



Independent  
Evaluation  
Office

United Nations Development Programme

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF UNDP  
**PROGRAMME OF  
ASSISTANCE TO  
THE PALESTINIAN  
PEOPLE (PAPP)**





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# INDEPENDENT EVALUATION OF UNDP PROGRAMME OF ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (PAPP)

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT effectiveness COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability  
responsiveness MANAGING FOR RESULTS relevance COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
HUMAN COORDINATION efficiency PARTNERSHIP sustainability NATIONAL OWNERSHIP efficiency  
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# FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Independent Evaluation of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP). This is the first such assessment carried out by the Independent Evaluation Office and covers interventions implemented during the Palestine Programme Framework from 2018 to 2021 (extended to 2022).

The progress towards and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) continue to be defined by the severe political, economic and social constraints of over five decades of Israeli occupation. The inter-Palestinian conflict and the separation of authorities between the West Bank and Gaza add to the context of protracted crisis. Palestine remains subject to a prohibitive regime of Israeli closures and trade impediments, and as a result, it is facing increasingly limited development prospects and availability of basic services.

UNDP demonstrated timeliness and responsiveness to the demand for quick recovery support, given the complexity of implementing infrastructure initiatives in the context of an ongoing occupation. Due to its well-established partnerships and long presence in oPt, UNDP was well-positioned to respond to oPt's needs and priorities. UNDP's leading role in Gaza's recovery presented a unique opportunity to support services that the Palestinian Authority has found difficult to provide, a key element to reducing fragility in Palestine. As UNDP transitions beyond response and recovery-oriented programmes alone, a structured humanitarian-development nexus framework is needed to provide long-term development solutions that are necessary in a protracted crisis context.

Notable gains were made in the areas of access to justice and gender justice, e-governance and local elections; these achievements all have the potential for longer-term outcomes. Sustained collaborative efforts in the justice and local government areas are essential to linking UNDP pilots and innovations to reform targets and are key to fostering synergies with other donor interventions. Reducing oPt reliance on imported energy is critical, and UNDP support and tangible outputs to renewable energy and water solutions have been important. While UNDP contributions to addressing the income needs of crisis-affected households were significant, initiatives have yet to demonstrate the scale and need to balance sustainable employment processes with temporary, short-term job creation.

UNDP will need to accelerate its strategic long-term support to position itself as a key development organization. It can do so by leveraging its comparative advantages of long presence in oPt and close engagement with the authorities. In addition, UNDP should continue its ongoing efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming capacities.

I would like to thank the Palestinian Authority, national stakeholders, colleagues from the UNDP PAPP office, as well as the Regional Bureau for Arab States, for their support throughout the evaluation. I hope that the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations will strengthen the formulation of the next Palestine Programme Framework to enable peace and sustainable development pathways for the people of Palestine.



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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ACCO</b>	Area C Coordination Office
<b>APLA</b>	Association of Palestinian Local Authorities
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CRDP</b>	Community Resilience and Development Programme
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EGP</b>	Employment Generation Programme
<b>EQA</b>	Environment Quality Agency
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUREP</b>	European Union Representation
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Fund
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
<b>GIZ</b>	German Agency for International Cooperation
<b>GRES</b>	Gender Results Effectiveness Scale
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HJC</b>	High Judicial Council
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IEO</b>	Independent Evaluation Office
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>JAIP</b>	Jericho Agro Industrial Park
<b>KPI</b>	Key Performance Indicator
<b>KYWWTP</b>	Khan Yunis Waste Wastewater Treatment Plant
<b>LACS</b>	Local Aid Coordination Secretariat
<b>LGU</b>	Local Government Unit
<b>MDLF</b>	Municipal Development and Lending Fund
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MoNE</b>	Ministry of National Economy
<b>MoTA</b>	Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
<b>MRI</b>	Magnetic Resonance Imaging

<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>MW</b>	Megawatt
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan
<b>NIS</b>	Israeli New Shekel
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NPA</b>	National Policy Agenda
<b>NTC</b>	National TVET Commission
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>oPt</b>	Occupied Palestinian Territories
<b>PalAccLab</b>	Palestine Accelerator Lab
<b>PA</b>	Palestinian Authority
<b>PAPP</b>	Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People
<b>PCBS</b>	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
<b>PCP</b>	Palestinian Civil Police
<b>PMA</b>	Palestinian Monetary Authority
<b>PMO</b>	Prime Minister's Office
<b>PPF</b>	Palestine Programme Framework
<b>PV</b>	Photovoltaic
<b>PWA</b>	Palestinian Water Authority
<b>SAACB</b>	State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>TEA</b>	Transparency, Evidence and Accountability
<b>TSCA</b>	Transitional Shelter Cash Assistance
<b>TVET</b>	Technical Vocational Education and Training
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDAF</b>	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDSS</b>	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNOPS</b>	United Nations Office for Project Services
<b>UNRWA</b>	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
<b>UNSCO</b>	United Nations Special Coordinator
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

<b>USAID</b>	US Agency for International Development
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

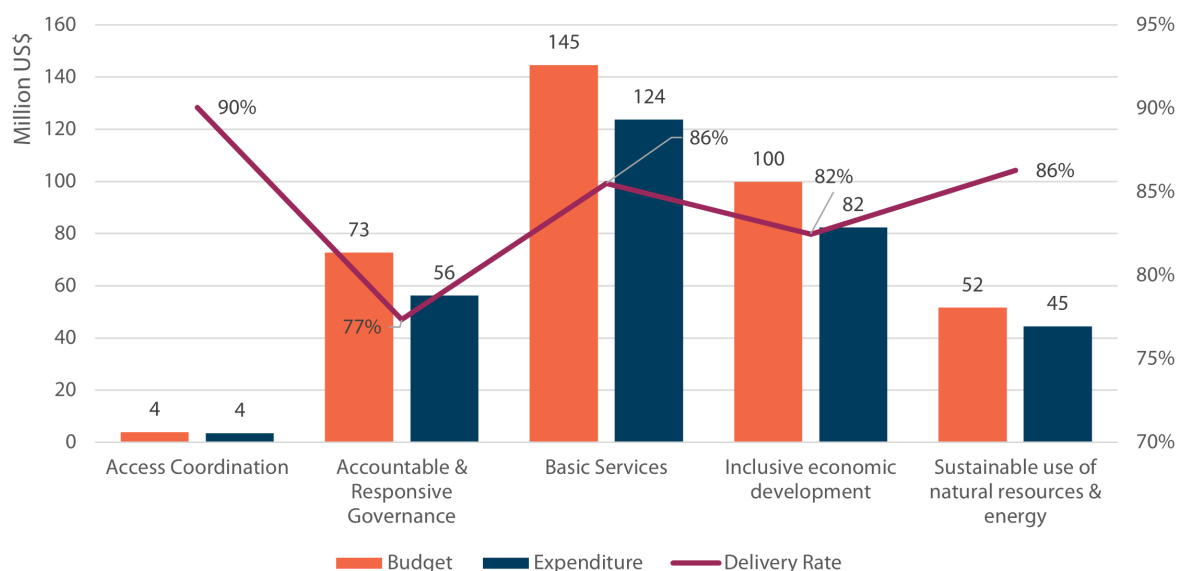
# Evaluation Brief: Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP)

Over sixty years of Israeli occupation and subsequent political developments have had enormous impacts on socio-economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) (East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank). The inter-Palestinian conflict and the separation of authorities between Gaza and the West Bank add to the severe and persistent political, economic and social constraints that affect progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The ongoing blockade of Gaza has hindered the access of people and goods from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Palestine remains subject to a prohibitive regime of Israeli closures and trade impediments, which inhibit development prospects and the availability of basic services, including education, health, solid waste management and water.

This evaluation assessed the UNDP Palestine Programme Framework (PPF) for 2018-2021 (extended to 2022). The PPF's focus, which emphasized the most vulnerable populations in East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank, was on three solution pathways:

- i) Enhancing responsive and inclusive governance in order to increase access to sustainable and quality basic services, public goods and rights;
- ii) Building resilience to climate change and disasters, thus ensuring the sustainable use of natural assets and closing the energy gap; and
- iii) Fostering access to sustainable and inclusive economic and productive opportunities.

**FIGURE 1: PAPP CLUSTERING BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

UNDP demonstrated timeliness and responsiveness to the demand for quick recovery support, given the complexity of implementing infrastructure initiatives in an occupation context. UNDP was well-positioned as the preferred partner of choice because of its established relationships with development partners and its long-term engagement across oPt. This presented greater possibilities for strategic development engagements compared to other actors.

Responding to the urgent need to accelerate recovery and reconstruction processes, UNDP emphasized short-term interventions. Donor priorities for short-term support to civil society organizations (CSOs) or donor emphasis on infrastructure made a portfolio approach difficult. Such constraints notwithstanding, UNDP's lack of a systematic approach to strengthening institutional and human capacities represented an inadequate focus on local government capacities and limited its contributions and positioning for future engagement.

UNDP successfully contributed to the Palestinian National Development Plan agenda in terms of access to justice and gender justice processes, e-governance and local elections. However, despite these successes, UNDP has yet to build a strong governance portfolio to sustain its programme contributions or to address structural governance challenges at the local level. Sustained collaborative efforts in the justice and local government areas are essential and key to linking UNDP pilots and innovations to reform targets for synergies with other donor interventions.

UNDP made significant contributions to addressing the income needs of households affected by recurrent and multiple crises. However, limitations in balancing sustainable employment processes with temporary, short-term job creation for economic recovery undermined UNDP contributions in this area. Despite important contributions to short-term employment and early economic recovery, new approaches and economic development and livelihood support lack consolidation.

UNDP contributions to improving basic services infrastructure have been important in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. UNDP addressed recurrent recovery and reconstruction needs in oPt, and UNDP support to public infrastructure development and rehabilitation contributed to filling critical gaps in basic services. UNDP played a leading role in Gaza's recovery efforts that underpin development and humanitarian support in oPt.

UNDP's unique positioning in working in sensitive areas, such as providing support services that the Palestinian Authority (PA) finds difficult to provide, is key to reducing fragility and improving community resilience in Palestine.

Given oPt's heavy dependence on power imports, the renewable energy sector is a crucial entry point for UNDP. UNDP support to renewable energy (particularly solar energy) and water solutions have been important and have generated tangible outputs. While there is a high potential for solar energy in oPt, concerted joint efforts are lacking for mass application.

UNDP has yet to consolidate its work in climate change resilience support.

UNDP has made efforts to promote women's empowerment across its programmes. The potential of forming partnerships with other UN agencies to address complex gender-related development challenges remains untapped. As UNDP prepares for the corporate gender seal, the lack of a gender strategy and adequate capacities remains a challenge in furthering gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) outcomes.

UNDP has been taking measures to bring coherence within and among its offices in Gaza, Jerusalem and Ramallah to move towards a programmatic approach to respond to the highly integrated and interconnected development solutions. Internal programme coherence between different portfolios and with external actors working in similar areas is essential for enhancing UNDP contributions.

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** With decades of development and humanitarian support to oPt, UNDP has the leverage to forge stronger partnerships with the PA and other actors. UNDP's strategic long-term support should be accelerated to position UNDP as a key development organization. Consistent efforts are needed to change the image of UNDP as an infrastructure agency and the reputational risk it entails.

**Recommendation 2:** Strengthen municipal capacities for sustainable recovery and development. Building on access to justice programme outcomes, engage in the sector reform agenda and further accelerate access to justice processes and gender justice advocacy. UNDP should continue to promote e-governance and digital transformation solutions as a nexus approach.

**Recommendation 3:** Build on the current programme's successes and lessons learned to develop customized solutions that can provide models for income generation and scalable employment. Support productive capacities and value-chain initiatives by developing a well-considered strategy to address the specificities of Gaza and variations among West Bank areas. Explore programmatic partnerships to enable comprehensive employment and income-generation solutions.

**Recommendation 4:** To enable sustainable solutions, UNDP should build on its private-sector pilots and pursue avenues for private-sector engagement and development. UNDP should develop a private-sector strategy along with the forthcoming PPF and assign the necessary resources for its implementation.

**Recommendation 5:** The solid waste management situation in Gaza requires longer-term engagement; UNDP should build on its current initiatives to comprehensively engage the solid waste management sector.

**Recommendation 6:** UNDP made important contributions in the area of renewable energy. For further engagement in this sector, UNDP should consolidate its work to scale efforts and enable policy processes.

**Recommendation 7:** UNDP should continue its ongoing efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming by strategically promoting GEWE in UNDP programme support and prioritizing policy engagement. UNDP should strengthen PAPP office gender capacities in preparation for the corporate gender seal.

**Recommendation 8:** A UNDP strength is its oPt-wide presence with a strong team in Gaza and the West Bank. UNDP should leverage this capacity for consistent development engagement. Adequate measures should be taken to strengthen programme efficiencies. UNDP should prioritize addressing efficiency issues that impact programme coherence, timeliness of delivery and services, and UNDP's reputation.



# CHAPTER 1

# BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION





## 1.1. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an evaluation of the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP). UNDP PAPP derives its mandate from United Nations General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978. United Nations Member States called upon UNDP “to improve the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people by identifying their social and economic needs and by establishing concrete projects to that end.”<sup>1</sup> This independent evaluation was conducted within the overall provisions contained in the UNDP Evaluation Policy.<sup>2</sup> Based on the principle of ownership by the Palestinian stakeholders, IEO conducted this evaluation by engaging UNDP programme partners.

The evaluation captures and demonstrates evidence of UNDP contributions to the reconstruction and development of occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) and evaluates the effectiveness of the Palestine Programme Framework (PPF) for 2018-2021 (extended to 2022). The evaluation assessed UNDP contributions to:

- i) Enhancing responsive and inclusive governance in order to increase access to sustainable and quality basic services, public goods and rights;
- ii) Building resilience to climate change and disasters, thus ensuring sustainable use of natural assets and closing the energy gap; and
- iii) Fostering access to sustainable and inclusive economic and productive opportunities.

The evaluation is expected to contribute to strategizing and strengthening the forthcoming UNDP PPF for 2023-2026. The evaluation is also expected to strengthen UNDP accountability to global and regional partners and the people of oPt.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation was conducted from May to July 2022 before the finalization of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and UNDP PPF strategy for 2023-2026. The evaluation was conducted in close collaboration with the PAPP office, UNDP Executive Office and the UNDP Regional Bureau for the Arab States.

## 1.2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was conducted in the final year of the ongoing UNDP PPF to inform the process of developing the new PAPP PPF. The scope of the evaluation, therefore, included the entirety of UNDP activities, which include PPF 2018-2021 (extended to 2022) and pipeline projects to assess the UNDP approach.

The evaluation assessed the three programme pathways and corresponding outcomes and 31 outputs presented in Annex 1. This included an assessment of UNDP contributions to recovery, reconstruction and development processes in oPt. Because this is the first independent evaluation of the PPF, specific

<sup>1</sup> UNDP PAPP derives its mandate from United Nations General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978. United Nations Member States called upon UNDP “to improve the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people by identifying their social and economic needs and by establishing concrete projects to that end.” See General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978, Assistance to the Palestinian people, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/33/147>.

<sup>2</sup> UNDP, Revised UNDP Evaluation Policy, 2019, DP/2019/29, [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2019/DP\\_2019\\_29\\_E.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/policy/2019/DP_2019_29_E.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> See General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978, Assistance to the Palestinian people, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/33/147>.

consideration was given to programme areas that are an extension of previous PPFs. The evaluation covered interventions funded by all sources, including core UNDP resources, donor funds, joint funds and fiduciary funds. The Terms of Reference of the evaluation is presented in Annex 1.

The evaluation also covered joint projects/collaborations with the UN and other development agencies, analysing whether opportunities were taken to foster the sustainability of outcomes achieved or to promote external coherence for enhancing contributions to recovery and development in oPt. In particular, the evaluation sought to capture the role and contribution of UNDP joint efforts with United Nations Volunteers and the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

In assessing the PPF, the evaluation incorporated change management and responsiveness to the evolving, volatile context within which UNDP operates and implemented the programme. The evaluation assessed UNDP programme specificities in West Bank and Gaza.

## **Evaluation framework: Key evaluation questions**

*What did the UNDP PPF intend to achieve during the period under review?*

The evaluation assessed PPF responsiveness to evolving needs in oPt. In assessing programme responsiveness and the relevance of UNDP support, sub-questions included:

- How relevant are UNDP programmes to the development needs of oPt (West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza)?
- Did UNDP programmes respond to the evolving context in oPt? Were the changes made in the PPF results framework responsive to the evolving context?
- How relevant are UNDP programmes for enabling gender equality and women's empowerment? How relevant are UNDP programmes for leaving no one behind?

*To what extent has the PPF achieved (or is likely to achieve) its intended objectives?*

The assessment of PPF effectiveness included the extent of outcomes achieved in this process (positive and negative, direct and indirect, intended and unintended). Assessments of projects and outputs were the basis for assessing PPF outcomes. Key sub-questions included:

- Did PPF accomplish its intended objectives and planned outcomes in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza? What are the unintended outcomes? How did UNDP ensure the sustainability of results?
- Did UNDP programmes and interventions contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment?
- Did UNDP programmes and interventions contribute to reducing vulnerabilities? Did UNDP programmes reduce existing inequities?
- Are the development outcomes achieved through UNDP support sustainable?

*To what extent has UNDP been able to adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic and support oPt's preparedness, response and recovery process?*

The evaluation assessed the relevance and effectiveness of UNDP support for COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery. Key sub-questions included:

- What were the contributions of UNDP to COVID-19 preparedness, response, and recovery?

- Did UNDP accomplish its intended objectives in its support of COVID-19 preparedness, response and recovery?

*What factors contributed to or hindered UNDP's performance and, eventually, to the sustainability of the outcomes achieved?*

In recognition of the unique mandate of UNDP in oPt, the evaluation examined specific factors that influenced (positively or negatively) PPF programme outcomes and sustainability. Factors included PPF strategy, management strategy, change management practices and the diversity of contexts within Area C, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank. Key sub-questions included:

- How well did UNDP use its resources (human and financial) in achieving development outcomes?
- Was adaptive management used for enhancing efficiency and programme contribution? What enabled or constrained adaptive change management?
- What are the contextual factors that impacted UNDP contributions? Did UNDP programmes take into consideration contextual specificities of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem/Area C) and Gaza while addressing programme risks?
- Should UNDP programmes continue with a similar strategy, or should their approach and programme focus be reviewed for the new PPF cycle?

Annex 1, Table 2, presents the evaluation matrix with questions for the five evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability).

## Methodology

The evaluation approach draws on the UNDP PPF. The three strategic priority areas and outcomes are supported by 31 output indicators. Given the nature of the UNDP mandate in oPt, PPF used a combination initiative, including support to recovery, rehabilitation, restoration of basic services, providing employment and livelihoods and enabling governance processes.

While some areas of UNDP support have been pursued over two to three PPF cycles, others were short-term in nature. To minimize the complexity of evaluating a large number of outputs, the evaluation grouped outputs by comparable programme themes. Available decentralized evaluations and audit reports served as important inputs for this evaluation; 10 decentralized evaluations and 15 audit reports have been conducted since 2017.

**Data collection methods:** The evaluation used data from primary and secondary sources, including a desk review of documentation and information and interviews with key informants, including beneficiaries, partners and UNDP managers and staff. A survey was administered to the UNDP PAPP office and select partners (the survey was administered to 42 persons, of which 23 responded). The evaluation team avoided administering the survey to key informant interviewees in order to avoid reaching out to the same respondents with multiple requests.

The evaluation examined the level of gender mainstreaming across all UNDP programmes and operations. This examination included an assessment of the level of progress on the gender standards achieved after the certification with the Bronze Gender Equality Seal in 2015. Further, gender-disaggregated data was collected (where available) and assessed against programme outcomes.

Special attention was given to integrating a gender-responsive evaluation approach to data collection methods. To assess gender, the evaluation used the gender marker<sup>4</sup> in the portfolio analyses by outcome area and the gender results effectiveness scale (GRES)<sup>5</sup> when assessing results. GRES classifies gender results into five categories: gender negative, gender blind, gender targeted, gender responsive and gender transformative (see Annex 1). In addition, gender-related questions were incorporated into data collection methods and tools, such as the pre-mission questionnaire and interview questionnaire, analysis and reporting.

Specific attention was paid to the programme specificities of East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank (including Area C).

**Stakeholder involvement:** A participatory and transparent process was followed to engage with multiple stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation process. During the initial evaluation phase, a stakeholder analysis was conducted to identify all relevant UNDP partners, including those that may not have worked with UNDP but played a key role in the outcomes to which UNDP contributed. This stakeholder analysis also served to identify key informants for interviews during the main data collection phase of the evaluation and to examine any potential partnerships that could further improve UNDP contributions to oPt.

Interviewees included representatives from the government, CSOs, the private sector, UN agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral donors and programme beneficiaries. Focus group discussions were used to consult with some groups of beneficiaries (see Annex 5).

**Programme performance rating:** The evaluation used a rating system to determine UNDP programme performance in oPt. The rating system enabled summarizing and quantifying evaluation performance and facilitated the codification of performance. The rating system complemented the rich qualitative evaluative evidence and was aligned with the evaluation criteria and questions presented in Table 2 in Annex 1. As a quantitative approach to performance assessment, the rating system improved the way in which evaluative judgements were rendered. Ratings also serve to highlight areas where UNDP has performed well and those that need change. Disaggregated ratings are presented in Annex 8.

**Validation:** The evaluation used triangulated information collected from different data sources and/or by different methods to enhance the validity of its findings.

### 1.3. PROGRAMME CONTEXT

Over sixty years of Israeli occupation and subsequent political developments have left an enormous impact on socio-economic conditions in the oPt. The inter-Palestinian conflict and separation of authorities between Gaza and the West Bank are additional constraints. As a result of the separation and the various military conflicts that have taken place between Israel and Gaza (the last conflict was in August 2022),<sup>6</sup> the Gaza Strip is left largely dependent on international support, which is predominantly limited to humanitarian assistance.

<sup>4</sup> A corporate tool to sensitize programme managers in advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) by assigning ratings to projects during their design phase that indicates the level of expected contribution to GEWE. It can also be used to track planned programme expenditures on GEWE (not actual expenditures).

<sup>5</sup> See 'The Gender Results Effectiveness Scale (GRES): A Methodology Guidance Note', [http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/gender/GRES\\_English.pdf](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/documents/guidance/gender/GRES_English.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> United Nations News, 'Fresh Israel-Palestinian Islamic Jihad truce prevents "full-scale war"', August 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/08/1124212>.

The protracted conflict has created an unsustainable political, economic, security and humanitarian context in the oPt. The progress towards and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the oPt continue to be defined by the severe political, economic and social constraints of over five decades of Israeli occupation.<sup>7</sup> The occupation and concomitant, multilayered restrictions on citizens' movement for over two decades have hindered the free movement of people and goods across large areas of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and have led to a total blockade of Gaza. Further, the sociopolitical fragmentation of territory has stunted economic growth and has restricted Palestinian use of critical resources, such as land, water and minerals.<sup>8</sup>

Even after almost three decades since the signing of the Oslo agreements,<sup>9</sup> the Palestinian economy is facing more constraints than at any time before. Palestine as a whole remains subject to a prohibitive regime of Israeli closures and trade impediments. These constraints are inflicting increasingly severe impacts on development prospects and the availability of basic services (e.g. education, health, solid waste management and water).<sup>10</sup> In the West Bank, more than 60 percent of the territory, with all its natural and productive resources, is virtually out of reach for Palestinians (Area C). East Jerusalem, the traditional economic hub of the West Bank, has been isolated by the separation wall and a strict Israeli closure regime. Gaza's economy has been crushed by years of siege and bombardment.

oPt is in the high human development category, with its human development index (HDI) increasing from 0.659 in 2005 to 0.708 in 2019, ranking 115th out of 189 countries and territories.<sup>11</sup> However, HDI improvements are not reflected in poverty levels. Poverty rates in oPt stand at 29.2 percent (13.9 percent in the West Bank and 53 percent in Gaza).<sup>12</sup> Around three-quarters of Palestinians in East Jerusalem live in poverty.<sup>13</sup> About 2.5 million Palestinians, or about half of the population, need humanitarian aid, including 1.4 million Palestinian refugees, who are among the most vulnerable groups.<sup>14</sup> The prolonged conflict has disproportionately affected women and girls. Women-headed households represent 11 percent of the total households in oPt but account for almost 20 percent of families suffering from extreme poverty.<sup>15</sup>

The National Policy Agenda (NPA), 'Putting Citizens First (2017-2022)', contains three pillars (path to independence, government reform and sustainable development) and ten national priorities. These pillars formed the basis for the 'National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2023'.<sup>16</sup>

The sustainable development pillar encompasses the majority of the State of Palestine's reform agenda. This pillar includes five national priorities and 21 national policies. The pillar aligned with the national priorities as set in the NPA and other national strategies, such as the 'Agriculture Sector Strategy (2017-2022)', 'Strategic

<sup>7</sup> State of oPt Voluntary National Review, 2018, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/oPt>.

<sup>8</sup> UNCTAD, 'The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Palestinian People: Arrested Development and Poverty in the West Bank', United Nations, 2021, [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsapp2021d2\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsapp2021d2_en.pdf); UNCTAD, 'The Besieged Palestinian Agricultural Sector', 2015, [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsapp2015d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/gdsapp2015d1_en.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> The Oslo Accords, a series of interim agreements reached between 1993 and 1999, are the product of secret Israeli-Palestinian negotiations facilitated by Norway and recognized by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel. See Middle East Institute, 'The Oslo Accords 25 Years On', <https://www.mei.edu/publications/oslo-accords-25-years>.

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, The Palestinian Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), 2021.

