/CBOs to work together to raise human rights awareness and raise human rights culture. Thus, they have a stronger voice for the benefit of their end beneficiaries

A strong effect of the HRP was the integration of various smaller CSOs/CBOs into coalitions/networks, through which they had a stronger voice. In addition, HRP provided a platform for many of the organizations to approach institutions with a stronger standing, bringing to daylight specific cases of human rights breaches. Issues ranged from child marriages to land grabbing – and it is precisely in this output that HRP worked with end beneficiaries through grassroots organizations, rendering specific and effective change to the most vulnerable.

Working through the CSO networks, i.e., bringing together a number of CSOs/ NGOs who work on a common issue related with human rights was an innovative approach introduced by HRP. In effect, such a network serves the goal of protecting and promoting HR in the following ways-

- First of all, since the network managed to bring together like-minded actors, it was easy for the actors to find a common goal and work towards that goal;
- Second, the actors shared a commitment towards this common goal and as such, there was an in-built accountability mechanism that helped the network to perform in an effective and efficient way;
- The network was effectively linked with other components (NHRC, Youth Leaders, Interfaith groups etc.) and as such, it managed to receive support and assistance whenever necessary;
- The network actors often had their own financial and non-financial resources that they shared with each other while fighting for their goals. This resource-sharing has helped the network to achieve more with less resources and also ensure sustainability of the network

As one stakeholder commented:

"...the thing is, we go together to these places, and we are united. They cannot ignore a unified voice".

Another respondent noted:

"...the officials know that we are with Organization X (name of organization removed for anonymity purposes) and UNDP is with us and that is why, they have to pay attention to what

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[19] Perception, awareness of human rights and complainants' satisfaction survey of NHRC, commissioned by the HRP and conducted by IRG Development Services Limited in 2020

[20] Overall, Output 2 has mixed achievement when observing attainment of targets. However, this output includes human insight stories – actual improvement of lives of individuals, hence it bears special leverage. For a detailed overview please see Annex III.

An added value of the HRP was also the fact that it was in position to indirectly support the organizations by involving the NHRC and by making their issues a national issue (such as land rights of the indigenous community). This is exactly the platform type of support UNDP is well placed to provide as a trusted partner by all parties.

> An example: A total 145 children engaged in child labour have withdrawn and enrolled in the schools as a result of human rights advocacy and awareness raising conducted by the CSO coalition in Habiganj district while 535 women have been able to participate in family income and decisions.

Output 3: Enhanced capacity of law enforcement agencies, in particular police, on human rights issues[21]

Finding 8/ Output 3: UNDP has identified a niche receptive of assistance and worth exploring further as law enforcement officials are one of the key stakeholders in fostering human rights.

HRP has been providing support to law enforcement agencies, in the field of human rights protection. It has supported the establishment of focal points with police units and their full onboarding. These focal points took part in human rights dialogues with various partners – both government and non-government on different emerging issues. The Output had a strong gender component, by tackling both GBV issues and promoting a good working environment for female police officers. HRP enabled greater access of HRDs to law enforcement officials, which has proven to be very important and could be fostered further by introducing more structured cooperation.

Furthermore, HRP's effective partnership with the Bangladesh Police resulted in better collaboration among NHRC, police, CSOs. Under the partnership, the Police Staff College produced three research reports that contributed to transform the police institution towards more human rights compliance including gender responsiveness. It has strengthened conceptual understanding and sensitized on fundamental human rights and gender 1508 police officials (Male 1186 & Female 322) in compliance with national and international human rights standards.

Finding 9/ Output 3: UNDP provides access to specific technical knowledge.

HRP established cooperation with the Police Staff College in 2018, by observing carefully their recommendations for a manual that was being developed. Whereas HR issues were previously discussed in trainings, there was no comprehensive focus on this, and it was only a small part of the course. But now, they have specific focus on Human Rights Issues and hold multiple sessions and workshops which allow the police officials to specifically focus on protecting human rights. The evaluators were informed by one stakeholder:

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[21] Overall, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of Output 3 as progress has largely not been reported against the set targets. For a detailed overview please see Annex III.

"What we did in the past was simple- we taught them about few UN Human Rights rules and regulations and we talked about the legal framework in very general terms. But now, we do case studies, workshops and sessions and this provides a deeper understanding on the issues."

While HRP provided logistical support in organizing training, the Police Staff College also had access to pools of experts through the program.

Output 4: Strengthened capacity of NHRC and other national stakeholders to better protect and promote women's rights[22]

Finding 10/ Output 4: Awareness raising resulted in a significant number of cases reported on violence against women.

Though gender has been mainstreamed across the program, output 4 was dedicated to promote women's rights, empowerment and gender equality. This output was designed for raising awareness on eliminating gender-based violence, restraining child marriage, overall orientation on women's rights at every level, women empowerment, conducting research on women's rights issues, national level policy advocacy to reform discriminatory laws & reforming new laws, stimulating NHRC's thematic committee of women's rights etc.

> More than 12 million people have been reached so far using on-ground and online platforms (e.g. through the Women Safety in Public Place campaign website, YouTube channel, Facebook page, short video, email, SMS, e-bulletin, creative contents etc.). A group of 327 trained youth led the campaign on 'Women's Safety in Public Place (WSSP)' to raise awareness addressing gender-based violence, which resulted in greater sensitization and mass awareness amongst the communities, youth, students, transport sector, market associations and other relevant stakeholders.

Under output 4, HRP has been supporting the women rights thematic committee of NHRC[23] and partner organizations to conduct mass awareness campaigns on women and girls' rights at national and grassroots levels. HRP has also been supporting research and organized rights forums on women's rights and gender equality initiatives. As a result, there has been a growing awareness on women rights, especially amongst the youth, which was targeted separately, strengthened lobbying and advocacy for policy formulation and policy changes as well as reporting on violations of women rights. Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased

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[22] Overall, it is evident that the gender equality aspects of the HRP were a strong feature of the project with many achievements to report on. However, Output 4 has mixed performance if assessed against achievement of targets stemming from the M&E framework. The evaluators are of opinion that, especially in this output, some of the targets were set relatively randomly, without proper assessment of opportunities, as, for example, the first outcome target was exceeded almost 10-fold, while. e.g., the number of women able to participate in family income and decisions was four times less than projected.