<sup>11</sup> UNDP, Human Development Report (HDR), 2020, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/PSE.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/PSE.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017, [https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txte\\_poverty2017.pdf?date=16\\_4\\_2018\\_2](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txte_poverty2017.pdf?date=16_4_2018_2).

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, Poverty and Equity Brief West Bank and Gaza, 2020, [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global\\_POVEQ\\_PSE.pdf](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/poverty/33EF03BB-9722-4AE2-ABC7-AA2972D68AFE/Global_POVEQ_PSE.pdf); Central Bureau of Statistics, 2017 [https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txte\\_poverty2017.pdf?date=16\\_4\\_2018\\_2](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txte_poverty2017.pdf?date=16_4_2018_2).

<sup>14</sup> OCHA, 'Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020' (December 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/occupied-palestinian-territory-humanitarian-needs-overview-4>.

<sup>15</sup> WFP Country Brief, August 2020, [https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WFPCBAUG20\\_110920.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/WFPCBAUG20_110920.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Agriculture Sector Strategy (2017-2022), Palestine.

Framework and Programme of Executive Action for Area C (2018-2019),<sup>17</sup> the 'Local Government Sector Strategy (2017-2023)',<sup>18</sup> the 'Water Sector Strategy',<sup>19</sup> the 'National Financial Inclusion Strategy'<sup>20</sup> and the 'National Employment Strategy (2021-2023)'.<sup>21</sup>

Falling GDP per capita, declining trends in foreign aid and persistent, extreme levels of unemployment are expanding poverty. Based on the latest available official data, 22 percent of Palestinians lived below the US\$5.50 2011 purchasing power parity per day poverty line in 2016/2017.<sup>22</sup> In the West Bank, poverty rates are lower but sensitive to shocks in household expenditures. In Gaza, any change in social assistance flows can significantly affect the population's well-being.<sup>23</sup>

Estimates based on GDP per capita growth suggest that in 2020, the poverty rate spiked to 29.7 percent, an increase of nearly 8 percentage points from 2016. As pandemic impacts receded, the poverty rate is estimated to have declined to 27.3 percent in 2021. These poverty rates represent a poor population of about 1.5 million people.<sup>24</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exacerbate economic stagnation; it is estimated that the Palestinian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted by 11.5 percent in 2020 compared to 2019, escalating unemployment and poverty levels.<sup>25</sup> Per capita income has declined, and mass unemployment has increased in both Gaza and the West Bank. By ILO standards, unemployment rates stood at 29 percent, with significant disparities between Gaza (44 percent) and the West Bank (20.5 percent).<sup>26</sup> Of the two million Palestinians living in the besieged Gaza Strip, some 70 percent are refugees who are dependent on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for humanitarian assistance.<sup>27</sup>

In Gaza, recurring cycles of violence, physical destruction during successive rounds of hostilities, and demographic pressures have caused human losses and impacted all aspects of social and economic development. The ongoing blockade has devastated socio-economic conditions in Gaza, isolating it from the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the world. The World Bank estimates that the May 2021 conflict in Gaza increased poverty in Gaza to 59.3 percent.<sup>28</sup> Between 1.3 million to 2 million Palestinians (26.3 to 36.7 percent of the population) are estimated to be moderately to severely food insecure.<sup>29</sup> In 2021, almost two out of five people were food insecure, up from one in five in 2018.<sup>30</sup>

In the face of limited incomes and assets, female-headed households are often forced to adopt negative coping strategies, including taking out high-cost loans or cutting down on vital family activities/practices. During the 2014 hostilities, over 60 percent of housing stock incurred considerable damage, as did service

<sup>17</sup> Prime Minister's Office, Strategic Framework and Programme of Executive Action for Area C (2018-2019), Palestine.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Local Government, Local Government Sector Strategy (2017-2023), Palestine.

<sup>19</sup> Palestinian Water Authority, National Water Sector Strategic Plan and Action Plan (2017-2022), May 2016. <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/pal179893E.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ministry of Labour, National Employment Strategy (2021-2023), Palestine.

<sup>22</sup> World Bank Data, Poverty headcount ratio at \$1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (percent of population) – West Bank and Gaza, accessed at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.DDAY?locations=PS>.

<sup>23</sup> OCHA, 'Occupied Palestinian Territory: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020' (December 2019), <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/occupied-palestinian-territory-humanitarian-needs-overview-4>.

<sup>24</sup> The World Bank Group, Palestinian Territories' Economic Update, April 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/economic-update-april-2022>.

<sup>25</sup> World Bank, World Bank Report Calls For Coordination To Fight the Spread of COVID-19 in the Palestinian Territories, 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/02/22/world-bank-report-calls-for-coordination-to-fight-the-spread-of-covid-19-in-the-palestinian-territories>.

<sup>26</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Press Release on the Results of the Labour Force Survey, 2021.

<sup>27</sup> UNRWA, Gaza: EU and UNRWA Support oPt Refugees with Cash and Shelter Repairs, 2021, <https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/gaza-eu-and-unrwa-support-oPt-refugees-cash-and-shelter-repairs>.

<sup>28</sup> World Bank: Economic Monitoring Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, 17 November 2021.

<sup>29</sup> WFP, UNICEF and ILO, Evaluation of the Joint WFP/UNICEF/ILO Programme: 'Towards a Universal and Holistic Social Protection Floor for Persons with Disabilities and Older Persons in the State of Palestine', March 2022.

<sup>30</sup> WFP, Thousands of Palestinians Face Food Insecurity Amid Escalating Conflict – WFP Infographic, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/thousands-of-palestinians-face-food-insecurity-amid-escalating-conflict-wfp-infographic/>.



infrastructure (including government buildings and water, energy, health and education facilities) and private-sector facilities and assets.<sup>31</sup> The effects of the most recent escalation were also severe both in terms of human losses as well as loss of social infrastructure.

Gender inequalities that perpetuate disadvantages for and discrimination against women and girls remain a significant impediment to social and economic development. For example, about 2 out of 10 females participate in the labour force compared to about 7 out of 10 males who do so. Further, the rate of female participation in the labour force was 17 percent compared to 69 percent for males.<sup>32</sup> Women's economic empowerment is likely to be impeded by lower wages and domestic work. The average monthly income for women-headed households is 1,666 NIS (Israeli New Shekel), well below the "deep" poverty line of 1,888 NIS per month per family.<sup>33</sup>

The 2020 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) Labour Force Survey indicates that approximately 11 percent of households in Palestine are headed by females (12 percent in the West Bank and 9 percent in the Gaza Strip).<sup>34</sup> About 20 percent of individuals living in female-headed households suffer from deep poverty, unable to fulfil the minimum required for food, clothing and housing, compared to about 17 percent of male-headed households who suffer from deep poverty.<sup>35</sup>

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, for the years 2018 and 2019, there is a clear gender disparity between the number of men and the number of women holding decision-making positions. For example, women hold only 5.4 percent of seats on the Palestinian Central Council, 11.3 percent on the Palestinian Legislative Council, 10.6 percent on the Palestinian National Council, 6.7 percent on the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, 13.6 percent on the Palestinian Cabinet and 11.2 percent in the diplomatic sector. To some extent, the stalling of elections in 2022 reduced the momentum towards increasing women's political participation.<sup>36</sup>

oPt is severely impacted by water and energy shortages. The water crisis caused by Israeli restrictions and climate change impacts, especially in Gaza, is creating serious public health issues.<sup>37</sup> For example, 95 percent of Gaza's water is considered unsafe for human consumption.<sup>38</sup> In addition, while energy needs continue to grow, oPt remains almost entirely dependent on imported power supplies. Due to the long-term overuse of natural resources, negative environmental impacts have increased significantly. The water shortages are exacerbated by population growth, pollution of aquifers and the marine environment, as well as by depletion and deterioration of limited agricultural and grazing areas.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>31</sup> UNCT, 'Leave No One Behind: A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in oPt', 2016, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-194206/>.

<sup>32</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Press Release on the Results of the Labour Force Survey, 2021.

<sup>33</sup> World Food Programme, State of Palestine Country Strategic Plan (2018–2022), <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/145e5a9ff07b43c59fbd4e4e5e7ac806/download/>.

<sup>34</sup> PCBS-UNFPA Joint Press Release on the occasion of World Population Day, July 2021.

<sup>35</sup> PCBS, Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), Poverty Profile in Palestine, 2017, [https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txt\\_e\\_poverty2017.pdf?date=16\\_4\\_2018\\_2](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Document/pdf/txt_e_poverty2017.pdf?date=16_4_2018_2).

<sup>37</sup> Efron, S., Fischbach, J. R., Blum, I., Karimov, R. I., and Moore, M. 'The Public Health Impacts of Gaza's Water Crisis: Analysis and Policy Options', 2017, [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2515.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2515.html).

<sup>38</sup> OCHA, 'Study warns water sanitation crisis in Gaza may cause disease outbreak and possible epidemic', 2018, [https://www.ochaopt.org/content/study-warns-water-sanitation-crisis-gaza-may-cause-disease-outbreak-and-possible-epidemic#:~:text=Until%20the%201990s%20the%20aquifer,Health%20Organization%20\(WHO\)%20standards](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/study-warns-water-sanitation-crisis-gaza-may-cause-disease-outbreak-and-possible-epidemic#:~:text=Until%20the%201990s%20the%20aquifer,Health%20Organization%20(WHO)%20standards).

<sup>39</sup> World Bank, 'Securing Water for Development in West Bank and Gaza', 2018, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/736571530044615402/Securing-water-for-development-in-West-Bank-and-Gaza-sector-note.pdf>.

## 1.4. UNDP PROGRAMME ASSESSED

UNDP's Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP) derives its mandate from United Nations General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978. United Nations Member States called upon UNDP "to improve the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people by identifying their social and economic needs and by establishing concrete projects to that end."<sup>40</sup> UNDP support to oPt over the years has been in the areas of strengthening accountable governance, employment and livelihoods, and sustainable infrastructure for better services.

In line with the programme mandate in oPt, the UNDP PPF for 2018-2021 (extended to 2022) is aligned with the 'State of Palestine National Policy Agenda 2017-2022' and the 'United Nations Assistance Framework State of Palestine (2018-2021 extended to 2022)'. UNDP operates in both Gaza and the West Bank (including East Jerusalem/Area C), with central support provided by the head office in Jerusalem. UNDP established a strong field presence in Gaza and the West Bank.

The PPF's focus, which emphasized the most vulnerable populations in East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank, was on three solution pathways:

- i) Enhancing responsive and inclusive governance in order to increase access to sustainable and quality basic services, public goods and rights;
- ii) Building resilience to climate change and disasters, thus ensuring sustainable use of natural assets and closing the energy gap; and
- iii) Fostering access to sustainable and inclusive economic and productive opportunities.

PPF aligns with four strategic areas of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (see Annex 1).

UNDP sought to promote development innovation through the Palestine Accelerator Lab.

UNDP recognizes the imperative of developing multi-sectoral and coordinated development responses. Therefore, it emphasized the need to promote institutional resilience and address unemployment and the lack of access to basic services and rights for Palestinians, particularly those living in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. The programme also sought to promote social cohesion to reduce political and social divisions.

UNDP emphasized engagement with a wide range of actors, including UN agencies, government ministries, civil society, international NGOs and the private sector. UNDP sought to use resilience-based programming in each of its priority areas while taking into consideration the economic, social and environmental dimensions of the process.

The PPF emphasized detailed and specific risk mitigation strategies for projects that have implications on programme implementation and achieving intended outputs and outcomes. This includes programme risks, including the demolition of development structures in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank; repeated military incursions in the Gaza Strip, which hampered the ability of the PA to exercise jurisdiction; and the blockade, which prevented the movement of materials into Gaza. Also, a heavy humanitarian focus, which slows longer-term development support, is a risk to fulfilling the UNDP mandate, something that the PPF and other PAPP strategies take into consideration.

<sup>40</sup> General Assembly Resolution 33/147 of 20 December 1978, Assistance to the Palestinian people, <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/33/147>.



During the assessed period, UNDP implemented 66 projects of varying sizes and various stages of implementation, some of which were continued from the previous cycle. The accountable and responsive governance portfolio included 10 projects, the basic services portfolio included 29 projects, the inclusive economic development portfolio included 21 projects, the sustainable use of natural resources and energy portfolio included 15 projects, and the access coordination portfolio included one project. There is an overlap in thematic areas, as projects often cover more than one thematic area, particularly in the areas of basic services, inclusive economic development and natural resources and energy. Most projects were directly executed by UNDP. See Annex 4 for a list of all projects implemented by UNDP. In terms of programme geographic areas, 18 projects were implemented in Gaza, and 50 projects were implemented in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

The 2018-2022 budget was US\$372.7 million. As of November 2022, the expenditure was \$310.3 million (see Figure 2). The basic services portfolio is the largest, comprising \$123 million in expenditure from 2018 to 2022, followed by inclusive economic development, with \$82 million; accountable and responsive governance, with \$56 million; and the sustainable use of natural resources and energy, with \$44 million. The access coordination portfolio, which mostly focused on Gaza, had \$3.5 million in expenditure. Execution rates were relatively similar across portfolios, with the highest delivery for the basic services portfolio and the sustainable use of natural resources and energy portfolio (86 percent each) and the lowest for the accountable and responsive governance portfolio (77 percent).

Annual budget and expenditure fluctuated from 2018 to 2022, with a peak in 2018 (\$88.6 million in annual budget and \$80.5 million in expenditure). There was a steady decline since 2018, with the lowest budget and expenditure over the programme cycle in 2020 (\$54 million in annual budget and \$45.4 million in expenditure). 2021 saw a significant increase in budget (\$81.2 million) and expenditure (\$65.7 million), although these figures dropped slightly in 2022 (the annual budget was \$73.5 million and expenditure was \$48.8 million, as of November 2022).

Execution rates were relatively consistent from 2018 to 2021, with an average of 87 percent (see Figure 3). There was a variation in expenditure across Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, with more investment in the latter given the wider scope of the programme (see Figure 4).

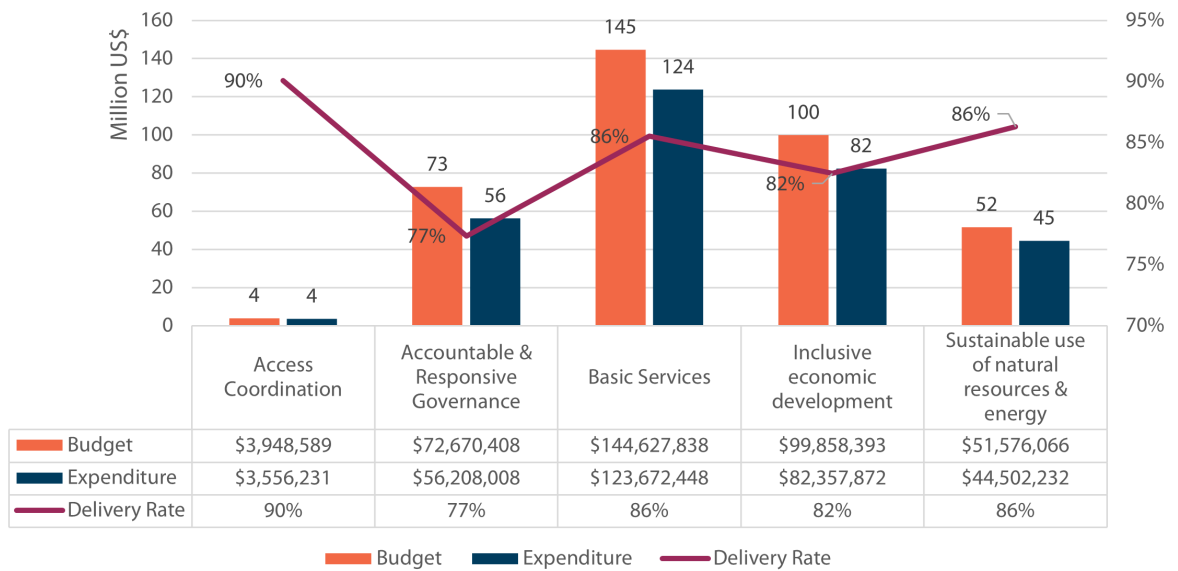
Funding was primarily from non-core resources, which represent 99 percent of the \$310.3 million total expenditure.<sup>41</sup> Most of the fund sources were from bilateral/multilateral funding (\$291 million), representing 94 percent of the total expenditure, followed by government cost-sharing (\$14 million), representing 5 percent, and regular resources (\$4 million), representing 1 percent. Major donors include the Islamic Development Bank (\$48.4 million), UN Relief and Works Agency (\$34.5 million), KfW (\$28.6 million), Japan (\$26.7 million), Norway (\$25.9 million), Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (\$17.7 million), the Netherlands (\$17.7 million), Canada (\$16.3 million), Paltel Group Foundation (\$16.3 million), State of Palestine (\$14.5 million), and Sweden (\$13.6 million).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> UNDP Atlas Power BI, extracted on 18 November 2022.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

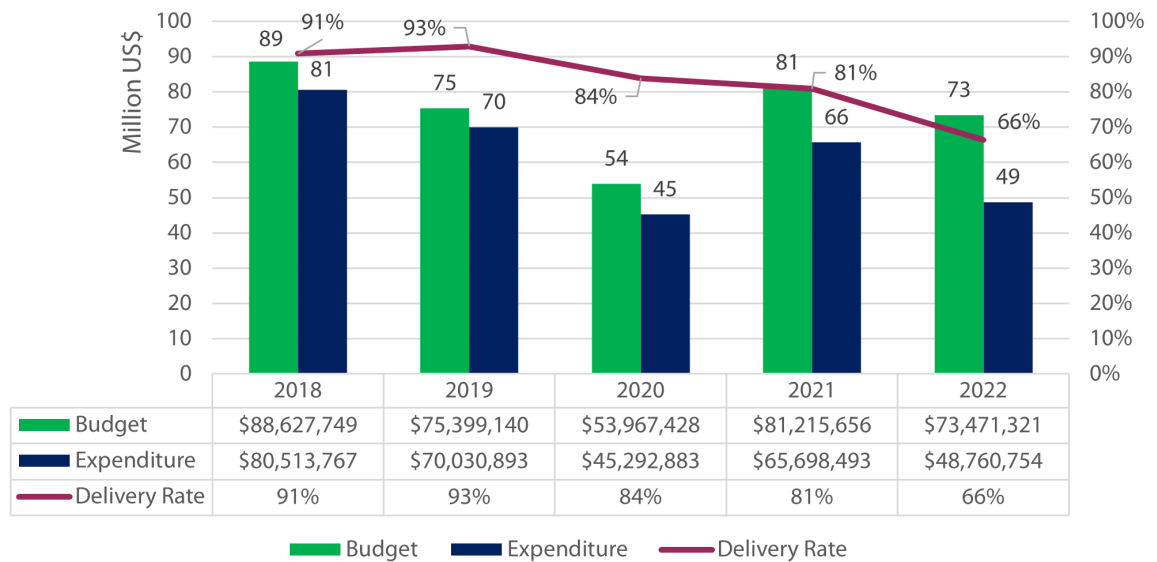
**FIGURE 2: PAPP CLUSTERING BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



Source: UNDP ATLAS, UNDP PAPP Office

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

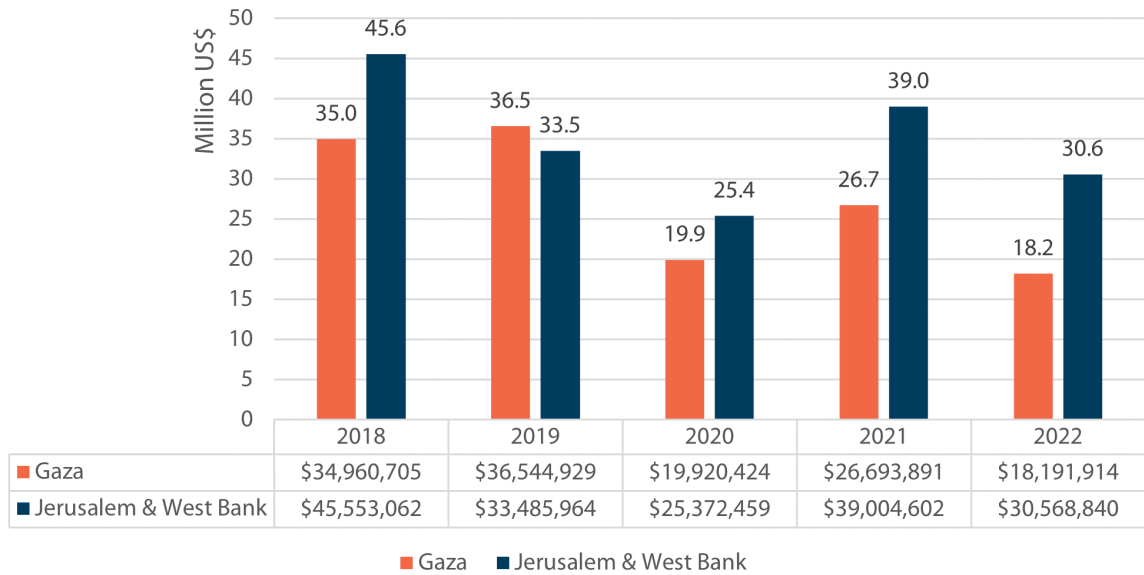
**FIGURE 3: ANNUAL BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



Source: UNDP ATLAS, UNDP PAPP Office

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

**FIGURE 4: EXPENDITURE BY PROGRAMME GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS (2018-2022)**



Source: UNDP ATLAS, UNDP PAPP Office

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

# CHAPTER 2 FINDINGS



This chapter presents the evaluation findings on UNDP's roles and contributions to recovery, rehabilitation and development outcomes in oPt. The evaluation analysis is broadly presented under sections on strategic programme positioning, five key themes, cross-cutting issues and programme efficiency. Section 2.1 presents an overarching analysis of UNDP's programme positioning in oPt. Section 2.2 analyses governance support, followed by basic services in Section 2.3, inclusive economic development in Section 2.4 and natural resources and energy in Section 2.5. Cross-cutting issues (GEWE, programme approaches, innovation) are analysed in Section 2.6; programme efficiency is analysed in Section 2.7. Section 2.8 closes the chapter with a discussion of programme performance ratings.

## 2.1. STRATEGIC POSITIONING

This section assesses the relevance, strategic positioning and underpinning factors in UNDP's roles and contributions in oPt, viz., programme prioritization and approach, programme efficiency and partnerships.

**Finding 1.** UNDP programme support remains relevant in a protracted conflict and occupation context that is marked by significant international cooperation constraints for longer-term development programming (e.g. short-term funding focus, declining Official Development Assistance (ODA), clearance of revenues). Notwithstanding these constraints, there is strong need for workable longer-term programme models that provide simultaneous humanitarian and development support. While the situation demands nexus partnerships and a diversified resource base, UNDP's response has been within the parameters of international support with restrictions on structured development engagement with authorities, particularly in Gaza. Prioritizing longer-term development issues remains a challenge.

The Israeli occupation, territorial fragmentation and internal political divisions undermine the legitimacy and empowerment of the PA and its ability to govern and sustain reforms. During the current PPF phase, international support for the two-state solution further diminished, which had adverse impacts on UNDP interventions.

The political divide between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas has evolved into a long-term stalemate situation, with adverse impacts on almost all governance-related and other institutional support to the PA. General and presidential elections have been cancelled, which undermines the legitimacy of the PA and creates a disincentive for substantial public-sector reforms, good governance, implementation of critical human rights laws and regulations, economic growth and social policy measures. Laws on harmonization between the West Bank and Gaza and harmonization with international law are also impacted. This created significant challenges to promoting holistic responses in the areas of employment and livelihoods and natural resource management and energy.

Financial hardship and recurrent crises challenge the PA's long-term financial sustainability of the PA. One result is that donor support risks becoming an open-ended endeavour.<sup>43</sup> There is considerable fragmentation in recovery, rehabilitation and development response in oPt. In general, development partners agree that aid coordination in Palestine is challenging.<sup>44</sup> Fragmented aid coordination has hampered an already challenging development context; sustained aid dependency effectively makes international agency interventions restrictive.

Most international support actors, including UNDP, do not incorporate specific exit strategies to mitigate the decline of ODA in oPt into their approaches. The Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS) mechanism has not been effective. As a result, potential competition between government actors and CSOs (or even donors) risks being reinforced by international aid that redirects staff resources and attention away from wider reform priorities. According to observers, this is a real concern as no lead evaluation of aid effectiveness in oPt has been conducted. After the abolishment of the Ministry of Planning in 2015, planning functions became less effective. Further, government ministers became less accountable for resource allocations and the use of international support.

UNDP recovery, rehabilitation and development support are relevant to the oPt context, a context in which international programming funding is predominantly for short-term and humanitarian support, whereas there is bilateral engagement by donors and international financial institutions for sector reforms and governance. Such contextual constraints call for well-conceptualized and comprehensive solutions alongside recurrent humanitarian responses, with purposeful partnerships.

**Finding 2.** UNDP has played a significant role in the development trajectory of oPt since the establishment of the PA. In a restrictive occupation context, UNDP contributions to recurrent recovery and reconstruction in oPt have been significant. UNDP programmes were responsive to key national and people priorities. With decades of development and humanitarian support to oPt, UNDP had the leverage to form strong partnerships with the PA and other actors.

The PPF addressed recurrent recovery and reconstruction needs in oPt, leading UNDP to play a significant role in the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza and the West Bank. UNDP's response demonstrated its recognition of the development disparities, recovery needs and occupation constraints of different oPt geographical areas. PPF programmes are aligned with the economic development, basic services and governance priorities that were identified in 'National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2023', 'Strategic Framework and Programme of Executive Action for Area C (2018-2019)', the State of Palestine's reform agenda and various sector strategies.<sup>45</sup> UNDP successfully mobilized funding for recovery and reconstruction efforts.