[23] Moreover, in response to gender-based violence, a total of 141 complaints on women rights violations were submitted to the NHRC by the Committee on Violence Against Women and Children and CSOs/CBOs as of June 2021, which were given solutions or referral by NHRC.

case incidence when it comes to violence against women, hence the project was well targeted to address this issue at a time of heightened need.

One commented:

> "The safe spaces allow us opportunity to discuss with our peers in a relaxed and safe environment issues that we otherwise would not be able to discuss. This is invaluable."

Finding 11/ Output4: HRP mainstreamed gender throughout its components.

HRP developed a **gender strategy** used by the project itself, carrying practical guidelines to ensure gender is a prime focus in its implementation. It should also be mentioned that a gender diversity manual was developed for providing capacity development training for NHRC, LEA and CSOs, in the spirit of mainstreaming. Gender considerations were also taken in terms of project operations – an example being that the women participants from grass root organizations, who participate HRP's programmes in Dhaka, were given the option to request **daily subsistence allowance** in order to avoid night and late evening travels.

An impressive example was the result of the HRP working with youth under Output 2 where youth leaders were trained to recognize and act upon cases of gender-based violence and child marriage. A very specific and human centric contribution of the project, directly affecting lives of those most left behind.

A note from an interview:

> "...the biggest contribution of the program is - it gave them hope and courage and taught them how to fight injustice and they are trying to follow their trainings.."

The project also supported an enabling working environment for female police officers. The adoption of the Rules, under Child Marriage Restraint Act was supported by HRP. A draft law on the prevention of sexual harassment was submitted to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs in December 2021. NHRC led the process of drafting and finalizing the law, engaging relevant ministries, CSOs, women rights organizations, academia and six UN agencies. A National Inquiry into violence against women and children with a focus on rape was conducted, resulting in 50 recommendations with action plan. It should also be noted that progress reports list not only achievements related to gender equality falling under Output 4, but actually portray gender related activities stemming from other outputs.

Output 5: Strengthened capacity of national stakeholders to better protect and promote the rights of ethnic minorities[24]

Finding 12/ Output 5: Dealing with rights of ethnic minorities benefits from a holistic approach, which can be further evolved to view the issues from a systems lens, leading plausibly to transformative change.

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[24] Overall, Output 5 has mixed achievement when assessing performance against set targets. For a detailed overview please see Annex III.

Output 5 is a dedicated output focusing on ethnic minorities and exploring various tools and approaches to address issues affecting them, ranging from legislative and policy efforts from collaboration with parliament and other institutions, to outreach efforts through radio stations aimed at informing ethnic minorities of their rights. Working with youth leaders and grassroots CSOs/CBOs as well as interfaith leaders, was a way to access individual beneficiaries and help secure their rights. Such a holistic approach covers various angles of an issue. Perhaps a greater effect would have been achieved if the measures were overlapped to an extent, taking on a portfolio approach. Activities implemented under this output led to impact at individual levels. Examples of such impact are provided under the section 4.5.

Output 6: Strengthened capacity and coordination of justice sector institutions to better justice delivery and remedies to all citizens including LNOB people.[25]

Finding 13/ Output 6: The implementation of output 6 has just commenced in cooperation with other CO initiatives related to digital transformation

The achievement of results for Output 6 was not reported in the EPR, so the evaluators relied on inputs provided by the HRP and conducted interviews.
Output 6 was added by the end of the period under evaluation and it has reached a number of its targets mid-way – with targets only partially achieved. It should be noted that at the time of evaluation, the HRP has been granted a third non-cost extension until the end of 2022, which may allow for more targets to be met under this output.

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[25] As Output 6 was added by the end of the period under evaluation, progress has been limited, with results yet to be reported. For a detailed overview please see Annex III.

4.3. Efficiency

The project has created a base of technical support to the NHRC and other partners. It continued to deliver despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, which did derail certain activities. An average delivery rate of 80% was recorded against annual targets. Although, the project phased difficulties with initial start-up and building of team capacities, as well as cumbersome governance arrangements at times, the project team managed to steer through the challenges and deliver results. Overall, the project has proven efficient as it did attract further donor funding, based on its initial results. It was designed as a 10M USD initiative, started off with 4.5M USD and attracted a total of 12M USD by the time of the evaluation. The following are key related findings:

Finding 14: HRP team capacity fluctuated throughout the project term.

As reported in the Inception Phase Assessment Report, like many other technical assistance projects, HRP has created a base of technical support and has played the role of a "technical support team" which was deeply appreciated by NHRC. However, the Report also notes that there were delays in recruitment of project staff and that HRP was able to have 70 % of its staff on board and set up its office by the end April 2017. Although, as reported by the HRP team at the time of the final evaluation, only four out of twelve posts were recruited by this time. If we consider that two additional posts existed under joint operations with other programs, that makes half of the team available by this date, based on the final team composition (it is likely that 70% was taken against an initial, smaller team setup). The Inception Phase Assessment Report notes that almost 2- 3 months of the financial year 2017 was spent mostly to set up the office, programme planning, staff recruitment and troubleshooting administrative matters. Regardless of these challenges the Programme has been able to achieve several results in 2017.

A total of 12 posts were engaged during the project lifetime for implementing the HRP, as follows:

Chief Technical Advisor
National Programme Coordinator
Programme Officer
Investigation & HR Expert
Gender Expert
Communities & Minorities Expert
Communication & Advocacy Expert
Monitoring & Evaluation Expert
Finance and Admin Associate
Programme Assistant
Data Analysis Expert
Driver cum Messenger

As noted during the key informant interviews, the perception was shared that the team is too large and some functions could be covered by the Country Office, rather than having project specific capacity. Another stakeholder noted that the project leadership was changing with impact on implementation. Overall, it is important to carefully delineate functions across the team, avoiding potential overlap in tasks and integrate roles with other CO portfolios where plausible.