<sup>43</sup> Historically, the revenues of the PNA have been dependent on two sources: *clearance revenues and international aid*. Estimated at \$2.4 billion annually (15 percent of GDP), *clearance revenues* constitute the backbone of the PA budget and account for 66 percent of total PA revenues and over half of its expenditure. However, repeated Israeli interruption of the clearance revenue have exacerbated the chronic PNA financial crisis (driven by outdated clearance mechanisms of Palestinian imports through Israel; excessive administrative fees levied to clear those imports; unfair distribution of revenue from exit fees paid by Palestinian passengers exiting the oPt; the withholding, by Israel, of deductions from wages of Palestinians working in Israel and the settlements, in particular the equalization levy, the health stamp, social security and the pension funds; indirect imports, and public revenue from Area C). Fiscal leakage from the revenue flows that the Palestinian treasury should be able to collect from indirect taxes imposed on Palestinian imports. In a study published in 2019, UNCTAD estimated the total value of fiscal leakage resulting from six main sources at \$473.4 million in 2015, which represented about 3.7 percent of the Palestinian GDP or 17.8 percent of total Palestinian tax revenues that year. Moreover, *international aid* decreased from \$1.2 billion in 2010 (62 percent of total revenues) to \$464 million in 2020 (12 percent of total revenues). In the justice sector, for example, international aid declined by 50 percent in the last few years. See MAS (2021), p 82.

<sup>44</sup> UNSCO, Palestine, 2021, 'Evaluation of United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine (2018-2022)', Abacus International Management, Page 19.

<sup>45</sup> For example, see the 'Water Sector Strategy', 'Local Government Sector Strategy (2017-2023)', the 'National Financial Inclusion Strategy', the 'National Employment Strategy' and other sector plans.

UNDP is the largest UN agency in terms of fund share of the UNSDCF. UNDP's longer-term engagement across oPt presents greater possibilities for a strategic development engagement. UNDP showed strong commitment across programme areas to further youth and women's economic empowerment.

Responding to the urgent need to accelerate recovery and reconstruction processes, UNDP emphasized short-term interventions. UNDP is well regarded for its recovery and reconstruction support, with a reputation and reach that has enabled engagement at the PA level and across oPt. UNDP demonstrated timeliness and responsiveness to the demand for quick recovery support. UNDP is widely credited for its quick responsiveness given the complexity of implementing infrastructure initiatives in a protracted occupation context. The value of UNDP technical support and international expertise is widely recognized. Partnerships UNDP established with national and local governments and communities were an enabling factor in UNDP's positioning.

Support to advisory and technical civil servants has provided key entry points for UNDP work. UNDP has been a partner of choice given the comparative advantage of its programme presence and partnerships in oPt (for many donors, UNDP is a reliable and well-capacitated implementing agency). Broad engagement with government and civil society partners has positioned UNDP as a reliable development partner. This also enabled the delivery of advisory and backup support for sector working groups.

Among UNDP's comparative advantages that stakeholder groups highlighted were its longer-term and broader development mandate compared to other agencies with programmes that have shorter time horizons or narrower focuses. UNDP demonstrated a flexible approach and ability to respond quickly to emerging needs, such as support in the aftermath of conflicts or the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Finding 3.** UNDP's added advantages of its strong, long-standing presence in oPt, partnerships with PA, well-established administrative support architecture to the UN and its ability to work across ministries are significant. However, these advantages have yet to be leveraged to position UNDP as a key development actor. Further, UNDP has yet to balance predominantly short-term projects with longer-term development solutions that are much needed in the protracted crisis context of oPt.

A prolonged phase of a recovery and rehabilitation mode of engagement has reduced strategic engagement in key development areas. Practical development solutions that address the specificities of Gaza and East Jerusalem are evolving and are critical for UNDP's positioning as a development agency in oPt. The UNDP portfolio entails a gradual transition from large infrastructure projects linked to local service improvement towards institutional development and policy support.

Development positioning has not been easy for UNDP within or outside the UN due to oPt's intense donor space (i.e. bilateral engagement, defined priorities and diverse approaches), a UNSCO, Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator context. Contributions to development coordination have had limitations in such a context. Despite its efforts, UNDP lacks a strategy for substantive engagement aimed at comprehensive initiatives in key areas of the organization's mandate. Given the recovery needs in oPt, a wide programme spread was inevitable. However, not adequately balancing recovery and development support proved to be counterproductive for UNDP's role and positioning as an expert organization.

Institutional support for government agencies, ministries and local governments (including municipalities and village councils), as part of various infrastructure, natural resource management and governance initiatives, augmented public institutions' capacities. Nevertheless, the level of emphasis and approach varied, particularly in terms of strengthening processes for improving public-sector institutional capacities.

UNDP's institutional development support worked well when addressing capacity gaps from a thematic perspective rather than focusing on single institutions. For example, the access to justice programme (Sawasya II) made a more comprehensive approach possible, with several institutions, actors, international development partners and local CSOs included in the project. Sawasya II, discussed further in Section 2.2, covers key dimensions of access to justice with gender justice as a cross-cutting issue. Other actors support dimensions of the justice sector that may not be targeted by UNDP interventions. For example, the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories supported legislative processes; Denmark and Sweden supported the human rights commission.

There is still scope for UNDP and other international agencies to move from *ad hoc* support to more comprehensive capacity development in areas such as constitutional and administrative justice. There were limitations in enabling comprehensive sector solutions in other areas. Support to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and platforms such as Monshati lacked institutional anchoring and private-sector strategies. UNDP support for SDG monitoring and reporting does not seem to have triggered any policy initiatives. Consolidation of engagement in the renewable energy sector has yet to take place. Given the time it takes for institutional support, complementary and parallel efforts in governance, economic development and renewable energy engagement would have enhanced UNDP contributions.

Despite long-standing infrastructure support at the local government level, there has been limited engagement to strengthen capacities or develop local and central PA linkages. UNDP supported local services in specific local government units (LGUs) without a long-standing strategic link to the local government sector strategy for upscale and replication. Some of the infrastructure, employment and natural resource management initiatives (for example, water treatment, medical waste management and vocational education) have yet to be consolidated as local sector solutions. Even in cases where local-level institutional strengthening may target individual LGUs or joint service councils and entail considerable benefits for women, children and vulnerable groups in specific local communities, such initiatives were not linked to wider sector processes.

Municipalities also encounter sustainability issues because the local government framework in oPt is severely constrained. In addition, without strategic linkages, learnings from local successes and failures may not inform the reform strategy; catalytic impacts of local, UNDP-supported solutions may therefore be missed.

While some programmes are well-conceptualized, implementation levels continue to be short-term. UNDP has nonetheless emphasized the strategic importance of combining a longer-term development perspective with short-term recovery support. During the current PPF period, UNDP programmes provided critical recovery support, but a predominantly short-term approach for a prolonged period has limited its overall positioning and contribution. Addressing infrastructure needs in the absence of an overall humanitarian-development nexus framework reduced the scope and scale of development efforts. It is, therefore, critical to devise a strategy for development engagement in a prolonged humanitarian context that will enable resilient programme solutions.

A longer-term development perspective in the protracted crisis context of oPt needs a shift in approach and collaborative partnerships, including with the private sector in areas such as basic services and livelihood and employment, which have yet to be systematically pursued. UNDP's approach was constrained by over-reliance on traditional sources of programme funding, which typically have strictly separate allocations for development and humanitarian programming.



The fragmented international cooperation environment constrained some strategic partnerships. While support involving physical construction entails a handover process, institutional support generally includes exit strategies that clarify how results can be sustained and reforms accelerated and who can contribute to this among the government, civil society, the private sector and the donor community.

UNDP had expectations regarding the transfer of regional and international knowledge from other conflict and fragile contexts that would showcase innovative and new development models. Such expectations, however, have yet to be met in areas such as livelihoods and employment (e.g. knowledge on the green and circular economy or on solid waste management).

## 2.2. ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE

UNDP governance support is aimed at improving the capacities of the government, local government actors and CSOs. The outcome on “improved democratic processes that ensure effective and accountable governance” supported development pillars 1 and 2 of the NPA and strategic priorities 1 and 2 of the UNDAF. The outcome comprises three thematic intervention areas: sector governance engagement; democratic elections, accountability and participation; and access to justice. Annex 4 presents programme outputs and a list of projects under this outcome. Assumptions that were critical to achieving the outcome included international backing for the two-state solution.

The budget for governance-related support is \$72.7 million, or 19.5 percent of the total PPF expenditures for 2018-2022<sup>46</sup> (see Figure 5). The allocation only partly covered soft components for training and institutional development, while support for access to justice entailed around \$19 million for the construction of the Hebron courthouse (which spanned two PPF phases).

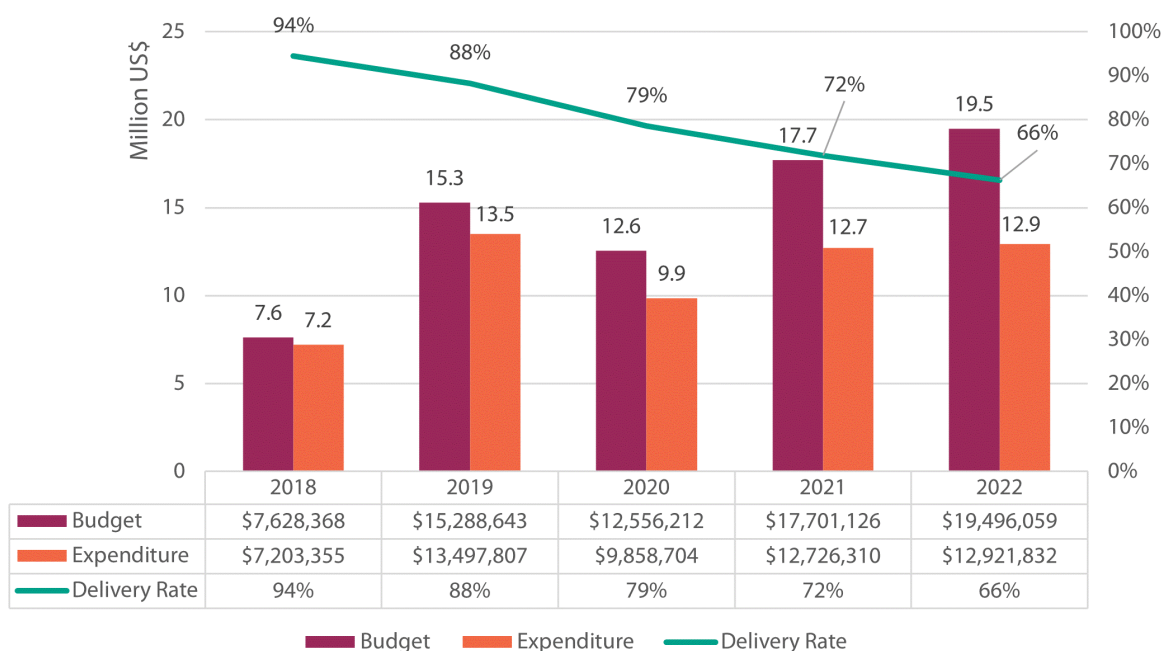
The project pipeline indicates the direction of PPF in the next programme phase. UNDP has obtained indicative support of \$25 million for a new phase of Sawasya, where e-justice is expected to be a focal area. In addition, the UK has indicated more support for the Transparency, Evidence and Accountability (TEA) Programme to strengthen support for a more accountable government. To this end, UNDP commissioned a political-economy analysis to identify new interventions under the TEA programme, which may see more focus on local governments.

CSOs received grant support for advocacy and service delivery. They were also engaged as service providers in projects such as Sawasya and Shufuna, delivering legal aid, training women for peace and conciliation, local elections voter mobilization and advocacy strategy development.

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<sup>46</sup> This does not include the Transboundary Wastewater Project or the work on tariffs, which are key for improving household and LGU finances and mitigating the so-called municipal net lending dilemma.

**FIGURE 5: ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE: BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



Source: UNDP ATLAS, UNDP PAPP Office

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are through to the date of data extraction: 18 November 2022.

**Finding 4.** UNDP support to governance was iterative and built on its long partnerships. It targeted key priority areas identified in the National Policy Agenda and complemented ongoing efforts. PA and local-level institutional support contributed to establishing and strengthening government processes and capacities, particularly in local governments and central institutions where UNDP projects were implemented.

UNDP governance contributions intended to balance upstream and downstream interventions, mixing short- and long-term purposes and gradually moving from more humanitarian-oriented support with a high emphasis on infrastructure development towards support with more focus on institutional development. Support to the justice sector, for example, has been ongoing for two decades. It has entailed institutional support and service provision as well as physical infrastructure support. For example, UNDP simultaneously supported efforts such as Hebron courthouse (support to infrastructure) and Sawasya, which has entailed upstream policy and capacity development in order to achieve system change, combined with shorter-term service improvements for vulnerable groups among women and children.

With the application of global signature solutions, UNDP contributions to policy and planning processes drew on its positioning in Palestine as a connector between national development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For example, support to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) contributed to SDGs localization in Palestine and the Voluntary National Review in 2018. The Environment Quality Agency (EQA) received support for its reporting obligations under global environmental agreements and conventions. UNDP responded to emerging needs for policy support, particularly with support to the formulation of a national economic recovery plan in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. UNDP also supported the EQA in its attempts to access GEF funding, which is currently blocked by the USA despite PA having met all conventional conditionalities.

In other cases, UNDP provided more *ad hoc* support to SDG reporting or the COVID-19 economic recovery plan. While this was due to the emergency nature of the response in the latter case, support for SDG monitoring and reporting does not seem to have triggered any policy initiatives as a result of this work.<sup>47</sup> It is also important to note that LGUs were not invited up front to participate in formulating the national economic recovery plan in 2020, even though the majority of citizen-targeted interventions involved them. LGUs became involved later only after they advocated for it. This underscores the importance of supporting and engaging LGUs and the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) in such processes.

In contrast, UNDP collaborated with think tanks such as the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute and Birzeit University and drew on statistical evidence from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS). These collaborations also strengthened the institutions' capacities, although *ad hoc* collaborations entailed high transaction costs in some cases where partners would have preferred a framework collaboration instead.

Notwithstanding UNDP's global priority of reform acceleration to attain the SDGs, in some cases, UNDP institutional support took ten to fifteen years to achieve impacts on policies and institutional capacities. For example, the Local Rural Development Programme that ran during the first decade after the adoption of the Oslo Accords eventually led to the establishment of joint service councils in Palestine. The establishment of PWA and the EQA resulted from previous UNDP projects.

On its own, the fact that an impact is achieved with some delay is not necessarily a negative aspect of capacity development; the key aspect to fully appreciate is the value-added of capacity support. Evidence of the delayed impact of capacity support corresponds to lessons learned elsewhere.

UNDP has worked in an increasingly difficult operational environment. The enabling environment in oPt for governance is becoming increasingly problematic due to factors such as structural and political issues and inconsistent donor engagement. Legislative and presidential elections have been cancelled again, undermining the legitimacy of the PA and the presidency and creating a disincentive for substantial public-sector reform, good governance and the implementation of critical human rights laws and regulations.

Key pieces of legislation that have not been passed but are critical for the progress of UNDP support include the Freedom of Information Bill, the Family Protection Bill, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Bill and the Legal Aid Bill. The Family Protection bill, in particular, faces strong resistance that is fuelled by entrenched patriarchal norms and misinformation about the CEDAW Convention (which PA has signed). Until 2007, the Legislative Council played a strong role in promoting the Family Protection Bill, but this voice is now missing. Moreover, UNDP's intent to support the legal harmonization of Palestinian laws between Gaza and the West Bank/East Jerusalem proved difficult due to political divides.

The territorial fragmentation of oPt and the escalation of the Israeli occupation fuelled by the Trump Vision in 2019 further undermined the legitimacy of the PA and its ability to govern its assigned territory and sustain development interventions. The Israeli occupation has resulted in further increases in new settlements in the West Bank, whereas the Gaza Strip remained in a semi-permanent crisis of armed conflict.

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<sup>47</sup> The limited policy impact of the SDGs is in line with a recent global study, which concluded that "the scientific evidence suggests only limited transformative political impact of the Sustainable Development Goals thus far," see Biermann, Frank et al., Scientific evidence on the political impact of the Sustainable Development Goals, in Nature Sustainability (2022).

The Oslo Accords themselves also assigned the PA an arguably unsustainable territorial layout, which made development support difficult to sustain; the occupation worsened the situation. For UNDP's governance support, this implies, for example, a lack of coordination between the Palestinian and Israeli justice systems. This undermines the mandate and efficiency of the Palestinian judiciary, especially since personal jurisdiction is limited and criminal offenders can evade the Palestine justice system by escaping to Area C (or, in the case of Hebron, H1 or H2). This also undermines overall public trust and confidence in the justice system. Financial hardship and recurrent crises continue to challenge the long-term financial sustainability of the PA, increasing the risk that donor support will become an open-ended endeavour.

## Democratic elections, accountability, and participation

**Finding 5.** UNDP has yet to conceptualize its engagement in the area of transparency and accountability (besides Mizan). Further, initiatives to promote transparency and accountability have yet to demonstrate a systemic approach to the governance reform agenda. Support for transparency and accountability can counteract the democratic deficit, provided it is linked to wider policy and service improvement processes.

In May 2021, the President once again cancelled legislative and presidential elections; only two rounds of local elections took place between 2021 and 2022. The first round of voting took place on 11 December 2021 in 376, mostly rural, LGUs in the West Bank. The second round took place on 26 March 2022 in the remaining 66 LGUs in Gaza and the larger municipalities in the West Bank. An additional 61 LGUs, where no elections took place in the first round, were also included in the latter.<sup>48</sup> The cancellation of legislative and presidential elections limited UNDP's space for supporting local elections processes and promoting the participation of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities in line with human rights obligations. UNDP also supported nationally broadcasted candidate debates in partnership with media organizations to engage local communities and raise awareness of democratic processes. Such media campaigns, which have not been conducted before in oPt, have the potential to improve the use of justice systems.<sup>49</sup>

Apart from local elections, bottom-up accountability rested solely in CSOs, a predominant approach in oPt. This approach can have sustainability issues and can slow institutional capacity processes. Moving forward, more support for transparency and accountability may counteract the democratic deficit, provided it is linked to wider policy change and service improvement initiatives. During the present programme phase, UNDP initiated the TEA programme 2020-2022 to allocate more attention to the transparency and accountability of Palestinian public institutions and service providers. The programme conducted pilots for transparency and accountability innovations and campaigned for the passage of the Freedom of Information Bill (which has yet to be passed). There are also plans to focus more attention on local governments and to cooperate with APLA on this. There is a lot of potential to move in this direction, but pilots should be linked to APLA advocacy and member service provision, Municipal Development and Lending Funds' (MDLFs) ongoing national Municipal Development Programme, and to the wider process of implementing the Local Government Sector Strategy.

<sup>48</sup> See Mapping Palestinian Politics on Politics on the European Council on Foreign Relations website (<https://ecfr.eu/special/mapping-palestinian-politics/municipal-elections-2021/>). According to the Central Elections Commission (CEC, <https://www.elections.ps/tabid/1167/language/en-US/Default.aspx>), voter turnout in the first round was 66.14 percent against 53.69 percent in the second round. This is on the higher side from an international perspective, and higher compared to the 2017 limited local elections held in the West Bank (53.9 percent voter turnout), although Hamas boycotted the first-round elections altogether. The CEC does not publish gender-disaggregated data regarding women's participation overall, but Palestinian electoral law stipulates that women should make up at least 25 percent of all candidate lists (only 18.3 percent of the council members in the West Bank as of May 2021, according to APLA). Mapping Palestinian Politics highlights that more than 1,500 women stood for election in the first round of the recent local election, but only nine of them were heading lists, and many were placed too low on their lists to win seats.

<sup>49</sup> See UNDP Results-Oriented Annual Report, Palestine (ROAR) 2021, p 21.

**Finding 6.** Despite a range of local-level infrastructure initiatives, a lack of strategic engagement in the local government sector limits UNDP contributions to local governance. While local governance has other major actors, there is more scope for UNDP engagement in municipal capacity development and enabling basic service solutions beyond efforts in local governments where projects are located. Consolidation of UNDP initiatives in basic services and other local-level work is critical for strengthening UNDP’s roles and contributions to local governance and related reform processes.

UNDP contributed to various policy and planning processes, promoted women’s roles in peace and reconciliation processes, and supported the PA’s international reporting obligations towards the 2030 Agenda and other international conventions. UNDP responded to national development priorities and emerging issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and, over time, supported central- and local-level capacity development. For example, the support for the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) combines infrastructure support in specific municipalities with tariff development and transboundary policy under the Transboundary Wastewater Pollution Control Project. Overall, however, most support to the local government sector is linked to specific regional utilities and joint service councils (for example, the Construction of Sewage Treatment Plant in Khan Younis project 2005-2022, which enhanced the operational capacity of the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility). In such cases, replication/upscale linked to the Local Government Sector Strategy was not pursued.

Support for community and transformative resilience in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza is a UNDP priority, but institutionalized approaches have yet to be consolidated. Several development partners engage in similar area-based support, including the World Bank, EU Delegation, EU countries (through MDLF) and UN-Habitat. Contrary to UNDP, they are part of the Local Government Sector Working Group and make efforts to streamline approaches with the local government framework to avoid duplication and competing approaches. There is a consensus among development partners that linkages to the Area C Coordination Office (ACCO) in the PMO are not sufficient to ensure alignment and harmonization with local government reforms.<sup>50</sup> Although dedicated support to Area C continues, the ACCO has been recently dismantled.

There is scope for UNDP to strengthen local government capacities, including the capacity to more openly engage with the electorate. For example, the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB) aims to scale up its annual audits to cover all municipalities. The World Bank will strengthen the capacity of SAACB to achieve this, and the TEA Programme could facilitate a more participatory audit process. Another area is the improvement of LGU’s own-source revenue generation, which is key to mitigating unfunded mandates, debts accrued by the so-called net lending practices, and the impact of COVID-19.

UNDP already supports more transparent wastewater tariffs, which ensures fairer pricing of wastewater treatment costs. Opportunities could also have been used to support capital investments through the mobilization of development financing and private-sector participation in local development, for example, in cooperation with the United Nations Capital Development Fund. Such support may also include framework improvements and the piloting of public-private partnership concepts in support of the Public-Private Partnership Bill.

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<sup>50</sup> The latest donor mapping exercise in the local government sector found that “it was hoped through the ACCO to improve the financial and technical coordination of the programmes in Area C for efficient implementation. In addition, the ACCO was supposed to play an important role in backing up development partners politically, should there be demolitions of projects. Tracking and monitoring projects will therefore become increasingly important in order to react swiftly to events on the ground. However, the Area C development partners expressed during interviews that the ACCO is not active and does not exist in reality,” see the Ministry of Local Government, Local Governance Sector Donor Mapping Draft Report 2021, p 29.

PA stakeholders and the deputy chair of the Local Government Sector Working Group also point to the need for more support to village councils and cluster approaches in Area C. Such involvement is relevant, as several projects appear to be terminated, including the important Local Government Services Improvement Programme funded by the World Bank and implemented by MDLF in coordination with the Ministry of Local Government. UNDP's resilience approach in Area C could embrace this, but careful tailoring and linking with the Local Government Sector Strategy is key, as cooperation with the PMO alone may not be enough to mitigate framework constraints and sustain results. UNDP has yet to systematically explore opportunities and conceptualize appropriate local governance solutions.

## Justice sector

**Finding 7.** UNDP's consistent support to justice sector systems over two PPFs contributed to institutional efficiency, accountability and transparency. Mizan demonstrates that e-governance support can provide a neutral space for governance achievements that can be sustained in a fragile development context. Support to access to justice strongly positions UNDP in the justice sector, although UNDP has yet to accelerate its contributions in the area.

UNDP engagement in the access to justice area is highly relevant. Palestine's justice sector strategy seeks to improve democratic accountability towards its citizens. Judicial independence is challenged, for example, by politically motivated appointments, judicial promotion and a lack of arms-length principles in court administration. Fundamental weaknesses include the absence of a functioning Palestinian Legislative Council due to the abolishment of general elections and inadequate legal frameworks with unclear mandates for justice sector actors.

OPt's present legal framework reflects elements from Ottoman rule, British mandate, Egyptian administration, Jordanian rule and Israel military orders. This amalgamation has left Gaza and the West Bank devoid of a harmonized legal code and with an ambiguous division of responsibilities among justice-sector authorities.<sup>51</sup>

The Israeli occupation limits personal jurisdiction,<sup>52</sup> travel and access (e.g. arrests, notice servings, enforcement, movement of prisoners and court staff), undermining the mandate of justice-sector institutions. Courts contend with persistent efficiency and performance problems.<sup>53</sup> Sawasya adds value as a platform for piloting Mizan's new standards for courthouse efficiency and a more citizen-oriented approach that underpins gender justice.

Through the joint Sawasya programme, UNDP and its partners established a platform through which access to justice could be more comprehensively addressed. Sawasya targets longer-term system change through support for institutional reform, legal framework improvements and harmonization, court efficiency and coordination between justice sector actors (including the High Judicial Council, the Attorney General's Office

<sup>51</sup> The Justice Sector in Palestine is composed of seven major institutions: the Ministry of Justice, the High Judicial Council, the Public Prosecution, the Constitutional Court, the High Council of Shar'ia Courts, the Judicial Institute and the Advisory and Legislation Bureau (Diwan). There are three other supporting institutions in the sector, the Anti-corruption Commission, the Bar Association and the Independent Commission of Human Rights.

<sup>52</sup> Israeli citizens and Palestinians residing in East Jerusalem cannot be prosecuted by the Palestinian justice system.