Finding 15: Heavy governance arrangements set by the Project Document and reporting of lower standards

The project document for the HRP envisages multiple governing bodies: a Programme Advisory Board (PAB) as the highest level policy and oversight body, set to meet three times a year, including representatives of the donors; a Programme Implementation Committee (PIC)[26], meant to support high quality implementation and set to meet once every two months, excluding donors; Challenge Fund Board for administering funding grants supporting CSOs; a Focal Point from the NHRC, appointed by the NHRC Chairman for daily communication with the HRP on behalf of the national partner; Programme Management Team, comprised of key HRP staff.

The PAB and PIC had a large number of members. In the opinion of the evaluators, while such structures may give legitimacy and stronger ownership to the programme actions, large and multiple bodies may impede operability and efficiency at times. The fact that they failed to meet at the projected intervals is not unexpected.

While engagement of stakeholders through the multiple governing bodies contributed to having them informed well on the progress of the HRP, the written progress reports fail to meet such standards, as the link between the M&E framework and reported activities is often not apparent. The information flow on project results is not sufficient.

Finding 16: HRP had an average delivery rate of 80% against initial yearly projections.

The annual delivery rates per output of the HRP were the following:

HRP Output	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Output-1	74%	95%	93%	118%	97%	74%
Output-2	82%	97%	202%	88%	49%	92%
Output-3	0%	78%	104%	87%	33%	80%
Output-4	83%	73%	94%	78%	50%	85%
Output-5	80%	75%	63%	83%	69%	87%
Output-6						60%
Operation	88%	101%	83%	88%	60%	58%

The displayed delivery rates are against AWP projections. The evaluation team assesses an average delivery rate of about 80% against initial yearly projections, which is an average delivery rate in UNDP terms. An overall lower delivery was recorded in 2020, as the year of COVID19 outbreak, when most development projects globally suffered decreases in delivery as working modalities needed to change and adapt to the new circumstances on one hand and on the other, projects were impacted with regards to travel and event organization, leaving resources unspent. Delivery in 2021 picked up pace to an extent, but not at the level of the overall average implementation rate of the HRP. The National Programme Coordinator announced at a PAB meeting that USD 0.5 million would remain unspent by the end of June

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[26] The difference between the PAB and the PIC is that the latter will focus on ensuring provision of the necessary and critical support and services from the various stakeholders and development partners for effective implementation of the Programme.

2022 (otherwise being an end date following a second extension), which is a rather significant amount in project terms[27].

As noted previously, the project struggled with engagement of project staff, as elaborated under Finding 14, which also impacted delivery, especially in the initial phases.

4.4. Sustainability

The evaluators must emphasize the fact that the human rights agenda requires long-term engagement and does not avail of quick wins. Patient and tactful measures are required, full national ownership and a neutral partner capable of balancing various institutional agendas for the sake of a higher goal of promoting human rights.

Already discussions are on-going with the existing donors for the development of a new phase of the project. While a new phase would not de-facto strengthen sustainability, it would allow for the further institutionalisation and consolidation of the project results.

It also remains to be seen if the Facebook platforms of youth leaders, CSO coalitions and other platforms built through the project, surpass its life-span.

The following are key related findings:

Finding 17: HRP provided capacity development support for the NHRC

The focus of the project is capacity development support of the NHRC – and at this stage of progress – the project was rightfully framed under the direct implementation modality. While there were views that the type of support the HRP is providing is rather capacity substitution, the evaluators find that the HRP provides fast track, on-demand, support for missing capacity in order to spur reforms (such as those related to policy development) or have the HRP provide more services (e.g. through the information system developed under the project[28]). Thus, it can be reasonably argued in fact, that it creates demand for enhancing its capacity and institutionalizing new posts, as can be seen with the increase of the number of staff of the NHRC throughout the years. In other words, once project piloted services prove effective and demand for such services persists, it is in the inherent interest of the NHRC to institutionalize them.

The way UNDP has positioned the project with the NHRC is commendable, with the team seated in the NHRC, enabling daily communication with the national partner and on-the-spot advisory and technical assistance to NHRC. Such an approach may be very effective short-term, however, it needs to be carefully managed in terms of partner's expectations, precisely to avoid instances of capacity substitution. In the long-run, a sound exit strategy is required, but it may still be early for such a strategy[29]. The next programming cycle may want to regularly

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[27] As per the UNDP POPP UNDP is not required to return unspent funding to donors up to the amount of USD 5000

[28] An Integrated Digital System for NHRC has been developed which is consists of five modules i.e., i) complaints management system ii) media monitoring iii) thematic committee iv) integrated MIS v). field visit and monitoring. This enables NHRC to manage the complaints digitally and ensure better services to the people contributing to the accountability and transparency of the institution.

[29] The Inception Phase Assessment Report noted however: "NHRC is very keen to continue this partnership with UNDP - but it should be done in manner avoiding heavy dependency on HRP for every single issue. At present NHRC seems to be heavily dependent on HRP which must minimize

assess the sustainability of the NHRC capacities.

Finding 18: There is strong ownership of some of the project activities including the actions undertaken by civil society organizations.

When assessing sustainability in terms of ownership of the project's activities and results, the evaluators find that there is strong ownership of some of the project activities. This includes activities where the HRP supports core processes, such as reporting to international bodies, or when establishing systems for handling complaints. However, during interviews, partners also testified to sustainability of actions supported through the HRP, in particular civil society, some of which continued to monitor and keep records of human rights violations, reporting them to the NHRC, even once their project with HRP lapsed.

On the other hand, external factors at times impede sustainability, such as frequent changes/transfers of government officials – both those trained and those who have established linkages with the project-supported CSOs/CBOs.

As one noted:

"Sometimes we try to create linkage with the government offices and the problem is, after that linkage is created, the government official got transferred and we have to start all over again."

4.5. Impact

The HRP links the human rights to the development agenda of the country, particularly to human development. Impact was witnessed on concrete lives of people and this is where its main value comes out. Such actions should be scaled, as well as the project's overall multi-partner approach that clearly avails of UNDP's integrator approach.
The following are key related findings:

Finding 19: HRP succeeded in addressing human rights as a development issue, directly impacting lives

While it is difficult to measure the impact of the project against its indicators, since measuring impact usually requires longer-term observation and targeted impact assessments, there are clear signs that the project is having impact in the enjoyment of human rights in Bangladesh and this is apparent from the content of the evaluation report so far. Perhaps one of the most striking features of the HRP achievements is the fact that it is managing to bring together diverse partners and stakeholders around a common people-centric goal focused on human rights, but directly or indirectly affecting a myriad of sustainable development goals (thus linking human rights to the development agenda of Bangladesh). This is evident through its multi-partner approach, through its efforts at linking beneficiaries through CSOs/CBOs with authorities, through joint fact-finding missions organized under the programme, etc. The evaluators captured several examples featured in HRP progress reports:

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during the next two years of the project." The evaluators are of opinion that a human rights program is a long-term initiative and cannot be downscaled in a matter of two years time.

Joint initiatives on human rights conducted with CSOs, HRDs, youth leaders, ethnic /religious leaders and local government institutions resulted in enhancement of awareness of a total of 989,504 people and 47% of them are from the communities left behind. 344 (M-164, F-180) ethnic, excluded and LNOB category peoples' representatives were included in the Union Parishad standing committees to play effective role in decisions for their own communities.

The accountability of local administration has been increased through joint fact-finding mission conducted by NHRC and Parliamentary Caucus On violation of land rights and entitlements of the Khasi community, located in Sreemongol, Moulvibazar district. . As a result of fact-finding mission, the local administration, police authorities, journalists and Khasi community leaders have been sensitized on land rights and entitlement issues and accelerated their action to better protect the land rights of Khasi community. The local administration took decision to solve the problem through conducting an investigation on the issue. HRP was instrumental in organizing the missions and provided all logistic support to make it successful.

By way of illustration of how small activities can have big impact, the evaluators had opportunity to conduct interviews with youth leaders in Bangladesh, who received training on leadership from the HRP. The impact that this support has had on their lives and especially the lives of those they helped, has been immense. Below follows an insight into the discussion, as told in the words of the beneficiaries.

"In our community, child marriage is quite common and parents usually marry their girls off when they are 13 or 14 years old. But we have managed to stop several child marriages. We used examples. For instance, we usually went to parents and reminded them of another child marriage incident and its consequences. We told them, 'look what happened to her. She was married at 14, got pregnant at 16 and then early pregnancy caused her death. Do you want your girl to face the same consequence? Usually these worked".

As reported in 2019, the capacity of 2118 indigenous and minority youth and their networks at national, district and sub district level have been strengthened through leadership training making them able to get engaged in community-based campaigns, resulting in positive changes in their communities. Youth leaders enabled 15157 people to claim their rights and the peoples' knowledge level on human rights increased from 25.43% to 51.8% while 97 child marriages in the grass root level have been prevented by the Youth leaders.

Such real-life stories captured through progress reports and evaluation interviews, showcase the important impact the project has on people's lives. However, it seems that this is just the tip of an iceberg with many more people in need of help. The same applies for instances of integration the HRP has achieved. There is ample room for scaling such approaches, which are obviously proving effective.

A good example of a well thought through and cost-effective action where the project enabled further scaling was the result of the Brave Men campaign for transformation from toxic to positive masculinity. Based on interactive empathy sessions on women and girl's rights for students and teachers across three districts, an online course on human rights was developed for the adolescent school students and submitted to NHRC for rollout across the country.

4.6. Coherence

The HRP represents the UN's main assistance to human rights in Bangladesh. UNDP has managed to create a platform integrating multiple partners in need of assistance with international partners providing development assistance.
The following are key related findings:

Finding 20: Inter-project collaboration served as an opportunity for innovation and generated synergy, while pooling of funds under the HRP contributes to stronger coherence

As reported, inter-project collaboration within UNDP Bangladesh spearheaded the development and launching of a virtual court platform to continue judicial service delivery to citizens across the country during the nationwide lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the support from HRP, a total of 275 lower Courts were included within the MyCourt system from across the country and in subordinate courts and high courts which allowed for online submission of applications and virtual hearings. From 11 May to 10 August 2020, a total of 1,026 Judges, lawyers, courts officials were trained on the MyCourt system, a total of 42,894 bail applications were received, 14,911 virtual hearing were held, and 10,523 persons, including women inmates, were released on bail, setting a record in the history of Bangladesh, and most importantly reducing the prison population by 11.95% in just three months, thus reducing the risks of COVID-19 outbreaks in already overcrowded prisons.

With the support of HRP, the UNDP regional Business and Human Rights in Asia Project (B+HR Asia) has been adopting activities and programmes in Bangladesh to raise awareness on the formulation and implementation of a National Action Plan (NAP) and to incorporate United Nations Guiding Principles UNGP in the national regulatory framework. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown significantly affected the implementation of the B+HR Asia work plan for Bangladesh in 2020, so this remains an area for further exploration.

However, when it comes to other human rights interventions by other development partners – it appears that there are not many, or at least, not of the scale of the HRP. The evaluators conclude that significant coherence has been achieved by pooling donor funds from three different donors interested in the area under one HRP, thus avoiding overlaps, maximizing effects and making a stronger contribution to impact.

4.7. Cross-cutting issues

HRP continually practices social inclusion in addition to adopting a gender mainstreaming approach to leaving no one behind, however a more balanced HRBA may be required. The HRP has a strong and effective gender focus, which was further adapted at the outbreak of COVID19, producing significant results and real-life impact stories. Especially commendable is how gender has been mainstreamed through the HRP. HRBA principles are also integrated in the project design. The following are key related findings:

Finding 21: The project has integrated gender equality and women's empowerment and other vulnerable groups into the project design and implementation. However, it could strike a stronger balance between support to rights holders and duty bearers.

HRP has a particular focus on working with vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women and girls, children, and young people, ethnic and excluded minorities, people with

disabilities, Dalit, and other minorities.

The Final Evaluation finds that the project has integrated a gender perspective into both the design and implementation of the project. HRP has been ranked GEN2 (Project Promote Gender Equality as Significant Objective) under UNDP's gender marker tool, with an output devoted to gender, while efforts were made to mainstream gender equality throughout, as evident in the progress reports.