<sup>53</sup> According to one Palestinian opinion poll, about 75 percent of citizens in the West Bank believe that there is corruption in the judicial system. This is also stated in the report of the AMAN Coalition on the judicial reform plan that was assigned to the Supreme Council of Transitional Judiciary. The report describes, from the point of view of numerous civil society organizations, attempts of political interference to interfere with judicial authority, see AMAN Coalition (2020). Annual Opinion Poll on the Reality of Corruption and Anti-Corruption Efforts in Palestine. The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity: Ramallah, in Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS), 'Prospects for Development in Palestine 2021', p 77.



and the Palestinian Civil Police). This includes particular attention to the needs of Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. The programme also targets gender justice and shorter-term service gap mitigation for women, children and youth when engaging with the Palestinian justice system.

To achieve its objectives, Sawasya draws on CSO and donor advocacy. CSOs are also mobilized for service provision, such as legal aid, which may reiterate and strengthen CSO advocacy for using justice systems.

The Sawasya programme was positioned in a difficult context of competing reform agendas and growing resistance to gender justice. However, the programme nonetheless achieved progress in the development of a pilot one-stop crisis response centre for women and children in Ramallah, the training of judicial actors and police on the specialized gender and juvenile prosecution units, and the establishment of the Palestinian Civil Police's (PCP) Family and Juvenile Protection Units. Contributions were also made to diverting juvenile offenders from imprisonment into a more developmental pathway. Support to CSO projects on legal aid and awareness-raising is evolving.

Sawasya II represents cooperation between UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF (the latter joined for the second phase). Sawasya II enables a more comprehensive approach to access to justice. Despite a challenging context, the programme achieved good progress in gender, child and juvenile justice, mobilization of civil society in service delivery and advocacy, and in the promotion of more institutional efficiency and coherence. However, competing interests and financial constraints challenge the sustainability and impact of the support.

UNDP was also successful in extending services to Gaza, including alternative options to youth detention and CSO provision of legal aid. Moving forward, however, it will be a challenge to upscale and fund service improvements, such as expanding the coverage of one-stop centres and fully implementing the mediation guidelines for juvenile law offenders.<sup>54</sup> It is important to recognize initiatives such as the CSO Empowerment Facility, which supports CSOs across the oPt to initiate and implement various human rights advocacy initiatives and campaigns. While targeting some of the same advocacy issues, the facility is more aimed at capacity support to CSO initiatives.

Building on CSO partnerships, UNDP contributed to enhancing CSO capacities to enable legal consultation and representation under the formal system (reaching 11,464 beneficiaries, including 8,576 women, in 2021). UNDP provided limited support to advocacy on major reform constraints, such as legal aid provision (strongly contested by the Bar Association), the adoption of the Family Protection Bill, and the implementation of CEDAW responsibilities in Palestine (strongly contested by religious actors and patriarchal norms). There were also limited achievements in enabling a greater role for civil society in holding the justice system to account.

A key UNDP contribution through Sawasya II is bringing together various donors' national priorities for bilateral development cooperation with the PA into one coherent structure. The joint programme provided a platform for UNDP and its partners to deliver signature solutions while facilitating funds mobilization from key donors based on their specific priorities.<sup>55</sup> In terms of internal coherence, the midterm evaluation of Sawasya II highlighted that more could be done to improve management and effectiveness and harness synergies among UN agencies. This evaluation concurs with this assessment; cooperation among agencies is based more on a division of labour than on a common gender approach that is implemented through mixed technical teams on the ground.

<sup>54</sup> The mediation guidelines were developed for the specialized juvenile PCP under the Juvenile Protection Law 2016.

<sup>55</sup> For example, Sweden is mainly interested in supporting the rule of law and justice sectors, while others link the justice sector to security and include working on police reform. Still others, such as Spain, have a national focus on promoting women's rights.

While Sawasya illustrates the benefits of a more comprehensive reform approach based on partnerships with other UN agencies and key donors, the programme is an outlier; most UNDP initiatives remain shorter-term in their support or tied to longer-term infrastructure projects in specific locations without scale or strategic linkages to national reforms for upscaling, replicating or learning. Donor priorities also contributed to a bias towards short-term CSO support or emphasis on infrastructure, which makes a portfolio approach more difficult. UNDP's lack of strategic engagement with local governance reform also missed potential partnership opportunities with UN-Habitat on local development. The United Nations Capital Development Fund could be re-engaged in support for development finance or climate resilience funding for local governments. In addition to these potential partnerships, the current relationship with UN Women also lacks a well-conceived approach to engaging in gender-change processes.

Following the general trend, ODA in the justice sector has declined significantly, as major donors such as Canada, USAID and the UK have limited or stopped their support to the sector. This increased Sawasya II's and UNDP's significance in the sector. Even though the programme does not support all dimensions of justice sector reform, it is one of the largest providers of rule-of-law support to Palestinian governmental and civil society justice actors. Further, the programme targets areas where some progress is possible despite major constraints.

The significance of Sawasya II also promoted UNDP as an adviser for EU Representation (EUREP) in its role as deputy chair for the justice sector working group. EUREP is a major donor in the sector, and the design of Sawasya II reflects consultations with EUREP to harmonize approaches. However, the partners behind Development Policy Lending, while favouring a pragmatic approach, also discussed ways to accelerate reform, possibly by introducing conditionalities and exit clauses for continued support based on 'red lines' that ringfence observance of UN human rights principles. It is key for UNDP to support such considerations and vet its support based on the prospects of progress.

**Finding 8.** UNDP promoted digital innovation in oPt by supporting Mizan, a case management system. Mizan illustrates how digital innovations may act as a catalyst for broader governance and efficiency improvements among government stakeholders. UNDP, in cooperation with the PCBS, also promoted a more data-driven approach to access to justice through a justice monitoring system and publication of citizens satisfaction surveys. Relevance of achievements notwithstanding, issues remain in terms of coverage, focus areas and sustainability.

Support for state justice institutions targeted a more efficient and accountable court system and better coordination of justice-sector organizations. This includes improvement of management systems, human resource development (education, in-service), and updating of relevant laws with attention to gender mainstreaming. Key to the achievements of improved management is the Mizan II case management system, which promoted better efficiency in court processes, case flows and transparency and accountability mechanisms. Mizan II compatible systems in Gaza courts have the potential to facilitate the reunification of the different justice systems. Mizan II also underpins plans to support an e-justice platform in the next programme phase, as twelve justice institutions endorsed an e-justice matrix with a roadmap for the implementation of 19 e-services (see Box 1 for analysis on Mizan I and II).

UNDP promoted a more data-driven approach to access to justice through a country-level justice monitoring system and, in cooperation with the PCBS, the publishing of citizen satisfaction surveys. This also facilitates monitoring progress against the SDGs and the voluntary national review process. In addition to Mizan II, justice sector coordination is promoted through coordination platforms between the police and prosecutors, judges and prosecutors, and through the inclusion of security and protection institutions that address cases involving violence against women.



Efforts to strengthen justice reform include support to the National Legal Aid Committee. However, legal aid improvements have met resistance from the Bar Association. Consultations with justice actors pointed out that a change of leadership in the Association may improve this situation. UNDP supported the Palestinian Judicial Institute as the sector's judicial education institution, the development of educational courses and training programmes for family judges and specialized training for judges on violence against women cases. This builds on the work with specialized police and prosecutor teams to promote more consistent treatment of women and children. However, the current system of staff rotation does not take such specialization into account. This undermines the sustainability of the approach and was called out as an area of attention in both the Sawasya I final evaluation and the midterm evaluation of Sawasya II.<sup>56</sup>

Internal accountability systems were developed for prison monitoring. Improvement of family court inspections is also in progress, which is key to achieving gender justice. Another work in progress is support for the PCP complaint mechanism in collaboration with the senior command.

Despite issues related to fragmented and outdated legal frameworks, the adoption of the Oslo Accords and the state-building process promoted favourable legal frameworks in some sectors that are more liberal than in other countries in the region. The legal and judicial systems of the PA have been a focal area since the Oslo Accords. Contrary to most Arab countries, where the content and application of the law are both authoritarian, the reform of the Palestinian rule of law has resulted in a far more liberal framework, notwithstanding difficulties in bringing the letter of the law into operation.<sup>57</sup> One example of how Sawasya II leveraged a more liberal framework is its work on diverting juvenile offenders from court processes and jail through mediation and alternatives to detention. The current Palestinian approach is well ahead of other countries in the region. More may also be achieved in gender justice, but the implementation of international law (e.g. CEDAW) is currently resisted. Among other impacts, this has prevented the Family Protection Bill from passing.

Relevance and scope of Sawasya II achievements notwithstanding, issues remain in terms of coverage, focal areas and sustainability. Many achievements are still a work in progress, and given the challenging context, it was also difficult to make inroads in law and justice harmonization with international law and between Gaza and the West Bank. Moreover, there does not seem to be any exit strategy included in the programme that, for example, balances the financial absorption capacity of a future Palestinian justice system with the reform interventions. Stiff reform resistance adds to the challenge of achieving and sustaining a fully upscaled formal justice system.

Given the decades-long support to the sector and the huge investments, this also poses questions on the overall direction of the support. Despite substantial support for the justice system, capacity remains limited compared to demand and needs. Informal justice is increasingly sought by Palestinians, building on traditional tribal and community dispute resolution processes. These are, however, unfair to women's and children's rights. Sawasya already promotes alternative solutions in its work on juvenile offenders and non-detention pathways. There might also be more space for informal justice support instead of waiting for the Alternative Dispute Resolution Bill to pass.

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<sup>56</sup> See General Consulting and Training, Final Evaluation of SAWASYA Programme 'Strengthening the Rule of Law: Justice and Security for the Palestinian People', p 4 and Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 'Midterm Evaluation Report on Sawasya II - Promoting the Rule of Law in Palestine', December 2020, commissioned by UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF, p 32f.

<sup>57</sup> The current legal framework governing Palestine's justice sector is premised on several key laws, most importantly, *the Basic Law*, issued in 2002. This envisaged the separation of the Palestinian state into three branches: Legislative Authority, Executive Authority and Judicial Authority. It also established a High Judicial Council to govern the Judicial Authority and the Public Prosecution. Further structure for the judiciary was provided by *the Law on Formation of Regular Courts of 2001*, which defines the hierarchical levels of the courts (conciliation courts, courts of first instance, courts of appeal, High Court), and also *the Judiciary Authority Law of 2002*, which divides the courts into regular, religious and special courts.

The midterm evaluation of Sawasya II also found that more could be done to influence the slow pace of legal reforms.<sup>58</sup> Responding to the evaluation, Sawasya II developed a four-point advocacy strategy for the Family Protection Bill for 2022-2023, drawing on, among others, CSO support and regional practices in Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia, where a similar bill was passed. This strategy illustrates that rigorous advocacy is needed to overcome inherent norms and reform resistance in the justice sector.<sup>59</sup> The impacts of this strategy are a topic for the final evaluation of Sawasya II.

As a fragile and crisis-ridden society, the global adverse impact of the coronavirus pandemic hit the Palestinian economy and social cohesion particularly hard. The pandemic made overall aid coordination difficult, as sector working group meetings slowed down or stopped. The pandemic also necessitated *ad hoc* responses from UNDP to support the economic recovery plan. On the positive side, however, it also demonstrated some of the benefits of digitalization and e-governance that may underpin future support (e.g. support to the e-justice initiative, which is expected to be a major intervention area in Sawasya III).

The Israeli occupation and the territorial fragmentation established by the Oslo Accords undermine the PA's legitimacy, empowerment and ability to govern and sustain reforms. During the current PAPP phase, international support for the two-state solution further diminished with an adverse impact on PAPP interventions. Access to justice support implies a lack of coordination between the Palestinian and Israeli justice systems, which undermines the mandate and efficiency of the Palestinian judiciary, especially since personal jurisdiction is limited and criminal offenders can evade the Palestine justice system (see above). This also undermines the public's trust and confidence in the justice system.

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<sup>58</sup> Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, 'Midterm Evaluation Report on Sawasya II - Promoting the Rule of Law in Palestine', December 2020, commissioned by UNDP, UN Women and UNICEF, p 17 and 33.

<sup>59</sup> See management response in the the UNDP Evaluation Resource Center (<https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/12484>) and 'Sawasya II Update on Progress in Relation to Recommendation # 6 of the Mid Term Evaluation on the Family Protection Bill', 2021.

## BOX 1: MIZAN: CENTRALIZED DIGITAL JUDICIAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The successful development and ownership of Mizan are driven by an incremental and home-grown innovation approach. This corresponds to international lessons for the improvement of court management and addresses some of the challenges of e-governance innovations at large. Mizan enabled digital innovation and contributed to making the court system in Palestine more efficient, equitable and accountable.

Mizan ('balance' in Arabic) is a homegrown digital case management system initiated to improve court management in Palestine. Supported by UNDP, it has been in development since 2006. It targets more efficient case management in civil, criminal and enforcement cases handled by the Conciliation Court, the First Instance Court, the Court of Appeal, the Cassation Court, the High Court of Justice and the Notary Public.

Mizan is currently in its second development stage. The first stage, Mizan I, supported judges' case management. Mizan II targets the efficiency of the broader justice system, including all specialized prosecution units, family courts in Hebron, Bethlehem and Nablus, and linkages between the HJC and the police, regular courts, the judicial police, lawyers and litigants. Harvesting the full potential of Mizan II is still a work in progress and depends on contributions from other government actors. For example, a link between Mizan and the civil registry is needed for unique person identification in the system, but this has been resisted by the Ministry of Interior for several years and needs to settle between the AGO and the Ministry of Interior. Moreover, case filing in Palestine is still paper-based, even if Mizan could warrant a transition to e-filing in the court system. Notwithstanding this, Mizan has proved its value-addition in the justice sector in a number of areas:

- *Court efficiency:* Mizan provides the HJC with a tool to monitor the efficiency of judges through regular KPI reporting. The HJC reported that a high case-flow merits promotion and transfer preferences of individual judges. It has also been assessed that the backlog of cases in Palestinian courts decreased by 14 percent in 2019, partly due to the impacts of Mizan II.<sup>60</sup>
- *Access and transparency:* Mizan provides 24-hour online access for judges, prosecutors, court staff, lawyers and litigants to monitor a case process through a mobile app, while paper documents can be uploaded independently of office hours by way of digital filing machines outside the courthouses.
- *Equity in justice and court decisions:* Mizan promotes equity in court decisions, as it provides access for all actors to a digital research-based law database with updated information on court decisions relevant to a particular court case. This access is used by the courts daily, as confirmed by the Chief Prosecutor of the Hebron Courthouse.
- *Corruption mitigation:* Improved transparency in case handling and court decisions mitigates corruptive practices, as process monitoring and reference to similar cases is made easier.

<sup>60</sup> Midterm Evaluation Report on Sawasya II, p 26.

Mizan's ownership and sustainability are underpinned by two factors. First, Mizan is essentially a home-grown system that HJC began conceptualizing in cooperation with USAID before UNDP started its contributions. The IT team nested in the relevant Palestinian institutions, and the PA allocated funding for the upscale (compare to Sawasya II, which pays for some aspects of system development). Second, the incremental approach has contributed to Mizan's sustainability. Initiated as an internal HJC case management system for judges, it has evolved incrementally and increased its functionality and outreach (when the technology and institutional absorption capacity allowed for it).

The incremental approach seems to have safeguarded Mizan from common trappings of e-governance innovation in which smart approaches exceed resource envelopes, skills and competencies and the overall level of institutional preparedness,<sup>61</sup> or when one-size-fits-all solutions are introduced without being tailored to the local context. Some leapfrogging will be necessary, however, such as the full transition from paper to e-filing.<sup>62</sup> Mizan also attracted some international attention in the region; Djibouti reportedly intends to implement a system based on the Mizan experience.

Lessons for e-governance in general from Mizan's experience are important. Apart from the challenges mentioned above, Mizan illustrates how digital innovations may act as a catalyst for governance and efficiency improvements and promote such improvements among other government stakeholders by linking up with them as the innovation outreach is expanded. It also appears that Mizan acts as a neutral space to promote these improvements, given the challenges in the justice sector.

Source: IEO UNDP PPF evaluation

**Finding 9.** Despite a strong gender dimension in access to justice support, a partnership with UN Women would benefit from a more structured approach to addressing gender concerns. Moreover, in some cases where women's rights were advocated, a comprehensive advocacy strategy was lacking, thus reducing UNDP contributions.

Women face systemic discrimination in all spheres of society; overcoming such challenges is difficult. The promotion of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) outcomes is a cross-cutting priority and is pursued across all interventions. Several projects are directly designed to support women's rights and participation, such as the Shufuna Project on women's participation in the peace and reconciliation process, the project support for women's participation in democratic (local) elections, and support for women's rights through the CSO Empowerment Facility. Moreover, while projects like Sawasya II or various waste and wastewater projects served a more general purpose of systemic change in the public health sector, the design and implementation of such projects entailed explicit entry points in support of GEWE, youth and vulnerable groups. This notwithstanding, UNDP's gender approach and its partnership with UN Women reflect an agreed division of work at the project level more than a structured approach to addressing gender concerns (see above).

In some cases, additional efforts are needed to strategize advocacy interventions towards policy change. For example, the Shufuna Project, assisted by the Palestinian Initiative for Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy ('Miftah'), formulated the National Strategy to Integrate Women in National Dialogue and

<sup>61</sup> The law-and-order sector is old, with traditional, bureaucratic values reflecting the need for strict work procedures to ensure the rule of law. Like the hospital sector, such deep-rooted institutional values often prevent even incremental e-governance innovations from being sustained. Digital innovations tend to harvest efficiency gains through new procedures and responsibilities; mutual dialogues are key to achieving this.

<sup>62</sup> The incremental innovation approach in the justice sector seems to tally with countries doing well in e-governance. For example, the digital transition of the Danish Court of Justice. Denmark was ranked number 1 in the 2020 UN E-Government Survey, and the Danish court case management started its digital transition in the mid-1990s. This resulted in three case management systems aimed at bailiff, civil and criminal cases. While bailiff and civil cases are fully digitalized, the criminal cases remain partially paper-based as the Attorney General's Office still considers it too early for a full digital transition.

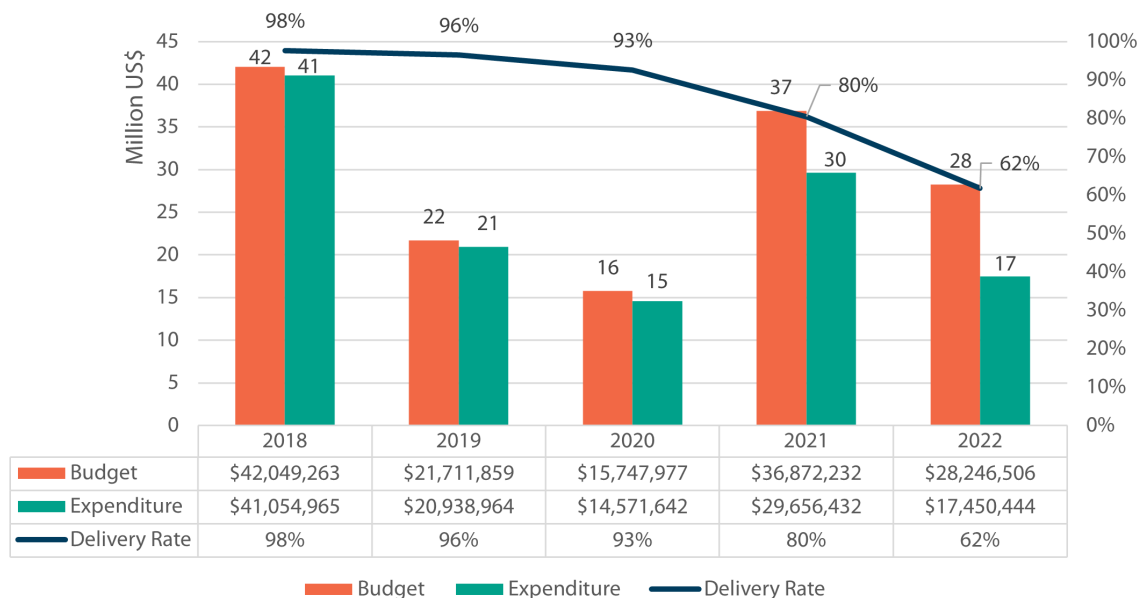
Decision-Making Positions with a baseline survey to underpin the roadmap implementation. While the project itself reported that the strategy was implemented,<sup>63</sup> the Ministry of Women’s Affairs stated that it has neither endorsed it nor been involved in the formulation process. The midterm evaluation of Sawasya II also recommended that efforts should be made to advocate for policy change in terms of passing the Family Protection Bill, which has been stalled ever since the 2006 annulment of the general elections. An advocacy strategy that was designed to address this has yet to be implemented.

## 2.3. IMPROVING BASIC SERVICES

UNDP support to basic services and infrastructure ranges from small-scale social and community infrastructure projects (such as the restoration of houses and historic buildings in Gaza, Jerusalem and the West Bank, rehabilitation of commercial stores in East Jerusalem and the installation of solar panels in hospitals and schools) to large-scale construction projects (such as Khan Younis Wastewater Treatment Plant (KYWWTP) and the Hebron courthouse). Initiatives that focused on community resilience aimed at improving water access and quality, housing and sanitation, community facilities, solid waste management, construction of wastewater networks and installation of transboundary wastewater flow meters. See Annex 4 for a list of projects.

Inclusive economic development and improving basic services, areas that are both linked to the three PPF outcomes, have several common projects. Of the 66 PPF projects, 29 projects (ongoing) have initiatives pertaining to improving basic services. Basic services also generated temporary employment (see Section 2.4. on inclusive employment and livelihoods). See Figure 6 for total budget and expenditure for this area.

**FIGURE 6: BASIC SERVICES: BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



Source: UNDP ATLAS, PAPP OFFICE

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

<sup>63</sup> See ROAR 2020, p 10.

**Finding 10.** UNDP support to the rehabilitation of a range of public infrastructure has been vital to the functioning of basic services. It contributed to alleviating the impact of chronic crises, supported community resilience and improved economic, educational and employment opportunities for Palestinians, particularly in Area C and Gaza.

In general, infrastructure support contributed to filling critical gaps in basic services. UNDP was well regarded for its speedy and flexible support in this area. UNDP support to improving basic services aligns with the national priorities set in national development and sector plans (e.g. education, health, local government, water and public works). UNDP support included large, strategic infrastructure projects that could not be implemented by the authorities or local organizations given the occupation context, for example, KYWWTP, the construction of wastewater networks in northwest Bank, the Hebron courthouse and the installation of transboundary wastewater flow meters.

A major and long-standing area of the UNDP programme is supporting community infrastructure in Gaza through the multi-phase Employment Generation Programme (EGP), currently in its culmination phase (its eleventh phase), and the subsequent Investment Programme for Resilience that started recently. The programmes aimed to rehabilitate social infrastructure and to create temporary employment for economic recovery.

There were social and economic infrastructure improvements in Gaza and the West Bank. The last evaluation of the EGP programme (for phases V-IX) reported that 340 infrastructure projects (80 in Gaza and 260 in the West Bank) were implemented, including 15 projects in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem.<sup>64</sup> The programme supported the construction and improvement of hundreds of individual infrastructures relevant to basic services, such as education, road, community centres, health, water, sanitation and public facilities, such as markets and parks. UNDP made a shift in its infrastructure initiatives to include support to social cohesion and the promotion of local ownership. To align with local priorities, UNDP worked with CSOs to identify the needs of local communities by contracting community mobilizers.

Community resilience initiatives in Area C and East Jerusalem (Community Resilience and Development Programme (CRDP), completed in 2020) contributed to reinforcing the resilience of Palestinians by improving basic services infrastructure. A total of 142,134 Palestinians benefited from various interventions.<sup>65</sup> These initiatives contributed to improving access to education services (including through the rehabilitation of schools, professional development for teachers and scholarships), proper living conditions and decent housing in East Jerusalem, and enhanced health services (including subsidized treatment, mobile ophthalmic care clinics, intensive care units and mobile health clinics). There are examples where UNDP support had a tremendous impact. For example, Bedouin communities in Area C have improved access to renewable energy power supplies. Restoration of historic sites increased the opportunities for tourism in Khan Al-Wakleh in Nablus, similar to Maqam En Nabi Musa in Jericho.

UNDP completed the reconstruction of 121 housing units damaged during the 2014 hostilities, benefiting 641 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and contributing to gradual resettlement (including eight female-headed households). UNDP started the repair of 102 severely damaged housing units of 628 IDPs

<sup>64</sup> KFW, Employment Generation Programme Ex post Evaluation, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> 31,374 students had improved access to quality education services through the rehabilitation of schools, the professional development of teachers and access to scholarships; 13,323 Palestinians now have access to proper living conditions and decent housing in East Jerusalem; 21,999 Palestinians benefited from health development services (e.g. subsidized treatment, mobile ophthalmic care clinics, an intensive care unit and mobile clinics); 326 Palestinians living in Bedouin communities in Area C have improved access to renewable energy power supplies; 800 shepherds and farmers received agricultural support (e. g. automated semen freezing unit, a liquid nitrogen generator and a data selection unit).



(including five female-headed households), improving their living conditions. Access to shelters and housing was also targeted in Gaza as a response to the different escalations that have taken place since 2008 (the last one was in May 2021).

UNDP supported the Transitional Shelter Cash Assistance (TSCA) programme for affected IDPs. A total of 397 families (39 woman-headed households) were supported with TSCA, which enabled 1,998 IDPs, including 17 persons with disabilities, to live in decent housing conditions. While the scale of needs is extensive in Gaza and areas of the West Bank, UNDP contributions are important to ongoing efforts to address basic needs. For many oPt and international partners, the presence of UNDP's local and international staff (in the field) and UNDP's capacity to quickly and efficiently mobilize resources made UNDP a suitable implementing agency for early recovery and then for building resilience for more sustainable support. Private-sector institutions stressed the critical role that UNDP played in providing a framework for Gaza recovery efforts.