Especially noteworthy are the COVID-19 rapid response activities under HRP, which had a substantial focus on GBV, an issue of global concern at the outbreak of the pandemic, as well as in Bangladesh[30], hence the HRP was spot-on with specific targeting of GBV under the COVID-19 context. HRP's substantive efforts have been reported and recognized in the COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker by UNDP and UN Women. HRP also engaged intensively in developing the Immediate Socio-Economic Response Plan (ISERP) to COVID-19 including the GBV sub-group of pillars 5 under the overall guidance of United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

Law Enforcement Agencies- particularly the police – took multiple measures during the COVID 19 situation to respond to GBV cases including setting up a new Cyber Support for Women unit. The high prevalence of GBV occurrences also motivated women police officials to reappraise their roles to accelerate and improve response mechanisms. With utmost priority, HRP took appropriate measures to support all counterparts, partner CSOs, and youth to respond to gender and GBV issues including providing solidarity food packages (27,267 HHS were received solidarity package), 80% of the beneficiaries were female belonging to marginalized groups. In addition, 1,200 vulnerable LNOB HHs received livelihood recovery support and 62,850 face masks. The effort included mass awareness raising using mainstream and social media platforms to disseminate gender sensitive messages that reached 2,827,000 people. HRP continually practices social inclusion in addition to adopting a gender mainstreaming approach to leaving no one behind. Hence, women representing marginalized groups were given due focus in HRP efforts with ethnic and excluded minorities communities.

The HRP, by virtue of its design, tackles all five HRBA principles - Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality. It also works with both groups of stakeholders – rights holders and duty bearers. However, based on multiple feedback during interviews, a stronger focus on building capacity of duty bearers would be appreciated, under the given context in Bangladesh. [Source- HRP Final Evaluation]

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[30] As noted by the UNDP RR at the 9th Project Advisory Board meeting

5. Conclusions and general assessment against evaluation criteria

5.1. Conclusions

Below follows a brief conclusion of the evaluators' assessment of each evaluation criteria, along with further explanation against findings and recommendations.

Criteria	Conclusion
Relevance **based on findings 1, 2, 3** as well as 5, 15	**1. The HRP targets a core country priority, but requires a more systemic approach and stronger RBM** Designed based on previous programming in the same area, the HRP represents an outcome of UNDP learnings, especially related to the fact that tackling human rights requires a multi-partner approach. The HRP has been adaptive and responsive to an extent to changing contexts, including the pandemic outbreak. However, it was not consistent throughout when it comes to M&E, RBM and therefore, results reporting.
Effectiveness **based on findings 4 - 13**	**2. The HRP's integratory approach has proven effective, but it could avail of more coherent capacity development at individual, organizational and system levels** Unlike the previous human rights programming phase that focused only on capacitating the NHRC, the HRP expanded partnerships onto a myriad of other institutions as well as civil society, academia and others. The benefits of such an integratory approach are proving effective as the results show. However, rather than devising activities per national partner, the HRP might have achieved greater integration had it devised activities as per the capacity development approach, targeting people, institutions and overall society.
Efficiency **based on findings 14-16** **as well as 17**	**3. The HRP has created a base of technical support to the NHRC, but its delivery was impacted by a slow start-up, fluctuating capacities and cumbersome governing arrangements.** The average delivery rate of the HRP was around 80% against annual projects, with lower rates noticeably recorded at the COVID outbreak. The project struggled with initial setup as its start date was not consistent with dates of final approvals, creating a programming gap in relation to the previous programmatic phase. In an attempt to be inclusive, the governance arrangements may have been too cumbersome, affecting at times operability and efficiency. However, the team worked hard to nurture partnerships with national partners, which was facilitated by the fact that the NHRC provided premises for team members, thus enabling daily and easy communication with the main national stakeholder.
Sustainability **based on findings 17, 18**	**4. HRP creates demand for increasing capacities of institutions relevant for human rights, but a fine balance must be struck between capacity development and capacity substitution for the sake of sustainability** The human rights agenda is a theme requiring extensive and long-term engagement and does not avail of quick wins. Patient and tactful

	measures are required, full national ownership and a neutral partner capable of balancing various institutional agendas for the sake of a higher goal of promoting human rights. The reforms must come within – they cannot be implanted through external capacity.	
Impact based on findings 19, as well as 21	**5. Small activities can have big impact when they are well targeted and integrate multiple partners around a common goal** As already assessed, human rights are also an important development agenda – one that targets the core of human development. Enjoyment of human rights accelerates the attainment of basically all SDGs. The HRP's approach impacted concrete lives and this is where its main value come out. Such actions should be scaled.	
Coherence based on finding 20	**6. HRP is a platform, bringing together stakeholders in need with available development assistance** HRP mobilized resources from three different donors, enabling greater coherence in comparison with potential three different projects targeting the same area. In addition, the HRP team strived to create synergies with other relevant UNDP projects, but it could support greater mainstreaming of the HRBA throughout other CO initiatives.	

5.2. Summary of general assessment against evaluation criteria and output progress

Below follows a summary of the evaluators' assessment of each evaluation criteria, followed by its individual ranking and with a ranking of the overall project provided at the end.

Criteria	Conclusion	Ranking
Relevance	The project is very relevant in the given country context. It is aligned with national priorities, most notably, those of national partners as well as the UNDP CO. It is aligned with the UN development frameworks covering the given project phase. The HRP has showcased an extent of adaptive management during the project rollout, given the changing contexts and challenges.	4 – very successful
Effectiveness	The overall effectiveness of the implemented output activities is successful, in particular the multi-partner approach the HRP employed. The project was extended multiple times and remains with a number of partially achieved targets, despite adjustments in the project targets.	3 – successful
Efficiency	The project has created a base of technical support to the NHRC and other partners. It continued to deliver despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, which did derail certain activities. An average delivery rate of 80% was recorded against annual targets.	4 – very successful