UNDP should be credited for speedy and effective rubble clearance in Gaza. A spectrum of stakeholder groups acknowledged the responsiveness and timeliness of UNDP support and the attention paid to details in disposing and recycling different types of rubble. The rubble removal activities enabled the safe demolishing and timely reconstruction of around 385 residential units that had been destroyed or severely damaged. Over 93,000 tons of debris were collected; 67,000 tons were crushed and reused to rehabilitate 18,565 meters of agricultural and internal roads across Gaza.

Restoration of historic buildings and sites is critical to preserving the heritage and identity of Palestinians in their land and to enabling these assets to be used for cultural and economic activities. This is also an area where a coordinated approach among many actors would further enhance MoTA and Ministry of Local Government capacities in heritage conservation and local economic development.

**Finding 11.** UNDP's support to wastewater and medical waste management addressed critical public health issues. Wastewater management initiatives demonstrate effective practices to enable PWA to improve transboundary wastewater management and control.

UNDP support improved transboundary wastewater management in the West Bank and water treatment in Gaza. In West Bank wastewater collection networks, two pumping stations were established and flow measurement systems were installed in five remote, rural border communities in the northwest Bank (benefiting approximately 14,500 families).

Community engagement is a key aspect of this wastewater management initiative. In the municipalities where the initiatives were developed, UNDP support helped to build capacities for wastewater management and monitoring of transboundary wastewater quantities. The development of a digital platform for PWA to monitor, record and analyse real-time data on wastewater flows across borders helped to understand the scale of operations and provided PWA with reliable data to improve their ability to negotiate better transboundary wastewater arrangements with Israel.

The other UNDP initiative in this area is the construction of KYWWTP, which is significant in many ways despite the lengthy time it took to complete and operationalize it. KYWWTP continues to contribute to improved hygiene, environment and water security in Gaza. Support to enhancing the municipal and PWA capacities has resulted in efficient plant management and the governorate proactively mobilizing resources for maintenance. KYWWTP was completed and commissioned in November 2019 with the planned capacity to serve more than 375,000 residents in the Khan Younis governorate. The first stage is currently operational

and serving 200,000 residents of Khan Younis city. UNDP should be credited for securing financial resources and for being persistent with the construction of the facility despite the substantial challenges of restricted movement of goods and intermittent conflict escalation.

There are still resource gaps and gaps in technical capacities required for maintaining KYWWTP. The Coastal Water Management Utility lacks qualified human resources and a sufficient revenue stream (for example, paying salaries for two shifts is a challenge). Resource mobilization in terms of user fees may not be sufficient because water and sewage tax collection is not optimal. The governorate is currently paying salaries from additional resources mobilized from international actors and using currently available technical resources in the municipalities.

UNDP has been a pioneer in the area of medical waste management in oPt. During the assessment period, support to Gaza's hospital waste management system improved hospital hygiene, thus contributing to controlling the spread of disease. The upgraded medical waste management system in Gaza comprises a new medical waste management facility (equipped with a high-capacity medical waste treatment microwave). UNDP also supported five hospitals and several health facilities with essential equipment for waste storage and pre-treatment processes. Over time (particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic), this will take on further significance in ensuring hospital hygiene and patient care, particularly given the heretofore unhygienic treatment of medical waste in Gaza.

The 'National Water and Wastewater Policy' and 'Strategy for Palestine 2013 – 2032'<sup>66</sup> provide the planning and management framework necessary for the protection, conservation, sustainable management and development of water resources and for the improved provision of water supply and wastewater services and local and international standards (oPt is a signatory to international environmental accords).

There are significant environmental concerns related to wastewater management in many areas; a challenge for oPt is that many rural households are not connected to a wastewater management network. The environmental risks and health impacts call for a more comprehensive response to building on the above good examples and for authorities to make stronger commitments. There is scope for UNDP to engage at the policy level, building on its wastewater treatment experience in Gaza and West Bank. Other agencies (e.g. World Bank, UNICEF, KfW) are supporting similar initiatives; the resulting diverse efforts are in need of consolidation.

A related area is solid waste management, an area where UNDP engagement during the current programme has been limited. Currently, 47 percent of all waste, including hazardous waste, is disposed of in unsanitary dump sites (which have reached capacity), while just 3 percent of rubbish is recycled; there is limited attention paid to the environmental impacts of solid waste management in Gaza.<sup>67</sup> If left unaddressed, these waste management issues will eventually pose both environmental and public health hazards. Visits to Gaza for this evaluation point to a looming public health hazard (with the potential to become another flashpoint with Israel) unless solid waste management issues are addressed.

**Finding 12.** Although capacity development was not central to infrastructure rehabilitation and building, UNDP's technical and human resources support has bolstered the capacities of basic service provision, particularly in oPt's response to the COVID-19 crisis.

<sup>66</sup> See <http://www.pwa.ps/userfiles/server/policy/Policy%20-%20English%20-%20Final.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, State of Environment and Outlook Report for the occupied Palestinian territory, 2020, <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/state-environment-and-outlook-report-occupied-palestinian-territory-2020>



There were areas where UNDP support augmented ministries' human resource capacities. Strengthening the MoH's capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic included the provision of urgent medical equipment and the deployment of 1,148 health workers to medical facilities and hospitals across Palestine. This support helped improve the socio-economic conditions for employed health workers (linked to economic development and employment). The health institutions used UNDP and other COVID-19 response support to strengthen areas that needed attention in critical health services. Support to health facilities resulted in improving the provision of essential health services to vulnerable communities, including the supply and installation of an intensive care unit at Hebron Government Hospital; installation of a blood bank, laboratory and comprehensive microbiological unit at Jenin Hospital; construction of two additional floors in the education hospital of Al-Najah University; building an outpatient, laboratory and radiology floor at Yatta Hospital; and installing advanced MRI equipment at Ramallah hospital. The evaluation team noted the importance of medical waste management training provided to 4,756 health workers in improving hospital hygiene.

Strengthening the institutional and operational set-up of the Joint Service Council in Gaza, which serves over 80 hospitals and health facilities, is widely acknowledged as critical to strengthening the capacities of the authorities in medical waste management. Engaging the Joint Service Council increased ownership of the facility and commitment even when operational resources were scarce.

Support to ministries and municipalities that are improving the operations and management of the two main restored historic sites ensured the management of the assets created (e.g. Maqam En Nabi Musa in Jericho and Khan Al-Wakleh in Nablus). The site of Khan Al-Wakleh is currently operational and provides tourist and hospitality services to visitors of the city of Nablus. The functioning of Maqam En Nabi Musa has been interrupted due to religious incidents; UNDP and relevant PA agencies have been in discussions regarding a way forward for operationalizing the site.

Historical restoration projects have not yet led to opportunities to strengthen institutional capacities for site/facility maintenance and operations or for authorities to activate sites for the benefit of local communities. UNDP did not leverage its partnerships with PA ministries or local NGOs to enable a comprehensive strategy and coordination mechanism to protect historical sites and revitalize their economic potential.

**Finding 13.** Notwithstanding the geopolitical constraints in Palestine that restrict UNDP work, several factors contributed positively to UNDP support to basic services and inclusive economic development. Ensuring the capacity, resources and willingness of local partners are crucial to operating and maintaining the rehabilitated infrastructure beyond the UNDP programme period. There remain gaps in the sustainability and proper utilization of infrastructure facilities by the authorities. UNDP efforts in ensuring the sustainability of outcomes have been constrained by restrictive funding sources and limitations in development financing.

Facilitating factors in enabling recovery and development support include UNDP's long-established experience operating in difficult development and fragile contexts; the technical capacity and local knowledge of the PAPP team; the strong relations and partnerships with the government and local communities and partners; and the flexible, client-oriented approach that characterizes UNDP work in Palestine. UNDP is recognized for its expertise in the implementation of infrastructure and economic development activities, mainly in geopolitically sensitive areas like Area C, Gaza and East Jerusalem. UNDP was among the first international agencies to step in and mobilize the human and financial resources that are critical to urgent support. The ability of UNDP to mobilize a strong, local technical and management team and responsive partners was critical in advancing the construction of the flagship projects (for example, the Hebron courthouse).

Despite UNDP’s strengths, it has been less successful in its efforts to ensure the sustainability of project-supported infrastructure and the longevity of the institutional and community processes achieved. One of the constraints is donor reluctance to support maintenance. UNDP has yet to address this challenge.

Similar to the economic growth and livelihood areas, the lack of private-sector engagement in basic services is an obstacle to improving sustainability and infrastructure utilization. There is scope for better leveraging its comparative advantage in finding options for enabling sustainability processes, including facilitating financing.

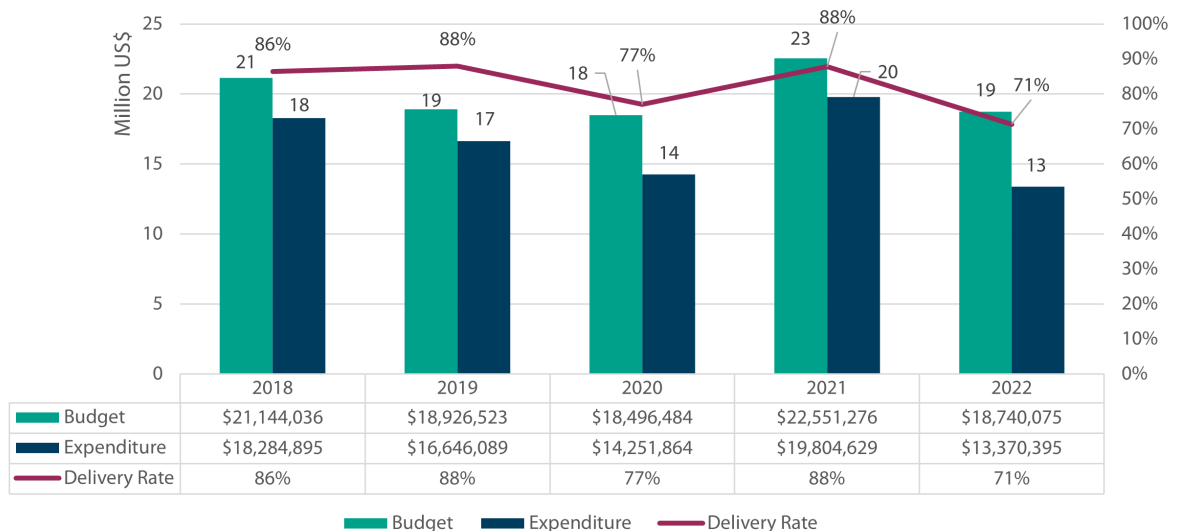
## 2.4. INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Initiatives under *inclusive employment and livelihoods* comprised three support streams:

- a. Short-term employment (including cash for work through social infrastructure work and responding to urgent socio-economic challenges resulting from the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and escalations in Gaza);
- b. Support to employment generation and self-employment through micro-enterprise development, professional business support for MSMEs and vocational education; and
- c. Innovation and ICT tools and support to institutional capacities (enhancement of TVET system and facilities ).

UNDP emphasized an inclusive approach, women’s economic empowerment and social cohesion among youth (the latter through initiatives such as training and scholarships for students and providing employment opportunities). The total budget and expenditure for this area are presented in Figure 7.

**FIGURE 7: INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS: BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



Source: Source: UNDP ATLAS, PAPP OFFICE

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

**Finding 14.** Support to short-term employment and business revitalization was critical in alleviating the adverse socio-economic impacts of the recurrent escalations in Gaza and the COVID-19 crisis. UNDP is widely credited for the quick delivery of much-needed temporary employment in the context of multiple and protracted crises in oPt.

A major focus of the economic recovery initiatives was on short-term employment creation; UNDP was effective in providing this. The temporary job creation through cash for work was vital to augmenting minimum living conditions for families and individuals affected by crises. This support helped break the cycle of unemployment and contributed to quick income, which is essential for sustaining households. Temporary employment support, which provided urgent and quick relief in affected and marginalized areas, was positively perceived by recipients, the authorities (PMO, Palestinian Employment Fund, Ministry of Social Development), and international partners.

Improvements to social and economic infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank were achieved through the multi-phase employment generation programme (EGP), which is now in its 11th and culmination phase. The infrastructure initiatives generated temporary jobs over the years. The last evaluation of the programme (for phases 5–9) reported that 340 infrastructure projects were implemented (80 in Gaza and 260 in the West Bank), including 15 projects in Area C and 8 in East Jerusalem.<sup>68</sup> The programme supported the construction and improvement of hundreds of individual projects relevant to basic services such as education, road, youth and sport, cultural sites, community centres, health, water and sanitation sectors. The programme also supported the construction of public facilities such as markets and parks that are critical for normalization. According to UNDP monitoring reports and stakeholder consultations, 2,968 employment opportunities were created (three to six-month periods) for skilled and unskilled workers, mainly in smaller communities and refugee camps. In addition to the EGP, as part of early response/recovery to the COVID-19 crises, UNDP also supported the deployment of 1,148 health workers for nine months in 121 MoH hospitals.

While this evaluation cannot rigorously validate the vast number of workdays UNDP supported (approximately 1,200,000 working days since 2018 in Gaza), various consultations have made it evident that temporary employment through different economic recovery initiatives filled critical household income needs.

The cash-for-work programming has witnessed some positive changes since 2017. Previously, the approach was limited to unskilled, temporary employment (for example, cleaning streets, farm work, public infrastructure maintenance, etc.).

UNDP realized the potential of short-term employment in key sectors such as education, health and municipal services, as well as the need to shift to more sustainable skills-oriented employment generation. More recent iterations (such as the Investment Programme for Resilience) have adopted a sector-based approach and integrated capacity-building elements and support to social cohesion in cash-for-work activities. UNDP's successful piloting of cash-for-work in West Bank social sectors is currently being replicated by Norway in collaboration with the World Bank.

Injecting cash through temporary work into the crippled Gaza economy has been one of the main supporting mechanisms for stabilizing household income and livelihoods for people living under extreme conditions. However, the reach and response of such measures have been fragmented due to the absence of a coordinated strategy among international actors. Given current political constraints, there is limited momentum in oPt to link temporary employment efforts to more structured social protection measures.

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<sup>68</sup> KFW, Employment Generation Programme Ex Post Evaluation, 2019.

**Finding 15.** UNDP-supported vocational training and skills and entrepreneurship development initiatives produced tangible outputs, particularly in reaching out to youth. However, these initiatives require better strategizing and streamlining to enhance the sustainability of processes. UNDP is well-positioned to support economic development and livelihood efforts in areas that are politically and geographically sensitive (Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza). For business and entrepreneurship development efforts and wider replication of successful initiatives, it is critical to anchor and link similar central-level programmes in government policy processes that are currently lagging. This is critical for the wider replication of successful pilots.

Promoting business development by supporting enterprises and enhancing the institutional and operational environment for MSMEs is an important area of UNDP support. UNDP provided technical, managerial, financial and legal Advisory services to MSMEs and promoted women-led businesses through various projects (e.g. business development consulting services, supporting MSMEs in Jericho Agro-Industrial Park (JAIP) and Gaza Industrial Estate, and Monshati). UNDP support to MSMEs was expanded to providing financial support to cope with the severe impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic had on businesses. There are examples where UNDP support successfully revitalized small business units.

Monshati is a key UNDP initiative in support of MSMEs. Monshati aims to provide MSMEs with a one-stop shop/national help desk scheme in five governorates (Bethlehem, Deir AL Balah-middle, Hebron, Jericho and Nablus). The Monshati online platform and help desks provided training, technical assistance and legal advice to more than 3,500 users (32 percent were women), benefiting almost 2,500 businesses. There was positive feedback regarding the Monshati initiative's achievements, particularly its virtual modality that enabled it to reach small businesses in remote areas. Partners perceived initiatives such as the Deir AL-Balah Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Industries, and Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) as some of the most important initiatives in the past years. UNDP is also credited with facilitating networking among the national Monshati partners (Chambers of Commerce, Federation and PMA).

There is evidence that small enterprises have improved their capacities. However, the alignment between production, specialized technical support, commodification and market aspects needs consistent and collaborative engagement that is often beyond the scope of UNDP support activities. Some Chambers of Commerce can respond to such needs within and beyond UNDP support, but in the absence of a localized strategy to link resources and appropriate actors, such efforts have not been systematically employed. Technical training has been unable to keep pace with the increasing demand for diverse areas of business development. The evaluation also points out that sustained support is needed to enable access to finance, increase capacities to consistently cluster and link to supply markets, analyse and design business strategies and adopt new technologies.

Notwithstanding the momentum generated by Monshati, insufficient financing and the lack of an enabling environment for long-term competitiveness and market linkages have reduced enterprises' income-generation capacities. The evaluation points to several concerns. Notably, the sustainability of Monshati outputs and the Chambers of Commerce's ability to maintain the services of the help desks. There are also concerns regarding the availability of financial resources to upgrade the online platform to a second version and to cover PMA or/and Ministry of National Economy (MoNE) operating costs (about \$150,000 per year). The evaluation also points out that response rates and the number of platform users have decreased in recent months due to the ending of the contracts of Help desk Officers (which were paid by UNDP).

Moving forward, UNDP and its partners need to consider certain issues. The three key actors (PMA, Chambers of Commerce and UNDP) did not arrive at a consensus regarding activities, exit strategies or prioritization. These actors have different expectations, which resulted in delays in activity implementation. Though the conceptualization was important, the process and implementation of support to MSMEs were not commensurate with the expectations that the programme generated among users. For example, governorates were not clear regarding their prioritization of interest-free loan disbursements leading to mismatched MSME expectations. The training was seen as supply-driven rather than demand-driven business development information. Lastly, the programme lacked coherence with the activities of other agencies, which undermined business development efforts.

The success of the Monshati platform depended on the proactiveness of the Chambers of Commerce (for example, Hebron and Deir AL-Balah are more active than Jenin). The Deir AL-Balah Chamber of Commerce has already renewed the contracts of the Helpdesk Officers for an additional three months.

One of the shortfalls of the Monshati approach is the partnership modality that was adopted and the roles of various private-sector partners. MoNE was not adequately engaged, often slowing implementation and decreasing ownership. It would have been more logical and efficient to have a clear and active role for MoNE in a national initiative such as this. The Chamber of Commerce and Industries in Hebron, for example, was proactive in engaging the MoNE.

The involvement of PMA is important in providing a policy umbrella for projects related to access to finance and incentives for financing institutions and MSMEs to promote better financing arrangements and tools. Due to the mandate and outreach to a wide base of members, having PMA lead the initiative was not the best choice; private-sector organizations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce and industrial unions) are more suitable for this task.

Addressing strategic enablers for enterprise development requires concrete efforts to address key dimensions of productive capacities. Partnerships are critical to bringing in appropriate expertise, thus enabling support that enhances long-term capacities, covers sufficient scope, is anchored in institutions and ensures the long-term sustainability of results. Currently, despite a range of initiatives with different scopes, they are not designed to catalyse enablers for entrepreneurship development.

**Finding 16.** UNDP has a long-standing engagement in Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank. UNDP contributed to the setting up and functioning of vocational education centres, increasing their potential to improve employment skills.

UNDP supported a range of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) initiatives that had different approaches. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, support focused on infrastructure and improving TVET facilities (e.g. schools, workshops). Visits to TVET centres and consultations indicated that attention was paid to the quality of infrastructure, design and implementation. In Jerusalem, UNDP's role was well considered by partners, including the National TVET Commission (NTC), who consider UNDP's work vital to providing a relief pathway for Palestinians.

The TVET in Gaza focused on training using tailored, short-term courses with special attention to youth, women and persons with disabilities. UNDP carried out a study on TVET value chains in Gaza to understand how and where women could be more involved in the TVET field. Women and persons with disabilities represent about 30 percent of TVET employment created by UNDP. This approach was designed based on

a needs and gap assessment conducted by UNDP and continued technical committee dialogue with key actors in the sector (e.g. Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Education, GIZ, Enabel). This approach improved learning and experience exchanges among stakeholders.

The sustainability of TVET interventions requires coordination and synergy between infrastructure support and the 'soft' side of implementation (e.g. the quality of curricula, teacher capacities and linkages with employment). These aspects of implementation are done by other UN agencies such as UNESCO and donors (e.g. GIZ and Enabel). As of now, these linkages are not established.

There were examples of other partners carrying some UNDP initiatives forward. For example, the Palestine Employment Fund was able to secure additional funds for women's TVET based on its previous experience with UNDP. In 2016, UNDP pioneered freelancing and e-work concepts in partnership with Working Without Borders, after which several agencies started similar interventions. UNDP has created a working group/platform to coordinate and discuss synergies among donors working within the e-work field (the first meeting was on 2 June 2022). Stakeholder interviews in Gaza confirmed that UNDP was instrumental in expanding e-work beyond ICT to include other freelancing services (for example, virtual assistants, accountants, translation and graphic design). UNDP was also key in creating the trend of e-work in Gaza and providing the needed supply through its various projects.

**Finding 17.** UNDP efforts are important to nurturing innovation, entrepreneurial culture and market-linked skills among youth to enhance employability and productive engagement in economic activities.

UNDP made concerted efforts to strengthen youth employment skills. In Gaza, attention was on youth employment; 569 Palestinian youth (of which 44 percent were women) have actively engaged in economic empowerment activities for enhancing employment. This resulted in youth training and employment in different sectors, particularly the municipality, health and education sectors. There are indications that at least 25 percent of these youth started an enterprise or secured jobs, including in the public sector. The evaluation team's visits to Gaza confirmed that youth considered the opportunities to engage in skills development and engage in new work areas as empowering and critical for their self-esteem and their capacity to contribute to the community.

Facilitation of experience exchange and coordination among partners such as Maan Center, Al Nayzak and Save the Youth future was important in promoting the youth empowerment agenda. Youth who participated in the evaluation focus group discussion consider the facility established as part of the Beit Al Fakhoura initiative as their second home that gave them a decent and safe space to meet, learn, socialize and entertain. The programme equipped students with new skills, confidence and networking opportunities that helped them secure employment and become catalysts for change in their communities.

The scholarships and financial support alleviated the financial burden on low-income families. Despite the importance of these initiatives and the need for scaling them up for wider reach, there are limited indications of their continuation after the programme period. The closing of the youth facility after the programme raises questions about a programme design that did not plan for the continuation of successful initiatives.

For over a decade, a significant UNDP initiative supported students (most of whom were part of a marginalized group) by providing financial scholarships, academic counselling, training, internship opportunities, market linkages, establishing student clubs and organizing the 'Inspire Conference'. This support helped beneficiaries complete their university degrees and improve their leadership and life skills. The programme also established the Beit Al Fakhoura student facility to create a meeting and learning space



for students. Because students had lacked such a space, Maqam En Nabi Musa was widely considered to be unique. The programme produced promising results. For example, internships were provided to 621 new graduates; 401 secured long-term employment.

International support for youth initiatives is fragmented, reducing medium-term focus and the promotion of youth programme models. While there are several initiatives by UN, donor and other agencies, they generally provide short-term youth employment activities and reach a small number of beneficiaries each. There are limited efforts to provide a coordinated approach to youth employment that go beyond the humanitarian mode of support.

**Finding 18.** UNDP is considering resilience approaches for inclusive economic development. UNDP's Deep Demo Strategic Enablers, which promote systems thinking and resilience, are highly relevant to oPt. But such approaches have not yet enabled investments or partnerships to provide workable, time-bound solutions. Although UNDP acknowledges that engaging and strengthening the private sector is critical for resilient economic development in oPt, this approach has yet to receive the attention it deserves.

UNDP used the Deep Demo Strategic Enablers, a programming tool to accelerate the value and productivity of small enterprises and to boost economic growth in a complex business environment. The UNDP Palestine Accelerator Lab (PalAcCLab) is identifying the enablers to accelerate businesses by, for example, clustering small enterprises into business collectives to enhance their value. A service company development continuum is bringing together a broad range of knowledge on local business innovation, best practices and trade models to develop a coherent and scalable strategy. PalAcCLab is also exploring innovative options to improve trade linkages in order to enhance the value of businesses.

Promotion and support to sector economic growth (such as agri-food value chains), digital infrastructure, MSMEs, efforts to increase the number of industrial parks and enhanced community resilience are all pertinent to the oPt context. However, UNDP initiatives were often too fragmented, short in duration and limited in scope to address structural market constraints. In addition, there was no coherence between UNDP initiatives that aimed to demonstrate viable models of enterprise development and trade.

For the economic clusters to tap into the Palestinian market, a more viable strategy is needed that entails more than targeting the local market. In Hebron, these initiatives are already underway, and project support was used to develop a strategy for leather clustering units. The strategic framework, developed with the support of UNDP and Chambers of Commerce, may help bolster the leather MSME cluster efforts, but it is too early to ascertain progress. Leather brands sold in Palestine need design assistance to enhance value, capture niche markets and improve marketability.

Despite sound approaches, the scope of UNDP interventions is not commensurate to the task of responding to the many factors that affect the progress and profitability of MSMEs. To upscale efforts, sector growth solutions need consistent engagement with wider partnerships and comprehensive support.

Recent UNDP programmes have been shifting from short-term initiatives towards a longer-term approach. For example, there is a stronger longer-term emphasis in the Investment Programme for Resilience and Inclusive and Resilient Economy. While it is too early to assess the implementation of this approach, lessons from previous programmes are worth considering.

The evaluation observed a need to bridge the gap between programme design and implementation. In Gaza, following the completion of the Palestinian Families Economic Empowerment Programme (DEEP), UNDP implemented the Path to Economic Recovery: Facilitating Jobs in Gaza programme. The programme, which took a holistic approach to economic recovery, had four components: short-term employment (cash



for work), support to MSMEs, TVET and entrepreneurship. The implementation of these components lacks the scope needed to address key bottlenecks that would unlock processes to create more sustainable income generation and employment.

Despite using different programmatic approaches, UNDP's economic development and employment initiatives had limitations in enabling sustainable solutions. Some UNDP partners were able to implement solutions that would sustain employment outcomes achieved. Similar to those in other areas, short-duration UNDP projects in Gaza could not create the desired sustainable income-generation options for youth.

A strategic approach to private-sector development has the potential to enhance UNDP initiatives' ability to increase productive capacities and enable enterprise development. Despite the occupation and crisis context, Palestine provides opportunities to mobilize private-sector actors and finance providers as agents of economic growth (beyond short-term engagement in projects). The World Bank and EU are involved in public-private partnerships, and EU and GIZ are engaged in efforts to de-risk the policy space for private-sector development in employment creation.

UNDP recognizes that technology and digital platforms are important tools for mitigating the challenges of restricted access to clients and markets. However, UNDP efforts were limited in harnessing private-sector support for economic recovery initiatives and have yet to explore possible roles in medium- to longer-term livelihood efforts. The nascent Palestinian entrepreneurship ecosystem needs substantial support to maintain its accelerated growth path. UNDP is well-positioned to enable private-sector growth by leveraging the potential of its ongoing work and using its comparative advantage in policy engagement, its partnership with PA authorities and its expertise in programme approaches and technical inputs.

UNDP has aligned its efforts with local needs and made attempts to streamline its support with other agencies' ongoing initiatives. There were mixed responses to UNDP's collaborations and partnerships. In Gaza, UNDP had relatively more success in engaging with actors to support economic recovery and promote employment and business development. Engaging local partners in identifying, designing and delivering projects enabled the success of activities and local partner ownership. Collaboration with partners such as G-Gate, the Islamic University of Gaza and the University College of Applied Sciences enabled the linking of short-term UNDP support for skills development and entrepreneurship to longer-term employment and enterprise development support. NGO partners and the Islamic University of Gaza in Gaza were active in the development of prototypes for enterprise development and exploring new fields (e.g. e-services and agricultural technologies) and provided support to expanding production and market linkages.

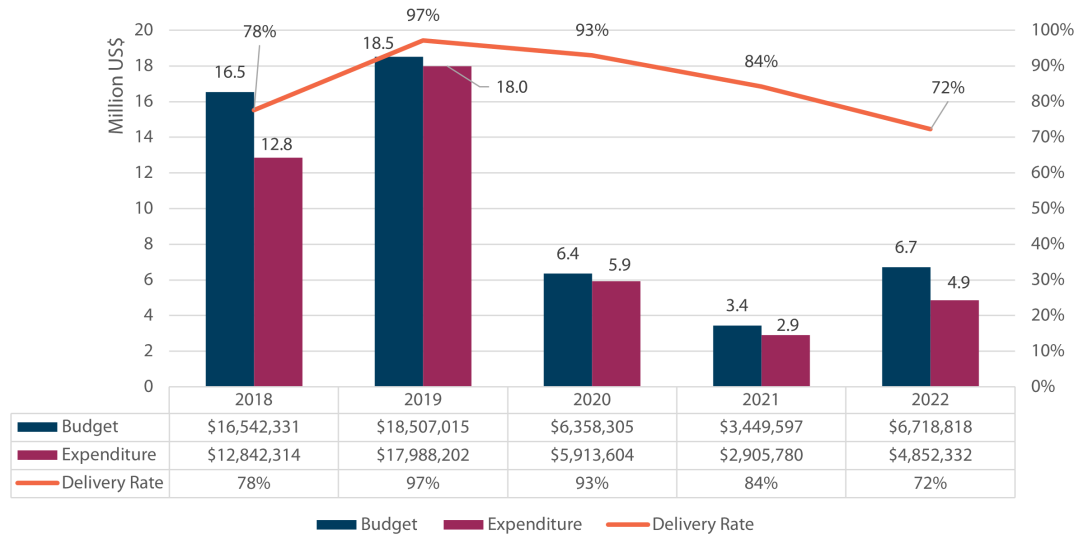
In contrast, there was a perception in the West Bank that UNDP was competing with NGOs and private actors by independently implementing projects instead of partnering with them. This practice was in contravention of the UN mandate to facilitate engagement with various actors

## **2.5. SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

This section presents an analysis of UNDP support to natural resource management and energy efficiency. The first stream of support in this area included small- and medium-scale renewable energy initiatives in Gaza and the West Bank (including the KYWWTP, Medical waste management plant, Turk hospital in Gaza, JAIP and social sectors in Gaza and West Bank). The second stream of initiatives supported green climate readiness and wastewater pollution control, hydro climate modelling, cleaning wadi Gaza coastal wetland, wadi JAIP rehabilitation, transboundary wastewater and green Gaza. The third stream of support entailed building the Environment Quality Authority's capacities to develop national mechanisms and guidelines

for accessing the Green Climate Fund (GCF). This stream included the development of institutional and regulatory frameworks and mechanisms that contribute to building national and local capacity to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Annex 4 presents a list of the projects in this area; Figure 8 presents the budget and expenditure for this area.

**FIGURE 8: SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY: BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE (2018-2022)**



Source: UNDP ATLAS, PAPP OFFICE

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

## Renewable energy

**Finding 19.** UNDP successfully promoted solar energy systems through its infrastructure support. The use of solar energy reduced electricity consumption, provided renewable energy options, minimized negative environmental impacts and reduced the reliance on imported electricity.

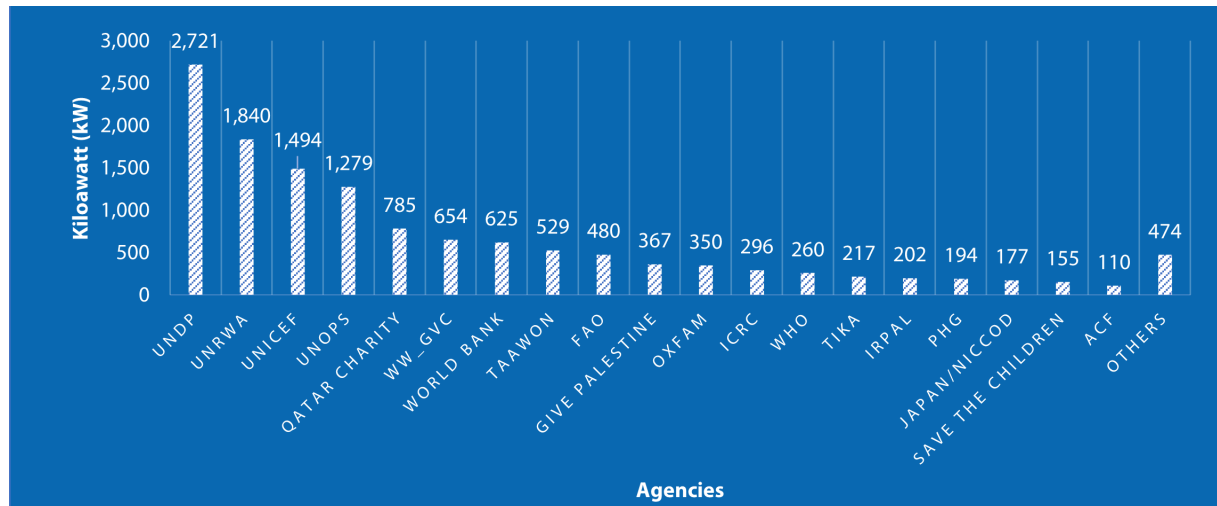
Decades of daily power outages in Gaza affected the provision of basic services, including health, WASH, education and solid waste management. Whereas there is a need for 450 MW of electricity, Generating Power Planet only produces 70-80 MW of electricity. 120 MW of electricity is imported from Israel, resulting in a shortage of 250 MW.

UNDP support assumes particular significance given the critical importance of renewable energy options and bridging the electricity deficit. UN agencies, including UNDP, and other development actors have undertaken solar energy initiatives for facilities such as schools, hospitals and water treatment plants. Such initiatives have the benefit of reducing operational costs and increasing sustainability.

UNDP is a major contributor to the establishment of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems in education and health facilities in Gaza and the West Bank. Similarly, UNDP support for renewable energy systems in WASH facilities (in Gaza) and business services in Gaza and the West Bank (GAIP and JAIP) improved energy efficiency. UNDP used its infrastructure support to mainstream solar energy in educational, health and WASH facilities as a renewable energy option. UNDP support focused on mitigating the effect of the energy crises by installing

solar PV systems at educational, health and WASH facilities. In Gaza, the UNDP contribution is the largest among all other international agencies. UNDP solar energy projects implemented in Gaza from 2018 to 2022 in the health, education and WASH sectors enabled the generation of about 2.72 MW<sup>69</sup> of renewable energy (see Figure 9).

**FIGURE 9: CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PV SYSTEMS IN GAZA BY AGENCY AS OF 27 APRIL 2021**



Source: UN/UNDP PAPP reporting

The promotion of solar PV systems within infrastructure and economic recovery projects is instrumental to enhancing infrastructure sustainability, promoting good environmental practices and reducing the dependency on the Israeli grid and the financial burden on Palestinians. The solar system at JAIP improved access to alternative energy to meet the growing needs of businesses and industries with a capacity of 2 MW solar utility. The solar utility system was installed on the rooftops of 22 hangers in JAIP in addition to an expansion of the existing ground solar facility.

Education is another key sector to benefit from renewable energy projects. Continuous cuts and frequent disturbances of electricity in schools (electricity is often only available on alternate days) jeopardize students' access to quality education, which affects learning outcomes and educational achievement. School rooftop PV systems are therefore critical to lessening power-related education disruptions in Gaza.

To reduce the electricity costs in KYWWTP, UNDP supported installing PV systems to cover some of the plant's energy needs. Efficiency gains are contributing to the sustainability of its operations and demonstrate the programme's dedicated emphasis on this area. It is estimated that the plant needs 7MW of energy to cover its operations; UNDP supported the installation of 1.3MW of PV systems (about 18 percent of the total energy). There has been a positive follow-up to cover the remaining energy need. The EU expressed its commitment to fund the installation of PV systems to cover KYWWTP's remaining energy gap. UNDP's Renewable Energy study and design also led to EU funding. A good practice that was reported during the evaluation was the collaboration between UNDP and WHO for assessing renewable energy options for the health facilities in Gaza.

<sup>69</sup> Solar Electrification of the Health System in the Gaza Strip: Opportunities and Challenges. Assessment Findings and A Strategy for Energy Transition, 2019.

The focus on renewable energy underscores the adaptive approach that UNDP has taken to respond to energy needs. Previously, a large amount of funding was allocated for purchasing the fuel necessary to operate electricity generators. As this approach is neither sustainable nor efficient, UNDP revised it and created a working group comprising different international agencies to study options for replacing fuel-based energy with renewable energy. UNDP commissioned a comprehensive needs assessment of renewable energy related to the education and health sectors. The findings of this study were presented to donors and became a guiding document for future support to renewable energy in Gaza.

UNDP has proposed developing a model for a microgrid and solar storage facility for universities that generates electricity through high-capacity PV systems. Al Aqsa University has been selected for the pilot. The microgrid components are in the process of design. The other pipeline project is a model for PV solar systems deployed in public markets, thus capitalizing on private-sector opportunities. There is also a proposal to establish a public-private partnership to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and environmental pollution. This is intended to support LGUs' ability to cover part of their operating expenses. This initiative is currently in the inception phase.

There remain challenges to building solar energy plants, such as securing Israeli permits for construction, feeding generated electricity to the Israeli Electricity Company-managed grid for distribution and the lack of transmission infrastructure. Restricted access to Area C in the West Bank and limited availability of land in Gaza also contribute to lower levels of solar energy production.

While other renewable resources (e.g. wind energy) could be harvested in parts of the West Bank and offshore in Gaza, it is almost non-existent across the oPt due to Israeli-imposed restrictions. There are, however, initiatives such as the Gaza Solar Revolving Fund, a pilot by the Palestinian Energy Authority, and a World Bank initiative to install rooftop solar energy for residential consumers, businesses and hospitals. In addition, the Partnership for Infrastructure Development Multi-Donor Trust Fund is financing solar energy initiatives. There are possibilities for wider collaborations for UNDP, particularly in linking to public-private partnerships and in private-sector engagement.

## Natural resource management

**Finding 20.** Transboundary water treatment initiatives enhanced access to environmentally sound municipal wastewater services. UNDP support to a range of water solutions in oPt has produced short to medium-term processes, but sustainability challenges remain. Institutional consolidation remains key to both scaling and speeding up efforts, particularly in Gaza.

International agencies play critical roles in wastewater management, supporting a range of activities from institutional strengthening to conservation, biodiversity and building public infrastructure. UNDP is a key actor that has supported different activities over the years. UNDP supported wastewater management projects such as KYWWTP (discussed in Section 2.3), constructing wastewater networks in northern villages of the West Bank and upgrading the Hebron sewage system, which responded to vital hygiene and environmental needs. Ongoing initiatives, such as cleaning and greening of Wadi Gaza wetland, and action plans and awareness campaigns to monitor and safeguard the cleanliness of the Wadi, assume importance given the alarming environmental situation. While transborder water treatment initiatives have enhanced access to environmentally sound municipal wastewater services, challenges remain in community wastewater management, improving tariff and revenue collection systems and enhancing the capacities of PWA and local authorities.

The environmental crisis has worsened in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, with solid waste, sewage and air pollution being the major issues. Security and financial challenges have led to significant constraints in solid waste management and services. In addition, the lack of sanitary disposal sites has further deteriorated the environment, contaminating groundwater resources. UNDP support in Gaza for ecological restoration is significant and needs consistent engagement.

Challenges remain in improving institutional and technical capacities to develop water management efficiencies and financing. This, coupled with the recurrent damages to the wastewater infrastructure due to escalations, creates significant environmental, health and safety risks. There is considerable scope for UNDP to build on its past and its ongoing support for institutionalizing sustainable water management practices.

## Climate change resilience

**Finding 21.** UNDP support to PA to access the GCF and develop adaptation and mitigation projects is important. UNDP has yet to comprehensively engage in climate change and solid waste management areas, a key priority in oPt.

UNDP support to climate change resilience adaptation is generally intended to integrate climate resilience and green approaches into the provision of social and basic services. oPt sought GCF support to strengthen the national designated authority and the oPt capacity in line with GCF objectives. UNDP support aimed to enable the National Designated Authority to implement guided mitigation and adaptation measures to fulfil its obligations to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to effectively engage stakeholders, to create awareness and to facilitate knowledge building. UNDP support to establishing systems for strengthening monitoring, reporting, verification and oversight of climate finance has been important.

UNDP supported oPt readiness capacity to access GCF through improving EQA's capacities to effectively manage the fund, including monitoring and oversight and the active engagement of stakeholders. Support extended to the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Transportation, the Palestinian Water Authority, the Energy and Resources Authority, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry of Social Development and the private sector. UNDP provided support to the National Designated Authority in Palestine to prepare a gender and socially inclusive country programme that focuses on prioritizing investments in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The Operation Manual to access and utilize GCF financing was heavily referenced and utilized by climate change stakeholders in developing project proposals for GCF funding.

EQA has developed concept notes on renewable energy, energy efficiency, grid enhancement, climate-smart agriculture and land use and forestry. These concepts will facilitate oPt efforts to transition towards a green economy. Gender mainstreaming in climate change is a relatively new topic in Palestine. Basic training on gender and climate change was provided, although there is a need for additional training and awareness creation to ensure the development and implementation of gender-sensitive climate actions.

Integrating climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning requires consistent engagement, particularly in facilitating climate investments. UNDP is well positioned to provide such support by building on its work in the area of natural resources management. UNDP has yet to facilitate appropriate green economy solutions that would address intersecting environmental and economic challenges.

## 2.6. CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMME THEMES

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

**Finding 22.** Gender equality and women's empowerment is a cross-cutting issue in PPF interventions. Women as beneficiaries received more attention when policy support and advocacy for addressing structural constraints were also needed. A programmatic (streamlined) approach to addressing gender challenges would have enhanced UNDP contributions.

UNDP programmes included short-term engagement of women as beneficiaries. UNDP prioritized areas of gender-specific development/peace-related initiatives that require longer-term solutions, such as women's access to justice and the integration of women into democratic and civil peace process. UNDP contributions to developing a gender strategy for the Palestinian civil police (a first in the Arab region) and capacity building of the PCP's Family and Juvenile Protection Units (ten, throughout the West Bank) are important.

In partnership with UN agencies and in collaboration with the Palestinian Bar Association, 130 lawyers currently support the legal aid scheme on a *pro bono* basis. Initiatives such as SHUFUNA – Women in Reconciliation contributed to raising awareness related to the lack of women's participation and representation in Palestinian decision-making and in the reconciliation process.

UNDP has supported entrepreneurship efforts in areas such as digital platforms, e-accounting and developing commercial prototypes that broke stereotypes of women's employment generation. Gender justice efforts in partnership with UN Women as part of Sawasya are important.

UNDP made concerted efforts to promote women's empowerment across its programmes, particularly entrepreneurship, access to the market, vocational training, and e-work. For example, support to youth and women in Gaza Youth contributed to efforts to move away from humanitarian aid dependency toward building skills and capacities that enable market opportunities. Opportunities for skill and employment for youth, women and people with disabilities in Gaza by using entrepreneurship, incubators, vocational training and on-site intensive skilling have been important. Although the interventions were effective in terms of achieving the stated outputs and contributing to enhancing capacities for the integration of women in the labour market, the scale was limited.<sup>70</sup>

UNDP PAPP has a Gender Equality Strategy (extended to 2022 in line with the extension of the PPF). The UNDP PAPP office is currently going through the Gender Equality Seal process and has developed the Gender Equality Seal Action Plan based on a thorough assessment; the Action Plan is expected to be implemented by March 2023. Despite such efforts, the UNDP programme is short of addressing the intersecting gender drivers of peace and development.

The results of the Gender SEAL assessment show that UNDP PAPP scored positively on 15 of the 38 benchmarks (39 percent) that were found applicable. Promoting and sustaining an enabling environment (0 percent) and mainstreaming gender equality systematically into programmes and projects (0 percent) are key areas that are lagging. The SEAL results also indicate that notwithstanding the range of efforts that have been noted around building an enabling environment for gender equality, the baseline showed that there are still significant gaps in meeting benchmarks. The assessment suggests that UNDP should work on an action plan in its results areas for addressing gender-inclusive policy gaps.

<sup>70</sup> See also ENFRA Consultants, Midterm Evaluation of Gaza Project, 2018 and the General Consulting and Training, Midterm Thematic Evaluation, 2021.



UNDP partnerships with UN Women and UNICEF enhanced contributions to gender justice processes. Overall, the potential of partnerships with UN agencies remains untapped to address complex gender-related development challenges. Small-scale efforts in the absence of advocacy and sector gender solutions undermined UNDP contributions. There was scope for more concrete engagement in gender-related policy support. UNDP considers that UN Women is the focal point for GEWE-related engagement with the PA and the Ministry for Women Affairs. Such an approach undermines opportunities to contribute to the gender agenda in the key development areas where UNDP has programmes. While UN Women has the policy mandate, engagement of thematic agencies with domain expertise is critical and gender-specific policy support can be more collaborative with each agency bringing their comparative advantage. Another area where there were missed opportunities was in areas of UN resolution 1,325 related to institutional and capacity development, where UNDP, through its various initiatives, could have provided more concrete inputs. UNDP engagement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs remains weak and needs urgent consideration for more strategic engagement.

UNDP uses the Gender Marker<sup>71</sup> to track financial investments that advance or contribute to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. As of 2022, only six projects have GEN3, 40 projects have GEN2, and 31 projects have GEN1 (See Figures 10 and 11). In addition to the attention needed to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in UNDP programmes, UNDP needs to address the weak gender capacities of the PAPP office. A senior gender adviser (who was part of the Sawasya team) has only recently begun supporting the gender mainstreaming strategy. The gender adviser is supported by a gender focal point. The absence of dedicated gender expertise has been evident in the meagre attention that gender mainstreaming has received.

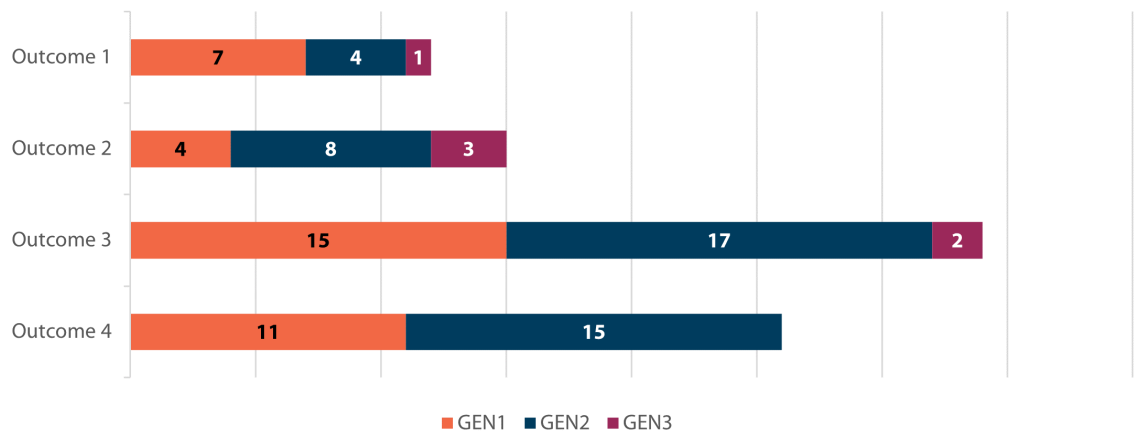
UNDP recently appointed a temporary Gender Adviser in addition to a gender focal point who have been the main PAPP gender resource. This created momentum within activities to strengthen gender mainstreaming. The Gender Working Group, a Gender Seal Task Force and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Focal Points are in place.

Since April 2021, UNDP has conducted nine gender transformative workshops for all staff; 95 percent of staff from all contractual modalities have participated. An annual training plan has been developed and is currently being rolled out. The training plan includes training for sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment focal points and gender mainstreaming in programming workshops for programme and support unit staff. The gender mainstreaming in programming workshops will further be the kickstart of a portfolio review from a gender perspective, which will be conducted across all three key programmatic priorities in the beginning of 2023. The persistence of such efforts is critical for strengthening PAPP's gender mainstreaming capacities.

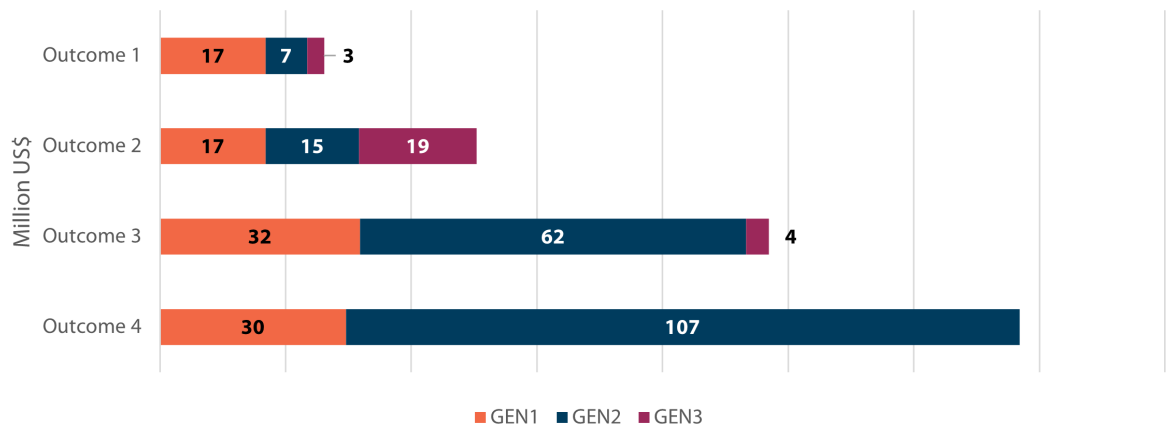
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<sup>71</sup> The Gender Marker is an indicator of gender mainstreaming within programmes. Although a powerful tool, the Gender Marker nonetheless has limitations in tracking project implementation and outcomes.

**FIGURE 10: NUMBER OF PROJECTS BY GENDER MARKER AND OUTCOMES, 2018-2022**



**FIGURE 11: EXPENDITURE BY GENDER MARKER AND OUTCOMES, 2018-2022**



Source: UNDP Atlas, UNDP PAPP Office

Note: The budget and expenditure for 2022 are up to November, as data was extracted on 18 November 2022.

GEN0 (not expected to contribute to gender equality)

GEN1 (contributes to gender equality in a limited way)

GEN2 (gender equality is a significant objective)

GEN3 (gender equality as a principal objective)



## B. Innovation

**Finding 23.** Despite disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Palestine Accelerator Lab (PalAccLab) generated considerable momentum in exploring innovative solutions for sustainable development and resilient recovery. Pursued initiatives have the potential to provide inputs for a more effective UNDP programme approach as well as broader development change options. Innovation initiatives are in the early stage; more time is needed before determining their outcomes and contributions.

UNDP Launched in December 2019, the UNDP Palestine Accelerator Lab (PalAccLab) is a corporate mechanism to support country-level development innovation efforts that target and accelerate SDG progress.<sup>72</sup> PalAccLab demonstrated the potential to mobilize institutions, enterprises, and communities to develop solutions that would be applicable in occupation and crisis contexts. There has been a specific emphasis on using online platforms and technology for various development solutions in response to the constraints of the occupation. Through long-standing partnerships with authorities, PalAccLab has the potential to create a new capability for decision-makers to explore, experiment, and enable development solutions. Working closely with UNDP portfolios, there are opportunities to generate mutually reinforcing solutions to tackle complex development challenges in oPt. The evaluation recognizes that innovation in development practices and their scaling up is time-consuming.