	Although the project phased difficulties with initial start-up and building team capacities, as well as cumbersome governance arrangements at times, the project team managed to steer through the challenges and deliver results. Overall, the project has proven efficient as it did attract further donor funding, based on its initial results. It was designed as a 10M USD initiative, started off with 4.5M USD and attracted a total of 12M USD by the time of the evaluation.	
Sustainability	Human rights programming is a long-term endeavour with few opportunities for quick wins. It is evident that the HRP has contributed to a gradual increase in capacities of the NHRC and that it strives to ensure strong national ownership of project interventions, which is one of the most important elements for sustainability. A next programming phase is under development, which will contribute to financial sustainability of the project and further institutionalization and consolidation of the project results.	3 – successful
Impact	The HRP links the human rights to the development agenda of the country, particularly to human development. Impact was witnessed on concrete lives of people and this is where its main value comes out. Such actions should be scaled, as well as the project's overall multi-partner approach that clearly avails of UNDP's integrator approach.	4 – very successful
Coherence	The HRP represents the UN's main assistance to human rights in Bangladesh. UNDP has managed to create a platform integrating multiple partners in need of assistance with international partners providing development assistance.	4 – very successful
Overall	The project has produced noteworthy results under the given challenging country context for programming in the human rights sphere. It has employed an innovative multi-partner approach and managed to bring the voices of the vulnerable to the attention of authorities in a number of difficult instances. The next programming phase could benefit from a more integratory approach, more structured management and governing arrangements, as well as from consistent RBM and reporting.	22/24 – very successful

6.   Recommendations and actionable points

The recommendations presented hereunder are meant to inform the implementation of the last mile of the project (as a third extension has been granted to the HRP at the time of conducting the evaluation) as well as the next programming cycle of UNDP Bangladesh in the field of human rights, rule of law and access to justice. In that sense, some of the recommendations focus on more operational aspects and can be taken on board during the last mile of the HRP, while others are more strategic and are intended to support future programming.

The evaluators made an effort to provide a set of forward-looking recommendations, which are practical and actionable. Each set of recommendations is linked to the relevant findings and conclusions upon which it is based. For the sake of consistency and bigger picture, the particular recommendations are grouped under four main sets.

Recommendation 1 - Partnerships and Positioning

Based on findings 3, 4, 7, 8, 12 and conclusions 1 and 2

1.1 Strengthen the multi-partner approach through a partner's forum
The multi-partner approach, which proved to be effective at the beginning of the new project cycle should be further strengthened going forward. For example, the organisation of a partner's forum would allow UNDP to identify potential new partners to upscale its work on human rights. This process goes hand in hand with exploring new thematic areas (see more under recommendation 2.1)

1.2 Scale-up the geographical coverage of the project and work at the sub-national level through adaptive programming and a portfolio approach
Going forward the project should scale the geographical coverage of the project and put additional focus on the sub-national level work at the district and sub-district/upazila level. In this regard, UNDP should employ an adaptive programming and a portfolio approach[31], especially when addressing issues at district level, based on each district's distinct characteristics and challenges[32]. By making conscious efforts to ensure cross-thematic synergies, such interventions can consolidate programmes and their human rights orientation. This in turn helps the application of multidimensional solutions, resulting in improved livelihoods, empowered citizens and better services.

1.3 Facilitate more access to regional and global knowledge, expertise, practice and networks for positioning UNDP as a preferred and neutral partner
The project should work further on aligning perceptions for positioning UNDP as a preferred and neutral partner, capable of facilitating complex, strategic, policy and normative dialogue, thus tactically contributing to strengthening of political will for higher level reforms. This could be furthered by facilitating more access to regional and global knowledge, expertise, practice and networks in this regard. A clear exit strategy for capacity development and any perceptions of capacity substitution should be addressed in the early stage of the next programmatic cycle.

1.4 Leverage UNDP's capacity development approach to bring innovation and multiplier effects
The evaluation team recommends that outputs should be conceived following UNDP's traditional capacity development approach (at individual, organizational and systemic level). Putting greater emphasis on UNDP's integration role in the framework of its traditional capacity development approach (working at individual, organizational and system levels), rather than

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[31] The portfolio approach is part of the system transformation framework for addressing highly complex, structural, interconnected, and increasingly unpredictable modern challenges. It represents an ambitious shift in delivering development - from single-point solutions fit for short time frames and clearly definable problems, to a holistic approach to human development that supports innovative policies and builds capacity for ongoing adaptation to fast-changing environments. With this approach, the premium is placed on learning about a system, rather than executing linear plans perfectly. It assumes and anticipates changes in the external environment, adopting dynamic management and constant adaptation.

[32] See details under the Mayors for Economic Development regional portfolio implemented by the Istanbul Regional Hub, which develops specific portfolios of assistance for each municipality it works with using a systems transformation approach.

devising activities per partner will bring a breath of innovation in project design and contribute to multiplier effects when partners are brought together around common activities or initiatives.

1.5 Continue to strengthen the CSO-Network orientated approach with a focus on human-rights orientated organisations and build their capacities to engage

Based on the results and lessons learned, HRP should continue the CSO-Network oriented approach, while at the same time, sending a clear message to the key Partner Organization (PO) within a district that in building this coalition, they should only pick those actors/ NGOs/ CSOs who have expertise in HR issues, have previously worked on these issues and who are interested mainly on working in the HR domain. While there can be other organizations who have multiple engagement and who do not mostly focus on HR activities, the coalition should be very careful in incorporating these actors within the network. If the coalition members are not selected cautiously, it is possible to have several organizations who do not share the goal of the coalition or are not committed enough. It is unlikely that these organizations would contribute and they may eventually weaken the network.

Until now, the CSOs have been mainly involved with awareness raising, service delivery, advocacy, and linking and referral activities. However, if UNDP decides to step in to address politically sensitive issues, these partner organizations can be the key vehicle/ instrument for UNDP. In that case, capacity of these CSOs need to be improved so that they effectively push for demands and negotiate with the local administration and other actors. Therefore, capacity building of the CSOs in the areas of negotiation skills will be necessary.

Recommendation 2 - Strategic prioritization

Based on findings 17, 18, 19, 21 conclusions 1, 2, 4, 7

2.1 Broaden the scope of human rights work with a strategic framework at the CO level

In order to further strengthen its position as a strategic influencer, UNDP should widen its scope of work in the human rights field, thus building an all-encompassing portfolio of interconnected interventions, by scanning the horizon for new areas and stakeholders that have not been the most obvious to date. This can be a continuous process, based on learnings, with both short-term and longer-term effects. New partners can lead to new thematic areas, but also existing partners can be exposed to new areas and this interlinkage could be explored further. Furthermore, UNDP should consider developing a longer term human rights within a wider rule of law strategy.