The Lab has successfully identified entry points for accelerating employment and livelihoods and enabling resilient recovery. There has been a range of activities, such as a web platform that will connect female-owned small-scale food enterprises with customers, crowdfunding campaigns to support informal businesses, fostering of cost-efficient Internet of Things and artificial intelligence technologies to stop water and revenue losses, prototyping locally developed development solutions and an app to translate sign language into Arabic (thereby improving communication with people with hearing disabilities). Some of the initiatives were also in response to the business slowdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, virtual marketing initiatives, such as the online platform to market women's products or linking women cooperatives and small producers to a specialized online marketing platform.

PalAccLab is exploring ways to generate ideas, support their implementation where possible and establish linkages for scale-up. Given PalAccLab's purpose, it is reasonable to assume that activities cannot be seen only from the perspective of their contribution to an innovative solution.

Initiatives such as 'Solve', which has PMO support, aim to generate networks of community resilience through prototyping locally generated development solutions and virtual markets. Although these have yet to gain momentum, they have considerable potential. Such initiatives also need wider sector partnerships to catalyse different agencies to build on the development prototypes generated.

Locally driven bottom-up recovery and development solutions using technology and information are important for oPt. For PalAccLab to become a catalyst for development solutions, the first step is greater leveraging of UNDP programmes. The interface of PalAccLab activities with UNDP programmes needs further attention, although there are a few efforts to link deep demo initiatives with the UNDP portfolio. Given PalAccLab's structure, it does not have the necessary resources to build partnerships or pursue promising initiatives; hence the scaling rests on UNDP and other actors. Some initiatives, such as addressing gender gaps in digital inclusion, can build on successful UNDP initiatives in Gaza. Too many streams of work are also reducing PalAccLab's potential to come up with workable options.

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<sup>72</sup> The UNDP Accelerator Labs are a new corporate service offering to engage people, governments, the private sector and other actors to reconceptualize development processes and solutions suitable for the changing context, with specific emphasis on the use of technology.

There are PalAccLab activities that should have been pursued by the UNDP economic revitalization or basic services portfolio as a matter of course. For example, funding diversity (such as crowdfunding) to support informal businesses through partnerships, virtual markets and digital solutions should be part of UNDP's programme strategy.

The Deep Demonstrations' engagement is expected to span 10 to 12 months and result in identifying policy issues, building a new set of competencies in UNDP, PAPP and the government counterpart, and identifying leverage points for designing and implementing new programmes. This process should be part of any regular programming.

## C. Partnerships

**Finding 24.** Partnerships for a consolidated response to basic services, local development or employment and livelihoods remain a challenge for UNDP. There is scope for improved partnerships in access to justice, an area where there has been better success.

There are examples of joint programmes where complementarities and comparative strengths were optimized, for example, collaboration with UN Women and UNICEF in Sawasya II and with UNFPA in supporting family law. Joint programming enabled a comprehensive approach to gender, child and juvenile justice and mitigated some of the challenges linked to aid coordination in Palestine in the justice sector. It enabled UNDP and its partners to accommodate several international donors in the programme and to ensure a more coordinated approach, even though it can't cover all justice-related issues in one programme.

Challenges remain in other areas, despite UNDP efforts to establish programmatic partnerships. Part of the reason for this is the fragmented international aid landscape. Some mechanisms, such as the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which coordinates donor assistance to avoid fragmentation, have yet to engage with UN agencies such as UNDP. With some exceptions, UNDP has yet to make inroads into the multi-donor policy support space or link its initiatives with other agencies for better institutional anchoring.

UNDP established long-term, strong partnerships with Palestinian institutions and ministries and is often a preferred agency. While there are good project-related engagements, UNDP has yet to leverage this for a catalytic policy and institutional capacity engagement. Opportunities are also missed in establishing broader partnerships with municipalities for developing capacities for more responsive and accountable local governments. There was strong collaboration and engagement with CSOs across the portfolio for project implementation and advocacy. UNDP has yet to allay concerns, particularly in the West Bank, among CSOs who perceive UNDP as a competitor and not a facilitator.

Contextual challenges notwithstanding, private-sector partnerships are evolving. Partnerships with the Bank of Palestine, the Federation, chambers of commerce and Paltel are activity-based and have the potential for collaboration aimed at longer-term outcomes. An *ad hoc* approach is undermining the facilitation of the private sector as key actors in the development change process. There are several ongoing efforts in oPt in private-sector development and engagement, notwithstanding the complex and challenging context. For example, there are several initiatives by the World Bank to alleviate market failures related to binding constraints in the entrepreneurship ecosystem, including financing, enabling policies, institutional support and connectivity. There are also other actors, such as GIZ, working to de-risk policy space. UNDP has yet to systematically engage in private-sector development that is crucial for its support to employment generation and basic services, particularly in the renewable energy sector.

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

**Finding 25.** Several corporate tools and approaches are routinely applied or used more for compliance rather than specific value addition. Many concepts that are taking the time and resources of UNDP are not new and need unpacking for more realistic use.

UNDP acknowledges the importance of a systems and portfolio approach to development support, which needs a programmatic approach to building on the synergies between different streams of work. Opportunities for leveraging extensive rehabilitation support to enable development options and institutional capacities are missed. A lack of synergies within and between programme portfolios is reducing UNDP's development engagement. Development innovation received priority with the establishment of PalAccLab. Innovative solutions are evolving but need concerted integration into UNDP responses (See also sections 2.4 and 2.6 B).

Progress in longer-term programmatic thrust is hampered by the *ad hoc* application of development approaches and tools. While conceptualization of resilience (community resilience and transformative resilience) is important, its application remains uneven and in its early stages. Addressing an issue as broad and complex as an inclusive, resilient economy requires much more than what the current UNDP programme offers. While UNDP interventions have identified the right entry points and stakeholders, an overarching framework is needed to address the economic ecosystem challenges and partnerships for sustaining interventions long enough and cover key elements for sustainability.

**Finding 26.** Nexus focus in UNCT is recent. Although there is a wide acceptance of nexus as a way forward, necessary momentum in terms of well-conceived inter-agency joint efforts is lacking. Transformative resilience as a UNDP programming approach is evolving but lacks institutional anchoring.

Despite a protracted humanitarian context, the nexus approach is not evident in oPt. While agencies recognize the importance of a humanitarian and development nexus as well as a peacebuilding dimension, concrete approaches are lacking. UNDP programmes are not an exception to this trend.

UNSCDF is not enabling nexus collaborations. A larger issue is the weak aid coordination in oPt. An assessment of the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat (LACS) system carried out in 2015<sup>73</sup> and the more recent UNSCDF evaluation point out that the LACS system has variously been considered moribund and ineffective. The LACS meetings have become increasingly infrequent and have devolved into time-consuming information-sharing sessions that do not serve to further policy or engage in strategic dialogue.<sup>74</sup> The adoption of the nexus requires the development of a broader complexity-systems analysis focus that was found to be lacking. In the absence of donor coordination and consensus on nexus focus, funding for establishing synergies between humanitarian and development programmes has been limited. In the present funding systems, due to several political and strategic factors, there are limited incentives for humanitarian agencies to engage with development agencies for a quicker transition to development.

Within the UN development system itself, agency heads fell back on the well-established and entrenched Humanitarian Coordination cluster mechanism for coordination<sup>75</sup> (and, likely, development concerns), and thinking would inevitably have been crowded out given the proliferating demands for humanitarian assistance. Reliance on this mechanism for coordination has inevitably limited most of the substantive

<sup>73</sup> Reforming aid management in the West Bank and Gaza: A paper commissioned by the co-chairs of the Local Aid Coordination Secretariat, March 2016.

<sup>74</sup> UNSCO Evaluation. Internal document.

<sup>75</sup> Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) responsibilities for coordination. Each cluster is also responsible for integrating early recovery from the outset of the humanitarian response.

dialogue to 'nexus' issues that tend to be limited to early recovery. It is clear that the 'nexus approach' has become common currency among UN agencies, although even a nexus strategy does not appear to exist in any substantive way.

Although not an easy proposition, UNDP has been less proactive in strategically pursuing humanitarian and development nexus collaborations. While UNDP and UN agencies use the resilience concept, it has yet to enable linkages between different streams of support for sustainable development and resilient recovery.

## E. COVID-19 response

**Finding 27.** UNDP proactively responded to support Palestine's COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery efforts. UNDP short-term employment support was critical for employment creation and for improving health services.

Given the protracted crisis context, restricted resources, poor fiscal sustainability and constraints on mobility, the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis had severe consequences for people in oPt. Although the Palestinian government's pre-emptive measures controlled rapid outbreaks, short-term social security measures and front-line health care were a priority. Anchored in transformative resilience, UNDP PAPP's approach sought to support COVID-19 preparedness of health systems, planning for response and resilient recovery with an emphasis on vulnerable populations. UNDP support to the COVID-19 economic recovery plan, response, control and infection prevention, temporary health staff and medical waste management contributed to strengthening the public health system's capacities. The COVID-19 response was leveraged to strengthen public health system capacities. UNDP was one of the first agencies to respond to strengthening those health sector mechanisms needed to respond to the pandemic and support additional facilities.

Short-term temporary employment in the health sector boosted PA capacities and enabled the strengthening of specialty areas in public hospitals. Support to businesses (including short-term financing and business development support; see sections 2.3 and 2.4 for further analysis) enabled small enterprises to weather the prolonged lockdown. Opportunities for institutional and community resilience and enabling social protection mechanisms have yet to be fully explored.

## 2.7. PROGRAMME EFFICIENCY

**Finding 28.** Over time, the occupation context has presented a situation for UNDP to facilitate administrative support and access to the UN agencies, a responsibility UNDP fulfilled to a large extent. This role cannot be taken for granted and needs revisiting, given the increasing demands for efficiency and agility in administrative support services.

UNDP has provided important administrative support to UN agencies for over a decade. UNDP has a well-organized mechanism to provide operational support to UN agencies. Unaddressed efficiency issues carry reputational risks for UNDP. Value for money concerns, while not entirely justified, have yet to be addressed. Concerns such as delays (partly due to HQ procedures and processes) and UNDP's lack of proactiveness to improve access and administrative facilitation have yet to be addressed. UNDP is of the view that despite some delays, efficiency gains for UN agencies receiving administrative services remain.

The UN in oPt has multiple mechanisms to facilitate the import of and access to materials necessary to implement their projects, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency's (UNWRA) access mechanism, UNDP's Access Coordination and Monitoring Support Project, UNSCO-UNOPS's Gaza Reconstruction

Mechanism in addition to other mechanisms implemented by UNICEF, UNDSS and WHO. The UNWRA, UNDP and UNOPS mechanisms use the same channels with the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories and the Coordination and Liaison Administration and adhere to the same application protocols for importing dual-use items. Post-2014 conflict, UNDP (as well as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency) made efforts to reinforce trust with Israel and resumed the operations necessary for post-war reconstruction.

Construction and intrastate planning in Area C and East Jerusalem were impacted by strict Israeli measures and policies. UNDP's Access Coordination and Monitoring Support Project was set up as a temporary mechanism that had significant added value. The Access Coordination and Monitoring Support Project has succeeded in accessing materials for 191 projects with a total value of \$231 million since 2011. Subsequently, the UNOPS Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism was set up and has since been operational, providing more options for access.

The consolidation of different UN access mechanisms has strengths and limitations. The evaluation points out that the strength of a well-coordinated parallel mechanism is better than the risks of a single mechanism. UNDP (as well as UNRA) monitors dual-use materials in their projects. UNDP also used the UNOPS mechanism for the repair and reconstruction of housing, but other infrastructure uses their mechanisms. UNDP has yet to make its positioning clear on the three access mechanisms and the value addition of its access stream.

**Finding 29.** Efforts as part of the restructuring and streamlining of programme teams are important for UNDP to shift from an infrastructure-centric programme to a development-centric programme. PAPP office reorganization has yet to enable UNDP to position itself more strategically to respond to development needs in oPt.

UNDP took measures to strengthen its programme and management processes to reposition PPF on development priorities. The revisiting of intervention logic in 2020 was intended to consolidate programme areas and prepare a solid basis for the next PPF. The restructuring of the programme portfolios, streamlining staff configuration, mainstreaming engineering units into programme units and expanding field offices are important for ensuring programme efficiency and for enabling UNDP to realize its potential to become a key agency in support of the development and reform agenda.

The fact that UNDAF did not function as a programme coordination and monitoring tool impacted the UNDP programme strategy to some extent because the two-state solution and progress towards Palestinian statehood, on which the UNDAF and the PPF are based, did not garner Israeli or international support.<sup>76</sup> UNDAF was not used as a fund mobilization tool either, as funds mobilization was left to individual UN agencies.

Given the history of UNDP's PAPP mandate, some support overlaps with other UN agency mandates. For example, infrastructure projects overlap with the UNOPS mandate, and the rehabilitation of historical houses in East Jerusalem overlaps the UNESCO mandate.

Programme efficiency issues are undermining UNDP efforts to provide a coherent and strategic response. A project implementation mode (as opposed to structuring the team as a provider of development solutions) is undermining what the PAPP could collectively achieve. A compartmentalized approach to recovery and development support reduced UNDP contributions. While a predominantly humanitarian

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<sup>76</sup> UNSCO Evaluation, p 19ff. Internal document.

international response was a factor, UNDP was not proactive in building on the short-term support for a consolidated response. While some infrastructure programmes (e.g. the water treatment plant) had an iterative capacity development component and other sustainability initiatives, they were often not conceptualized for a holistic response. There is scope for identifying key capacity and institutional dimensions and intersectoral elements (for example, infrastructure and renewable energy) that can enhance sustainable development processes.

UNDP has been taking measures to bring coherence within and between its offices in Gaza, Jerusalem and Ramallah to move towards a programmatic approach to promote highly integrated and interconnected development solutions. Establishing synergies between different programme areas, within and between outcomes, however, has been limited. Programme management issues remain, specifically internal programme coherence and delivery. A highly professional office, well regarded across partners, is evolving into thematic portfolios, but further efforts are needed to bring structural and programmatic coherence.

The PPF intended to mobilize \$500 million for a Resilience and Development Fund to underpin more adaptive programming, but this fund never materialized. In addition to fluctuating programme funding from traditional donors, PPF is challenged by not being sufficiently diversified in its funding for a combination of short-term and longer-term responses. A challenge UNDP is confronted with in oPt is that programme funding (with certain exceptions) is for short-term recovery support and basic services infrastructure. This challenge, however, is not new, and UNDP has yet to devise ways to augment resources for longer-term development solutions alongside recovery support. A related issue is limited strategizing to facilitate development financing.

UNDP has embarked upon measures to strengthen programme monitoring and learning loops. While sufficient investments were made to strengthen programme monitoring, the pace of strengthening was slow, which had consequences for learning and course correction. Strengthening monitoring and linking it to learning and management is critical for programme efficiency and enhancing UNDP's effectiveness and contribution. There is scope for using user-friendly digital platforms for programme monitoring.

The evaluation acknowledges that some delays were due to external factors. Political instability and an uncertain economic situation led to considerable delays in implementing some of the infrastructure projects. COVID-19 disruptions further contributed to the delays.

## **2.8. PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE RATING**

Table 1 presents PAPP programme performance scores for the three outcomes and the rationale for the scores assigned (Annex 8 presents a detailed analysis for each output). UNDP has supported a range of initiatives in the three outcome areas; a large component of the activities has remained consistent over the years. UNDP's choice of initiatives and prioritization of marginalized groups and most affected regions were pertinent for the recovery and reconstruction needs of oPt. While UNDP was effective in achieving the outputs it set, the sustainability of outputs achieved is undermined by a lack of partnerships and institutional anchoring. The focus of UNDP activities has been predominantly short-term support, while the protracted nature of the crises requires longer-term development support as well. An area where significant change is needed is internal and external programme coherence.



**TABLE 1. Aggregated Performance Rating of the Country Programme**

Consolidated Rating Table	Overall rating	
<b>1. RELEVANCE</b>	<b>3</b>	
1.A. Adherence to national development priorities	3	UNDP programmes are aligned with oPt strategies. During the current PPF, UNDP support continued to transition from infrastructure and humanitarian assistance towards more support to development processes and institutional development. Prioritized support to Area C and East Jerusalem and targeted communities threatened by eviction and loss of livelihood. Overall, UNDP's choice of support did not always reflect the development solutions to the protracted crisis context of oPt needs.
1.B. Alignment with United Nations/UNDP goals	2	
1.C. Relevance of programme priorities	3	
<b>2. COHERENCE</b>	<b>2</b>	
2.A. Internal programme coherence	2	There have been efforts as part of the PAPP office restructuring to streamline programme teams. However, PAPP office reorganization has yet to enable UNDP to position itself more strategically to respond to development needs in oPt. Establishing synergies between different programme areas, within and between outcomes, however, has been limited. Internal programme coherence is evolving, and further efforts are needed for consolidated portfolios that would enhance contribution to recovery and development outcomes.  UNDP has established strong partnerships with the PA, donors, CSOs and local partners. Programmatic partnerships are a weak area of UNDP, with exceptions (such as Sawasya).
2.B. External programme coherence	2	
<b>3. EFFICIENCY</b>	<b>2</b>	
3.A. Timeliness	2	The evaluation acknowledges that some of the delays in programme delivery were due to external factors. Political instability and an uncertain economic situation led to considerable delays in implementing some of the infrastructure projects. COVID-19 disruptions further contributed to the delays.  There is scope for minimizing delays in administrative support to UN agencies. UNDP PAPP has yet to address delays due to corporate processes such as the clustering of services.  A highly professional office, well regarded across partners, is evolving into thematic portfolios, but further efforts are needed to bring structural and programmatic coherence. Linkages with policy processes or other related efforts of donor agencies are not evident.  Limited attention was paid to ensuring gender programming capacities in the PAPP office.  While resource mobilization was not always commensurate with the targets, the lack of programme funding diversification undermined UNDP strategizing and contribution.  Development innovation is evolving.
3.B. Management and operational efficiency	2	

◀ Table 1 (cont'd)

Consolidated Rating Table	Overall rating	
4. EFFECTIVENESS	3	
4.A. Achievement/eventual achievement of stated outputs and outcomes	2	<p>UNDP was most effective in achieving the stated outputs. The initiatives are broadly linked to the SDG priorities. There remain challenges in the achievement of outcomes, mainly because of the limited scope and limitations of programmatic partnerships. Also, the combination of outputs does not enable the outcomes of the PPF. Except for access to justice, there were limitations in linking UNDP programmes with PA and donor initiatives.</p>
4.B. Programme inclusiveness (especially those at risk of being left behind)	2	<p>Given the aid coordination constraints and fragmented international cooperation, oPt does not present an enabling environment for partnerships with international financial institutions. Partnerships, however, were established with some UN agencies, although there is considerable scope for greater programmatic collaborations among UN agencies.</p>
4.C. Prioritization of gender equality and women's empowerment	3	<p>UNDP was most effective in achieving the stated outputs. The initiatives are broadly linked to the SDG priorities. There remain challenges in the achievement of outcomes, mainly because of the limited scope and limitations of programmatic partnerships. In addition, the combination of outputs does not enable the outcomes of the PPF. Except for access to justice, there were limitations in linking UNDP programmes with PA and donor initiatives.</p>
4.D. Prioritization of development innovation	3	<p>Given the aid coordination constraints and fragmented international cooperation, oPt does not present an enabling environment for partnerships with international financial institutions. Partnerships, however, were established with some UN agencies, although there is considerable scope for greater programmatic collaborations among UN agencies.</p> <p>UNDP programmes paid attention to and were inclusive of marginalized groups and affected regions. UNDP has a strong presence in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. Programmes emphasized youth.</p> <p>Gender equality and women's empowerment are cross-cutting issues in the PPF interventions. Women as beneficiaries received more attention when policy support and advocacy for addressing structural constraints were also needed. While there were successes in some areas in engaging in the policy process, a programmatic (streamlined) approach to addressing gender challenges would have enhanced UNDP contributions.</p> <p>There is scope for strengthening programmatic collaborations with UN Women and other UN agencies for contributing to gender outcomes.</p> <p>There was limited attention to development innovation in PPF initiatives before the PalAccLab was established in the last quarter of 2019. Despite disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, PalAccLab generated considerable momentum in exploring innovative solutions for sustainable development and resilient recovery. Initiatives pursued have the potential to provide inputs for a more effective UNDP programme approach as well as broader development change options. Development innovation initiatives are in the early stage, and more time is needed before determining their outcomes and contributions.</p>



◀ Table 1 (cont'd)

Consolidated Rating Table	Overall rating	
5. SUSTAINABILITY	<b>2</b>	
5.A. Sustainable capacity	2	The sustainability of outputs and outcome processes remains a challenge after the programme's completion. Municipalities and CSOs lack the resources to manage the assets created. Initiatives such as the online platform to provide services to MSMEs are not anchored in government processes or lack partnerships to sustain the activities until capacities are created. Limited attention to partnerships and institutional anchoring has reduced the sustainability of the outputs and outcomes achieved. There were also limitations in enabling development financing.
5.B. Financing for development	1	

Note:

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

**4 = Fully Achieved/Exceeds Expectations.** A rating of this level means that programme outputs and outcomes have been fully achieved (or are likely to be achieved) or even exceed expectations. This score indicates high performance.

**3 = Mostly Achieved.** A rating of this level is used when the overall assessment is substantially positive and problems are small relative to the positive findings. There are some limitations in the contribution of UNDP programmes that have prevented the achievement of stated outputs and outcomes, but no major shortfalls. Many of the planned programme outputs/outcomes have been delivered. This score indicates moderate, but good, performance.

**2 = Partially Achieved.** A rating of this level is used when significant shortfalls are identified. The intended outputs and outcomes have only been partially achieved. Overall, the assessment is moderate but less positive.

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

Source: IEO



# CHAPTER 3

# CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE



This evaluation assessed UNDP contributions in four programme outcome areas for the period of 2018 to 2022. Building on the key findings set out in the previous chapter, the conclusions and recommendations presented here focus on strategic issues pertaining to UNDP's programme approach and balancing support to recovery and development.

During the conduct of this evaluation, there were escalations in Gaza and Jerusalem, which brings to the fore the constant need for recovery support. This, however, does not preclude the critical need for longer-term development processes given the protracted nature of conflict in oPt. The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter take into consideration this contextual reality.

### 3.1. CONCLUSIONS

**Conclusion 1.** UNDP contributions have been significant to quick recovery and enabling normalcy after intermittent conflict and destruction. Given well-established partnerships with national institutions, bilateral donors and other development stakeholders, UNDP has been well-positioned in its response to oPt's needs and priorities. Initiatives in the UNDP-supported areas of access to justice, vocational training and energy have the potential to provide sustainable development solutions.

Notwithstanding the contextual challenges, UNDP contributions to setting up oPt institutions and providing critical support to infrastructure and capacity building have been and continue to be important. UNDP played a key role in supporting the international response, enabling speedy recovery and reconstruction in a restrictive occupation context. Support to recovery efforts in oPt has contributed to fulfilling the immediate service needs and short-term employment that are critical for normalization during protracted, multiple, and intermittent crises. A prolonged phase of a recovery and rehabilitation mode of engagement, however, has impacted UNDP's strategic engagement in key development areas.

Responding to the urgent need to accelerate recovery and reconstruction processes, UNDP laid more emphasis on short-term interventions. UNDP demonstrated timeliness and responsiveness to the demand for quick recovery support given the complexity of the implementation of infrastructure initiatives in an occupation context. Technical support and international expertise augmented crucial capacity gaps. UNDP's longer-term engagement across oPt presents greater possibilities for a strategic development engagement. UNDP showed strong commitment across programme areas to further youth and women's economic empowerment. A consistent engagement in the access to justice area was evident in e-governance solutions.

The value-addition of UNDP includes targeted support for SDG reporting, the Human Development Report (which, due to resistance, became a Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute publication), the COVID-19 economic recovery plan and capacity development of EQA to access GCF funding. These are all relevant to the Palestinian development challenges and benefit from an adaptive approach. The occupation and the inherent constraints of governance reforms meant that policy change remained difficult.

The partnerships that UNDP established with national and local governments and communities were an enabling factor in UNDP's positioning. UNDP has been a partner of choice due to its reputation and reach at the PA level and across oPt, including Area C and Gaza, and the comparative advantage of its programme presence. Broad engagement with partners in government and civil society has positioned UNDP as a reliable development partner.

UNDP's roles and contributions in oPt should be seen in the context of protracted crisis and the significant constraints the occupation imposes on development and recovery support. It has been more than 25 years since the Oslo Accords introduced the PA and assigned limited self-government powers over the oPt.

While intended as an interim agreement towards Palestinian statehood, the failure of the peace process, the continued occupation and the increase in settlements effectively turned the Oslo Accords into a quasi-permanent self-government arrangement. The political backing for the two-state solution waned, and the occupation and annexation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem escalated. This, and a deepening internal political divide, undermined key assumptions of the PPF 2018-2021 change theory.

The cancellation of the general and presidential elections further undermined the rule of law, the PA's legitimacy and its relationship with the Palestinians and, invariably, the space for PAPP governance interventions. The failure of the peace process and the internal political divide limited the scope and pace of reforms, institutional capacity engagement and the international support to promote them. The inherent change theory of the current PPF was based on a number of assumptions that became critically challenged. Recurrent conflict and emergency response diverted focus from longer-term livelihood and employment solutions and environmental issues.

**Conclusion 2.** While UNDP is transitioning beyond a response and recovery-oriented programme alone, a structured approach to providing much-needed development solutions in the protracted crisis context of oPt is lacking. UNDP support had limitations in strengthening the institutional processes that are necessary for building sustainable capacities and enabling development. Donor conditionalities and a lack of partnerships for strategic engagement added to these limitations.

Faced with donor conditionalities favouring short-term interventions or infrastructure support, the UNDP portfolio was also able to demonstrate more comprehensive sector approaches and targeted policy support. While such initiatives are an outlier in the portfolio, they nevertheless reinforce the importance of consistent development engagement and enabling sustainable institutional capacities. Although infrastructure support is complemented by capacity support for a municipality or a joint service council, most local support, except for the transboundary wastewater, lacks scale and strategic perspective and is not tied to national reforms for upscale, replication and learning or linking to local government sector reform and respective aid coordination mechanisms.

Given the recovery needs in oPt, a wide programme spread was inevitable. However, not adequately balancing recovery and development support proved to be counterproductive for UNDP's role and positioning as an expert organization. Donor priorities for short-term CSO support or emphasis on infrastructure made a portfolio approach more difficult. Such constraints notwithstanding, the lack of a systematic approach to strengthening institutional and human capacities in the select areas has an inadequate focus on local government capacities and limited UNDP contributions and positioning for future engagement.

A pragmatic approach to addressing infrastructure needs first and then looking for ways to link to development had limitations. In the absence of an overall humanitarian-development nexus framework, such efforts were not sufficient. It is critical to develop a strategy for engagement in a prolonged humanitarian context that will enable resilient programme solutions. A longer-term development perspective in the protracted crisis context in oPt needs a shift in approach and collaborative partnerships, including with the private sector in areas such as basic services and livelihood and employment, which has yet to be systematically pursued. UNDP's approach was constrained by over-reliance on traditional sources of programme funding, which typically have separate allocations for development and humanitarian programming.

Despite a protracted humanitarian context, the nexus approach is not evident in oPt. While agencies recognize the importance of the humanitarian and development nexus as well as the peacebuilding dimension, concrete approaches are lacking. UNDP programmes are not an exception to this trend. The UNSCDF by itself is not enabling nexus collaborations.

A larger issue is the weak aid coordination in oPt. Fragmented international cooperation is a factor that limits nexus programming, which, to a certain extent, constrained strategic partnerships.

**Conclusion 3.** Occupation and other contextual limitations notwithstanding, UNDP was successful in contributing to the NDP agenda in the areas of access to justice, gender justice processes, e-governance and local elections, which have the potential for longer-term outcomes. Sustained collaborative efforts in the justice and the local government areas are essential to linking UNDP pilots and innovations with reform targets and for synergies and complementarities with other donor interventions.

During the current PPF, UNDP support continued a transition from infrastructure and humanitarian assistance towards more support-to-governance processes and institutional development. Local elections were successfully conducted; UNDP contributions to this are notable. The joint Sawasya programme illustrates the benefits of a more comprehensive reform approach, which is based on partnerships with other UN agencies and key donors in governance strengthening. E-governance innovation like Mizan within the judiciary and social media awareness campaigns are significant initiatives with the potential for longer-term outcomes. UNDP facilitation, while modest, reiterates the importance of protecting CSOs and supporting their complementary role in advocacy and service delivery to counterbalance the impacts of the occupation and the democratic deficit in oPt.

Despite successes, UNDP has yet to build a strong governance portfolio to sustain its programme contributions or to address structural local-level governance challenges. Strengthening public services is tied to infrastructure projects in specific locations and lacks a structured approach. Linkage to reform interventions and aid coordination is critical to formulating exit strategies for justice sector interventions and sustaining UNDP outcomes that have been achieved. Notwithstanding the context challenges, insufficient attention was given to defining how an intervention can be sustained (e.g. partnerships, complementarity, and stakeholder engagement in advocacy for policy change). Some of these issues are often exacerbated by donor preferences for addressing short-term emergencies.

Promoting transparency and accountability that are central to oPt development may counterbalance the democratic deficit and public distrust in public authorities. Such support includes tailored and strategic engagement of local governments. While there are other actors, UNDP has yet to strategize its role in this important area or to harmonize its support with other initiatives in the sector to avoid overlaps and competing approaches. The fragile state of LGUs, in particular pertaining to unfunded mandates and the net lending problem, also suggests that mobilizing the voice of civil society at the local level cannot stand alone. Achieving more accountable and empowered LGUs depends on proper attention to both supply and demand side support that also considers legal frameworks, funding mechanisms, performance incentives and capacity gaps in LGUs.

Transparency and accountability efforts are relevant, provided such interventions are linked to strategic development priorities and interventions. UNDP envisions a shift in its governance support towards more focus on transparency and accountability, possibly with local governance as an entry point. Local councils are still the only democratically elected level of government in oPt, but a general lack of transparency and accountability at both the national and local levels has eroded public trust in the authorities, especially in

holding the Council of Ministers to account. There is space for UNDP to promote more accountability among local governments through its various interventions, leveraging ongoing digitalization and e-governance solutions for catalytic impact.

**Conclusion 4.** UNDP contributions to addressing the income needs of the households affected by recurrent and multiple crises were significant. Limitations in balancing the sustainable employment processes and solutions that oPt urgently needs with temporary, short-term job creation for economic recovery have undermined UNDP contributions. UNDP has embarked upon resilience approaches to accelerate skill and business development and local economic growth. Such efforts, while important, need a comprehensive framework, partnerships and institutional anchoring to enable sustainable income-generation processes.

UNDP is well-positioned to support resilient development and livelihood options for Palestinian communities in areas that are politically and geographically sensitive, such as Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. UNDP support to income and employment generation and stabilization of livelihoods included a range of initiatives that opened opportunities for crisis-affected households to engage in employment and productive activities. Temporary employment, both skilled and unskilled, contributed to quick income, which is essential for sustaining households and breaking the cycle of unemployment.

UNDP's economic development and livelihood support have yet to demonstrate scale. Despite important contributions of short-term employment and early economic recovery, new approaches that were tried, economic development and livelihood support lack consolidation. Entrepreneurship development efforts have yet to provide comprehensive programme options for inclusive employment generation and livelihoods suitable for protracted conflict contexts. The small scope and scale of MSME interventions that were constrained by a lack of institutional anchoring and limited financial mechanisms have reduced UNDP's effectiveness and ability to sustain impacts. Efforts such as Monshati and technical and value chain support are important but are facing structural and sustainability challenges. In the absence of financing tools and mechanisms, MSME support has a limited threshold impact.

Given the severity of the challenges in oPt, there is a need for greater collaborative efforts for economic revitalization and medium to long-term employment, in the absence of which UNDP cannot have more sustainable outcomes. Slow progress in developing programme partnerships (partly due to competing in an international cooperation environment) undermined scalability and contributed to structural challenges. A weak link within UNDP support to accelerating enterprise development and economic growth is the inadequate attention it gives to private-sector engagement and development. UNDP has yet to pursue a more structured approach to mobilize private-sector development and investment.

**Conclusion 5.** UNDP contributions to improving basic services infrastructure have been important in Area C, East Jerusalem and Gaza. UNDP played a leading role in Gaza's recovery efforts that underpin the development and humanitarian support in Palestine. UNDP's unique positioning in working in such sensitive areas is key to reducing fragility in Palestine by supporting services that the PA finds difficult to provide, as well as supporting the resilience of Palestinian communities.

UNDP addressed recurrent recovery and reconstruction needs in oPt. The public infrastructure built or rehabilitated generally contributed to filling critical gaps in basic services. UNDP's speedy and flexible support enabled large, essential infrastructure such as KYWWTP, the construction of wastewater networks in northwest Bank and the Hebron courthouse, which could not have been implemented by the authorities

or local organizations given the occupation context. UNDP support to wastewater and medical waste management addressed critical public health issues. Wastewater management initiatives demonstrated effective practices and enabled PWA to improve transboundary wastewater management and control.

Small-scale infrastructure initiatives contributed to improving access to education services (including through the rehabilitation of schools, professional development of teachers and scholarships), proper living conditions and decent housing in East Jerusalem and enhanced health services (including subsidized treatment, mobile ophthalmic care clinics, intensive care units and mobile health clinics). Restoration of historic sites increased tourism and improved livelihoods. UNDP's response showed a recognition of development disparities and basic services needs, and occupation constraints of different oPt geographical areas.

Where UNDP used support to basic infrastructure to enable municipal capacities, it was confined to municipalities where the project was implemented. Improving local government capacities in revenue-raising and accessing development financing are fundamental to resilient basic services and to maintaining the assets created. In addition, given that there are several actors in infrastructure support and local governance, collaborations are critical.

**Conclusion 6.** UNDP has identified the right entry points in the area of natural resource management. UNDP support to renewable energy and water solutions has been important with tangible outputs. There are opportunities to build on current and past work to support sustainable solutions in energy efficiency and natural resource management.

Reducing reliance on imported energy is critical from the point of generating employment opportunities and livelihoods and for basic services. Given the heavy dependence of oPt on power imports, renewable energy measures assume importance. UNDP contributions have been important to mainstreaming renewable energy in oPt by implementing a gradual transition to solar energy systems that serve critical facilities in the education, health, WASH and business sectors. Several solar energy initiatives had power efficiency gains for individual projects and improved municipal services. While there is a high potential for solar energy in the oPt and there are several actors in this area, concerted joint efforts are lacking for mass application.

UNDP support was important in enhancing institutional performance capacities for the readiness to the GCF and effective management of Climate change response and wastewater management. Climate change resilience efforts need comprehensive acceleration. Overall, climate change resilience support has been limited to GCF readiness and does not reflect UNDP's comparative advantage in this area. The initiatives continue to be reactive rather than oriented to formulate a sustainable, transformative model that will ensure long-term rehabilitation, development and protection of the natural resources. While engagement with the Palestinian Water Authority and Environment Quality Authority as part of different initiatives has been important, UNDP has yet to consolidate its work in this area.



**Conclusion 7.** As UNDP prepares for the corporate gender seal, the lack of a concerted gender action plan and inadequate capacities remain a challenge in furthering GEWE outcomes. There are opportunities for building on UNDP work in employment generation and access to justice for promoting gender-sensitive development processes.

UNDP made efforts to promote women's empowerment across its programmes. There are areas where UNDP support and engagement have significance for women's economic empowerment and access to justice. Support to entrepreneurship efforts in areas such as digital platforms, e-accounting and developing commercial prototypes broke stereotypes of women's employment generation. Gender justice efforts in partnership with UN Women as part of Sawasya are important.

The potential of partnerships with UN agencies to address complex gender-related development challenges remains untapped. As UNDP prepares for the corporate gender seal, the lack of a gender strategy and adequate capacities remains a challenge in furthering GEWE outcomes. There are opportunities for building on UNDP work in employment generation and access to justice for promoting gender-sensitive development processes that would enhance authorities' policy processes and practices. Small-scale efforts in the absence of advocacy and gender sector solutions undermined UNDP contributions.

**Conclusion 8.** Efforts to streamline programme teams are important for programme coherence. Such efforts have yet to be accompanied by a strategic programming focus, which is essential to positioning UNDP as a key development actor.

UNDP took measures to strengthen its programme and management processes to reposition PPF on development priorities. Revisiting the intervention logic of 2020 is important for consolidating programme areas for the next PPF. The restructuring of the programme portfolios, streamlining staff configuration, mainstreaming engineering units into programme units and expanding field offices are important measures for programme efficiency and enabling UNDP to realize its potential to become a key agency in the support to the development and reforms agenda. Such efforts need persistence and acceleration to enhance UNDP contributions.

UNDP has been taking measures to bring coherence within and between its offices in Gaza, Jerusalem and Ramallah to move towards a programmatic approach that responds to highly integrated and interconnected development solutions. Internal programme coherence between different portfolios and with external actors working in similar areas is essential for enhancing UNDP contributions. Similarly, strengthening integrated programme monitoring is critical for management and lessons for strategizing.

## 3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

### RECOMMENDATION 1.

With decades of development and humanitarian support to oPt, UNDP has the leverage for stronger partnerships with the PA and other actors. UNDP’s strategic long-term support should be accelerated to position UNDP as a key development organization. Consistent efforts are needed to change the image of UNDP as an infrastructure agency and the reputational risk it entails.

Leveraging its comparative advantage, long presence in oPt and close engagement with the authorities, UNDP should promote sustainable development approaches and practices. Given the multiple actors and uneven coordination of international cooperation, UNDP’s development positioning depends on the technical depth and programming models it can bring to the table that can address the complex challenges in Gaza and the West Bank. UNDP should identify areas for longer-term engagement and proactively work towards it.

UNDP should equally prioritize policy engagement, connecting relevant actors for comprehensive solutions. While there is a need for intermittent recovery and rehabilitation support, this cannot be at the cost of longer-term development and policy support.

Managing perceptions as an infrastructure implementation agency is critical for UNDP’s future positioning. While UNDP may continue infrastructure support services, such activities should be used as entry points for development engagement and positioning. Concerted programmatic and policy engagement that enables practical development solutions is critical for repositioning UNDP.

Enable area-based development with due linkages to policy processes. The protracted and multiple crisis contexts of oPt need workable nexus solutions to simultaneously pursue longer-term development. UNDP should further engage with the UN and other humanitarian and development actors to promote nexus solutions. Leverage PalAccLab to engage with UN agencies and other actors with compelling nexus solutions. UNDP should prioritize Nexus collaborations in select areas. UNDP should consider nexus partnerships for area-based solutions in areas such as local economic development, solid waste management in Gaza, solar energy and private-sector development.

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

UNDP PAPP **partially accepts** the recommendation and agrees that UNDP’s strategic long-term support should be accelerated, but seeks to position UNDP as an organization contributing to Palestinian Transformative Resilience through an HDP Nexus approach.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.1 Ensure all programming and communications are aligned with UNDP PAPP’s vision and strategic positioning, contributing to Palestinian Transformative Resilience.	Dec 2025	Special Representative (SR), Deputy Special Representative (DSR), Head of Gaza Office (HoGO), Programme: Assistant Special Representatives (ASRs), and Communications		Initiated

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
1.2 Further strengthen advisory support to the Palestinian Authority in accelerating progress towards the SDGs, including taking on a key role in the integration of the SDGs in collaboration with RCO and UN agencies.	Dec 2025	DSR, ASRs		Initiated
1.3 Continue to develop and implement interventions that address key development challenges while addressing immediate needs in the three PPF priority areas: governance and basic services, economic opportunities and natural resources management.	Dec 2025	DSR, HoGO, ASRs, Programme Analysts (PAs)		Initiated
1.4 Continue to play a key role in the HDP Nexus core group with RCO, OCHA and other UN agencies to operationalize the approach in the oPt.	Dec 2025	DSR		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 2.



**Strengthen municipal capacities for sustainable recovery and development. Building on the access to justice programme outcomes, engage in the sector reforms agenda and further accelerate access to justice processes and gender justice advocacy. UNDP should continue to promote e-governance and digital transformation solutions as a nexus approach.**

UNDP is well-positioned to strengthen municipal-level capacities and enable area-based solutions. While several development partners are engaged in the sector, there is space for UNDP, provided local pilots focus on LGUs' core mandate, especially service delivery and citizen engagement in co-design, co-implementation and social audits. Potential areas of support include improving LGUs' own-source revenue generation and energy governance. Currently, the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau (SAACB) aims to scale up its annual audits to cover all municipalities, and there is international support to strengthen the capacity of SAACB to achieve this. Complementing this, the TEA programme could facilitate a more participatory audit process. Where appropriate, UNDP support should promote e-governance solutions to digitally empower LGUs and local communities.

UNDP should contextualize local-level engagement to address constraints for municipal capacity development. Such engagements should be framed in a strategic partnership with the Ministry of Local Government, Municipal Development and Lending Fund (MDLF), APLA and key development partners and ensure a proper balance between supply and demand side support.

Current discussions on improving reform implementation and donor accountability include implementing the Local Government Policy Improvement model in the local government sector and the potential revision of the Donor Priority List in the justice sector. UNDP should engage in these initiatives to improve the coherence, acceleration and sustainability of its governance support. For the next phase of Sawasya, UNDP should consider support to alternate justice mechanisms.

UNDP promotes e-governance and digital solutions across its portfolio. Such support has demonstrated potential for efficiency, transparency and accountability improvements. UNDP should continue promoting smart approaches to improving service delivery and empowering public engagement through improved access to information. To sustain results and achieve catalytic impact, e-governance innovations should be linked to strategic reforms. Lessons learned—both good and bad—should always be documented and shared with decision-makers and development partners.

**Management response: Partially Accepted** 

UNDP PAPP **partially accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
2.1 Increase systematic engagement at the local/municipal level in coordination and consultation with local actors (e.g. MDLF, KFW/ GIZ, Enable, EU, WB, Danish) and identify entry points through existing and new programming, including capacity development of local entities to improve service delivery.	June 2024	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, Project Managers (PMs)  <b>Focal point:</b> Nader Atta		Initiated
2.2 Continue to strengthen access to justice with a strong focus on gender, including through Sawasya phase III.	Dec 2025	Sawasya Joint Programme Manager (JPM), CTA, ASRs, PAs  <b>Focal point:</b> Nader Atta, Petrit Skenderi		Initiated
2.3 Continue to promote digital transformation across all PPF priority areas, including e-governance.	Dec 2025	DSR, HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PMs, Communications  <b>Focal point:</b> Nader Atta		Initiated

### RECOMMENDATION 3.



Building on the successes and lessons from the current programme, UNDP should aim to develop customized solutions that can provide models for income generation and scalable employment. Support to productive capacities and value-chain initiatives needs a well-considered strategy addressing the specificities of Gaza and variations among areas of the West Bank. Explore programmatic partnerships to enable comprehensive employment and income-generation solutions.

Demonstration projects should be time-bound to provide viable employment generation models for wider use. UNDP should strengthen its area-based approach to address the bottlenecks in livelihoods and productive capacities.

To support integrated employment and livelihood solutions, take measures to strengthen and formalize programmatic partnerships with UN and other international agencies and the private sector. UNDP should pay specific attention to engaging relevant authorities for buy-in, avoid duplication of efforts and strengthen linkages with bilateral donor efforts. Support to MSMEs needs a well-conceived approach that links to ongoing efforts of the PA and other actors and strategic engagement of the private sector rather than silos of innovation and demonstration.

### Management response: Fully Accepts



UNDP PAPP **fully accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
3.1 Continue to explore/ identify/develop models relevant to the local context to scale up income generation interventions, in coordination/consultation with partners, through improving employability, MSME strengthening, and enabling environment.	Dec 2024	DSR, HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PMs, Communications  <b>Focal point:</b> Ruba Adham, Hala Othman		Initiated
3.2 Integrate findings from the value-chain assessment into ongoing and new programming.	Dec 2023	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PMs  <b>Focal point:</b> Hala Othman, Ismail Abu Arafeh		Initiated
3.3 Continue to test/develop models for Value-Based Economy (including through AccLab) that can be scaled up for greater impact.	Dec 2023	DSR, AccLab, HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PMs, Communications  <b>Focal point:</b> Husam Tubail		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 4.

**To enable sustainable solutions, UNDP should pursue avenues for private sector engagement and development building on its private-sector pilots. Develop a private sector strategy along with the forthcoming PPF and assign necessary resources for its implementation.**

UNDP should support a conducive environment for MSMEs and address binding policy constraints. UNDP should explore areas where the organization can facilitate private-sector engagement and development. Such efforts should go beyond *ad hoc* initiatives and provide comprehensive support. Renewable energy, solid waste management and MSME value chains are some options that need concerted private-sector development facilitation, which UNDP should systematically engage in.

In Gaza and the West Bank, development challenges such as in-come generation, water and service delivery are linked to energy access. Position UNDP as a connector of renewable energy ecosystem actors, enabling collaborations between the private sector and authorities. Explore engagement possibilities at the municipal level through local economic development or improving the economic efficiency of basic services.

**Management response: Partially Accepted** 

UNDP PAPP **partially accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.1 Continue to explore and pursue private-sector partnership models in all three PPF priority areas, including testing models for public-private partnerships scale up, including finance and non-financial/technical partnerships (e.g. renewable energy, solid waste management, natural and cultural tourism, TVET).	Dec 2024	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PM <b>Focal point:</b> Husam Tubail, Hala Othman, Hekmat Khairy		Initiated



Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
4.2 Engage private-sector stakeholders in designing and further developing platforms/mechanisms for promoting job creation and MSME development (e.g. Uni-Led Innovation, MSME Help Desk, PALPRO, circular economy) based on a systems approach to promote private-sector investment.	Dec 2025	DSR, HoGO, ASRs, PAs <b>Focal point:</b> Husam Tubail, Hala Othman		Initiated
4.3 Work with the relevant ministries and governmental/ semi-governmental bodies to create a more enabling and responsible environment for private-sector development (e.g. bylaws, regulatory and incentive mechanisms)	Dec 2025	DSR, HoGO, ASRs, PAs <b>Focal point:</b> Husam Tubail, Nader Atta, Hala Othman		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 5.

The solid waste management situation in Gaza requires longer-term engagement to support sustainable waste management solutions. Building on its current initiatives, UNDP should comprehensively engage the solid waste management sector.

UNDP should consider the roles it can play in providing sustainable solutions for solid waste management. UNDP should outline a strategy for longer-term support to solid waste management that builds on its support in Gaza in the areas of wadi cleaning, solid waste, wastewater and medical waste management. This should include ways to deal with the overflowing landfills that have already reached capacity, setting environmental standards for new landfills and strengthening institutional frameworks.

Management response: **Fully Accepts** 

UNDP PAPP **fully accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
5.1 Scale up comprehensive and integrated solid waste management interventions in Gaza, including through the ongoing Greening Gaza programme.	Dec 2025	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PM <b>Focal point:</b> Hala Othman		Initiated
5.2 Continue to strengthen engagement with key stakeholders in Gaza and the West Bank (e.g. World Bank, EU, Norway, Belgium, etc.) working in the solid waste management sector towards more comprehensive and sustainable solutions, including through round tables.	June 2024	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PM <b>Focal point:</b> Hala Othman, Husam Tubail		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 6.

**UNDP made important contributions in the area of renewable energy. UNDP should consolidate its work for further engagement to scale efforts and enable policy processes.**

Building on its work in the area of renewable energy, UNDP should strategize to promote solar energy, which is critical for oPt development and growth. UNDP should facilitate private-sector development in this area to enable more investments as well as to improve renewable energy services. Considering that there are several actors engaged in this area, partnerships and collaborations are critical for a consolidated response in strengthening solar energy services.

While support to renewable energy initiatives in Area C and East Jerusalem could be challenging, UNDP should identify the areas it will engage in to promote the solar energy ecosystem and services.

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

UNDP PAPP **partially accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
6.1 Continue to develop and implement renewable energy programming in multiple sectors and strengthen engagement with actors working on policy improvements (e.g. World Bank).	Dec 2025	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PM <b>Focal point:</b> Husam Tubail, Hekmat Al Khairy, Hala Othman		Initiated
6.2 Integrate renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions into infrastructure programming.	Dec 2024	HoGO, ASRs, PAs, PM <b>Focal point:</b> Husam Tubail, Hekmat Al Khairy, Hala Othman		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 7.



**Continue ongoing efforts to strengthen gender mainstreaming. Strategically promote GEWE in UNDP programme support. UNDP should prioritise policy engagement in areas of UNDP support. As UNDP prepares for the corporate gender seal, strengthen PAPP office gender capacities.**

UNDP should invest in gender expertise and a dedicated staff position to support gender mainstreaming in UNDP programmes. UNDP should pursue select areas for substantive, longer-term GEWE engagement in order to enable gender-sensitive solutions and processes. UNDP has well-established programmes in the areas of access to justice and inclusive employment for strategic GEWE engagement.

Programmatic collaborations are critical for the continuity of UNDP efforts and the institutionalization of measures for gender accountability. UNDP should explore wider programmatic partnerships and collaborate, particularly in the areas of gender justice and economic empowerment. UNDP should prioritize gender-related policy engagement in areas where UNDP has a comparative advantage.

**Management response: Fully Accepts**



UNDP PAPP **fully accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
7.1 Implement the Gender Equality Seal Action Plan to obtain the certification.	July 2023	SR, DSR, Gender Focal Point (GFP), Gender Working Group (GWG)		Initiated
7.2 Continue to improve staff and implementing partner capacity in gender transformative approaches for GEWE, including through trainings, targeted support, and knowledge-sharing sessions.	Dec 2025	DSR, GFP, GWG, Gender Adviser (GA)		Initiated
7.3 Conduct a gender portfolio review for each of the three PPF priority areas and identify areas for increased support.	Mar 2023	GA, GFP, ASRs, PAs, PMs, RBM		Initiated

## RECOMMENDATION 8.



A strength of UNDP is its oPt-wide presence with a strong team in Gaza and the West Bank. UNDP should leverage this capacity for consistent development engagement. Adequate measures should be taken to strengthen programme efficiencies. Efficiency issues that impact programme coherence, timeliness of delivery and services and UNDP's reputation should be addressed as a priority.

UNDP should assess administrative support to UN agencies and, where needed, let go of areas where reputational risks are involved. Efficiency issues about corporate policies should be addressed.

For efficiency, rather than quick and retro fixes, a portfolio approach should aim to address programme fragmentation and be oriented towards promoting sustainable development solutions in select areas and addressing systemic issues from different entry points. This also requires well-conceived programmatic partnerships.

## Management response: **Partially Accepted**



UNDP PAPP **partially accepts** the recommendation, and will implement the following actions:

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)	Tracking*	
			Comments	Status
8.1 Conduct a review of common services administered for UN agencies and make necessary adjustments/ changes where needed, including through the OMT and subgroups.	Dec 2023	DSR, Operations Support Manager (OSM)		Initiated
8.2 Continue to implement the Portfolio Approach and engage in corporate discussions around ensuring that corporate systems, procedures, rules and regulations are in place to facilitate this approach.	Dec 2025	SR, DSR, RBM, BSSC		Initiated

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

# ANNEXES

Annexes to the report (listed below) are available on the website of the Independent Evaluation Office at: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/documents/download/22517>

**Annex 1.** Terms of reference

**Annex 2.** Country at a glance

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

**Annex 4.** Project List

**Annex 5.** People consulted

**Annex 6.** Documents consulted

**Annex 7.** Status of a country programme outcome & output indicators

**Annex 8.** Performance rating

**Annex 9.** Theory of change



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