In addition to the areas and stakeholders already covered, UNDP might want to explore potentials for expanding into more nascent thematic areas, as appropriate for the country context, such as environment and human rights, rights-based digitalisation, human rights and artificial intelligence, the concept of smart cities and human rights, business and human rights (based on initial work supported through a regional program), etc. The expanding gaming industry, for example, is an area where the younger population can be exposed to role models of extreme violence, discrimination or injustice, just to name a few. However, it also provides a wealth of opportunities for approaching the younger population, through influencers trained to circumvent divisive narratives and hate speech, promote tolerance and equality and contribute to raising a generation sensitive to the enjoyment of human rights. Young politicians (youth branches of political parties) may not be the immediate and most obvious group of stakeholders, but working with them in the formative years of their career can produce rippling effects long term as they become a positive communication channel to the public and are sensitized to the importance of human rights when taking office. Working with journalists on how to report ethically on cases of gender-based violence can help both authorities and victims

down the line. These are just several examples of potential opportunities UNDP might want to embrace in its next programming phase, based on insights of the evaluators, while a thorough horizon scanning was not an objective of the final evaluation.

2.2 Utilise analytical approaches to inform project design and implementation, capture lessons learned and assess impact

UNDP should employ a more systematic approach to risk assessment, political economy and context analysis to inform both project design and implementation. Conducting more impact assessments of activities, such as awareness raising activities, small grants, seed-funding etc. would feed into the programmatic implementation and likely strengthen results. For instance, while talking to the evaluators, one respondent noted that her organization mainly focused on changing the mindset of male students so that they can be more sensitive about the works and responsibilities performed at home by their mother or sister. The program also wanted to change the mindset of the students about gender roles so that they can play an active role against sexual harassment and Gender-based violence. In her opinion, the M&E framework did not help much in capturing this change in attitude. As she stated,

"Yes, we did surveys- one before the training started and one after the training ended. The goal was to see whether certain ideas, concepts about gender, gender role etc. have changed due to participation in training. The problem is, at our initial survey, we often received high positive feedback and the exit survey only showed a minor improvement. Moreover, I was never sure about the effectiveness of these surveys. They can say a lot of things but to understand the extent of change, we need to do some qualitative study".

In addition, UNDP should put in place a systematic mechanism to capture lessons learned and incorporate them into the project design and implementation.

2.3 Develop a coherent theory of change with a good mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators to better capture results at both output and outcome level

For the next programming phase, a strong and evidence-based theory of change should be developed, from the outset which can be used to develop the next phase results framework with SMART indicators and a strong M&E framework. Indicators and targets should be set more realistically, based on experience from the current phase, while future reports should focus more on results, rather than activities, closely aligning with the M&E framework. By using a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, the project would address the shortfalls in the indicator framework, and would be able to track, monitor and report on progress during the implementation period.

2.4 Initiate dialogue and support for politically sensitive issues leveraging the 2030 Agenda and SDGs to push for results

UNDP's commitment to and insistence on realizing human rights should not be muted by political or strategic positioning. Since UNDP has become a valuable partner of NHRC, built a connection with the institution, and has managed to develop a collaborative relationship, it is high time for UNDP to gradually push for attaining high-end, politically sensitive goals. In areas like Gaibandha, UNDP has already played an important role in helping the indigenous community to fight for their land-rights and based on this experience, UNDP should move focus more on supporting the community in attaining these politically sensitive goals. This has two different dimensions-

- As mentioned in the findings section, the needs, aspirations and struggle of marginalized groups (e.g., religious minority, ethnic minority, Dalit community) vary from district to district. However, in all cases, these communities face difficulties in establishing or preserving their land rights, face gender-based violence and often remain vulnerable to pressure exerted by local administration or local political elites. In these cases, UNDP should actively support these communities through the NHRC. Following Gaibandha's example, UNDP in cases of these sensitive political issues, may try to draw attention of the NHRC, facilitate visit by the members and Chair of the NHRC to the field, and encourage the NHRC to create pressure on the local administration through the NHRC;
- At the national level, as mentioned above, concerns have already been raised about Enforced Disappearance, Extra-Judicial Killing and shrinking political space. Considering the political reality, UNDP should not challenge the government's narrative at this stage. But UNDP, through NHRC, can initiate dialogue on these issues, may organize events and workshops to understand and explore how NHRC can play a role in protecting HR in these areas. Furthermore, UNDP may indirectly work with the national level CSOs (that are acceptable to the NHRC, e.g., BLAST, ASK) and encourage them to hold dialogue with the NHRC on these sensitive issues.

UNDP can leverage the SDGs which can lead to strengthened political prioritization of human rights if they are perceived as an important part of the development agenda.

2.5 Bring law enforcement agencies closer to the people through targeted and assessed capacity development initiatives

Put more focus on working with duty bearers, while maintaining a hype on the demand side with rights holders. For example: in HRP, a key focus was working with the law enforcement agencies to raise their awareness about HR issues and to sensitize them. Under HRP, training and workshop sessions have been organized and a significant number of police officials received training. However, the impact of these training and workshop initiatives have not been measured properly and as such, it is not clear whether and to what extent these initiatives have helped the law enforcement agencies to be more sensitive about protection of human rights. Important to note that, in interviews and field visits, almost all the respondents have raised concern about roles played by the law enforcement agencies and whereas some of them said that situation had improved most of them pointed out they still had difficulties in receiving services from the police station. In this regard, two things can be done-

- First of all, impact of these training activities have to be properly evaluated and measured and based on that effort should be taken to design new programmatic interventions if necessary;
- Secondly, UNDP or its Partner Organization at the local level should try to organize more consultation meetings where officials of the law enforcement agencies would have opportunities to face and interact with the CSOs, citizens, youth groups. During our field visits (and interviews), several respondents noted that these events were very irregular and regular interaction may enhance the responsiveness and accountability of the officials

Recommendation 3 - Participatory planning and programmatic and operational continuity

Based on findings 14, 15, 16, 17 and conclusion 3

3.1 Ensure continuity of operations through participatory approaches and development

of a resource mobilization strategy

In order to avoid a break in operations between this phase of the project and the potential next phase (as witnessed with the previous phase), UNDP should discuss with donors to consider continuity of the present HRP until conditions are met to commence the new programming phase. This will ensure continuity of crucial staffing capacity, which would enable immediate commencement of envisaged activities, without inception phases. Such an approach would also help the NHRC sustain some of its activities, reliant on external support.

The participatory approach exercised during project conceptualization should be maintained throughout the project implementation, by involving more the national counterparts in further planning processes. UNDP should also devise a comprehensive resource mobilization strategy (considering also emerging donors, vertical funds, strategic use of core funds for entering into new partnerships, etc.).

Recommendation 4 - Programme management, team strength

Based on findings 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, conclusion 3

4.1 Exploit the potential for synergies within and across portfolios while strengthening team capacities.

UNDP should focus on seeking and deepening potential synergies and cross-portfolio connections to ensure the transformative potential is achieved. It is clear that the bulk of UNDP interventions, including innovative pilots, depend on finding funding, which often results in donor-driven one-off initiatives. However, UNDP should carefully analyse the areas of support and possibilities to connect such efforts with other sector interventions, thus exploiting the potential for synergies within and across portfolios. This will also help UNDP to consolidate its portfolio by integrating themes and strengthening the focus and depth of its interventions to improve outcomes, tangible impacts and sustainability. Moreover, UNDP should capitalize on successful interventions, building on the lessons learned as a tool for policy advocacy to enhance scale-up potential.

As noted under the findings and conclusions, the project was affected by a slower start-up, fluctuating team capacities and quite cumbersome governing arrangements.

The following could be considered in a new programmatic phase: consolidate further the team structure with clear roles and responsibilities; consider shared support functions with other cluster projects; consider using resources to build and cost-share a gender equality team that works on cost-recovery basis implementing gender related activities and mainstreaming gender throughout the CO, rather than having a dedicated gender advisory only for the project. This could also contribute to stronger alignment of activities across the office; a similar approach could be employed for mainstreaming the HRBA in other CO initiatives, which could also contribute to building up a HR cross-office portfolio, breaking through the silos; expose the HRP team more to cross-learning opportunities within the UNDP global network; consider more agile governing bodies through simplification of structures and membership, while framing needed consultations around specific issues through project activities; and Ensure greater involvement of senior management in project execution and advocacy, in order to raise the project's profile both domestically and within the international community.

Finally, be fast and curious. Instead of piloting single solutions across geographical areas, try multiple fast track experiments to accelerate learning. Go much more out to the field and search for those very local solutions that work. Then use UNDP's scaling capability to bring those solutions to more people in need. Try experimenting with alternative data sources. Satellite imagery of evening horizons can easily detect people movement almost in real-time. Sentiment analyses can be done for social media posts, unveiling weak signals of change or alarming responses to measures before a greater outbreak on the streets. Such practices can accelerate learning on what works, what is happening and potentially inform on what will happen through foresight and other predictive analyses. These are cutting-edge development practices that can bring innovative approaches to a classical but complex and ever-evolving challenge – the human rights agenda.

7.   Lessons learned

Lessons learned were recorded at a number of points during project implementation, which is commendable. The final evaluation too particular note of the following:

Lesson learned 1

Wide consultations bring the matter to the spotlight.

Wider consultations including at district levels bring human rights issues to the limelight otherwise ignored or overlooked. Consultations have also led to several facts- finding missions raising NHRC profile among public. Consultation and inclusion of multiple stakeholders in planning, implementing, and monitoring activities, particularly in COVID-19 responses, worked well since it produced better cooperation.

Lesson learned 2

Importance of staff capacity for smooth delivery.

Delays in recruiting project staff has hampered programme delivery. Staff capacity also needs to be developed in order to avoid over reliance on external consultants. Staff capacity needs to be developed in order to avoid over reliance on external consultants (Observed in activities done in 2016) For example, M&E framework and the theory of change could be developed by the programme staff rather than hiring the international staff. However, during the financial year 2017 no external consultants were hired except the training experts for preparing training manuals on gender and law enforcement agencies

Lesson learned 3

UNDP can connect civil society with state institutions on HR issues, helping build trust and cooperation through various tools it has at disposal.

The challenge fund mechanism is a successful tool to bring rural CSOs to the policy table linking them with NHRC and has facilitated the scope to work in partnership through MoU with NHRC. Mapping of good practices of CSOs related to human rights guides HRP to take a tailor-made approach in designing CSO capacity building initiatives under its call for grants (Challenge fund) CSOs are willing and eager to learn more on HRBA.

Lesson learned 4

Flexibility, adaptability and seizing opportunities are key to successfully delivering projects in challenging and fast-moving contexts.

Despite the challenges faced by the project in the project design, due to fast-changing contexts, as well as the additional challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the project has been successful

at the activity level as a result of its ability to be flexible and to respond to opportunities as and when they arose.

Lesson learned 5

Projects require alignment between the theory of change and results framework, and a comprehensive approach to M&E that systematically captures lessons learned, incorporating them into the project implementation.

In project design, coherence between the ToC and RRF is critically important to create a logical results chain that can clarify and improve attribution of results. It is equally important that the ToC is seen to be a living document that is reviewed and fine-tuned periodically, in order to remain relevant as a guiding strategy to achieve the desired change. Prioritising learning in M&E increases understanding of project impacts and improves results.

Lesson learned 6

National ownership is key to successful programming and sustainability of results

As outlined in the annex to the project document, the project was designed as a direct response to strategic priorities of the national partner. In addition, locating the project team in premises of the national partner enables easier communication and more streamlined support, also fostering national ownership. Finally, such an approach enables much greater sustainability of results.

Lesson learned 6

Targeting youth at an age when they are developing their positions is crucial for issues such as HR

The project recognized the importance of working with youth and capitalized on such an approach. Involvement of Youth leaders in knowledge building and transformation process is a key in empowering youth in local community and they played a vital role to promote rights of ethnic minority at the grass root level. Youth-led interactive discussion and awareness-raising sessions at the community and school/college levels are necessary for better realization of their rights and expanding space for indigenous youth in education and other local opportunities.